

Twite 1960s

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

The enquiry grew out of a private study in the southern Pennines of England, where the Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* was found to be absent from several localities at which it had been known to breed at the beginning of the 20th century. An initial study showed that, particularly in Derbyshire, published breeding records were few, and with almost no recent ones.

Almost complete coverage (over 90% of the upland area being searched) was obtained for the Pennines south of Ripon. Coverage was much less complete to the north, and nil returns were received for the whole of the North Yorkshire National Park and for the moorlands in the vicinity of Liverpool. In addition, during 1968 Long Mynd (Shropshire) was visited and several days were spent in Merionethshire. No Twites were seen, although much of the areas visited appeared to be suitable.

Only proven breeding records were used for analyses. Although the breeding season is long, birds do move around into June. So seeing birds in suitable localities during the breeding season was not always indicative of probable breeding there.

There was a concentration of breeding birds in the southern Pennines, particularly on the hills between Blackburn and Halifax. South of this it was mainly on the western side of the Pennines to Derbyshire and north Staffordshire. On the eastern side of the Pennines it was extremely local and breeding was only proved for three localities.

No records were received from England south of the Pennines, nor from the Welsh hills, but in 1966 two nests (neither confirmed) were reported from the Isle of Man. Only a few scattered colonies were found from Ripon north to the Forth-Clyde Valley – a few pairs breed on moors in Cumbria and the only other known locality was the established colony on Ailsa Craig. (A separate population in northern and western Scotland was not covered by this survey.)

The majority of birds were found on heather or *Molinia* grassland moors although a variety of other habitats were used with pastures being quite important for feeding. Several nests of Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* were found within colonies of Twite.

Methods of Data Capture

Questionnaires were circulated to local recorders and observers in the areas expected to contain birds. These asked for details of numbers, localities, habitat and any other notes especially on breeding. In addition to information collected by the organiser, 130 completed questionnaires were received from 34 recorders, and a further 40 observers supplied information by letter.

Purpose of Data Capture

The primary aim was to find the breeding distribution in Britain south of the Forth-Clyde Valley. In addition, information was sought regarding its breeding ecology and its association with the closely related Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain south of Forth-Clyde Valley.

Temporal Coverage

Officially the enquiry ran from 1966 to 1970 inclusive, but records were received from outside this period and the report of the survey includes information for 1960 to 1971.

Other Interested parties

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

Organiser(s)

Noel W Orford

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Orford, N. 1973. Breeding distribution of the Twite in central Britain. *Bird Study* 20: 50-62, 121-126.

The survey was noticed in *BTO News* numbers 15, 17, 24 and 28.

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 folder containing some letters. It is assumed the data (questionnaires) were retained by the organiser.

Notes on Access and Use**Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**