

AVON BIRD REPORT

2008

AVON ORNITHOLOGICAL GROUP

Front cover: Great Crested Grebe. Photograph by Richard Andrews.

Rear cover: Map of the Avon area computer generated by S. Godden, Dept. of Geography, University of Bristol.

Text drawings by R.M. Andrews, J.P. Martin, R.J. Prytherch, B.E. Slade, the late L.A. Tucker and Anon.

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CONTENTS

BTO advert		Front cover
Avon Ornithological Group (AOG)		Front cover
Editorial	H.E. Rose	3
A guide to the records required by the Avon Bird Report		4
Species and subspecies for which descriptions are required		5
A review of 2008	R.J. Higgins	7
Weather in 2008	R.L. Bland	11
Migrant date summary		14
Introduction to systematic list		15
Contributors of records		18
Systematic list		
Swans and geese	R. Mielcarek	19
Ducks	M.S. Ponsford	23
Game birds	R. Mielcarek	36
Divers to Spoonbill	R.J. Higgins	38
Raptors	B. Lancaster	45
Water Rail to Crane	R. Mielcarek	53
Waders	H.E. Rose	56
Skuas to Auks	R.M. Andrews	71
Doves to Woodpeckers	R. Mielcarek	83
Passerines, Larks to Dipper	J. P. Martin	91
Passerines, Wren to Buntings	R.L. Bland	97
Escaped, released and hybrid birds	R Mielcarek	126
Birds of the Downs, 1994 - 2008	R.L. Bland	127
Metal pollution in Bristol: An assessment using bird of prey feathers	S. M. Murgatroyd	137
Bitterns breeding at Chew Valley Lake 1997 - 2001	K. E. Vinicombe	143
Black-necked Grebes breeding at Chew Valley Lake in 1998	K. E. Vinicombe	147
Black Redstarts breeding at Royal Portbury Dock	L. F. Roberts	151
Eastern sub-species of Jackdaw in the Avon area	A. H. Davis	155
2007 Nesting survey of ST5877 (Southmead/Henleaze)	R.L. Bland & J. Tully	157
Eagle Owl in Clifton	E. Drewitt	162
Breeding Birds Survey for 2008	R.L. Bland & J. Tully	163
BTO Atlas report	R.L. Bland	168
Avon Ringing Report	E. Drewitt	169
Gazetteer	R. L. Bland	175
Advertisement		Back cover
Map of the Avon area		Cover

EDITORIAL

The theft of eggs from the nests of our breeding birds, especially the rarer species, is still a problem that concerns us greatly; there was a report on the radio only today. It is less widespread than in former times but it has not gone away. With this threat in mind a number of past breeding records have not been published in this Report so far. In most cases these events occurred some time ago and appear to have been isolated over a period of a year or so, and they are mostly not continuing today. Therefore we feel that it is 'safe' to publish these records now. Four species were involved. The first three were Bittern, Black-necked Grebe and Ferruginous Duck, and the events took place some time ago at our main birding site Chew Valley Lake (CVL). The fourth involved Black Redstart, and took place in 2007 and 2008 at Royal Portbury Dock (RPD). Keith Vinicombe has provided vivid and very readable accounts of the occurrences of the first two of these species over several years at CVL, and detailed records for the third occurrence are given in the systematic list. Nationally these last records are probably the most important. Lyndon Roberts have written an account of the recent breeding at RPD. Black Redstarts do breed in the most unlikely places, some of the earlier UK records were from derelict bomb sites in London during and after the Second World War! Let us hope that more species will choose to breed in the Avon area in the future; for example, how long will it be before Little Egrets breed here?

Last year we republished a 1931 paper giving an account of the birds of Clifton Down at that time. For this year's Report, Richard Bland has written a follow-up concentrating on his BBS study in Clifton thus providing some interesting comparisons. One point struck me while reading this paper – when out birding, although we do not realise it, we miss a surprisingly high percentage of the birds present. Richard has revisited his site many times and so has been able to quantify clearly the percentages of the birds missed. The remaining papers this year include (a) a study by Megan Murgatroyd of the extent of heavy metal pollution in our region obtained by analysing bird of prey feathers, (b) an account by Andy Davis of the first records of 'Nordic' Jackdaws in the Avon area, and (c) a paper by Richard Bland and John Tully of the common breeding birds in the Southmead/Henleaze area of Bristol. As usual we have a BBS Report and a Ringing Report written this year by Ed Drewitt.

In last year's editorial we documented the recent name and taxonomic change to the British List made by the BOU. This process, based on the most recent scientific research, continues, and so in this Report the order in which some species appear in the systematic list has changed; for example with the *tringa* waders.

No new species was added to the Avon list in 2008. As noted above one subspecies – Nordic Jackdaw – was recorded for the first time. Other unusual sightings included Lesser Scaup (fifth record), Crane (fourth record), Franklin's Gull (fourth record), Bee-eater (seventh record) and Great Reed Warbler (second record). Also the first breeding (in England) by Goldeneye occurred at CVL. The record of Ehrenberg's Redstart (*P. p. samamasicus*) given in the 1989 Report is now considered unsafe, and so this subspecies has been removed from the Avon list.

As usual it is my great pleasure to acknowledge all the hard work and dedication that has gone into this Report. First and foremost my thanks go to all those observers who sent in records, both electronic and paper – please do keep them coming. Secondly, to all editors, proof readers and photographers who have helped to improve the standard of the Report. Rich Andrews did most of the preparation for the colour photographs, and we thank him for this. Lastly I would like to mention our two technical editors. Jason Williams did this job for five years and improved the quality and 'look' of the Report markedly, but due to pressure of work he now feels unable to find enough time to do it properly. Luckily Richard Mielcarek felt able to take on this job and carry on the work started by Jason. We are most grateful to both Jason and Richard for their dedication to the Report.

Harvey Rose (Editor)

A GUIDE to the RECORDS REQUIRED by the Avon Bird Report

Apart from the rarities, for which we require a description, we welcome records of every observation of the following groups, species and sub-species:-

Bewick's Swan, all geese and ducks, Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Bittern, Little Egret, all raptors, Red-legged and Grey Partridge, Quail, Water Rail, all waders, Kittiwake, Little, Mediterranean, Yellow-legged, and Great Black-backed Gulls, all terns, Ring-necked Parakeet, Cuckoo, all owls, Nightjar, Kingfisher, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Sand Martin, Tree, Water and Rock Pipit, Yellow and Grey Wagtail, Dipper, Nightingale, Black Redstart, Redstart, Whinchat, Stonechat, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel, Cetti's, Grasshopper, Dartford and Wood Warblers, Firecrest, Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, Marsh Tit, Tree Sparrow, Brambling, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, Crossbill, and Snow, Reed, and Corn Buntings.

For the common birds we would also like the following records, which will be especially helpful during the four years of the BTO National Atlas, 2007-2011.

- a) Breeding season site records, and evidence of breeding, for all species with the code **B** in the list below.
- b) All **first** and **last** sightings of summer and winter visitors, indicated by **D** in the list below.
- c) All records of passage or cold-weather movements, including rates per hour, for any species.
- d) Size and site of all roosts at any time of year.
- e) Feeding flocks at any time of year that exceed the value **F** in the list below.
- f) All records of winter visitors present in summer, or summer visitors in winter, particularly Blackcaps and Chiffchaff in winter, Black-headed Gulls and Common Gulls in summer (indicated by **S** or **W** in column B).
- g) All records of any unusual activity, including early or late song, display, aggression, and plumage, or birds at unusual sites, or unusually early or late breeding.
- h) All regular counts, such as monthly maxima or bird-days, from well-watched sites including gardens.
- i) All records of birds that have obviously or probably escaped from captivity.
- j) All records of birds considered to be hybrids.

	B	D	F			B	D	F
Mute Swan	B		10		Mistle Thrush	B		10
Pheasant			10		Sedge Warbler	B	D	
Little Grebe	B		5		Reed Warbler	B	D	
Great Crested Grebe	B		5		Blackcap	W	D	
Cormorant	B		5		Garden Warbler	B	D	
Grey Heron	B		5		Lesser Whitethroat	B	D	
Moorhen	B		10		Common Whitethroat	B	D	
Coot	B		10		Chiffchaff	W	D	
Black-headed Gull	S		50		Willow Warbler	B	D	
Common Gull	S		20		Goldcrest	B		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	B		30		Long-tailed Tit			15
Herring Gull	B		30		Nuthatch	B		
Feral Pigeon			50		Treecreeper	B		
Stock Dove	B		10		Jay	B		10
Woodpigeon			50		Magpie			10
Collared Dove			20		Jackdaw			50
Swift	B	D	10		Rook			50
Green Woodpecker	B				Carrion Crow			50
Great Spotted Woodpecker	B				Starling			100
Skylark			20		House Sparrow			20
Swallow		D	20		Chaffinch			20
House Martin	B	D	20		Greenfinch			20
Meadow Pipit	B		10		Goldfinch	B		20
Pied Wagtail	B		10		Linnet	B		20
Fieldfare		D	20		Bullfinch	B		
Redwing		D	20		Yellowhammer	B		10

Species and subspecies for which DESCRIPTIONS are required

Whooper Swan	Goshawk	Red-rumped Swallow
Bean Goose	Rough-legged Buzzard	Richard's Pipit
Pink-footed Goose	Red-footed Falcon	Tawny Pipit
American Wigeon	Spotted Crake	Red-throated Pipit
Green-winged Teal	Corn Crake	Waxwing
Red-crested Pochard+	Crane	Bluethroat
Ring-necked Duck	Stone Curlew	Cetti's Warbler**
Ferruginous Duck	Kentish Plover	Aquatic Warbler
Common Eider *	Dotterel	Marsh Warbler
Long-tailed Duck	American Golden Plover	Icterine Warbler
Surf Scoter	Temminck's Stint	Melodious Warbler
Velvet Scoter	White-rumped Sandpiper	Barred Warbler
Red-breasted Merganser+	Purple Sandpiper*	Dartford Warbler+++
White-headed Duck***	Pectoral Sandpiper	Subalpine Warbler
Quail**	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Greenish Warbler
Red-throated Diver	Red-necked Phalarope	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Black-throated Diver	Grey Phalarope	Yellow-browed Warbler
Great Northern Diver	Pomarine Skua	Radde's Warbler
White-billed Diver	Arctic Skua*	Dusky Warbler
Red-necked Grebe	Long-tailed Skua	Wood Warbler ++
Slavonian Grebe	Great Skua*	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Black-necked Grebe #	Sabine's Gull	Bearded Tit
Fulmar*	Ring-billed Gull	Willow Tit
Cory's Shearwater	Caspian Gull	Golden Oriole
Great Shearwater	Iceland/Kumlien's Gull	Red-backed Shrike
Sooty Shearwater	Glaucous Gull	Great Grey Shrike
Manx Shearwater*	White-winged Black Tern	Woodchat Shrike
Balearic Shearwater	Roseate Tern	Chough
Wilson's Storm-petrel	Common Guillemot*	Hooded Crow
Storm-petrel*	Razorbill	Rosy Starling
Leach's Storm-petrel	Black Guillemot	Serin
Gannet*	Little Auk	Twite
Shag	Puffin	Common Redpoll
Black-crowned Night Heron	Turtle Dove	Arctic Redpoll
Cattle Egret	Long-eared Owl	Parrot Crossbill
Great Egret	Nightjar**	Common Rosefinch
Purple Heron	Alpine Swift	Hawfinch
White Stork	Bee-eater	Lapland Bunting
Spoonbill	Hoopoe	Girl Bunting
Honey-buzzard	Wryneck	Ortolan Bunting
Black Kite	Short-toed Lark	Rustic Bunting
Hen Harrier	Wood Lark	Little Bunting
Montagu's Harrier	Horned Lark	Corn Bunting+++

away from the three main reservoirs

* inland only

** sight records of non-singing birds away from established breeding areas

***category D, but descriptions required please

+ except males in breeding plumage

++ autumn only

+++ away from breeding stronghold

Subspecies

We also require descriptions for claims of scarce subspecies - this applies to any subspecies which is not normally recorded in Avon. As a guide the list below shows the 'recognisable' scarce subspecies that have been seen in the Avon area

Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*
 Pale-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*
 'Continental' Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa limosa*
 Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*
 Scandinavian Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus littoralis*
 Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava*
 Greenland Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*
 Scandinavian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus*
 Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*
 'Nordic' Jackdaw *Monedula monedula monedula*

As well as the subspecies listed above and the species on the previous page, we also require descriptions for;

- all 'British Birds' rarities (see the BBRC website <http://www.bbrc.org.uk> for a list of such species and details of how to submit these – the ideal is to submit to BBRC and send a copy to the county recorder), and
- out-of-season migrants (for example a Whimbrel in January, or a Fieldfare or a Goosander in July)

We also reserve the right to ask for supporting notes in the event of queries regarding any record.

REVIEW OF 2008

R.J. Higgins

First Winter Period

The first two months of the year were almost entirely warm, wet and dominated by westerly winds. The only relief came between Feb.13th and 22nd, when the wind direction changed from west to east and temperatures fell.

The trends seen in wildfowl numbers over the past two winters continued in this period. A combination of mild weather and high water levels at the reservoirs resulted in very low numbers of surface-feeding duck, especially Wigeon and Teal. Species often associated with cold weather were either scarce, as were Bewick's Swan and Brent Goose, or absent, for instance White-fronted Goose and Smew. CVL registered its first winter ever without the appearance of the last-named species. By contrast, numbers of diving species such as Tufted Duck, Pochard, Goldeneye and Goosander were reasonable at the reservoirs. The only common wildfowl species to enjoy good fortunes was Shelduck, with a count of 630 at Sand Bay in January particularly notable. Amongst the less common species, Scaup had a good season, with a maximum of five seen at BL.

On the Estuary the trend for good Oystercatcher numbers seen in recent years continued. Dunlin counts were average and there was some shift from Severnside, where notably few were seen, to CI-Y, where a maximum of 6,500 was noted in February. Counts of most other coastal species were average, but a maximum of twelve Purple Sandpiper on the Estuary and five Avocet at Severnside were notable. Common Sandpiper were present in good numbers and two Spotted Redshank wintered. Inland, Lapwing were scarce but counts of Golden Plover, Snipe and Jack Snipe were average.

The populations of many wintering passerines were above the levels seen in recent winters, with good numbers of Blackbird, Fieldfare, Redwing, Starling, Brambling, Siskin and Lesser Redpoll all suggesting reasonable migration into the area. Counts of Redwing and Siskin were the highest for ten years, despite the mild weather. Many largely resident species, including Wren, Robin, Dunnock and Song Thrush were also plentiful and Stonechat numbers continued to rise. House Sparrow and Mistle Thrush numbers, however, were poor, indicating ongoing problems for these two species of conservation concern. The Marshfield area supported large flocks of several species, outstanding amongst which were 17 Grey Partridge, 400 Skylark, 500 Linnet, 200 Yellowhammer and 90 Corn Bunting.

The period was not outstanding for scarce birds overall, but one good rarity made an appearance and there were several other interesting records. The Ring-necked Duck remained until Feb.18th, which was the last time this long-staying rarity, first recorded in 1998, was seen. Ring-billed Gulls made an earlier appearance than is normal, with single adults seen at CVL on Jan. 6th and Feb.17th, and at Shortwood Tip on Feb. 27th and 28th. Eliciting more excitement was a Franklin's Gull that, having been first seen in Somerset, appeared at CVL on Jan.19th and was then seen off-and-on until March 28th, also putting in appearances at Keynsham, RPD and BL. Firecrests were found at Blaise Castle on Jan.12th, Weston STW on Feb. 27th and Bedminster on 28th. There was an exceptional influx of the eastern sub-species of Jackdaw, "Nordic Jackdaw" into the UK in early 2008 and several birds made their way into our area, being recorded at Keynsham from Jan.14th and thereafter at Marshfield and CVL. Two passerines more often associated with autumn passage were found wintering in early February. The first and most exceptional, a Ring Ouzel present at Ham Green throughout February, may have been seen in the previous month. Yellow-browed Warblers are more expected now, but one found at Chew Stoke STW on Jan. 29th still proved popular. More seasonal were a Long-eared Owl at Aust Warth on Feb. 6th and a Glaucous Gull at CVL on 9th. Goshawks are still rare, so one over Wrington on 9th was a good find.

Spring

Spring started unseasonably, with a cold but wet March. April was also on the cold side and largely dominated by westerly winds, with easterlies between 15th and 22nd. May, by contrast, was warm and to start with dry, with easterly airflows dominating. From 25th, however, rainfall was exceptionally heavy.

Wildfowl numbers during this period were unexceptional, although there were reasonable numbers of Garganey from March 24th onwards. The first movements of seabirds and gulls were passages of Kittiwake noted on the coast on March 10th to 12th, 23rd and 28th. Later in the spring single Pomarine Skuas on May 1st and 2nd preceded good numbers of Little Gull, Little Tern and Black Tern, all of which peaked between May 4th and 11th. The main passage of Common and Arctic Terns was slightly later, between 16th and 18th, a period that also saw a single Shag record.

Passage of waders was mixed. There were some notable counts of Common Sandpiper, peaking at 22 at CVL on April 26th, and of Sanderling, which peaked at 15 on Severnside on May 16th. Ringed Plover passed through in good numbers in late May but passage of Bar-tailed Godwit and Whimbrel was poor.

The first summer visitor of the year was a Sand Martin at CVL on the exceptionally early date of Feb. 23rd. This species was next seen on March 2nd, with Wheatear following on 7th and Swallow on 13th. The first big influx was of Sand Martin on 15th, a date that also saw good numbers of Stonechat and the first record of White Wagtail. House Martin appeared on 21st and the end of the month saw a large passage of Wheatear and the first record of Tree Pipit. Poor weather at the beginning of April slowed migration but Redstart, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler and Whitethroat arrived in the first week of the month and the weather did produce an exceptional 7,000 Sand Martin at CVL. The period April 13th to 16th saw the first records of Swift, Yellow Wagtail, Grasshopper Warbler and Pied Flycatcher, but the outstanding day of the season was 20th, when a huge passage of Swallow, House Martin, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, Goldfinch and Linnet coincided with the first records of Whinchat and Lesser Whitethroat. The next day produced the last record of Fieldfare and the first of Garden Warbler. There was a large arrival of Swift and the spring's best passage of Wheatear on 26th. Thereafter the spring was quieter, although there were movements of House Martin on May 15th and 26th and first records of Wood Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher on May 2nd. Overall the spring saw good passages of most migrants and high numbers of some species such as Yellow Wagtail and Pied Flycatcher, although some other less common species such as Ring Ouzel and Grasshopper Warbler were hard to find.

Scarce birds in March retained a distinctly winter feel. Scaup numbers at BL reached eight and a Lesser Scaup, possibly the bird seen in 2007, appeared here on 15th before visiting BG from 21st and CVL from April 7th, providing an overdue first for the lake. A Lapland Bunting at Marshfield was an exceptional find on 24th, since both inland and spring records of this species are very unusual. A Whooper Swan was seen at Severnside on 29th, the same day produced an Osprey at CVL. A Stone Curlew was at CI-Y on April 6th but the first ten days of the month were quiet. A classic spring rarity in the form of a Hoopoe appeared at Dryham on 11th and there was another record at Severnside on 27th. The only scarce bird to be found as part of the exceptional movement of common migrants on 20th was a Blue-headed Wagtail, seen at Severnside. An Iceland Gull at CVL on May 2nd was unseasonal and in distinct contrast to a Bee-eater at CI-Y the next day. There was then a Crane at OPS on 4th. There were clear signs of raptor passage in the spring. May 3rd and 4th produced sightings of two Marsh Harriers and a Hen Harrier whilst between 12th and 17th there were several Red Kite sightings together with single Montague's Harrier and Osprey. The only real rarity of the season was a Great Reed Warbler, present for one day only at CVL on 12th, and the spring ended with a Red-backed Shrike on 29th.

Breeding

Two over-riding factors influenced the breeding season: the after-effects of the poor summer of 2007 and the wet, cold conditions that dominated the summer of 2008.

The fortunes of wildfowl were mixed. Mallard and Little Grebe both had a poor year, but Gadwall, Great Crested Grebe and Grey Heron enjoyed a good season. The breeding success of Shelduck was the best for ten years.

Birds of prey seemed little affected by the weather, with Sparrowhawk and Kestrel both enjoying good seasons and Buzzard and Peregrine apparently stabilising at a high population level. Hobby had an average season.

Wader records were less encouraging, with no records of Little Ringed Plover or Snipe, evidence of a continued decline in Lapwing and Redshank and only average numbers of Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover.

Several passerine species, such as Blue Tit, Starling and Greenfinch, bred in low numbers and suffered a poor success rate, whilst many others, including Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler and Great Tit, were present in good numbers but had high failure rates. However, two species that have done well in recent years continued their positive trend, with Long-tailed Tit and Goldfinch both breeding in good numbers and apparently with high success rates. Two less common species, Stonechat and Cetti's Warbler, continued their expansion, although their success rates are unknown. Two species that have declined significantly in recent years, Willow Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher, had mixed fortunes; numbers of the former remained low and their success rates appeared to be poor, but there were some signs of an upturn in Spotted Flycatcher numbers. Another declining species, Cuckoo, had a further very poor year and there was also evidence that Swifts were scarce. On the other hand, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker both did well and it appeared to have been an excellent year for Kingfisher.

Amongst the scarce species there was no evidence that Tree Pipit bred, but Yellow Wagtail appears to have bred again at Tormarton and may have bred elsewhere in the east of the area. Also in the Cotswolds, there were at least four male Quail in the Marshfield area with a bird also calling at CVL. There was a first confirmed breeding attempt by Black

Redstart, at RPD, but unfortunately the young died in heavy rain. Siskin were present at two sites in the Mendips and may perhaps have bred, whilst the sighting of a Hawfinch at Leigh Woods in April raises the possibility that this secretive species may have returned to breed here. The exceptional breeding news, however, came from CVL. There had previously been no confirmed breeding records of wild Goldeneye from anywhere in England or Wales, but a female appeared unexpectedly with a brood of six at Herriott's Bridge on June 4th and two of the young survived to fledging. Not quite so unexpected, but still remarkable, was a possible breeding attempt by a pair of Pintail. No young were seen, but the behaviour of the adults suggested that a clutch was laid.

Summer

Summer 2008 will be remembered for its high rainfall, but June started dull but dry. Much of July was also dry, but there were some exceptional downpours, notably on 8th, before a spell of hot weather at the end of the month.

The summer months are normally the best for seabirds in the Estuary, and although 2008 did not produce exceptional numbers there was a reasonable sequence of records. June was the best month, with good days for both Manx Shearwater and Gannet on 3rd, for Storm Petrel and Fulmar on 22nd and for Manx Shearwater, Gannet and Storm Petrel on 28th. A Pomarine Skua at CI-Y on 19th was less usual, as was a first-summer Arctic Tern at CVL on 30th. July, however, was much quieter and unusually did not produce any Fulmar records.

If there is an invasion of Crossbills it normally starts during the summer and 2008 produced the greatest number of records since 2005, widely scattered across the area.

The period was quiet in terms of scarce birds. There was some evidence of a late raptor movement, with a sequence of Red Kite records, including four together over the Avon Gorge, in the first half of June. There were also two sightings of Osprey at CVL in that month and a Long-eared Owl, which unexpectedly is the second June record from the site. Ferruginous Duck has become expected here, and the male spent the whole summer at the lake.

Autumn

August and the first half of September were exceptionally wet and cold, with westerly airflows dominating. The second half of September was drier, as winds switched round to the east. October then saw largely westerly winds and low rainfall, with a blast of northerlies at the end of the month.

The summer deluge meant that water levels in the reservoirs were high and that numbers of dabbling ducks were, yet again, low with particularly poor counts of Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler and Teal. Diving species are less affected by water levels and there were good numbers of Tufted Duck. A high count, equalling the previous record, of Great Crested Grebe was made at CVL in August. Little Grebe numbers, by contrast, were low.

Storm Petrel appeared in good numbers during the winds of mid August, peaking on 13th. There was a reasonable passage of Arctic Tern peaking on Sept. 5th and 9th, and although the former date saw 40 Black Tern at Severnside, overall they were scarce. The autumn as a whole was poor for Leach's Storm Petrel, with none seen at Severnside and only one record in the whole year, at CI-Y on Oct. 2nd.

Wader passage was poor. Numbers at CVL were the worst on record and the coast did scarcely any better, with Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ruff, Bar-tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper and Greenshank all notably scarce. An early record of five adult Curlew Sandpiper at CI-Y possibly hinted at a poor breeding season. What migration there was seemed at its greatest in September, with peaks of 57 Knot at OPS on 6th, six Curlew Sandpiper at Severnside on 18th and seven Little Stints at the same site on 21st. The only species to be present in better than average numbers were Common Sandpiper, following on from a good spring, and Black-tailed Godwit.

Passerines had more mixed fortunes, with an exceptionally large passage of Wheatear and reasonable numbers of Whinchat contrasting with poor counts of Skylark, Yellow Wagtail, Ring Ouzel, Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler and Chaffinch. Evidence of an early start to the migration of some species was provided by first records in early July of Whinchat on 4th, Tree Pipit on 9th, and Wheatear on 10th. A Wood Warbler, rarely seen on autumn passage, was found at Emerson's Green on 7th and a count of 17 Whinchat at Marshfield on 16th was also noteworthy. The second half of August saw the season's largest movement of Yellow Wagtail and peaks in records of Sand Martin on 17th and Wheatear between 21st and 23rd, and 29th and 31st. There was another peak in Wheatear numbers between Sept. 6th and 14th. The second half of the month produced the last records of Swift and White Wagtail on 19th, Whitethroat and Willow Warbler on 21st, Grasshopper Warbler on 27th, and Tree Pipit and Sedge Warbler on 28th. Siskin passage peaked on 14th and 19th. The first Redwing was seen on 26th but the first influx was not until Oct. 18th, when Fieldfare arrived and

there were movements of Mistle Thrush and Chaffinch. The last two days of October saw large movements of Skylark, Blackbird and Starling. Some summer visitors lingered beyond these distinctly wintery events, with last records of Wheatear on Nov. 2nd, and Swallow and Reed Warbler on 16th.

The autumn produced, as usual, the bulk of the year's records of scarce birds but without any real rarities appearing. Quail are rarely seen in autumn but the first of two this year was seen at CI-Y on Aug. 7th, the same day that a reasonable passage of Black-necked Grebe began. Most of the month, however, was very quiet. Bitterns are regular at CVL in winter, but records on 23rd and 24th were most unusual. The first date also saw a Red-necked Phalarope, perhaps the best bird of the autumn, arrive at Weston STW. A Wryneck was seen at Portishead on the last day of the month, the start of a good sequence that saw further records on Sept. 4th, 5th, 12th (two), 13th and 16th. Mid-September saw a movement of raptors through the area, which included Honey Buzzards on 15th, 16th and 18th, part of a national influx, and six records of Osprey between 7th and 20th. A Grey Phalarope was at CVL on 5th, whilst 6th saw records of Long-tailed Skua at OPS and Severnside. A Spoonbill was also seen at OPS on 6th, with a Firecrest here the following day. The only Nearctic species seen all autumn was Pectoral Sandpiper, which appeared at Severnside on Sept. 18th and at BG two days later. The last ten days of September produced the second Quail of the autumn at Hengrove Park on 23rd and two Yellow-browed Warblers, at Steep Holm on 26th and Cameley on 27th. Early October was also quiet, with westerlies producing a second Grey Phalarope at CVL on 4th and an early Great Northern Diver at CI-Y on 5th, but mid-month saw a flurry of records. A Caspian Gull was identified at CVL on 10th and the year's only Spotted Crake was here on 14th, followed by a Long-tailed Duck on 19th. Elsewhere, a good autumn for Yellow-browed Warblers was completed by birds at Sand Point on 11th and Dundry on 27th, the first bird coinciding with a Dartford Warbler at Marshfield. A wintery feel was provided by a Great Grey Shrike at CI-Y on 19th and a Whooper Swan at CVL on 28th.

Winter

The winter began with high temperatures and rainfall associated with westerly winds but December was cold, with airflows from the north until 24th, followed by easterlies.

After another wet summer and in mild conditions wildfowl numbers in the second winter period were similar to those in the first. Species such as Bewick's Swan, Brent Goose and White-fronted Goose were again rare and numbers of dabbling ducks such as Wigeon and Teal were low. Smew failed to appear once again and Great Crested Grebe counts fell rapidly at CVL after their autumn peaks. The only duck species to appear in good numbers was Shelduck. High water levels at CVL were to the detriment of most species but Water Rail did benefit, with a notably high count of 31 in December.

Short-eared Owl appeared in good numbers on the coast, with a highest count of five at Aust. The same area produced a good sequence of Merlin records. Two Hen Harriers were seen in the Marshfield area and two Marsh Harriers spent much of the winter at CVL.

Waders also followed recent trends, with good counts of Oystercatcher and average numbers of many species, including Curlew. Dunlin were scarce, although a count of 1,600 at Sand Bay in December was noteworthy. There were good numbers of Common Sandpiper, a Spotted Redshank and four Greenshank, possibly a consequence of climate change. Inland, Lapwing counts were again poor, but numbers of Golden Plover, Jack Snipe and Snipe were reasonable.

The poor breeding season meant that counts of many resident passerine species were low and it was also a poor winter for many migrant species, with Fieldfare, Redwing, Starling, Brambling and Lesser Redpoll all scarce. Siskin, however, was present in reasonable numbers and Goldfinch followed up a good breeding season with large flocks at several sites. Linnet counts have been high in recent winters and this trend continued, with 800 at Marshfield outstanding, as was a flock of 40 Reed Bunting at Lower Knole Farm near Almondsbury.

Two of the first scarce visitors of the winter both came from the north-west: an Iceland Gull at Severnside on Nov. 3rd and a Whooper Swan at CI-Y on 5th, with a Ferruginous Duck from the east at CVL on 3rd. On 9th, however, a strong depression and heavy rainfall brought a Great Northern Diver and a phalarope to CVL as well as an exceptional eight Ring-necked Duck, the largest count of this species ever made in Britain. Possibly arriving from the same direction were a Grey Phalarope at Portishead on 20th and a Ring-billed Gull at CVL on 23rd. Firecrests demonstrated site fidelity by returning to Blaise Castle and Bedminster and were also seen at another five sites in a good winter for this species. A Slavonian Grebe was at BL briefly on 21st before re-appearing at CVL on 28th. The second influx of Hawfinch in three winters started on 26th when three were found at Marshfield. The same day saw a record of "Nordic Jackdaw" at Keynsham, probably a returning bird following the previous winter's influx. Velvet Scoter have been seen more frequently at CVL in recent years, and two were found here on Dec. 6th. A Dartford Warbler was at Flax Bourton on 10th but the rest of the month was quiet, with a Ring-billed Gull at CVL on 20th possibly the bird that was seen earlier in the winter, before a Siberian Chiffchaff here from 28th provided more interest.

WEATHER REPORT FOR 2008

R.L. Bland

The BNS has been given weather records for the 19th century by S.M. (Mike) Taylor which has enabled me to take the temperature averages back to 1853. This has made minor changes to the long-term averages previously quoted in the annual weather record.

2008 was the coldest year since 1996, and the fourth wettest since 1853. It began with a warm winter, which was followed by nine months with below normal temperature and, from May to September, with above average rainfall, despite which 228 days (61%) had no rain at all. February broke records for sunshine, and August for cloud.

The overall mean maximum temperature was 13.7°C, just a tenth of a degree warmer than the average since 1853 of 13.6°C. Overall rainfall was 1150mm compared with the average since 1853 of 894mm. It was only beaten by 1862, 1924 and 2000.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Av. Max °C	14.6	14.1	13.8	14.3	15.0	14.3	14.4	14.7	14.5	13.7
Ten year av. °C	13.8	13.8	13.8	14.0	14.2	14.3	14.2	14.4	14.4	14.3
Rainfall mm	1106	1250	860	1178	758	951	896	955	1107	1150
Ten year av. mm	966	1003	995	1010	978	970	954	973	997	1005

Table 1. Decadal average mean maximum temperature and rainfall

Seasons The average for the **winter** (Dec.-Feb.) was 9.1°C, the warmest since 1998/99. Rainfall at 118mm was well above average, and just less than the previous winter. There were 32 frost nights (October to April), the last on March 5th. There were five nights with cold enough to create ice, and one day with snow lying. The coldest spell was from Feb. 14th to Jan. 19th.

Spring (March-May) Temperature was 13.3°C, close to the long term average of 12.9°C. Rainfall was a third higher than the average.

Summer (June-Aug.) at 19.4°C, a little below average, was identical to 2007. Rainfall was 40% above average and greater than in 2007. August was the wettest since 1997. It was a second disastrous breeding season for many birds.

Autumn (Sept.-Nov.) at 13.6°C was the coldest since 1993. Rainfall in September was the wettest since 2000, but October and November were near normal.

Seasonal comparisons

	2008	Min	Max	Av.
Winter	9.1	1917 2.5	1920 10.6	7.5
Spring	13.3	1887 10.4	1893 16.6	12.9
Summer	19.4	1883 18.0	1976 23.9	20.2
Autumn	13.6	1915 10.6	1959 16.8	13.9
Annual	13.7	1892 12.1	1921 15.6	13.6

Table 2 2008 season average temperatures compared with minimum, maximum and average since 1853

	2008	Min	Max	Av.
Winter	118	1964 21	1995 154	78
Spring	94	1893 17	1981 107	60
Summer	101	1995 11	1879 140	73
Autumn	102	1978 26	1935 173	87
Annual	1150	1864 590	1882 1253	894

Table 3 Average monthly rainfall in mm for each season in 2008 compared with minimum, maximum and average since 1853.

Monthly deviation from the average since 1853.

Temperature Three months, January, February and May were warmer, and nine were colder. Only January lay outside the standard deviation.

Rainfall Eight months were wetter than the long term average, four drier. Six months, January, March, May, July, August, September, were outside the standard deviation.

	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Temp	36	23	-3	-3	10	-3	-3	-6	-4	-3	-2	-18
Rain	95	-32	97	11	65	-27	61	67	65	-14	8	-41

Table 4 2008 - Temperature and rainfall monthly deviation from the monthly norm

Monthly summary 2008

	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Av.
Temp C	9.8	9.3	9.7	12.3	17.9	18.6	20.3	19.2	17.2	13.7	10.0	6.5	13.7
Rain mm	164	42	118	63	102	45	116	142	130	82	94	52	1150

Table 5 2008 Monthly average temperatures and total rainfall for each month

January 9.8°C, the warmest since 1990, and the 8th warmest since 1853. Rainfall 164mm, the wettest since 1995, and the 4th wettest since 1853. Three frost nights. The whole month was dominated by W or SW winds, and a constant series of depressions.

February 9.3°C, the warmest since 2002, rainfall 42mm. Sunshine was the most unusual feature of the month, averaging 4.8 hours a day, double the normal average. 12 frost nights, three cold enough to cover ponds in ice. The first two weeks were relatively warm with SW winds, even though high pressure brought clear skies and frost nights. From 13th winds turned easterly and temperatures fell, but rose again on 22nd when S winds between high pressure in Europe and low in the Atlantic.

March 9.7°C, below average and, unusually, colder than January. Rainfall 118mm, double the average, and the 14th wettest since 1853. Two frost nights. There was a considerable storm from 9th to 12th. From 16th winds turned northerly and temperatures fell, but westerlies took over from 27th.

April 12.3°C, just below the long-term average, rainfall 63mm. Six frost nights. Began with light westerlies but from 15th easterlies between low pressure in Spain and high in Iceland, which held sway until 22nd, when more normal westerlies and low pressure came in, and by 27th the temperature reached 18°C.

May 17.9°C, the warmest May since 1992. Rainfall 102mm, the third wet May in a row. Easterly winds dominated from the start, and from 6th to 14th the temperature was always over 20°C, reaching 25°C on 11th, and making that week the second hottest of the year. High pressure over the Baltic or the UK was in control, and until 22nd the month was almost completely dry, but between 25th and 30th 80mm of rain fell and on 26th the temperature fell to 12°C. This damaged many nesting attempts.

June 18.6°C, below the long-term average, Rainfall 45mm. There was a warm spell from 8th-11th, but from 17th a succession of low pressure systems and westerly winds saw very dull days, though very little rain.

July 20.3°C, below average, and rainfall 116mm, a second wet July. 32 mm fell on 8th, one of the wettest days of the year, and then virtually none from 12th to 27th. There was a brief touch of summer from 22nd to 31st with temperatures over 20°C, reaching 28°C on 28th, the hottest day of the year. This was associated with SE winds and high pressure.

August 19.2°C, the coldest since 1994, and rainfall was 140mm, the wettest since 1997. It was a spectacularly dull month with an average of only 3.5 hours sunshine a day, less than February. Winds were generally W or SW round low pressure systems.

September 17.2°C, rainfall 130mm, the wettest since 2000, and it all fell in the first 15 days, to the despair of farmers. The first half was dominated by westerlies and low pressure, the second by high pressure and easterly winds.

October 13.7°C, just above average, rainfall 82mm, and three frost nights at the end. Dominated by W winds, with low pressure to N and high to south. Almost dry until 17th. Temperature fell sharply at the end of the month as N winds set in round a high in the Atlantic.

November 10.0°C, rainfall 94mm, both close to the average. The 9th saw 34mm of rain, the second wettest day of the year. One frost night. W winds and low pressure took over from 6th, and dominated until 18th when they moved to NW between a low in the Baltic and high pressure in the Atlantic.

December 6.5°C, coldest since 1996, rainfall 52mm, 17 frost nights. For the first three weeks winds were northerly, and then from 24th set in from the east. On 31st the maximum temperature fell to -1°C, the lowest temperature of the year, and since January 1997.

Weather Extremes

The table below gives figures for extreme annual events over the past decade, enabling the extreme events of 2008 to be put in perspective. There seems to be no pattern in these figures, except for the number of days without any sun to increase from around 50 to around 100. It is also interesting that, contrary to common perception, two days in every three have no rain at all.

		1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008	
Hottest	°C	30	30	30	26	32	28	30	35	27	28	July 28th
Coldest	°C	3	3	2	0	1	3	0	0	2	-1	Dec. 31st
Wettest	mm	28	55	55	60	45	45	47	39	40	35	Jan. 11th
Sunniest	hr	14	15.5	14	14.9	15.1	13.9	14.8	14.7	14.1	14.9	June 9th
Longest dry	days							14	22	24	16	Feb. 6th-21st
Longest wet	days							7	11	8	8	Jan. 13th-20th
Frost	days	29	28	46	14	49	30	32	33	25	44	
Snow	days		4	0	0	0	6	2	2	2	1	
Storms	days							1	3	6	4	
< 25C	days	20	12	15	3	22	13	14	27	1	7	
> 5C	days	9	13	34	17	25	15	26	39	18	14	
<10hr sun	days	41	32	45	30	42	19	38	36	45	29	
No sun	days	44	51	62	78	56	90	89	107	99	95	
No rain	days					263	231	248	234	238	228	

Extreme annual events over the past decade

MIGRANT DATE SUMMARY

	Earliest	Av 1984-2008	2008	Latest	Av 1984-2008	2008
Sand Martin	23 Feb '08	12 Mar	Feb 23	18 Nov '76	5 Oct	Oct 4
Wheatear	28 Feb '98	11 Mar	Mar 8	29 Nov '98	4 Nov	Nov 3
Swallow	7 Mar '78	21 Mar	Mar 13	16 Dec '70	4 Nov	Nov 16
White Wagtail	1 Mar '07	24 Mar	Mar 15	22 Nov '97	3 Oct	Sep 14
House Martin	4 Mar '97	26 Mar	Mar 21	28 Nov '70	28 Oct	Oct 8
Garganey	4 Mar '69	13 Apr	Mar 24	13 Dec '92	6 Oct	Oct 4
Willow Warbler	9 Mar '72	26 Mar	Mar 29	25 Oct '81	23 Sep	Sep 21
Tree Pipit	16 Mar '92	1 Apr	Mar 30	24 Oct. '71	29 Sep	Sep 28
Lt Ringed Plover	16 Mar '02	3 Apr	Mar 31	18 Oct '76	10 Sep	Aug 30
Sedge Warbler	30 Mar '67	11 Apr	Apr 2	28 Oct '86	29 Sep	Sep 28
Reed Warbler	3 Apr '01	16 Apr	Apr 5	16 Nov '09	30 Sep	Nov 16
Redstart	20 Mar '94	7 Apr	Apr 7	12 Nov '72	13 Oct	Oct 12
Whitethroat	31 Mar '68	15 Apr	Apr 8	22 Nov '87	27 Sep	Sep 21
Whimbrel	26 Mar '86	11 Apr	Apr 10	19 Nov '97	11 Oct	Sep 30
Cuckoo	20 Mar '83	13 Apr	Apr 13	23 Sep '83	22 Aug	Jul 17
Grasshopper Warbler	28 Mar '97	16 Apr	Apr 13	28 Oct '73	19 Sep	Sep 28
Common Tern	1 Apr '00	12 Apr	Apr 13	28 Nov '82	11 Oct	Sep 17
Yellow Wagtail	15 Mar '70	7 Apr	Apr 15	2 Dec '03	11 Oct	Sep 28
Pied Flycatcher	30 Mar '02	12 Apr	Apr 16	14 Oct '06	3 Sep	na
Swift	8 Apr '01	19 Apr	Apr 16	15 Nov '74	17 Sep	Sep 19
Hobby	30 Mar '90	21 Apr	Apr 17	29 Oct '98	5 Oct	Sep 25
Ring Ouzel	15 Mar '67	1 Apr	Apr 19	20 Nov '86	23 Oct	Oct 11
Lesser Whitethroat	3 Apr '57	21 Apr	Apr 20	22 Nov '98	1 Oct	Sep 13
Garden Warbler	20 Mar '03	13 Apr	Apr 21	21 Nov 93	25 Sep	Oct 19
Whinchat	19 Mar '74	21 Apr	Apr 21	12 Nov '67	15 Oct	Oct 12
Black Tern	2 Apr '82	26 Apr	Apr 26	23 Nov '86	9 Oct	Sep 9
Wood Warbler	31 Mar '68	21 Apr	May 2	18 Sep '77	19 Aug	na
Spotted Flycatcher	16 Apr '83	2 May	May 2	27 Oct '87	27 Sep	Oct 1
Nightingale	7 Apr '61	22 Apr	May 7	12 Sep '77	26 Aug	na
	Av 29 species	9 Apr	Apr 9	Av 26 species	3 Oct	Oct 3
Winter migrants						
Redwing	7 Aug '79	29 Sep	Sep 27	29 Apr '67	9 Apr	Apr 2
Brambling	3 Aug '68	9 Oct	Oct 6	30 May '86	18 Apr	Apr 16
Fieldfare	29 Aug '94	4 Oct	Oct 19	8 May '82	18 Apr	Apr 22

NB. Species are listed in the order in which they first arrived in 2008

INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMATIC LIST

The County of Avon, as an administrative unit, ceased to exist on April 1st, 1996. It was replaced by four 'unitary authorities' - South Gloucestershire (*SG*), Bristol (*BR*), Bath and North-east Somerset (*BA*), and North Somerset (*NS*). The area covered by these four administrative units corresponds almost exactly to the old County of Avon, and the area covered by this Report is also unaltered - we use the term 'Avon area' to describe this region. To aid comparisons with older Reports note that 'North Avon **NA**' corresponds to *SG* and *BR* north of the R. Avon, and 'South Avon **SA**' corresponds to *BA*, *NS* and *BR* south of the river.

Abbreviations

Some frequently occurring place name abbreviations are as follows:

ASW	Avonmouth Sewage Disposal Works and its surroundings
BG	Barrow Gurney Reservoirs
BL	Blagdon Lake
CI-Y	Severn shore and environs between Clevedon and mouth of the River Yeo (Clevedon Bay), and including the tidal part of the Yeo
CVL	Chew Valley Lake
OPS	Oldbury-on-Severn Nuclear Power Station and environs
PW	Portbury Wharf and the remainder of St. George's Wharf
RPD	Royal Portbury Dock (the dock area only)
Severnside	The Severn shore and environs from Aust to Chittening Warth inclusive
Weston STW	Weston-s-Mare Sewage Treatment Works and environs

BBRC When attached to a record implies that the British Birds Rarities Committee has accepted the record.

WeBS The Wetland Bird Survey which aims to monitor all non-breeding waterbirds in the UK to provide the principal data on which the conservation of their populations and wetland habitats is based.

There are a number of surveys which monitor populations. They use different techniques, operate at different times of the year, and vary in the quantity of the information recorded, but they provide valuable information on population change, especially for the common species. The following abbreviations are used.

BBS Stands for the BTO April to June **Breeding Bird Survey** begun in 1994. In 2008, 178 one-km squares were visited, 11% of the Avon area. A total of 63,225 birds was counted of 112 species. The data are used in four ways. A population estimate derived from the counts is given for the commonest species. A distribution figure is given which is the percentage of the squares in which a species was observed. The percentage change in the counts from the previous year is given in a status chart. The index for common species has been reset to 100 for 1998 to show the change over the past decade. The 2001 figures (when Foot and Mouth disease prevented an effective survey) have been interpolated.

CABS Stands for the **Clifton Area Bird Survey**. This is a weekly survey of ST 5673 begun in 1994. In 2008, 49 weekly counts were made, 6398 birds of 42 species were counted at a rate of 112 birds per hour. For common species the percentage change from the previous year is given.

WBC Stands for **Winter Bird Counts**. The survey began in 1997/98 winter. In 2007/08, as a result of the first counts for the winter Atlas 233,336 birds of 108 species were counted in 882 hours at a rate of 264/hr. In the 2008/09 winter, 124,908 birds were counted in 535 hours at a rate of 233/hr. For common species the percentage change in the rate is given for both winters.

WGS Stands for **Winter Garden Survey**. This survey began in 1973/4, and involves counts of birds using gardens between October and March. In 2007/08, 30 gardens participated over 800 recording-weeks counting some 35,500 birds of 42 species, with an average of 26 species per garden. Percentage changes in numbers present are recorded in the status chart.

In the passerine species accounts, the first table shows the percentage change for the surveys listed, compared with the previous year. For many passerine species the winter populations revealed by the new BTO Atlas survey are compared with the same information from the first Winter Atlas 1979-92.

Species Accounts

The systematic list follows the order given by Prof. H.K. Voous with later adjustments made by the British Ornithological Union. The nomenclature follows that of the BOU as given on their web site at www.bou.org.uk.

The term 'bird-days' means the cumulative daily totals for a given period, so for example 25 on day 1, followed by 100 on day 3 and 30 on day 7 gives 155 bird-days for the seven day period.

In the tables of maximum monthly counts a blank means that no count was submitted.

Status comments

The table below defines the status words used.

Status	Level of abundance	Breeding Numbers
Very rare	Five or less Avon area records	
Rare	Less than annual; many years pass between records	As per level of abundance
Very Scarce	Less than annual, but typically recorded every two or three years	
Scarce	Very small numbers recorded virtually every year	1 - 9
Uncommon	Recorded in low numbers every year	10 - 99
Fairly common	Occurs in reasonable numbers in suitable habitat	100 - 999
Common	Regularly occurs in good numbers in most suitable habitats	1000 - 9999
Abundant	Large numbers in all suitable habitats	10000 +

Resident A species whose population is largely sedentary, and occurs throughout the year (but may be augmented by passage migrants and/or winter visitors).

Summer Visitor A species which occurs in the Avon area during the late spring and/or summer, after migrating from its wintering areas. Most species that are summer/winter visitors also occur in Avon as passage migrants en route to/from other areas.

Winter Visitor A species which occurs in the Avon area during the winter months after migrating from its breeding areas in other parts of Britain or abroad.. These include species which do not occur during the summer (e.g. Fieldfare), or that already have a separate resident population in the Avon area (e.g. Starling).

Passage migrant A species which appears in the Avon area whilst on spring and/or autumn migration to or from its breeding/wintering ranges. Some species have protracted spring and autumn passage periods that can appear to 'overlap' in mid-summer (in most cases this is likely to involve immature birds or failed breeders). Some species are more numerous on spring passage than in autumn (or vice-versa). In such cases, an indication of abundance is given for both seasons.

Introduced A species with a self-supporting population derived from escapes from captivity or deliberately released individuals (BOU Group C).

Vagrant A species away from its normal range not usually seen in the Avon area.

Storm/Wind-blown visitor Used with seabirds that typically occur in Avon waters after having been blown up the Bristol Channel (and often from much further afield) as a result of strong winds. Season(s) of occurrence are also given. For most seabirds, seaduck and 'coastal' waders, a brief indication of abundance inland is usually given.

Waterbird and Wader Status Tables

Reports for 1991 onwards have presented a database monitoring the progress of the common waterbird and wader species in the Avon area. This has been repeated in this Report. For each species under consideration, their main (and regularly watched) sites in the Avon area are chosen (for some only one site is considered). A status table presents a period average – an ‘Avon index’ – which will be used to monitor future progress.

For the waterbirds and the waders the average of the monthly maximum counts for the season in question is given, and is called ‘the average count’. Finally, for species with more than one site, an overall ‘Avon average’ is also provided. For some less common wader species the average of the maximum monthly counts for the year is given.

Conservation status

For the commonest breeding species there is an estimate of the Avon breeding population (in pairs) derived from the BBS counts, and a percentage distribution figure that is the proportion of the 178 one-km squares in which the species occurred in 2008. This is followed by a percentage figure for the UK population change over the past 25 years. The local change over the past decade is shown by the BBS index. This gives a more precise indication of the conservation status of each species than a simple “traffic light” listing.

For migrant species ten-year rolling average arrival and departure dates have been made annually since 1970. In general, arrival dates became progressively later as March and April temperatures fell during the period 1960 to 1990, and then progressively earlier as temperatures have risen since 1990. Each species has reacted differently to this change, and so turning points are given for each species. The same is done for departure dates. Some species have reacted to the changes by staying longer in the UK, whilst others have maintained the same length of stay. This method monitors the reaction of each species to climate change.

For summer and winter visitors where there is adequate data, the first arrival, and last departure, dates for the 25 year period 1983 to 2007 are given following the status comments.

CONTRIBUTORS OF RECORDS

Since Oct.1st, 2008, there have been some new procedures for record submission. Electronic records of common species should be sent to Richard Bland at richardbland@blueyonder.co.uk, using an 'excel' or similar file system. Electronic records of unusual species, those needing descriptions (see page 5), should be sent to John Martin at avonbirdrecorder@googlemail.com. Also all paper records should be sent to John at 34 Cranmoor Green, Pilning, Bristol, BS35 4QF. Blank recording slips are available from the Editor, address on inside front cover.

All records are kept (they are stored by BRERC in Bristol) and they are used in conservation and scientific enquiries, sometimes of considerable importance to the bird-life of the area. They are stored by species, and so it is for this reason that we ask for one species per record slip, this also helps the editors in their work. This is not a problem with electronic files as these can easily be sorted although it helps if lists use the same species order as in this Report.

AOG wishes to thank the following observers for submitting records, also please accept our apologies and inform the editor if you have submitted records and your name is not on this list.

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Information and images from the following websites were used to help confirm and expand some records:

Birdwatching at Oldbury Power Station – www.phazelwood.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/OPS.htm
 Clevedon & Portishead Birds – www.clevedon-portisheadbirds.com
 CVL Birding – www.cvlbirding.co.uk
 The Birds of South Gloucestershire – www.thebirdsofsouthgloucestershire.co.uk
 Severnside Birds – www.severnsidebirds.co.uk
 Weston Birds – www.birdlist.co.uk

SYSTEMATIC LIST

The following list is based on observations from members of the Bristol Naturalists Society, Bristol Ornithological Club, BTO (Avon region), and individual birders. Initials are given only when written descriptions have been submitted or in special circumstances.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common resident; most winter in Bristol City Docks or in a roving flock around the R. Axe on the Avon/Somerset border. Summer moulting flocks occur at CVL and BL.

1998/99 to 2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
103	85	72

Bristol City Docks. Maximum winter count

1999/06 Av.	2007	2008
109	98	107

CVL. Moulting period, July and August

The number wintering in Bristol City Docks decreased to substantially below the long-term average. Although the CVL moult count increased, nearly back to the long term average, the numbers here during the rest of the year were low, probably due to high water levels.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
CI-Y	3	1	10	14	10	8	5	5	6	13	4	10
Weston STW	73	91	28	10	11	10	10	11	12	10	9	11
Bristol Docks	72	63	65	43	26	40	32	34	38	41	52	68
Portishead Marina	22	18	20	16		17	21	22	14	17	26	16
Kenn Moor	6	6	7	4		1					8	5
Tickenham Moor	15	20	24	25	18			3				18
Backwell Lake	37		9	19	17	8		6				14
BG	4	6	6	8	7	4	6	10	15	13	4	5
CVL	41	43	61	65	60	85	105	110	50	45	40	25
BL	5	2	13	12	13	32	27	21	20	17	11	10

Other sites Reported from a further 50 sites (a remarkable increase cf. 16 in 2007) but double figure counts only from Clevedon - Yeo Moor (30+ on March 29th) and Nailsea (twelve in June).

Breeding An average year with breeding confirmed at the following 13 sites (number of cygnets in brackets): New Passage (six but none survived), Orchard Pools (six), Floating Harbour, Bristol (one), Netham, Bristol (three pairs nesting), Eastville Park (six cygnets), R. Avon, Keynsham (three), Keynsham Marina (two), Saltford (nest with four eggs washed away), Newton Lakes (eight), Portishead Marine Lake (seven), PW (three in May and six in July), BL (four broods, 19 cygnets), CVL (ten broods, 39 cygnets), Land Yeo, Clevedon (seven), Weston STW (eight).

1989/98 av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
105	141	129	96	120	74	128	144	121	123	121

Number of cygnets

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Uncommon and declining winter visitor and autumn passage migrant.

Average first date Oct. 28th, last date March 2nd.

Another poor year, again with no birds staying.

First winter period

CVL – single birds on Jan. 22nd and Feb. 2nd.

Bewick's Swan – Second winter period

OPS – five on Dec. 13th;

Northwick Warth – four adults on Dec. 27th.

	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
Min. Number	20	22	43	18	27	47	47	18	11	7
Bird-days	22	22	120	18	908	687	180+	131	11	8

Winter counts - bird days

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Very scarce winter visitor

A good year with three records, the first since 2005. The CVL record was the first here since November 1974.

Severn Beach - adult flew to SW on March 29th (PDB, ADS);

CVL – adult on Oct. 28th/29th (RMI, AHD *et al.*). Found late afternoon amongst the gathering gull roost, it was heard calling after dark. The next day it flew off high to E at about 13.30 hrs;

CI-Y – juvenile/first winter Nov. 5th - 7th (RHu *et al.*).

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of individuals seen	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	3

Number of individuals

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

European White-front *A.a. albifrons*.

Uncommon and declining winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another poor year, with just two records:

Littleton Warth – two adults on Dec. 15th flew upriver;

Northwick Warth – three adults on Dec. 27th.

Year	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
No. of individuals seen	43	129	8	2+	22	2	7+	28	8	3

Number of individuals each winter

GREY GOOSE sp.

Six that flew through CVL on Dec. 21st were considered to be either White-fronted or Bean.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Uncommon introduced resident and former summer moult migrant.

Records were received from just seven sites (*cf.* eleven in 2007) as follows:

OPS – two flew to NE on April 18th and six on Nov. 3rd;

Sevenside – one flew to SW on May 5th;

PW – one on April 5th;

Floating Harbour, Bristol – single on Jan. 12th;

CVL – two on Jan. 22nd/23rd and March 25th, one on April 17th, three on Aug. 15th - 28th and three on Oct. 29th. These last three, which possibly arrived at the same time as the Whooper Swan, were very vocal and had departed by midday;

Wick St Lawrence – ten on Feb. 8th;

BL – one on Feb. 9th/10th.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Fairly common introduced resident; largely at CVL and BL; numbers increase during the summer moult.
Uncommon breeder.

The status tables show that, although wintering numbers at BL returned to the long term average, the numbers at CVL, both wintering and moulting, are declining, possibly due to high water levels.

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1998/99 to 2005/06 Av.	104	242	173
2006/07	51	192	122
2007/08	57	241	149

September to March average maximum counts

1999 to 2006 Av	2007	2008
679	415	295

CVL - June to August (moult period) average maximum counts

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	7	8	20	5	5	7	11	29	81*	72	73	73
Portishead Marina	12	11	7			1		9	9	1	10	9
CI-Y		5	5		4	10	14	25	72	55	15	85
Weston STW		46	2	12	10		22	45	62			93
Axe Est.	57			10			6	29	70		1	
Backwell	10	8	11	7	5							4
BL	204	70	52	30	78	108	209	324	328	175	250	211
CVL	40	70	35	40	30	335	255	242	2	2	6	76
Keynsham	57				16	43					99	114
Batheaston NR	89	51	38	12	10	6	30	26				76

* site record

Other sites Recorded at a further 43 sites (cf. 17 in 2007), with counts over 20 as follows:

Thornbury Pill – 96 on Oct. 19th;

Shepperdine – 20 on Aug. 23rd;

Littleton Warth – 57 on Dec. 21st and 38 on Sept. 28th;

Frampton Cotterell – 100 in flight to SW in evening on Oct. 4th and 5th with 40 flying north in morning on Oct. 17th and 19th;

Kendleshire Golf Club – 30 in February;

Nailsea – 39 on Sept. 16th;

Bathampton Meadows – 39 on Feb. 6th with a maximum of 71 in November and 50 on Dec. 13th;

Wrington – 60+ on April 2nd and 50 on Sept. 30th, both times in flight to W;

Somerdale – maximum of 49 in January;

Avon Country Park, Keynsham – 74 on Nov. 5th and a maximum of 97 in December.

Breeding A good year with breeding confirmed at OPS (pair with two juveniles on July 18th), Bristol City Docks (pair with a single gosling), Eastville Park (three goslings), R. Avon, Keynsham (at least four broods with 20 goslings), Batheaston NR (three pairs, 13 goslings), PW (five goslings), CVL (five broods with 22 goslings). First brood fledged on May3rd, BL (at least one brood with four goslings), CI-Y (pair with two juveniles during July), Washingpool Farm (pair on nest, outcome not reported).

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Sites	6	2	5	2	4	5	6	8	3	10
Nests/broods	11	3	6	7	13	9	9	14+	7	19+
Young	37	13	29+	36	50+	41	35	39	16+	72

Breeding details

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Scarce introduced resident; very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. It is often difficult to establish the origin of many birds with certainty, although wild birds have undoubtedly occurred.

The feral flock that commutes between CVL and BL increased in size.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
10	7	13	17	21	14	12	11	11	17

Maximum count from CVL/BL

Monthly maxima of feral birds at CVL and BL												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	:	Nov	Dec
CVL	11	10			2	2	5	15				17
BL	11				2	1		8	17		13	17

The only other record was of one that flew to SW over BG on Aug. 30th.

Breeding CVL – two pairs bred producing six young.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. bernicla*.

Uncommon coastal passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce/very scarce inland.

A poor year, the second worst in the last decade.

First winter period

Severn Beach – five on Feb. 11th;

Littleton Warth – two on April 12th were subsequently seen at Northwick Warth from 14th to 17th.

1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
24	82	136	42	48	79	226	127	147	38

Avon - Total winter bird-days

Second winter period

Severn Beach – two on Dec. 28th

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Fairly common resident; most migrate to moult. Uncommon inland (except at CVL). Uncommon breeder – has declined in the last five decades.

WeBS: the Estuary is currently ninth in international importance.

A good year with high numbers in both winter periods and a good breeding season.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	27	36	43	83	60	90	40	10	5	9	37	25
Severn Beach/NW	40	72	84	65	54	42				13	55	20
CI-Y	90	100	110	120	30	30	100	10	85	85	90	90
Sand Bay	630	230	250	100	31	7	27			500	335	230
Axe Est./Weston STW	140	151	71	70	48	118	33	2	220	82	165	71
CVL	16	20	10	12	24	16	6	2	1		8	11

Recorded at a further 17 sites with notable counts of 93 at PW on March 9th and a maximum at Littleton Warth of 64 on April 12th.

Winter and spring

The count of 630 from Sand Bay on Jan. 13th was the highest local count since December 2005 and the second highest in the last ten winters. The numbers north of the Avon were the highest in the last five winters.

	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
North of R. Avon	140	150	60	89	195	116	90	104	117	130
South of R. Avon	565	287	303	542	434	470	360	650	415	630

Highest winter count (October - February)

However the numbers at CI-Y were only average (the 2007/08 winter average published in the 2007 ABR was incorrect).

	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
	137	108	(68)	110	87	152	203	105	147	120

CI-Y. Average of the three highest counts (October - February), brackets refer to incomplete counts during the F&M outbreak

Breeding

A good year, the highest in the last decade, particularly north of the Avon where 110 young were seen. South of the Avon 43 young were counted; also bred inland at both CVL (three broods, 18 young of which only four fledged) and BG (where at least part of the brood survived crossing the A38.). A pair bred on Steep Holm but no live young were seen, just one dead pullus.

1989/98 av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
91	148	141	(83)	70	154	144	123	162	116	181

Avon area - Total number of young

Autumn and winter

Although numbers north of the Avon were low there were again good numbers in Sand Bay.

2007 – A pair bred at BG (eleven young).

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Uncommon introduced resident.

A good year for this species with a widespread series of records, however there was only one record in the second half of the year.

Torthworth Park – two males and two females on March 2nd;

Heneage Court – three males and one female on April 6th and 9th;

Walton Moor – two on Nov. 28th;

Kingston Seymour – male on March 29th;.

Lower Woods – pair on May 25th;

Stanshawes Lake – two males and two females from Feb. 22nd to March 3rd;

Kingsgate Park – one on May 9th;

Pensford – male on March 29th;

CVL – male on April 25th.



WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.

WeBS: There are eight sites of international importance followed by 17 of national importance, the Estuary is fourth on this second list.

The status table shows average counts and a continuing poor showing at CVL

Year	Severnside	CVL	BL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	246	246	231	241
1998/99 - 2005/06	378	183	172	211
2006/07	337	18	50	135
2007/08	312	26	52	130

September to March average maximum counts

Another below average year. In the first winter period there was a maximum of 1060 a significant reduction in last year's low figure of 1200, whilst the second winter period maximum of 1760 was similar to last year (1690). Although at a national level there has been a long term trend showing an increase in wintering numbers of 71% this has not been reflected locally.

Main Sites

The last in spring was noted at OPS on April 27th and the first to return were at CVL on August 11th. The highest count of the year was again on Severnside, 630 in December.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites										
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	:	Aug.	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	250	325	241	2			105	200	280	250
Littleton Warth	60	87	85				8	55	70	145
Severnside	400	87	85			4	120	70	200	630
PW										56
CI-Y	100	110	55	1			40	75	110	110
Axe Est/Weston STW	164	79				1	47	30	122	102
BG	7					1	3	2	5	
CVL	38	2	1			2	10	50	36	52
BL	88	69	53	3			8	13	33	52

Other sites

Records involving low counts were received from a further five sites as follows:

Backwell Lake – two on Jan. 1st, six on 5th and 7th, ten on 6th;

Kingsgate Park – two on Feb. 4th, four on 14th, one from March 3rd to 5th;

Keynsham – one on Feb. 16th and 21st;

Compton Dando – one on Feb. 19th;

Pensford – eight on Dec. 2nd.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Until 1915 a rare winter visitor, then none until 1937. Now a fairly common resident, winter visitor and late summer/autumn moult visitor, most numerous in autumn. First bred at CVL in 1958 with eleven broods in 1961, now uncommon as a breeding species.

WeBS: CVL is currently eighth in national Importance for this species.

The status tables show average counts with a continued decline in numbers.

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	77	58	68
1998/99 - 2005/06	39	19	29
2006/07	30	6	18
2007/08	22	6	14

October to March average maximum counts

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1989 - 1998	181	89	135
1999 - 2006	194	191	193
2007	213	30	122
2008	152	46	99

July to September (moult period) average counts

Main Sites

As with many other species of surface feeding ducks, *cf.* Wigeon, there were markedly below average counts in both winter periods. Nationally there has been a long term increase of 396% but this has not been reflected within this region. The summer counts from the main sites were also below average, high water levels, particularly at CVL presumably played a part.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS									1			
Severnside		5		4		1						1
ASW	15	22	17	8	3	17		4	18	18	12	8
PW	12				11							24
Weston STW	21	25		1	2			3	6	6	1	8
CVL	3	35	35	2	30	155	185	205	65	35	50	6
BL		9	3	2	6	63	119	15	3	5	3	8

Recorded at a further four sites as follows.

Torthworth Lake – two on March 2nd;

Backwell Lake – pair on Jan. 5th, 7th and 29th;

BG – three on Sept. 13th;

Kingsgate Park – six on Feb. 5th.

Breeding

Another above average year with breeding at three sites. At ASW there was a brood of seven, at PW a brood of nine whilst there were three broods at CVL with a total of eleven young.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Broods	0	3	4	1	3	2	4	4	1	3

Number of broods at CVL

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor and autumn passage migrant to the coast and reservoirs, present in small numbers elsewhere. A few usually over-summer at CVL; bred at BL up to 1939, and near Clevedon in 1952.

WeBS: the Estuary is currently ranked twelfth in the UK and is of international importance for this species.

Year	Severnside	CVL	BL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	172	1200	830	734
1998/99 - 2005/06	211	441	252	301
2006/07	234	151	237	207
2007/08	127	194	42	121

August to March average maximum counts

Main sites

Lower than average counts, resulted in a maximum count for the first winter period of 950, with 1110 for the second winter period both more than half of the 2006 figures. A submission error in 2007 for PW of 2000 in November should have read 200, the corrected figure for the 2007 second winter period is now 750. Whilst small numbers are present throughout the summer at CVL late spring birds involved a pair at Northwick Warth on May 11th, and one at OPS on May 14th. Returning individuals were first noted away from CVL at BG on July 19th and OPS on 20th. This species again featured as Peregrine prey items at the St Johns Church site in Bath on Nov. 23rd and 30th.

Teal Other sites Records were received from eight other sites with counts exceeding ten at the following:

Lawrence Weston – eleven on Dec. 6th;

Spaniorum Hill (Bristol) – 21 on Jan. 12th.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	72	50	32	28	3		1	15	133	183	183	240
Littleton	62	103	45	26				8	55	91	210	130
Severnside	180	160	87	34	3			30	260	260	150	300
CI-Y	70	60	60	16				4	40	25	45	60
Axe Est.	230	29	14	7				2	1		10	63
ASW	30	32							1	10	24	25
BG	87	53	27	6			1	7	130	180	185	60
CVL	140	260	20	6	1	16	6	35	90	175	115	60
BL	14	4	7	8		2		9	12	3	30	25
Chew Magna Res	28	66	67							16	42	39

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Until 1900's a sparse breeder, numbers increased with the creation of BL in 1905 and then CVL in 1952. Now a common and widespread resident, autumn passage migrant and winter visitor. Fairly common breeder (by far our commonest breeding duck).

WeBS: the Estuary is currently fourth in national importance for this species.

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	682	332	507
1998/99 - 2005/06	453	185	319
2006/07	300	270	285
2007/08	283	113	198

November to March Average maximum counts

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1989 - 1998	1099	671	881
1999 - 2006	777	358	568
2007	640	125	388
2008	538	140	339

July to September average maximum counts

Main sites

In the late summer numbers were again below average with high water levels at CVL undoubtedly a factor. Coastal counts were similarly on the low side. Nationally this species has declined with the ten year trend showing a decrease in the wintering population of 12%, within the region the decline has been substantially higher.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	260	115	34	24	50	40	73	140	212	90	220	111
Littleton	17	21	27	18	12	74	63	87	75	85	74	56
Severnside					39		39	103				27
ASW		10		16	20		40	25	6	16	20	5
*Sea Mills	7	5	2	2	1				9	12	71	
CI-Y	50	15	10	25	25	48	30	95	80	65	60	35
Weston STW	60	35	9	25	29	107	107	203	37	8	15	39
Emerson's Green	47	41	14	24	35	31	49	47		25	22	24
CVL	200	300	295	315	245	485	625	555	435	365	375	305
BL	150	21	47	48	93	141	172	180	69	54	73	74
Chew Magna Res	8	4	16		5					62	27	14

*This is the stretch of the River Avon from the Cumberland Basin to Sea Mills.

Other sites

Records were received for a further 39 sites and counts over 40 from sites not included in the table were as follows:

Portishead Boating Lake – 59 on April 20th and 150 on Dec. 21st;

Weston Bay – 110 on Feb. 10th;

Eastville Park – 47 on May 4th;

Royal Victoria Park – 100 on Dec. 12th;

Bath University Lake – 65 on Jan. 7th and 57 on Dec 9th.

Breeding

At CVL there were fewer broods than in 2007 but a similar number of young per brood.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Broods	18	27	19	11	29	16	17	22	29	21
Young	106	160	101	67	154	93	93	100	176	130

Numbers of broods and young at CVL

Elsewhere records were received of 44 broods and 226 young substantially lower than 2007 (59 broods and 327 young) but very similar to 2006 (43 broods and 236 young).

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Wintering birds leave from mid-February to early April with autumn arrivals usually in mid-September. Uncommon autumn passage migrant and winter visitor; most occur at CVL in autumn.

WeBS: the Estuary is currently eleventh in international Importance for this species although they mostly occur outside the Avon area.

Another year with low numbers particularly away from CVL, however high water levels at CVL do not favour this species either, this decrease is against the national trend which has shown a steady increase during the last ten years (19%). Away from CVL the last of the first winter period was noted at Severnside on March 28th, the first returning individual was a female again at Severnside on Sept. 14th. Both dates are fairly typical for this species.

The tables below show maximum counts at CVL and monthly maxima at other regular sites.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
14	14	36	50	70	31	140	53	60	29

Annual maximum counts at CVL

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites										
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	:	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Severnside	2	4	2				1	1	3	
OPS								2	13	
CVL	16	17	9	2		2	26	27	29	28
BL		4						13		

Records were also received from the following sites:

Olveston Pond – one on Jun. 29th and a pair on Nov 2nd;

Littleton – one on Nov. 15th and 29th;

Avonmouth Docks – one on Nov. 18th;

Weston STW – one on Oct. 22nd;

BG – one on Oct. 5th.

A pair was present at CVL throughout April and until May 15th, with the male on his own on 16th when the female disappeared. She re-appeared from May 30th to June 7th. A breeding attempt may have occurred but no definite evidence was available.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
15	150	36	67	70	47	140	77	60	29

Avon area - maximum count

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Scarce spring passage migrant and summer visitor, uncommon autumn passage migrant at CVL and BL, scarce elsewhere. Has bred.

Average first date April 15th, last date Oct. 6th.

A good scattering of records at both inland and coastal sites, the first of the year involved birds at OPS and CVL on March 24th, the last of the year was at CVL on Oct. 14th.

Spring and summer The records are as follows:

OPS – one on March 24th and one on April 28th;

CVL – males on March 24th and 31st, April 22nd and 28th, two males on May 6th, 10th and 12th; male on May 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th to 16th, 22nd and 23rd, one on June 16th;

BL – one on April 1st.

Autumn The records are as follows:

OPS – two on Aug. 19th;

Weston STW – one on July 8th and one on Aug. 31st;

BG – one on Sept. 22nd;

CVL – one on July 25th, 27th and 30th, two from Aug. 5th to 10th, one on 17th and female on 25th, one on Sept. 3rd and 17th, and Oct. 5th and 14th;

BL – two on Aug. 21st, one on 5th, one from 8th to 11th, and one on Sept. 13th.

2004 A late record (in all senses of the word) involves a bird at BG on Nov. 13th, 2004 (CJS).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
3	5	4	3	5	1	8	5	2	2

CVL - maximum single count

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Fairly common (but generally local) winter visitor and autumn passage migrant; usually common at CVL and BL in autumn/early winter. Scarce in summer; has bred at CVL with 40 pairs in 1959, has also bred at BL.

WeBS: CVL is currently fifth in international importance, whilst the Estuary and BL are both of national importance, for this species.

The status tables below show a slight improvement in wintering numbers compared with last year but as with the autumn figures there is still an overall marked decline.

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	193	59	126
1998/99 - 2005/06	218	29	124
2006/07	35	8	22
2007/08	41	44	43

November to February average maximum counts

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1989 - 1998	320	141	183
1999 - 2006	347	159	253
2007	125	136	131
2008	135	10	73

August to October average maximum counts

Main sites

As noted in the status tables the average maximum counts were generally below average again, the exception being the November and December counts at BL. High water levels at CVL clearly played a part in the fortunes of this species although this site still attracts the most significant numbers within the area. As with many of our other surface feeding ducks that have shown increases at a national level in wintering numbers, (the ten year trend showing an increase of 26%), within this region this species continues to decline.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASW	42	1	2				4	1	12	22	2	23
OPS	16	32	40	15				2	13	25	13	26
PW	20	10		5								16
Backwell Lake	16		9									14
Severnside	1	4	7		2				5			
Cl-Y		17			2			2				20
Weston STW	15	31	5	3				9	11	7	41	27
BG	27	33	57	5				32	92	51	13	11
CVL	2	27	140	45	9	15	10	45	255	105	35	70
BL	10	7	10	44	2	2		12	8	10	40	64

Other Sites

Reports were received from two other sites:

Somerdale (Keynsham) – five on Jan. 25th, eight on Dec. 5th and nine on 16th;

Newton Park Lake (Bath) – three on Jan. 12th.

Breeding

Two pairs were present at CVL but there was no evidence of breeding.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Uncommon visitor, most often in autumn. True status as a continental visitor obscured by feral birds and escapes.

A fairly typical showing, recorded from two sites:

OPS – a male photographed on Feb. 20th was the first record for the site;

CVL – female on Dec. 7th (GJ, RMi *et al.*), two males and one female on 24th (RMi).

The table below shows the number of individuals recorded during the last ten years although some of these probably relate to escapes.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
5	2	1	5	1	5	6	0	6	5
Maximum number of individuals									

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Fairly common winter visitor and autumn passage migrant. Uncommon in summer; scarce breeder at CVL, has bred at BL.

Status table showing good counts in 2006/07 but below average numbers in 2007/08.

Year	CVL	BL	BG	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	659	224	132	338
1998/99 - 2005/06	361	125	39	175
2006/07	585	200	17	267
2007/08	176	112	44	110
September to March average maximum counts (note: incomplete counts for BG)				

Main sites

The overall decline of this species continues with either low numbers or no records at all from sites that formerly attracted good numbers, only BG has bucked this trend. This is reflected at a national level with the ten year trend showing a decrease of 41% during the period.

Pochard cont.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASW/Hoar Gout	8					1				2	2	3
Portishead	10	10	9							4	4	8
RPD	6	6										1
Weston STW	31	34	8	1			4	6	8	27	11	23
Backwell Lake	6		12									1
BG	107	36	11				4	94	350	90	128	95
CVL	340	320	100	30	55	100	35	125	130	150	300	530
BL	115	33	92	11	2	32	81	206	9	34	200	190
Chew Magna Res	9	7								1	5	7

Other sites

Records were received from three other sites as follows:

OPS – two on Jan. 6th, three in December (no date given);

Kingsgate Park – one on Feb. 4th, two from 25th to March 3rd;

Cameley Lakes – six on Jan. 6th.

Breeding

The only breeding records came from CVL where there were two broods totalling nine young of which only three survived, predation by Pike is thought to have been the likely cause of this loss.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of Broods	5	12	1	6	3	2	1	4	6	2
No. of young	13	43	3	14	9	9	4	14	35	9

Breeding success at CVL

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

Rare Nearctic vagrant.

The male first noted in 1998 remained at PW until Feb. 18th (although it moved briefly to ASW on Feb. 3rd), it was not seen after this date.

On Nov. 9th a first winter male was found at CVL (KEV *et al.*), soon afterwards a small flock comprising four first winter males and a female was discovered elsewhere on the lake (RMA *et al.*), these five birds remained as a tight flock until dusk. A further pair (another first winter male and a female) were then located (RMA) giving a remarkable total of eight on the lake. This is believed to be a British record (although a flock of 15 was reported in Ireland in November 2008). The next day, Nov. 10th just three, two males and a female, remained (the flock of five presumably having moved on) and by the 11th just one female was present and none was seen subsequently.

The previous highest count at CVL was four in February 1977.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Rare vagrant.

Recorded as follows:

CVL – male from May 10th intermittently until Sept. 1st (KEV *et al.*) and adult female on Nov. 3rd (AHD, RMI);

BG – male from Sept. 22nd to 27th (RMI *et al.*);

Weston STW – male from Oct. 15th to 22nd (PAB *et al.*), see photograph opposite page 32;

BL – male on Dec. 21st (NRM).

The above male, thought to have been the bird originally seen as a juvenile in 2006 was mobile and responsible for this series of records

The following data gives the details of records from CVL in the period 2003-2007

2003

The regular female, first seen in 2000, returned on April 10th (KEV *et al.*) and was seen daily until April 18th when it was joined by an adult male. The female was then seen daily until April 21st and again on July 13th, Aug. 27th and Sept. 3rd. The male was seen almost daily from April 21st until Sept. 2nd. The pair were only noted together on April 18th, and June 11th and 27th.

