

Rook 1975

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

Rookeries were counted by the BTO between 1944 and 1946 and produced an estimate of about 3 million adult birds. This was estimated to represent an increase of about 20% since the 1930s. In Britain, with information obtained largely from records in county bird reports, the increase continued, with some exceptions, into the late 1950s and early 1960s, but then came some evidence that marked declines were taking place in many areas, and these in turn led to the decision to launch a survey throughout the UK in 1975 to try to determine the present position. The survey was run on the basis of surveying 10-km squares of the National Grid.

Overall 2838 squares were covered, ie 94.3% of the total of 3011, but there is no way of assessing the completeness of cover within the individual squares. A total of 907717 nests were counted in 28390 rookeries. The highest densities were 12.6 nests/km² in Co. Londonderry, and 10.3 in the Isle of Wight followed by Aberdeenshire (9.7) and the Isle of Man (8.1). On average, Scottish rookeries were over three times bigger than those in England or Wales, and almost twice the size of those in Northern Ireland with the largest single rookery at Arnage Castle, Aberdeenshire, containing 2087 nests. However 65% of nests occurred in rookeries of less than 25 nests.

The tree species was reported for about 60% of the total. Nests were found in over 60 species, of which over 23 were conifers, but only five broad-leaved (Ash, Oak, Elm, Beech and Sycamore) and one conifer species (Scots Pine) were of major importance -- the last holding over half the nests in Scotland.

Methods of Data Capture

The intention was to make a complete census of all rookeries. It was organised by 10-km square but observers were asked to supply a 6-figure grid reference for each rookery found, with a rookery defined as any group of nests 100m or more from the next nearest group. Observers were asked to count nests as late in the season as possible in order to include those starting later. However there are well-known difficulties of counting nests in rookeries, notably the lack of visibility and this is especially when the leaves are on deciduous trees and in conifers at all times. However counting later on was not always possible and some counts were made fairly early in the breeding season. No attempt was made to differentiate between occupied and unoccupied nests, as this was known to be difficult and time consuming.

Observers also recorded the numbers of nests in each species of tree where this was possible.

Purpose of Data Capture

To count the numbers of nests in all rookeries in all of the UK, to establish the size of the breeding population, and to record the locations of all rookeries.

Geographic Coverage

All of the UK.

Temporal Coverage

Most of the fieldwork was done in the breeding season of 1975, but in a few areas more work was necessary in 1976, and some 10-km squares in east Norfolk and Northern Ireland could not be surveyed until 1977.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organised, run and financed by the BTO with volunteer organisers.

Organiser(s)

Bryan Sage and Rae Vernon with help in particular from Malcolm Castle in Scotland and Ian Forsyth in Northern Ireland.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Sage, B.L. & Vernon, J.D.R. 1978. The 1975 national survey of rookeries. *Bird Study* 25: 64-86.

The results for Scotland are summarised as well in:

Castle, M.E. 1977. Rookeries in Scotland - 1975. *Scottish Birds* 9: 327-334.

It was also noticed in *BTO News* numbers 68, 71 and 77.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

BTO Unix network central area.

Computer data -- outline contents

In the directory rook96 are files for the 1975-1976, 1980 and 1996 surveys called ro75-76.mst (etc) and some associated programs.

Computer data -- description of contents

The data file ro7576.mst contains:

cols 1-4 -- 10-km square; 6-13 -- grid reference (2 letters and 6 numbers); 15-20 -- date (as DDMMYY although in practice most are75); 22-25 -- count of nests; 27-31 -- card number; 33-34 -- colony number in 10-km square.

Information held in BTO Archives

2 archive boxes of data sheets and 2 Transfer Cases containing letters and other miscellaneous information. All have been scanned.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis