

Red-backed Shrike 1960

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

The Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* had been declining as a breeding species and becoming more restricted to southern counties of England for a century or more although detailed specific information over most areas was lacking. Hence a survey was organised for 1960 to determine more precisely its then status. The published report reviewed the status over the previous hundred years or more county by county. (Note that the survey was purely breeding birds and no account was taken of migration/passage records.)

In the late 19th Century it was still considered widespread although rarer than previously in southern and central counties. However although the coverage for the survey was patchy and some areas known or expected to hold fair populations were poorly covered (eg Kent, Sussex and the interior of East Anglia) it was quite clear that a major decrease had occurred as few birds were recorded anywhere.

The largest numbers found in a county by some margin were the 61 found in Hampshire and 27 in coastal Suffolk. However a few pairs were found in many counties south of a line from Devon to Norfolk although there were several with none recorded.

The general pattern of the decline had been a withdrawal towards the south-east corner of Britain, but even within this area there had been a substantial decrease in numbers and the indications were that the total was only about half that of 10 years earlier.

The pattern of the decline suggested that the most likely cause of the overall decline was long term climatic changes with warmer temperatures leading to wetter summers leading to fewer large flying insects. Other suggestions included: a) destruction of habitat – perhaps important locally although there seemed to be plenty still available. This was the reason most often noted by observers as it was usually obvious when it occurred; b) predation – but there was no correlation with the increase of predatory species and the limited data available suggested that breeding success was adequate; c) parasites -- a filarial worm had been suggested but any effects of it were unknown.

Methods of Data Capture

Publicity via various publications requested as much information as possible about breeding birds. In addition all local and county bird and reports for 1960 were consulted for records to try to obtain as complete a picture as possible.

Purpose of Data Capture

The main aim was to determine the current numbers and status of the Red-backed Shrike as a breeding bird in Britain.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding season of 1960.

Other Interested parties

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

Organiser(s)

David Peakall

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Peakall, D.B. 1962. The past and present status of the Red-backed Shrike in Great Britain. *Bird Study* 9: 198-216.

The survey was noticed in *Bird Study* vol. 7 (1960) all four issues.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 archive box containing the data and some letters. All have been scanned.

(The published paper notes these are in the EGI Library but they were moved to BTO in the 1980s.)

Notes on Access and Use

The species now only breeds periodically in Britain and is on Schedule 1. Hence access to records is only on special application.

Other information**Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**