2004

The regular female returned early on Feb. 20th (RP, MPe) and the pair was seen together on 23rd (RMi). From March 17th the pair were noted regularly, associating closely and mating was observed.

At least one of the pair was present on Herriott's Pool almost continuously during late May and the whole of June, the male apparently 'on guard' on one of the small islands at the back of the pool. The pair disappeared at the end of June and there was never any sign of any young.

The female was then found in the flock of moulting *Aythya* on Aug. 15th, being seen daily until 27th and again on Sept. 15th.

2005

The only records were of an adult male on March 25th (GT, RMi), a pair on July 3rd (AHD) and an adult female in the moulting *Aythya* flock from Sept. 6th until 27th (many observers).

2006

A pair was seen on June 12th (AHD *et al.*). the adult female was then relocated amongst the moulting *Aythya* on Aug. 13th and was noted intermittently until Nov. 4th (many observers). The male was again noted on Aug. 24th and Nov. 16th (RMi).

A juvenile male was found on Oct. 18th, and noted until Nov. 5th (many observers) – see photo on p.96 of the 2006 Report.

2007

A first summer male was noted on many dates between June 6th and Nov. 10th (AHD *et al.*), and an adult female was seen on June 20th (RMi) and Aug. 19th and 20th (JPM *et al.*).

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Common resident, winter visitor and double passage migrant. Now a scarce breeder, although 157 pairs bred at CVL in 1959.

WeBS: CVL is currently twelfth in national importance for this species.

The status tables for the previous two decades are as follows.

Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98	337	188	263
1998/99 - 2005/06	639	155	397
2006/07	803	233	518
2007/08	838	319	579
October to March average maximum counts			
Year	CVL	BL	Av.
1989 - 1998	372	284	328
1999 - 2006	751	443	597
2007	755	486	621
2008	598	621	610
July to September average maximum counts			

Main sites

Numbers were again above average and despite the fact that coarse fish fry were plentiful at CVL (this usually results in low numbers of invertebrates) numbers were again high, other factors must account for this fact. The largest single count was 1350 at CVL in September, slightly lower than in 2007 (1480). Nationally this species has declined and winter counts have shown an overall decrease (5% during the last ten years) whereas it has prospered within the region.

Tufted Duck cont.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec.
OPS	6	10	7	8	6	8	6	13				2
Torthworth Park		3	3			7	7		15	14		
ASW	33	14	18	1	12	11	14	14	38	39	36	38
PW	12			15			17					37
Weston STW	26	18	17	26	16	14	5	7	20	10	7	15
Backwell Lake	14		3	3	5							12
BG	91	66	62	36	18	13	174	215	132	27	20	40
Hunstrate			6	7	12	25	7					
CVL	495	780	745	595	105	130	175	270	1350	895	595	405
BL	107	176	257	193	64	134	436	1054	373	717	460	289
Chew Magna Res	14	14	4							14	9	9

Recorded at a further eleven sites as follows:

Filton – three on Nov. 11th;

Portishead – one on Jan. 8th and one on Dec. 28th;

Clevedon – one on Feb. 6th;

Cl-Y – four on April 27th;

Kingsgate Park – two from Feb. 4th until March 26th;

Somerdale – seven on March 17th;

Hortham Brook – one on May 23rd;

Bathampton – four on May 7th;

Newton Park Lake (Bath) – 14 on Jan. 12th, one on May 23rd and two on Nov. 16th;

Keynsham – one on Nov. 1st;

Elberton – three on May 23rd.

Breeding

Pairs and numbers at CVL were marginally better (two broods, thirteen young), than in 2007 but were still very low. Elsewhere breeding was recorded at OPS (one brood twelve young), PW (three broods, thirteen young), Weston STW (one brood, four young), and Hunstrete Lake (one brood, eleven young).

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of sites	8	7	(1)	6	6	4	5	6	4	5
No. of broods	13	38	(7)	12	11	8	6	20	4	8
No. of young	78	187	(27)	72	72	42	25	115	16	55

Avon area breeding success for the last decade

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Between 1860 and 1910 common to abundant on coast around Weston–s-Mare. Now scarce/uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, but has occurred in most months. Most frequent at CVL.

Another very good year with an excellent series of records from BL again, the details are as follows:

First winter period

CVL – female from March 11th to April 14th (RMi *et al.*);

BL – female on Jan. 5th, two females from 6th, four females from 19th to 26th, joined by a first winter male on the 27th and all five remained until April 5th. A further increase to seven (three males, four females) on 11th to 24th rose to eight when they were joined by another female on the 25th. A pair remained from the 27th until May 9th, and a second male appeared on the 28th (NRM *et al.*).

Second winter period

ASW – female on Nov. 19th (SH);

Weston STW – female on Nov. 5th to 8th (PAB);

CVL – adult male in eclipse on Sept. 20th (KEV), female from Oct. 24th to Dec. 29th (RMi *et al.*), first winter male on Oct. 30th and an adult male from 30th to Nov. 5th (RMi, AHD);

BL – pair on Oct. 23rd, joined by another female from 25th, then six on Nov. 15th, 29th and 30th but fewer on intervening dates, four on Dec. 7th with two remaining until 26th (NRM *et al.*).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
21	9	11	6	5	5(7)	7	9	18	22

Total number of individuals

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

Very rare Nearctic vagrant

The first British record occurred as recently as 1987, however during the last twenty years this species has become annual and is now in danger of being removed from the BBRC list, with 102 accepted records up until 2007. This was the fifth county record, following two at BL in 2000 and two again at BL in 2007. This adult male was mobile and subsequently recorded at three different sites as follows:

BL – from March 15th to 20th (NRM *et al.*);

BG – from March 21st to April 5th (CJS *et al.*);

CVL – from April 7th to May 1st (AHD, RMi *et al.*).

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Scarce winter visitor; individuals at the reservoirs may stay for several months.

One record, female/immature at CVL from Oct. 19th to 31st (RMA *et al.*).

The table below of records for the last decade shows a marked decline

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
4	5	3	1	2	0	0	1	1	1

Number of individuals

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Uncommon spring, summer and autumn passage migrant; scarce winter visitor; normally a few inland records each year, mainly CVL.

An average year, the first appearing at OPS on Jan. 13th, the last at CVL on Dec. 5th. The records are as follows:

OPS – one on Jan. 13th;

Sevenside – four on May 6th, three on 8th, two on 18th, two on 27th, two on 31st and Jun. 1st, seven on July 8th, one on Oct. 1st and 7th;

Ladye Bay – two on Feb. 26th, three on May 4th, four on 5th, four on Nov. 11th, one on 9th, and one on 23rd;

CVL – one on March 26th, a female on April 9th, two males on June 8th, four (one male) on 14th, six on 30th, 16 (14 males) on Sept. 7th, four (three males) on 8th, three (two males) still present on 9th, and male on 23rd, female on Dec. 5th;

BL – two on Jun. 8th, one on Sept. 7th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
43	52	34	143	26	58	129	145	85	75

Total number of individuals

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Rare/scarce winter visitor, very rare inland

One record, two juvenile males at CVL on Dec. 6th (RMA, CC, KEV *et al.*).

This species has now been recorded at CVL in three out of the last four years, prior to that there had been no records since 1996 until a female at BG in 2004. December has produced inland records in four out of the last five years.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Before 1900 a very rare winter visitor, now a fairly common winter visitor and spring passage migrant; numbers peak in late March and early April. Uncommon away from the main reservoirs, and scarce/very scarce in summer

The status table shows a fairly constant winter population over the last twenty years.

Year	CVL (winter)	CVL (Spring)	BL (winter)	BG (winter)	Av. (winter av.)
1988/89 - 1997/98	65	92	10	21	32
1998/99 - 2005/06	88	97	15	9	37
2006/07	87	81	9	15	37
2007/08	68	80	18	12	33

Average maximum counts (note: no counts for BG in 2002/03)

Main sites

Overall there has been little change in the fortunes of this species as a winter visitor although records away from the main sites are still notable.

Breeding

As with previous summers females were present throughout the year at several sites. This recent trend of individuals remaining throughout the year culminated in the confirmation of breeding at CVL when a female with six downy young appeared on June 4th (see photograph opposite page 32). Although potential breeding in England was noted at Chester in 1931 and 1932 these records have since been questioned and nesting attempts in Lancashire several years ago may have involved feral birds. Nevertheless this was the first successful breeding of this species in Southern England and two young, a male and a female, survived until at least Sept. 3rd.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
BG	16	17	13	2			2	1	1	2	23	12
CVL	60	150	170	40		7	3	2	3	14	50	60
BL	25	29	29	14		1	1	1	2	5	18	17

Other sites Recorded at a further three sites as follows:

OPS – one on Oct. 31st;

Sevenside – two females on Nov. 17th and one on Dec. 11th, male on 2nd and 29th;

PW – female present from early April to the end of June.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Most records in recent years are of regularly returning individuals at CVL.

The presumed returning male has now been present for 28 winters.

First winter period

CVL – male from 2007 last noted on March 11th;

BL – male on Feb. 9th.

Second winter period

OPS – eclipse male on Oct. 26th and pair on Nov. 15th (per Birdwatching at OPS);

CVL – redhead on Sept. 23rd (RMI), redhead on Oct. 22nd (AHD, RMI), the returning male from 25th to year end.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Fairly common winter visitor to CVL; now increasingly recorded from other sites, but still uncommon away from CVL. Very scarce in the Estuary.

The CVL status tables below show a slight improvement in 2008.

1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
24	17	21	49	18	43	23	18	25	39
CVL December to February average maximum counts									
1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
28	20	75	55	57	52	17	28	43	65
Annual maximum counts at CVL									

CVL remains the most attractive site for this species and it was a good year by recent standards, however there has been a significant decline nationally, by approximately a third during the last ten years and this is reflected in the numbers now wintering in the region. Even though the high count at CVL of 65 was the second highest for the last ten years it was still significantly lower than the record count of 283 on Feb. 23rd, 1996.

The last in spring was a male at Severnside on the late date of May 19th and the first returning birds were noted on the very early date of Aug 24th with three at BG.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites								
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	:	Aug	Nov	Dec
CI-Y	1	2						
Backwell Lake	4	3	2					9
CVL	65	10	13	1			44	45
BL	2	28	6				16	8
BG	1					3		4

Elsewhere recorded from a further four sites as follows:

Severnside – male on May 19th, one on Nov. 15th;

River Avon (Sea Mills) – one on Nov. 16th;

River Yeo (Yatton) – two on Feb. 6th;

River Axe (Bleadon) – two on March. 21st.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Common introduced winter visitor at CVL and BL; scarce elsewhere. A few over-summer, and breeding was first noted at CVL in 1961; now one or two pairs usually breed here and elsewhere. Culls take place at CVL and BL by order of government agencies.

A below average year, before the cull began counts of 700 were regular at CVL:

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASW		3				8	10	2	6	8	3	
BL	40	16	15	7	9	6	8	13	16	25	40	4
CVL	35	30	5	2	4	4	2	6	11	10	30	70

Records were received from a further four sites:

PW – one on April 28th;

West Town (Nailsea) – one on May 5th;

BG – three on Aug. 24th;

Midford Brook – one on April 3rd.

Breeding was noted at two additional locations involving three broods, however these sites have not been included at the request of the observers.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Locally fairly common breeding resident but large numbers released for 'sporting' purposes.

An average year.

SG First winter period At Marshfield the maximum monthly counts were 117 on Jan. 30th (*cf.* 119 in December 2007), 50 on Feb. 29th and 28 on March 18th. Not reported from any other sites.

Breeding season Recorded at twelve sites with a maximum count of at least ten at Marshfield on April 22nd. Two at Coalpit Heath on June 13th were the first seen here in 17 years of watching.

Autumn and second winter period Only five records received with a maximum of 40 at Parks Farm on Nov. 14th (and 37 here on Dec. 10th) and 30 at West Kingston on Sept. 23rd.

NS Two records:

Wrington – one on April 13th;

Havyatt Green – three on June 17th.

BA Recorded at twelve sites as follows:

Priston – two on Feb. 7th, a pair on June 16th and five on Nov. 1st;

Priston Hill – one on March 19th;

Combe Down, Bath – two on March 19th;

Farmborough Common – two on May 5th;

Compton Dando – two on May 8th;

Wellow – one on May 11th;

Burnett – pair on May 21st;

Stanton Prior – one on June 7th;

R. Avon, Keynsham – one on Nov. 18th;

Lansdown – 18 on Nov. 19th;

Cameley – 18 on Dec. 6th;

Marksbury Plain – six on Dec. 6th.

The Bath Peregrines took one in November.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of sites - SG	3	1	5	6	1	3	n/a	6+	1	7
No. of sites - NS	3	5	1	4	0	0	4	4	2	2
No. of sites - BA	6	9	12	10	8	14	8	12	19	12

Number of sites away from ST77

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Uncommon, local and declining breeding resident. Small numbers may be released for 'sporting' purposes.

The decline continues with, for the first time, no reports from Weston STW.

SG - ST77 Up to 17 were present at Marshfield in January. The only reports from there received after this date relate to two on April 24th and three on July 16th. However the Birds of South Gloucestershire website says that the two birds were seen on a further four dates up to June 20th and there were nine on Oct. 1st. Also a record from Cold Ashton of two on April 25th.

SG - elsewhere Single birds recorded from Frome Valley on May 1st and Frampton Cotterell on May 15th.

NS - Two at Bleadon and one at Shiplate Hill, both on March 21st.

Observers are encouraged to submit all records of this species, with six figure grid references, in order that its declining status can be monitored

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of records received	21	46	33	24	16	12	15	18	10	7
No. of sites - SG	2	5	2	6	3	1	2	5	2	3
No. of sites - NS	1	2	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	2
No. of sites - BA	2	3	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	0

Number of records and sites away from Marshfield area

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce summer visitor, and presumed breeder, to the north-east of the area. Rare passage migrant.

An average breeding year.

Few records were submitted from the Marshfield stronghold but the Birds of South Gloucestershire website suggests that singing males were present between May 18th and Aug. 10th. with a maximum count of four on July 13th.

There were also isolated records from Folly Farm on May 31st and a cereal field south of Bath on June 9th.

A singing male at CVL was the first record for the site (AA, KEV *et al*). Heard and seen on June 14th and 15th in an uncut hay field at Lower Gurney Farm, it had moved to the 'parkland' near Villice Bay on 16th. It then moved between the two fields until June 23rd.

Unusually passage birds were also recorded:

Blakes Pool, CI-Y – one on Aug. 7th (HER). The bird flushed less than a metre in front of the observer, rose almost vertically and disappeared over a high hedge. It gave a wader like 'shreeeee' call quite unlike the usual 'wet-my-lips' territorial call;

Hengrove Park, Bristol – flushed on Sept. 23rd (RJH).

1989/98 av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
12	4	3	4	4	2	16	5	5+	3	5

Number of singing males each year

There were a number of reports from the Marshfield area in autumn/winter but no details were submitted. The County Recorder would welcome information on these.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Fairly common but under recorded. Very large numbers are released for 'sporting' purposes.

Population change in England 1996-2006 up 37%.

Widely recorded in small numbers.

The only counts in double figures were: 75 near Shirehill Farm, Marshfield on Jan. 26th, 30 at Marshfield on Dec. 30th, 17 at Haydon Hill, Radstock on Nov. 12th and twelve at Parks Farm, Tormarton on Nov. 14th.

On Steep Holm the lone surviving female was not seen after May 6th.

A melanistic bird was seen near Charfield on March 2nd.

Breeding The only report was of a female with twelve young at Aust Warth on June 14th. At CVL 16 calling males were located.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	104	100	96	89	94	101	111	117	106

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100 2008 BBS distribution 61%.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant to the larger reservoirs and the estuary; sometimes storm-driven.

Only one record in 2008; CI-Y – one at Ladye Bay on Nov. 9th (RHu, HT).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant to the larger reservoirs and the Estuary, sometimes staying for considerable lengths of time on the reservoirs.

2008 was another good year for this species, which has become established in recent years as our most regularly occurring diver. The first-winter period saw a long-staying individual remaining from 2007. The second-winter period produced two coastal records and three birds at the reservoirs, although none of these stayed for any length of time.

Severnside – one seen at Severn Beach on Nov. 15th (PDB);

Weston Bay – an adult in partial summer plumage flying to N on Oct. 5th (PAB);

CVL – the first winter bird from 2007 remained until 24th March (many observers). Three different juveniles were seen in the second half of the year, on Oct. 26th (RMA *et al.*), Nov. 9th to 11th (RMA *et al.*) and 24th (AHD, RMI);

BL – a juvenile, almost certainly the bird seen at CVL, on Nov. 26th to 27th (JAT *et al.*).

DIVER SP *Gavia sp*

CI-Y – two at Ladye Bay on March 1st.

Divers in the Avon area

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Red-throated		1		1			1		2	1
Black-throated		1			2					
Great Northern		4		3			2	6	3	5
Diver sp.		2			4		1	1	1	2

Annual totals for divers

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Fairly common breeding resident, but occurs widely in rhynes and small to medium-sized pools. Numbers peak in late summer at the reservoirs before dispersing. Very scarce in the Estuary.

CVL is currently ranked fourth in Great Britain for Little Grebe, and BL eleventh. (The Wetlands Bird Survey 2006/07).

BBS distribution 4%.

UK 25-yr change down 76%.

1997/06 Av	2007	2008
69	63	55

CVL - January to December average maximum counts

For the third successive year counts at both CVL and BL were low, possibly as a result of high water levels. As in 2007 autumn numbers at Weston STW were high.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Severnside	1	2	2	2	4	4				2		
PW	6	6	9						11			
Portishead	4	3	4								1	
Axe Est./Weston STW	7	8	14	10	5	15	26	24	38	10	8	1
ASW/Hoar Gout	7	1	1			2	5	5	5			
BG	14	16	12	2			1	15	30	21	17	18
CVL	5	15	15	15	10	15	30	45	70	50	25	20
BL	6	10	6	4	2	4	12	20	31	4	8	6

Other sites Reported from a further 15 sites (*cf.* eleven in 2006 and ten in 2007). The maximum counts were seven at Litton Resrs. on Dec. 24th, five at Cameley on 31st and four at Weston Moor on March 29th. The remains of Peregrine prey were found at St John's Church, Bath, on April 30th, May 7th, Oct. 19th and Dec. 7th.

Breeding At CVL numbers remained low, with three broods producing four young. Poor weather and predation by pike may both be partially responsible. Also recorded from a further six sites (*cf.* five in 2006 and eight in 2007) as follows:

Northwick Warth – a brood of one young;

Portbury Dock – a brood of two young;

Weston-s-Mare STW – nine broods totalling 15 juveniles (*cf.* six broods totalling eight young here in 2007);

Berwick Lodge – a pair brooding eggs, but outcome unknown;

Weston Moor – a brood of two young;

BL – one brood of two juveniles (*cf.* five broods here in 2006 and two in 2007).

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Broods	17	20	10	6	2	9	2	6	6	3
Young	25	24	12+	9	2	13+	3	10	9+	4

CVL. Broods and young

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Fairly common breeding resident, but occurs commonly at the reservoirs, particularly during the autumn moult/passage. Scarce elsewhere, including the Estuary.

CVL is currently ranked fourth in Great Britain for this species (The Wetland Bird Survey 2006/07).

As in 2007 numbers at CVL were high and the August count equals the highest on record, in October 2000 although numbers then declined to the year's end. The continued good counts here are probably due to the increase in the coarse fish populations.

1997/06 Av	2007	2008
443	527	613

CVL. January to December average maximum counts

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
BG	13	9	15	25	31	27	31	38	34	31	45	52
CVL	185	155	130	125	135	265	275	690	685	465	180	135
BL	21	17	31	29	29	44	62	83	64	47	11	12

Recorded elsewhere as follows:

OPS – one in February;

Sevenside – single birds on April 30th, May 9th and Sept. 14th;

Battery Point – one on May 5th;

CI-Y – two at Ladye Bay on Jan. 28th;

Weston STW – two on March 11th;

ASW – one in February, two in July, four in September, three in October and one in November;

Chew Magna Res. – one on March 26th and two on May 5th.

Individuals were recorded as Peregrine prey items in Bath on April 30th, May 7th and Oct. 19th.

Breeding

The upturn in coarse fish populations and high water levels at CVL produced a good year here, although survival was affected by weather conditions and perhaps pike predation. One was seen here on a nest on the early date of April 10th and two medium-sized young were seen on May 2nd.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Broods	29	36	24	5	2	6	0	20	38	20
Young	44	64+	28	6	4	9	0	43	62+	26+

CVL. Great Crested Grebe broods and young

Great Crested Grebe breeding elsewhere: Four broods at BL totalled five young and breeding probably also occurred at ASW, where two young juveniles were seen on Sept. 11th and subsequently.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Almost always at freshwater sites and very rare in the Estuary.

Two records, perhaps involving the same individual.

CVL – an adult from Nov. 28th to 30th (RMi *et al.*);

BL – one on Nov. 21st (NRM).

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Scarce passage migrant; wintered for the first time in 1998/99 and becoming increasingly frequent in the winter. Almost always at freshwater sites and rare in the Estuary. Has bred.

A slightly improved showing, with two birds in winter, five in spring and six in autumn, all at the main reservoirs:

CVL – two on Jan. 28th and 30th and Feb. 13th; one from March 1st to 18th; two on April 5th and 8th; one adult from Aug. 7th to 18th, joined by a second adult from 19th to 25th; and one on Oct. 18th and 19th;

BL – one on Oct. 25th and 26th, with two from Nov. 2nd to Dec. 6th.

In addition a bird was recorded as a Peregrine prey item at St John's Church, Bath on March 27th (ED).

2007 A bird was recorded as a Peregrine prey item at St John's Church, Bath on Sept. 18th (ED).

Scarce Grebes in the Avon area

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Red-necked				1		1		1		
Slavonian	1	3	1		1	1	1	1	2	1
Black-necked	9+	7	25	11	5	9	6	14	9	10
Annual totals										

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Uncommon visitor, less common in winter. Usually storm-driven, but occasionally occurs in calm conditions in mid-summer. Rare inland.

A below-average year, but notable concentration of records on June 22nd. All coastal records are included in the table below:

	Jan				March		May			June					Aug		Sept	Oct
	7	21	26	31	11	28	18	23	24	3	22	25	28	29	10	13	3	1
Severnside	1	1	1		1				1		11	2	1	2	1		2	
Portishead					1					2	5	1				5		
Ladye Bay				1		1	1			8	12		1			2		
Sand Point								1										
Anchor Head	1									4		2	3	1				1

Two records of inland birds were received in 2008, both at CVL. Neither coincided with records on the coast and it is possible that they originated from the east coast, having travelled across England, rather than from nearer sea areas.

CVL – single bird on May 26th and 27th (many observers) and probably a different individual on 30th (AHD).

Uncommon summer/autumn visitor, usually storm-driven, although large feeding flocks have occurred in calm anti-cyclonic conditions in mid-summer. Seldom recorded NE of the Second Severn Crossing. Rare inland.

[illegible]

Scarce storm-driven summer /autumn visitor to the Severn Estuary SW of the Second Severn Crossing; rare in winter and very rare inland.

Sevenside – one on June 22nd (PDB, BL, JPM); two on 28th (PDB); and three on Aug. 10th (PDB, RFR), one on 12th, four on 13th and 14th, three on 19th and one on 20th (PDB, BL, JPM, RFR *et al*). A juvenile male was picked up and died in care on Aug. 13th (ED);

Ladye Bay – two on Sept. 19th and one on 22nd (RHu);

Sand Point – one on June 28th (PAB):

Anchor Head – one on July 6th (PAB);

Awkley – a juvenile female with no fat reserves found dead on Aug. 13th (R Brown per ED).

Scarce storm-driven visitor to the Estuary SW of the Second Severn Crossing mainly in autumn and winter. Usually in ones or twos but large numbers have occurred in wrecks. Very rare inland.

Only one record was received in 2008 with, unusually, no records from Severnside.

Cl-Y – one seen near the mouth of the Yeo on Oct. 2nd (RHu).

Scarce/uncommon storm-driven visitor, mainly in spring and summer. Rare inland.

An average number of records was received, widely scattered across the year with unusual sequences of both early and late sightings and none in July, which is normally the peak month. All 2008 records are included in the table below:

[illegible]

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

NW European race *P. c. carbo*:

Fairly common resident and winter visitor, especially to the main reservoirs; breeds in small numbers on Steep Holm and on Denny Island.

UK ten year change up 14%.

Despite the increase in coarse fish populations at CVL numbers here were slightly lower than in 2007, although they remained above the ten-year average. This may be partly due to birds moving to BG, where exceptional counts were made late in the year.

1997/06 Av	2007	2008
142	186	168

CVL January to December average maximum counts

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	3	2	7	4	5	7	8	9	20	8	5	9
Sevenside	3	3	2	3	8	5				2		
CI-Y			4	5	2	1	3	5	18	1		
Weston STW	1	3	3	5	8	3	1	3	14			1
BG	60	10	8	13	16	10	14	22	25	18	136	151
CVL	110	170	130	100	25	40	55	60	40	175	160	80
BL	75	10	13	12	9	7	12	23	11	29	26	80
Batheaston		11	1	3				10	9	7	16	16

Other sites

Reported in small numbers from a large range of other sites, including regular sightings of birds flying over Bristol. The largest counts not in the table above were: 80 seen at Portishead on May 5th, flying from Denny Island (Gwent), and 20 at Shirehampton on Oct. 12th.

Breeding

As usual recorded only at Steep Holm, where counts on April 9th and May 5th recorded 81 and 79 occupied nests respectively, totalling at least 91 (*cf.* 106 in 2007).

Continental Cormorant *P. c. sinensis*

The few earlier Avon records of this race were described little better than white-headed birds in spring; however, ringing controls (and close examination) of several individuals have proved that this race occurs regularly in small numbers.

The continental race *sinensis* is probably grossly under-recorded, particularly at the main reservoirs.

Only one record with supporting information was received in 2008, relating to an immature at CVL on June 16th (TJB).

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Very scarce visitor, mainly in autumn and winter (rare inland); sometimes storm-driven.

A good showing, with five acceptable records, one of them inland. The details are as follows:

OPS – a first-winter on Sept. 3rd (PJH);

Sevenside – an adult on May 17th (PDB, JPM);

Ladye Bay – a first-winter on Sept. 11th (RHu);

Axe Estuary – a first-winter on Sept. 3rd (PAB);

BG – a first-winter on Aug. 18th (CJS).

Tubenoses, Gannet and Shag in the Avon area

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Fulmar	74	356	61	130	87	139	16	272	79	62
Cory's Shearwater	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Manx Shearwater	1081	269	98	586	1230	1920	40	1600	1216	1680
Storm Petrel	1	6/7	2	9/12	2	8	0	28	27	25
Leach's Storm Petrel	1	5	1	5/9	0	2	2	115	2	1
Gannet	20	20	19	134+	102	152	46	570	195	172
Shag	0	6/8	1	2	1	3	5	3	2	5

Annual totals

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce winter visitor; mainly to CVL.

As usual recorded only from CVL, but unusually there were three summer records here, possibly relating to a dispersing juvenile from the Somerset Levels. Individual birds were seen on Feb. 2nd and 9th, June 24th and Aug. 23rd and 24th.

See paper on page 143.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce resident, and scarce visitor mainly from late summer to winter. In line with the national trend, numbers have increased dramatically during the last few years.

As noted in 2007 the upsurge in records seems to have halted, although Little Egret remains much more frequent than it was ten years ago. CI-Y remains the prime site, numbers were low at the reservoirs due to high water levels. It remains a scarce bird away from the Estuary, the North Somerset Levels and the reservoirs. Recorded from a total of 24 sites (*cf.* 17 in 2003, 20 in 2004, 23 in 2005, 26 in 2006 and 17 in 2007).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
4	3	15	7	13	15	27	39	31	32

CI-Y and environs. Maximum count

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	1	1		2	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	
Littleton Warth			1		1				1		3	1
Severnside	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	2	6	3	2	1
CI-Y and environs	32	21	10	5	5	4	10	14	26	4	5	4
Sand Bay					1	1	3	1	1	6		
Axe Est	2	3	4	4	6	3	4	4	3	4	1	3
BG	6				1	1	6	3	1	1	1	
CVL			3		1		1	3	3	5	3	1
BL	1	1			1	1	1		1		1	1

Other sites

Recorded at a further fifteen sites, six coastal as follows, (and a further nine inland as set out overleaf):

Avonmouth Docks – one on Feb. 29th;

Tidal River Avon – two on March 26th and another two on Aug. 17th;

PW – six on July 24th and one on Sept. 15th;

Portishead – two on Feb. 15th and one on Sept. 9th;

Steep Holm – a predated egg was found on May 14th. It is thought to have been brought to the island by a gull;

ASW – two on Sept. 2nd;

Little Egret cont.

Latteridge, Iron Acton – one on Dec. 13th;
 St Annes, Bristol – one on Aug. 4th;
 Hengrove, Bristol – one on July 19th;
 Chewton Keynsham – two on Aug. 8th;
 Backwell – single birds on Oct. 21st and 31st;
 Yatton – two on Jan. 2nd and 18th and one on Feb. 9th with three on 10th;
 Wrington – two on Aug. 8th;
 Stowey – one on April 15th;
 Puxton – one on March 15th.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common resident; uncommon as a breeding species.

BBS distribution 29%.

UK 25-yr change 19% increase. Local ten-yr change 38% increase.

Counts at all sites were on the low side but the CVL heronry continues to grow, but the counts in the table below show that most of the birds feed away from the lake.

	1997/06 Av.	2007	2008
CVL	17	18	20
Sea Mills	19	22	13

Maximum counts

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	4	2	2	4	5	4	3	4	8	4	4	3
Severnside	5	4	2	2	1	4				5		6
CI-Y	1	1	1	4	3	3	4	3	2	3		1
Axe Est./Weston STW	2	1	4	4	7	4	2	2	3	1	1	1
R. Avon (Sea Mills)	6	6	2			1	1	9	9	8	9	13
BG	1	1			2	1	8	8	7	5	3	8
CVL	5	20	10	15	26	9	10	8	8	8	15	18
BL	8	3	8	5	3	2	2	3	3	4	6	6

Other non-breeding records Recorded from a further 43 sites, mostly in low numbers. The maximum counts not in the table above were five at Colehouse Farm, Clevedon on June 7th and four at Congresbury on Dec. 7th.

	Grid Ref	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Easter Compton	ST560811	6	9	6	8	8	7	8	0	0	0
Eastwood Farm	ST635713	10	12	12	16	25	25	25	25	25	34
Pill	ST530739							5	5	5	
Hanham Wood	ST641703	0			7		0		12	16	
Heath Farm	ST635708	2									
Newton Park	ST692640	7	7	6	7	5			8	4	
Prior Park, Bath	ST634761								1	1	2
Paradise Bottom	ST546748	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denny Island, CVL	ST575607	33	35	43	31	33	29	29	25	36	51
Cleeve Wood	ST462662	47	44	49	45	52	45	45	33	48	42
Uphill Grange Wood	ST320582	1	1	nc	2	3			4	8	4
Weston STW	ST313571										4
Clevedon Court Farm	ST4271			1	nc						
Total		111	112	118	116	126	106	104	113	143	137

Occupied nests

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia**Very scarce passage migrant.*

One record: an adult was seen at OPS on Sept. 6th. It flew across the Estuary and landed on Lagoon 3 for approximately ten minutes before departing to the south west (AJM). It was then also seen flying to SW over Northwick Warth (ADS).

This brings the total of Avon area records since 1920 to 25. The most recent were a series of four sightings in April and May 2006 and a single bird in August 2007.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus**Very scarce passage migrant.*

A good year, the first records in the Avon area since 2000.

Reported on three dates all in mid-September, one to S near Channel View Farm, CI-Y on 15th (RMA), a dark plumaged juvenile to E over Trooper's Hill, Bristol at 11.30hrs the following day (RJH). Another to S at North Stoke at 10.15hrs on 18th (DJA).

During September a major influx of continental birds, which had crossed the North Sea, began on 13th and then continued for several days. About 150 were noted on the first day, most arrived along the English east coast from Northumberland to East Anglia and these included 18 over Minsmere, Suffolk. Similar numbers were reported the next day. A further peak occurred on 20th and 21st but numbers began to dwindle shortly afterwards. It was thought that more than 600 may have been involved in this event.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus**Scarce passage migrant and visitor.*

An increasingly frequent visitor, most were seen in May and June. Recorded at 22 sites (*cf.* 19 in 2007), in fact 2008 was the best year to date for this species in Avon.

Records refer to single birds unless stated otherwise.

April – to N at CVL on 5th and at Marshfield on 29th;

May – OPS, flew in off the Estuary then to E on 4th, Bathampton on 12th and Brandon Hill the next day. At North Stoke on 15th and 29th, both to NE. Two at Kenn Moor on 17th and one at Clapton Moor the next day, the last of the month was nearby at CI-Y on 31st, the first record;

June – Sand Point on 1st, Walton-in-Gordano and BG on 7th, the first record for the latter site. On 8th over the Avon Gorge, one to SW at 16.00 then four together (the best count to date) high to E toward Bristol an hour later. On 9th near Chew Magna and Little Stoke. One to SW at Banwell and at Abbey Wood on 13th. CVL to SE on 14th and at Herriott's Pool the next day. Two drifted to NE at OPS on 17th and one to SW at Doynton on 30th;

July – Gordano Valley on 7th, Frenchay on 11th and to S at Brentry on 27th;

September – at Sand Point on 20th.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus**Scarce visitor and passage migrant.*

An excellent year for this species in the Avon area and the best to date, most records were from CVL during the latter half of December where, for the first time, up to two birds wintered.

The details are as follows, records refer to single female or immature birds unless stated otherwise, and give sites and dates when present:

First half-year

Ladye Bay, Clevedon – flew in off the sea on May 4th (RHu, HT, *et al.*);

Weston STW – a male to N on May 3rd (MSP);

CVL – second-calendar year on March 17th (AHD), one June 2nd (AHD) and 12th (DN);

Marsh Harrier Second half-year

OPS – to E on Dec. 6th (AJM);

CVL – juveniles on Aug. 15th (DJA, RMi, MGi), 22nd (KEV) and 30th (DJA), taking and feeding on insects in a Hobby like manner on Sept. 3rd (DJA, AHD, RMi), and recorded daily from Dec. 17th to year end with two were present on 28th and 29th (RMi *et al.*).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly to the coast.

A good year for this infrequent visitor, most records were from the Marshfield area during late September and the beginning of October.

A male to NE at Severn Beach on May 7th (RFR, PDB *et al.*);

At Marshfield a first-calendar year from Sept. 25th to Oct. 1st, two first-calendar year individuals on Oct. 2nd and 3rd (AHD, RL *et al.*);

A female/immature at Elm Farm, Burnett on Nov. 8th and 22nd (JA, SEP).

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

Rare summer visitor and passage migrant.

Since 2000 this species has been recorded in the Avon area in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

A female/immature near Tormarton on May 12th (CFS).

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Very scarce visitor.

Despite a relatively healthy population nearby in The Forest of Dean and Lower Wye Valley this species remains a scarce visitor and perhaps resident in the Avon area.

The following records were accepted: one over Wrington on Feb. 9th (SFY), and a juvenile at Soper's Wood, Charlcombe on Sept. 14th and Oct. 27th (DJA).

Scarce Raptors in the Avon Area

Year	1989	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	1998
Honey Buzzard	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	3
Black Kite	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Red Kite	0	2	0	1	2	2	1	3	6	1
Marsh Harrier	5	7	9	6	1	8	2	4	2	16
Hen Harrier	4	2	50	2	1	0	4	1	4	1
Montagu's Harrier	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	1	0	0
Goshawk	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	2
Osprey	1	3	2	5	2	22	8	5	4	7
Red-footed Falcon	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Honey Buzzard	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Red Kite	2	5	1	4	6	3	17	11	24	30
Marsh Harrier	4	8	7	4	15	2	11	8	6	27
Hen Harrier	2	2	1	6	7	3	3	3	4	14
Montagu's Harrier	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1
Goshawk	8	9	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	3
Osprey	2	14	7	4	3	4	10	6	12	13

Bird day totals for the last 20 years

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Fairly common breeding resident, possibly also an uncommon passage migrant.

Another rather typical year with 502 records received, more than the previous year but still less than in the two years preceding 2007. The spread of records across the year was reasonably even, most were in August during dispersal but the other trends associated with display and incubation were less evident.

The table below shows the distribution of records for 2008 and the previous five years:

Monthly distribution of records													
Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2003	49	35	52	47	24	11	30	44	37	39	38	32	438
2004	35	22	35	62	46	30	38	44	48	52	26	36	474
2005	43	37	49	51	38	24	38	45	63	58	38	49	533
2006	60	46	57	71	47	30	51	53	46	44	41	31	577
2007	42	44	48	69	30	47	44	32	22	34	35	35	482
2008	48	41	49	49	43	37	33	59	33	39	34	37	502

Breeding

The assessment of the number breeding in 2008 was somewhat higher than in the previous nine years and the SG total was a record, this followed an apparent decline in 2007. The totals, which were the best since 1997, were 24 in SG, 35 in BA & NS and nine in and around Bristol.

	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
SG	11	8	8	8	7	12	16	10	16	11	24
BA & NS	30	39	36	30	32	37	30	29	36	34	35
Bristol	12	14	13	17	13	13	6	13	11	10	9
Total	53	61	57	55	52	62	52	52	63	55	68

Breeding sites

Three pairs were found around CVL and at least four young fledged (*cf.* three in 2006 and 2007 when seven and four young fledged, respectively).

Other observations Steep Holm, noted only in September, all sightings were believed to be the same first-calendar year female. First recorded on 18th, trapped and ringed on 22nd, it left the island to SSE the following day.

Prey species reported Few reports but notes referred to Feral Pigeon, Blackbird and a couple of House Sparrows.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Fairly common breeding resident, possibly also an uncommon passage migrant, the population has steadily increased since the late 1980s, now regularly seen over suburban areas.

Another average year, overall breeding success appeared to be slightly lower than in the preceding two years. Records received totalled 940, less than the highest ever total in 2007, many of these were in the display period from February to April but few were noted in October and November. As stated in last year's report, "the overall population seems to have stabilised" but five more territories were found in RJP's study area.

Monthly distribution of records													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2003	84	103	122	92	60	61	46	75	57	61	65	57	883
2004	61	54	103	114	105	93	80	84	68	67	60	41	930
2005	84	81	121	111	79	65	55	78	54	60	72	90	950
2006	98	67	110	155	81	89	56	57	69	44	49	32	907
2007	75	83	154	164	89	102	62	66	52	88	52	55	1042
2008	88	113	114	110	104	85	55	60	67	42	39	63	940

Buzzard Breeding RJP's study area, which covers some 75m² of Failand and Gordano, had an average year, 97 pairs held territories, five more than in 2007, this was a record number. Of the 71 nests that were checked 33 were successful and 47 young fledged but the remaining 38 failed to produce any young.

The table set out below gives an assessment of the number of breeding sites in the Avon area in 2008 and the previous nine years as well as the ten year average from 1989 to 1998. Included are the results of RJP's studies in the Failand/Gordano area, and an estimate of numbers in the southern 60km² of ST66 based on JH's survey work from 1991 to 2004.

Year	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
SG	22	28	28	28	27	29	44	25	49	39	45
BA & NS	91	148	154	165	169	174	196	196	206	213	202
Bristol	1	4	4	8	8	9	12	16	14	12	9
RJP's Study Area											
Active nest sites	42	71	79	83	84	84	85	88	90	92	97
Chicks fledged	46	75	58	83	51	66	107	92	50	80	47
Successful nests	27	45	46	56	38	40	60	56	37	52	33
Brood success ratio	1.70	1.67	1.26	1.48	1.34	1.65	1.78	1.64	1.35	1.54	1.42
Breeding sites											

At CVL, five nests were found (*cf.* five in 2007) breeding was confirmed at all of these and six young fledged.

Large groups/counts There were only two counts in double figures, ten noted at Clapton Moor on Jan. 5th and 19 in fields below Tickenham on Dec. 1st.

Bristol Often noted over suburban areas on the periphery of the city but just two records elsewhere, over Horfield on March 22nd and three over Eastfield Road, Westbury-on-Trym on Sept. 21st.

Other notes Pale morphs. During April one with sandy upperwing coverts, dark remiges, pale head, whitish rump and underparts to SW at Northwick Warth on 12th, and a white headed individual at Parkland, CVL on 20th. Another described as very white at Herons Green Bay, CVL on May 24th. A white individual with a brown tail and a few brown breast feathers was at Congresbury on Sept. 9th.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce passage migrant; most records are from the reservoirs.

A good year, the best since 2000. Most were noted during the first three weeks of September, and all records refer to single individuals.

CVL – The first reports were for April 20th and 21st and one was seen carrying a fish toward Herons Green Bay on May 12th. In June noted at Herriott's Bridge to N on 7th, flew in from S, fished in Herriott's Pool and then left to S on 12th. Late summer and early autumn records were on Aug. 22nd and 23rd, and then Sept. 10th, 17th and 20th when reported nearby to E over the Pony and Trap Inn at New Town on 17th (TMcG);

Elsewhere – In September, to S at New Passage on 7th (ADS, RFR), at BL on 14th (NRM), to S at CI-Y the next day (RMA), and at Charlton Field to SW at 10.30hrs on 20th (AHD). Presumably this last record refers to the individual that appeared at CVL half an hour later, the last record of the year.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common breeding resident.

A reasonably good year for this species with breeding activity noted at over 100 sites, and the total number of records received was the highest ever at 754. Only on six previous occasions have the records received exceeded 700 and all of these were between 1984 and 1994.

The table below gives the monthly total of reports for 2008 and the previous five years. Although records were quite evenly spread across the year many were in the first half with fewer from August to November:

Monthly distribution of records													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2003	35	59	60	46	42	41	33	58	24	37	38	24	497
2004	24	27	22	42	30	30	37	51	34	46	27	47	417
2005	43	54	57	56	62	54	42	45	48	47	47	59	614
2006	76	53	60	60	57	43	42	27	28	44	47	37	574
2007	57	36	50	53	71	65	43	43	44	72	56	68	658
2008	67	81	74	76	65	70	64	49	45	54	47	62	754

The table below gives the years when the total number of records received exceeded 700:

	1984	1985	1988	1989	1993	1994	2008
Total records received	738	720	750	736	721	723	754

Breeding A good year in the Avon area, noted in the breeding season at 103 sites (*cf.* 100 in 2007), 36 in SG, 63 in BA & NS and four in *Bristol*, a quite significant increase in SG but fewer in BA & NS and *Bristol* than in the preceding couple of years.

CVL, two pairs were found at the lake, one near the main dam and the other in the Herons Green area, their success was uncertain but a juvenile was noted at the dam.

Nest boxes were used at Blake's Pool, CI-Y and Weston STW; at the latter site the occupants were evicted by a pair of Barn Owls on April 26th.

In *Bristol* nesting was reported on a bond warehouse at Hotwells. At Filton a juvenile was found near the aircraft hangers, it was ringed and released on June 22nd, others were noted in the area.

	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
SG	22	23	24	22	21	19	24	17	29	25	36
BA & NS	50	62	66	58	49	79	57	60	72	68	63
Bristol	9	6	9	7	9	11	5	5	7	7	4
Total	81	91	99	87	79	109	86	82	108	100	103

Breeding sites

Other notes On Steep Holm a first-calendar year arrived on Sept. 24th and stayed four days, and at Chittering Warth a melanistic individual was noted on July 10th.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor; most are recorded on the coast; scarce inland.

A very good year for this species in the Avon area and the best to date with a total of 143 bird-days (*cf.* 76 in 2007). During the year there were 62 bird-days in the first half year and 81 in the second half. Most were in January, October, November and December with 23, 24, 29 and 28 days, respectively. As usual most of the records were from Severnside with 93 bird-days, 51 in the first half year and 42 in the second half year.

The details are as follows, records refer to single females or immatures unless stated otherwise, and give sites and dates when present:

First half-year

OPS – Jan. 19th and a male on Feb. 26th;

Severnside – reported on 50 dates from Jan. 5th to May 12th most in the first three months of the year and only noted on one date in May, males were seen on 37 dates, probably the same individual, a male and female were present on April 10th;

CI-Y – Jan 16th, 27th and 28th and a male on March 27th;

Sand Point/Sand Bay – Jan. 6th and 28th, Feb. 9th and 16th;

Axe Estuary/Weston STW – Jan. 1st.

Merlin second half-year

OPS – a male on Oct. 23rd and Nov. 1st, Nov. 15th and 29th, a male and female on Dec. 5th, Dec. 7th and 8th;

Littleton Warth – Oct. 18th and Dec. 7th;

Sevenside – reported on 44 dates from Oct. 5th to the year end, regularly seen throughout this period and males were seen on all of these dates, probably the same bird, males and females noted on two dates in October, one in November and three at the end of December;

PW – Oct. 8th and Dec. 11th;

CI-Y – Oct. 17th and 19th, Nov. 9th and two on 5th and 19th, Dec. 18th and 31st;

Axe Estuary/Weston STW – Nov. 8th and 16th, a male on Dec. 6th.

Inland - First half-year

Ten bird-days as follows: during January at Acton Turville on 5th (PDB, JPM), and Tickenham Moor on 22nd (RJP). In February a male at The Mall, Cribbs Causeway on 1st (MP), and an unusual record of one perched in a garden tree at Timsbury on 5th (MB); reports of this type would usually prove to be Sparrowhawk. At Marshfield on Jan. 12th, March 25th, 26th, 28th and 30th a male was present on the former two dates in March, and April 3rd (MH, RL).

Inland - Second half-year

Six bird-days as follows: during October a male and female at Marshfield on 2nd (RL) and to W at CVL on 10th (AHD), in November at Kington Down Farm on 14th (DRS), Walton-in-Gordano on 23rd (RJP) and Alveston on 30th (PJH).

Year	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Avon area	52	46	73	60	70	107	127	101	93	76	143
Sevenside	20	23	36	34	32	59	98	53	57	69	93

Bird-days per year

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Uncommon passage migrant and scarce breeding summer visitor.

Another normal year in the Avon area.

Arrival

First recorded in April at Chittening Warth on 17th, Severn Beach and CVL on 20th, two at the latter site the following day. During the last week of the month single birds were noted at BL, Kelston and almost daily at CVL.

The earliest arrival dates in the preceding five years were all in April: 15th in 2003 and 2004, 21st in 2005, 14th in 2006 and 26th in 2007.

Breeding Confirmed at three sites one in *NS* and two in *BA*.

NS – a pair fledged two young

BA – two sites were located and both pairs fledged two young.

Breeding was suspected at a further seven sites two each in *SG* and *NS*, and three in *BA*.

	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
<i>SG</i>	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2
<i>NS</i>	2	3	4	3	2	2	4	4	4	6	3
<i>BA</i>	3	4	7	8	6	6	4	5	4	4	5
Total	7	10	13	13	9	10	10	10	10	12	10

Breeding status both confirmed and suspected

Other sightings From April 17th to Sept. 25th reported from a total of 42 localities, nine in *SG* and 30 in *BA* & *NS*, *Bristol* noted at Blaise Castle Estate on May 5th, nearby at Moorgrove Wood on June 16th and over Montrose Avenue, Redland on June 19th.

On Steep Holm one low over the island from SSE then to N at 7.50hrs on May 8th. AJP commented that this was only his second record here in 34 years.

Number of localities per month where birds were observed (including CVL)							
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
SG	1	4	4	4	4	1	0
Bristol	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
BA & NS	3	16	7	10	10	9	1
Total	4	21	13	14	14	10	1

CVL Regularly reported at this site with one or two often seen, three reported on May 13th, 19th and 30th, and on Sept. 5th and 8th, four on July 19th and Sept. 10th. First reported here on April 20th then on six other dates in April, 14 in May, six in June, five in July and August, ten in September, the last record was on Oct. 10th, 14 days later than 2007.

Departure

There was just one report in October, the late records were as follows:

SG – Northwick Warth on Sept. 19th;

NS – Portbury on Sept. 25th;

BA – Charlton Field and CVL on Sept. 19th, also at the latter site the next day and Oct. 10th.

The latest dates for the Avon area, most in October are: 14th (Nailsea 1979, Severnside 2007), 15th (Severnside 2007), 16th (Severnside 2004 and 2007), 17th (Severnside 2007), 19th (CI-Y 1998, Severnside 2007), 21st (Iron Acton 1995), 29th (Backwell 1998), and Nov. 11th (Dundry 2005).

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon resident and winter visitor; scarce breeder.

Breeding An good year and the Avon Gorge pair fledged the most young to date.

In the Avon Gorge a pair nested successfully on the Clifton/Durdham Down side, five juveniles fledged this was the most to date. One was found on a path in Leigh Woods on June 19th, it was taken into care by the RSPCA, then colour ringed 'AG' and released the following day (see photograph opposite page 129). Last bred on the Leigh Woods side of the Avon Gorge in 1996 and 2005.

Year	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of juveniles fledged	2	4	0	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	5

Breeding success in the Avon Gorge

On Steep Holm one or two were often present from May 5th to Sept. 23rd but breeding did not occur. Prey items recorded included a couple of Feral Pigeon, Mallard and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, the latter was noted as a prey item here in 2007.

St. John's Church, Bath was used for the third consecutive year, four eggs were laid but one was addled, three chicks hatched but one died within a couple of days, its corpse was ejected from the nest. Both surviving chicks were colour ringed 'AC' & 'AD', they fledged successfully and remained in the area until the autumn. Apparently, the adult male disappeared at the time of hatching. During the breeding season a juvenile was present that had fledged from this site in 2007 and had been colour ringed 'AA'.

Wick Quarry Here two juveniles fledged (*cf.* two in 2007).

Undisclosed sites.

SG Present at three sites (*cf.* four in 2007 and three young fledged) all were on man-made structures. One of these was used successfully for the third consecutive year and four young fledged. One was found and taken into care by the RSPCA on June 19th, it was colour ringed 'AJ' and released the following day. Another died when it collided with a structure during strong winds. Frequent at the other two sites but there was no evidence of breeding.

NS Located at two sites (*cf.* three in 2007 and four young fledged), at one of these two juveniles were reported on July 6th and 13th. At the other two downy chicks were reported in the nest on May 1st and both fledged during the first two weeks of June.

Peregrine cont.

BA Reported from one site (*cf.* one site in 2007 and four young fledged), two attempts at breeding were made on different ledges. The first attempt was unsuccessful and at the second attempt one chick hatched but did not fledge. The female was in her second-calendar year and her inexperience could have contributed to the failure.

Bristol Noted at one site, three chicks were in the nest on May 25th and two fledged successfully.

Year	1989-98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of sites occupied	2.7	9	7	6	13	8	9	14	15	12	11
No. of birds fledged	5.4	19	6	11	25	13	17	13	13	21	20
No. of successful nests	2.2	8	3	4	10	5	8	8	7	9	7
Breeding success											

Non-breeding records

OPS, **Severnside** and **CI-Y** – Frequent at these well-watched sites, noted throughout the year with 144, 141 and 72 bird-days, respectively.

Possibly under recorded at the other coastal sites.

Monthly bird-days for other coastal sites, CVL and BL													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Littleton Warth			1							1	1		3
Avonmouth							1						1
RPD/PW	2			1									3
Portishead		2	2				1						5
Sand Point/Sand Bay				1			2				1		4
Weston-s-Mare		1						2		3			6
Weston STW	1			2	2	1		3			1		10
CVL	4	2	1	3	1	3		4	4	2	3	2	29
BL				4				1	3		2		10

Inland (excluding CVL & BL) Single birds unless stated otherwise:

First half-year

Bristol On occasion noted at Wills Memorial Building. In January two over Windmill Hill on 11th and Queens Road Clifton on 23rd, Eastville Park on Feb. 17th, during April at Hotwells on 3rd and Brislington on 22nd. In June over Whitchurch on 9th and Temple Quay on 20th;

SG At Tockington on Jan. 27th, Easter Compton on March 30th and during April at Emerson's Green on 6th and Almondsbury on 10th, at Gaunt's Earthcott on May 26th, in June at Pucklechurch on 1st and two at Westerleigh on 13th; Yate/Chipping Sodbury area – in January two on 3rd, on 7th, then on Feb. 29th, March 11th and June 26th; Marshfield area – in January on 12th, 24th and 25th, during February on 10th and 18th, then on April 27th;

NS Two at Tickenham on Jan. 24th and March 17th, at Wrington on Jan. 29th and Feb. 9th. At Yatton reported on 15 dates from the beginning of the year to March 27th, two on Feb. 6th and 13th. Noted over Dundry on April 15th and two on June 16th, at Sandford Quarry on April 24th and Backwell Common on May 16th;

BA At Keynsham two on Jan. 28th and Feb. 8th, noted nearby at Burnett on March 12th.

Second half-year

Bristol Reported at Wills Memorial Building most often on autumn evenings. An adult and juvenile over Bishopston and at Westbury-on-Trym on July 23rd, at Hotwells on Aug. 26th and Redland on Sept. 9th, in December at Redcliffe on 2nd and two over Broadmead on 22nd, often seen at Christchurch, Clifton, on July 14th, then in September two on 18th, 22nd and 25th, in October on 6th and 8th and Dec. 19th;

SG In August, three at Coalpit Heath on 20th, two at Patchway on 6th and on 11th, two over Pilning on Sept. 12th, during December at Emerson's Green on 20th and Tockington on 28th, in the Yate/Chipping Sodbury area two on July 15th and two on Nov. 1st, at Downend on Oct. 3rd, Nov. 1st and Dec. 26th,;

NS At Felton Common on July 8th, BG on July 19th, Aug. 7th and 31st, Sept. 13th and 27th, Kenn Moor on July 28th, Aug. 25th and Dec. 5th, over Tyntesfield on Aug. 11th. At Yatton on Aug. 16th, Nov. 2nd, 16th and two on Dec. 11th, in November noted over Portbury Village on 15th and 27th, and at Lye Cross on 26th, at Potter's Hill on Dec 10th;

BA Seen at Bathampton on July 17th, Burnett on Aug. 2nd and Oct. 28th, in December noted at Keynsham on 9th and 15th, Stanton Wick on 21st and Saltford on 27th.

Other notes In May reported at Weston STW hunting up to 26 Noctule Bats *Nyctalus noctula* without success.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Uncommon winter visitor, scarce in summer, and very scarce as a breeding species.

Another good year with reports received from 23 sites and a high count of 31 from CVL on Dec. 16th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
19	16	15	18	16	14	16	24	23	23

Number of sites reported from each year

CVL – Autumn/winter The species is only present in numbers when water floods the main reedbeds; in 2008 continued high water levels meant that numbers recorded were again high. KEV estimates the wintering population by counting the number of locations around the lake where he hears or sees birds; he counted 36 in October - December even though some areas of prime habitat were poorly surveyed.

Year	1999/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	2008/09
Estimated winter population	27 (30)	41 (50)	8	44	3+	n/a	n/a	15	41	36

CVL wintering (Nov. - Feb.) population

CVL – Breeding Calling birds noted at two sites.

Severnside In the first winter period recorded from Aust (one Jan. 6th), Northwick Warth (two on Jan. 12th and 26th and one on Feb. 12th and 16th), Severn Beach (two on Jan. 13th and Feb. 10th with one on 19th), Orchard Pools (one March 21st) and Chittening Warth (three on Jan. 5th, two on Feb. 2nd and one on 7th). In the breeding season one at Chittening Warth on May 15th. In the second winter period recorded from Aust Warth (one on Dec. 19th), Northwick Warth (three on Nov. 30th and one on Dec. 5th, 7th and 12th), New Passage (one on Sept. 21st), Severn Beach (three on Nov. 29th, two on Dec. 15th and one on 1st and 21st), Orchard Pools (one on Oct. 23rd, two on Dec 23rd, three on 24th and one on 27th), Sea Bank Pools (one on Nov. 22nd) and Chittening Warth (one on Nov. 28th and 29th, and Dec. 6th and 28th).

PW/RPD One at PW on Jan. 12th, Feb. 14th (with two on 16th), March 10th, and Sept. 28th and 29th.

SG Regular at OPS with records for January (six dates, maximum of two), February (nine dates, maximum of two), March (five dates, maximum of three), April (three on 6th), September (two dates, maximum two), October (four dates, maximum two), November (four dates, maximum four) and December (nine dates, maximum of five on 14th). Also recorded from Leap Valley, Downend (heard on Jan. 27th and Feb. 17th) and Cabot Park, Avonmouth (one on Feb. 2nd).

BA Single birds recorded from Batheaston NR (March 21st, Nov. 7th and 15th with two on 20th), Chew Magna Res. (Dec. 4th), Manor Road, Keynsham (Feb. 11th), Newbridge (Feb. 6th), Shockerwick (April 11th) and Widcombe Common (March 2nd). The Bath Peregrines took a bird in October.

NS Recorded from ten sites (*cf.* four in 2005 and eight in 2006 and 2007) as follows (single birds unless stated otherwise):

Axe Est – Dec. 14th;

Backwell Lake – Jan. 7th and 29th with two on March 9th;

BL – January (6th and 27th), February (two on 9th), April (6th and 28th), August (25th and 31st), Oct. 18th, Nov. 30th and December (7th with two on 25th);

Churchill Common – two on Feb. 19th;

Clapton Moor – three on Feb. 9th;

CI-Y – Jan. 1st, Feb. 21st and Nov. 30th;

Congresbury Moor – Dec. 12th;

Weston Moor – March 29th;

Weston STW – recorded in January, February and December with high count of three on Sept. 17th;

Yatton – two on Feb. 13th and single on March 31st.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

Very scarce passage migrant. Most records from CVL in August and September.

One live record – a single bird at CVL on Oct. 14th (RJH). Found on Moreton Bank, one wonders how many others pass through unnoticed at inaccessible parts of the lake shore.

The Bath Peregrines took one in October – remains found on 10th and feathers retained (ED).

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of individuals seen	0	1	2	0	2	1	1	0	1	2
Number of individuals recorded										

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

Formerly uncommon, now a rare passage migrant

2002 – Remains found at the Peregrine roost site on St. John's Church, Bath on Oct. 4th, 2002 (ED); After a detailed scientific study of the feathers recovered this record has now been confirmed.

The last live record was in May 2003 from BL.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Fairly common breeding resident. Seen in large numbers at the reservoirs in late summer/autumn.

WeBS status: CVL is currently 13th in national importance for this species.

Population change in England 1996-2006; up 10%.

The counts at the two main sites were again well down on previous years, probably due to high water levels making counts difficult.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
CVL	130	185	165	105	245	125	80	90	55	70
BL	53	60	129	75	132	46	105	82	30	21

Maximum counts at CVL and BL (the highest counts are often not in the same month at both sites)

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	5	16	6	7	4	4	5	4	3	6	5	3
RPD	16	20	16									
Backwell Lake	11		6	1								
R Avon, Keynsham		33									35	
CVL	25	10	20	6	6	35	35	55	35	70	35	30
BL	13	10	16	16	4	4	3	9	21	20	10	7
Weston STW	1	5	3	3	4	2	5	7	8	4	5	1

Recorded in small numbers from another 55 sites; the only double figure counts were 44 at Avon Country Park, Keynsham on Dec. 7th, 16 at RPD on Jan. 12th, twelve at Portishead Marine Lake on Feb. 4th, ten at Keynsham Memorial Park on Jan. 8th, and ten at Keynsham Mill Grounds on Feb. 23rd.

Breeding Breeding confirmed at 19 sites (*cf.* 17 in 2007); Backwell Lake (two young), Bath, Sydney Gardens (one young), Batheaston NR (one young on July 21st), BL (brood of two juveniles on Aug. 2nd), Castle Wall, Bristol (three young), Clevedon (three young), CVL (18 nests), Emersons Green (15 young), Keynsham Memorial Park (three or four broods, seven juveniles), Littleton-upon-Severn (four chicks), New Passage (one young), Oveston Village Pond (four young), Portishead Boating Lake (one young), PW (two young), Stockwood Vale (two young), Tortworth Lake (two young), Weston STW (4 broods, eight juveniles), Winford Brook (pair had two broods) and Yatton (two young).

The Bath Peregrines took birds in January, February, March, August and October.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	94	91	88	75	114	107	134	139	143

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100 2008 BBS distribution 24%.

COOT *Fulcia atra*

Fairly common and widespread breeding resident, abundant in the autumn at the main reservoirs.

WeBS status: CVL is currently fifth and BL 17th in national importance for this species.

Population change in England 1996-2006; up 27%.

A poor year by recent standards as the first table below shows.

Year	1989/98 av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
CVL	1700	1980	3500	2360	3715	3285	3335	2210	2360	2095	2020
BL	865	1129	1012	2846	1740	1990	2080	3151	1400	2323	1403

Maximum counts at CVL and BL (the highest counts are often not in the same month at both sites)

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tortworth		33	32			17	11		27	11		
OPS	1	2	2	2	2	2	3					
ASW		6		4	7	6	6	6	6	8	12	10
PW	30	38	22				33					30
Backwell Lake	38		12	19	10							
BG	250	60	69	49	35	55	122	211	295	335	260	220
CVL	225	245	325	320	370	905	2020	1860	1620	1150	465	265
BL	132	109	264	230	282	554	1292	1403	800	1226	1090	1057
Axe Est./Weston STW	53	31	21	23	8	54	67	86	86	49	63	60

Other records Recorded from a further 36 sites although the only double figure counts were 50 at Walborough on Oct. 21st, a maximum of 17 in October at Chew Magna Res. and twelve at West Town on May 5th.

Breeding Bred at Batheaston NR, BL (15 broods, 30 juveniles), Backwell Lake (three juveniles), Monkswood Res., Newton Park Lake (two broods, four juveniles), PW, Publow (four juveniles), Tortworth Lake (seven broods, 22 young), Weston STW (seven broods, 17 juveniles) and Yeo Bank Farm (failed nest). A mediocre year at CVL.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of young	162	254	119	110	91	102	9	70	91+	61
No. of broods	63	100	53	50	41	44	4	34	41	28
No. of nests	84	100	110	88	116	121	n/c	112	91	96

No. of young, broods and nests at CVL

CRANE *Grus grus*

Very rare vagrant

One flew to NE over OPS at 1640 hrs on May 4th (MP).

The fourth Avon area record - previous records were; in flight over Clevedon in March 1971, two in flight over Severn Beach in January 2000, and five at Tortworth from Feb. 25th to March 2nd, 2003.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce breeding species. Scarce inland.

YEAR	Severnside	CI-Y	Sand Bay	Axe Est.	Ave
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	27	12	28	82	37
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	80	23	10	74	47
2006/07	60	29	35	85	52
2007/08	75	34	33	124	67

August to February average counts

The tables show that the slow increase of the past few years continued in 2008, with some good counts at the Axe Estuary. The highest count was here taken on the WeBS count day in November. Apart from the breeding reports given below, the remaining non-tabulated sightings included: two by the R. Avon at Sea Mills in February and July, single birds at BG on May 7th and July 22nd, one or two at CVL in the autumn (see table on page 70), and one at BL on July 20th.

Oystercatcher cont.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	2	2	8	25	4	4	6	6	1	1	3	4
Littleton Warth	2	4		1		1	11	4	6	2	6	13
Sevenside	90	80	73	27	15	18	11	47	38	105	91	80
PW/RPD					2		5	5				
CI-Y	19	30	28	23	26	11	12	28	36	32	32	31
Sand Bay				22		4	7		18	7		60
Axe Est.	144	127	64	41		2	45	100	82	90	161	nc

Breeding Nesting behaviour was noted at five sites, the details are as follows:

Avonmouth Docks – five nests were located within the dock area, but the success rate was unknown;

PW – distraction display was noted here by a pair on July 12th;

CI-Y – at least two pairs attempted to breed, a nest with two eggs was found on June 15th, and a pair with one chick was seen on 24th;

Weston STW – pair with three young but all predated.

Steep Holm – one to three were noted from April 5th to Sept. 21st, with three pairs on May 16th, but no successful breeding was seen.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Scarce winter visitor/ passage migrant. Rare inland.

There was a slightly better showing than in the past few years with 15 individuals noted at four sites as follows:

New Passage – one on Jan. 1st and five on Feb. 29th;

CI-Y – one also on Feb. 29th;

Axe Estuary – seven on Oct. 13th;

CVL – one on Nov. 13th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
2	4	11	12	9	6	14	4	6	15
Number of individuals									

STONE CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Rare passage migrant.

One record: a single individual was noted at CI-Y, first standing on the salt marsh near the Yeo mouth, then flying along the tide line past the observer before heading inland, on the very cold morning of April 6th (HER).

In the past half century this species has been recorded at Weston Bay (in September 1968), at CI-Y (in April 1988, June and September 1989, and April 1991), and at Sevenside (in July 1999 and April 2006).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Uncommon passage migrant, generally more numerous in autumn. Scarce as a breeding species.

Average first date April 6th, last date Sept. 13th.

Noted at only six sites from March 31st and May 13th, and from June 19th to Aug. 30th. Although some were present at the beginning of the breeding season no actual nesting activity was seen. Details of all records are given below.

Sevenside – one on April 13th, two on 21st and 22nd, one on 28th, two on May 2nd and July 31st, and three on Aug 30th;

PW – single bird on May 13th;

CI-Y – one on April 27th, two on May 4th, and single birds on 8th, July 6th and Aug. 3rd;

Weston STW – one on May 4th;

BG – one on March 31st, three on April 4th, 5th, 11th and 16th, and single birds on 28th, 30th, May 3rd and June 19th. In the past few years repair work has been undertaken at this site which required at least one of the main reservoirs to be drained so providing good breeding conditions for this species. This did not happen in 2008.

CVL – single birds on July 20th and 25th, and on Sept. 1st.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Uncommon winter visitor, and fairly common passage migrant (most numerous in autumn). Small numbers occur inland on passage. Very scarce breeder.

WeBS status: in 2005/06 the Estuary was eighth in national importance for passage.

YEAR	OPS	Sevenside	CI-Y	Ave
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	29:235	16:339	20:144	22:239
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	12:61	15:262	14:98	14:140
2006/07	2:69	26:330	13:120	14:173
2007/08	6:66	21:170	14:230	14:155

Winter (Oct. to Feb.) : Autumn passage (Aug. to Sept.) average counts

Wintering numbers were normal, spring passage was better than average, but autumn passage was on the low side; see the tables. Also some pairs bred as noted. The third week in May produced some good counts of birds probably on their way to the high Arctic breeding grounds.

On the other hand the autumn counts were on the low side especially at Sevenside partly offset by better than average counts at CI-Y in the last few days of August. Inland only small numbers were reported as follows: at BG, one on April 13th, seven on May 26th (see above) and one on Oct. 12th; at CVL, one on May 15th and a few in August (see table on page 70), and at BL, one on Aug. 16th.

One was taken by the Bath Peregrines on Aug. 23rd.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites																
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		May		Jun	Jul	Aug		Sep		Oct	Nov	Dec
				1–15	16–30	1–15	16–31			1–15	16–31	1–15	16– 30			
OPS	10	8			12	26	1	11		84	68	48	26	6	3	2
Sevenside	17	9	7	7	26	30	320	60	2	150	260	81	7	8	7	7
PW											15			20	42	
CI-Y	14	20	1	4	12	10	32	5	6	180	300	160	2	10	11	11
Sand Bay					1						250		4			
Axe E./Weston STW	18				1						2	10	43		32	24

Breeding

Only noted at Avonmouth Docks where eight nests were located, three of which were successful to hatching but the number of chicks was not recorded. This compares with nine nests at this site in 2004 and 2007 with six in 2005, no full survey was undertaken in 2006 when only one nest was found.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Fairly common winter visitor and scarce passage migrant (usually more numerous in autumn).

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
1230	1013	1989	(992)	2025	2020	3310	1475	2460	3336	1790

Total of the maximum monthly counts for all main sites

An average year although none were noted at the main reservoirs. As usual some sizable flocks were noted in the east of our region during the winter periods, but very few were seen elsewhere.

Present up to April 12th and from Aug. 31st, but no flock of any size was seen before Oct. 22nd.

The details are as follows.

OPS/Littleton Warth – one on Oct. 15th and 13 on Dec. 15th with nine on 31st;

Sevenside – 21 on March 15th, six on Sept. 21st and eleven on Oct. 16th;

CI-Y – one on Jan. 26th, and Aug. 31st with two on Dec. 15th;

Weston STW – six on Jan. 19th, one on Feb. 17th, three on Sept. 20th, and one on Dec. 14th;

Golden Plover cont.

Tormarton – 46 on Nov. 18th;

Marshfield – 500, the largest count in the Avon area this year, on Oct. 22nd;

W. Littleton Down – 140 on April 14th;

Marksbury – up to 420 in January, 36 in February, and 20 on March 7th;

Cold Ashton – 29 on Oct. 12th;

Burnett – 100 on Dec. 22nd;

Lansdown – 74 on Jan. 31st, 78 on Feb. 11th, up to 200 in March, 240 on April 5th with 100 on 9th;

Keynsham – 50 on Dec. 28th.

The Bath Peregrines took three in January, three in February and one in December.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce inland on passage.

YEAR	Sevenside	CI-Y	Ave
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	10	30	20
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	9	26	17
2006/07	6	21	13
2007/08	8	33	20

September to March average counts

An average year. Noted up to June 6th, and from Aug.17th onwards but only single birds were seen before late September. The table below summarises the coastal counts, it is likely that the flocks reported at Sand Bay (on Jan. 1st and Nov. 5th) were displaced from CI-Y. There were only two other records: single birds at PW in July and at CVL on the unusual date of March 1st.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	:	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS/Littleton Warth	13	10	9						4	11	3	
Sevenside	11	8	5	4	15				5	16	6	5
CI-Y	43	44	44	10	2	1		1	1		26	28
Sand Bay	38										17	

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Fairly common and widespread winter visitor and passage migrant; can become common in some winters. Uncommon breeding resident/summer visitor.

WeBS status: in the list of national sites holding 5000 or more the Estuary is currently fourth after five sites of international importance.

Year	Sevenside	CI-Y	CVL	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	297	251	487	345
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	294	274	215	261
2007/07	251	337	209	266
2007/08	215	474	108	266

August to February average counts

Counts of winter and passage flocks were slightly down on those of the past few years, and breeding numbers showed another major fall, see below. The largest counts were 1600 at OPS on Jan. 12th and 2000 at the Axe Estuary on Feb. 6th. About 4840 were present in our area in January, this compares with 3520 in 2007 and a ten-year average of about 7400, and about 2770 were present in December with only small numbers in the east of our region, this compares with 3640 in 2007 and a ten-year average of about twice this figure. Also as has become the norm in the past few years, only small numbers were present between March and mid-September with no count over 65.

The table below summarises the main counts, note that the largest count in the second winter period was 900. Non-tabulated counts over 50 included in January: 500 on Marksby Plain, 400 at Leap Valley, a high count for this site, and 50 on Puxton Moor; in February, 150 at Stowey; and in December, 50 at Pilning and 60 at Weston-in-Gordano.

The Bath Peregrines took one on May 16th.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	1600	580		2	6	2	9	10	63	210	450	580
Severnside	170	150	1	2	2	2				32	250	200
R. Avon, Sea Mills	90	85					5	20	30		90	105
PW	110	120					10					65
CI-Y	1350	350	8	10	8	8	5	12	40	7?	200	500
Axe Est./Weston STW	100	2000			3			21	3	110	400	900
BG	53	50	1	1	4					6	17	60
CVL	300	60	3	2		14	61	52	53	90	115	100
BL	20					1	4	19	25		20	160

Breeding

As last year very few sightings were reported. This is probably not as a result of the lack of observers as two sites that have produced good counts in the past – the area north of Marshfield and the Gordano Valley – are well watched. Only eleven pairs showed any real evidence of breeding activity although small numbers were noted at another nine suitable sites. All reports of this species during the breeding season, however minor, are welcome. (*Eds.*)

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
48	41-42	61	nc	42	52	38	44-47	25	14-15	11-20

Number of pairs of Lapwing present, displaying and/or nesting

All breeding season records are listed below. As in previous Reports 'pair' implies that some breeding activity was noted, 'nest' implies that an adult was sitting on a nest, and 'chick' implies that the nest was successful to hatching.

BG – four birds were present on May 17th;

CI-Y, Dowlais Farm – up to four pairs were noted on the new scrape from late March to the end of May, at least two nests were successful producing two and one chicks, respectively, in early June. Yeo Estuary – two pairs were present at this traditional site but the outcome was unknown;

Cromhall – two pairs on May 12th;

CVL – four birds noted on April 4th but not thereafter;

Marshfield area – one was seen at Lyegrove Farm on May 13th and four were present in the area on June 2nd;

OPS – three pairs mobbing a Fox in a maize field on May 28th, the vegetation grew too tall for any outcome to be observed;

Ringhurst Farm, near Gaunts Earthcott – two pairs on nests on April 30th with only one on May 2nd;

Timsbury – two birds on May 11th;

Weston STW – three birds present in early May;

Washingpool Farm, between Easter Compton and Pilning – two pairs on May 3rd and one bird on June 7th.

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, mostly in autumn. Scarce inland.

There are two races, *islandica* (nearctic) and *canutus* (Siberian), it is not known to which race the majority of our birds belong but almost certainly both occur.

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
501	799	1055	(94)	542	386	411	1520	172	595	293

Total of the maximum monthly counts for the coastal sites

The status line and main tables show a fairly non-descript year with no large flocks and only very weak spring and autumn passages. Recorded up to May 18th, and from July 31st at six sites (five in 2007), and the largest count was 57 at OPS seen on Sept. 6th for one day only. The main table summarises the counts – one was also noted at PW in April, there were no inland records.

The Bath Peregrines took single birds in February, March, April, and on June 7th!

Knot cont.

Monthly maxima at coastal sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	:	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	1		1					2	57	1	8	
Severnside				1	30			2	30	3	4	4
CI-Y	1	6	38	4			1	6	20	7	3	45
Sand Bay	1							25				
Axe Estuary				2					3		1	

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Uncommon passage migrant, more often in spring than in autumn; very scarce winter visitor. Scarce inland.

2008 was another fairly poor year.

Noted at eight sites (three inland) – five in 2007, from April 20th to June 1st, and from July 10th to Sept. 6th, the largest count was 15 (at Severnside on May 16th), and there was a small movement in the last week of May.

The details are as follows:

OPS – single birds on May 4th and 31st, three on Aug. 20th, two on Sept. 1st with one on 3rd;

Severnside – two on April 20th, five on May 8th, 15 on 16th dropping to twelve on 17th, six on 29th and one on June 1st, one on July 10th, three on 17th, one on Aug. 10th, then three or four from 15th to Sept. 6th;

PW – one on Aug. 20th;

CI-Y – one on April 27th, a poor showing for this site;

Sand Bay – three on April 23rd and two on May 24th;

BG – single birds on May 8th, 25th and 26th;

CVL – single birds on May 15th and 18th, Aug. 5th, and Sept. 9th;

BL – four on May 25th.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Passage migrant; very scarce in spring, scarce/uncommon in autumn, although may be quite numerous in some years. Rare in winter.

The poor run of sightings continued in 2008, it was only noted at four sites in the autumn and second winter periods, and was regular at just one of these – Severnside.

The details are as follows

OPS – one on Sept. 14th;

Severnside – first noted on Aug. 31st, then an adult on Sept. 4th, up to seven (on 21st) in the third week of September, three on several dates up to Oct. 18th, two on 20th, and single birds on Nov. 5th and 13th, and Dec 2nd;

CI-Y – one on Sept. 1st, again a poor record for this site;

BG – one on Sept. 28th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
45	14	58	10	11	13	21	20	17	14

Yearly totals of monthly maxima

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

Very scarce vagrant, it is assumed that most are nearctic but north-eastern palearctic birds cannot be ruled out.

Two records of single juveniles in September: at Northwick Warth, Severnside, from 18th to 23rd (PDB *et al.*), and at BG from 20th to 27th (SD *et al.*).

The first-ever Avon area record was at this latter site in 1935, and these 2008 records are the 41st and 42nd (50 birds in all) recorded in our region including records for each year except 2007 since 2001.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Passage migrant; scarce in spring, scarce/uncommon in autumn. As with Little Stint, some autumns can be lean whilst others can record sizeable flocks. Very rare in winter.

WeBS status: in 2004/05 the Estuary was the second most important site.

As with Little Stint, recently counts have been on the low side, see status line below. In 2008 only noted during autumn passage at five sites from July 31st to Oct. 14th, the largest count was six at Severnside in mid-September.

The details are as follows. All were juveniles unless stated otherwise.

OPS – single birds on Sept. 3rd and 17th, and Oct. 5th, 7th and 11th;

Littleton Warth – three on Sept 14th;

Severnside – one on Sept. 9th and 10th, three on 15th, six on 18th and 20th, two on 21st, and one on 22nd and Oct. 7th;

CI-Y – five adults still mostly in full breeding plumage on July 31st with one on Aug. 2nd, and a juvenile on Oct. 2nd;

Axe Estuary – one on Oct. 14th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
64	56	65	46	12	14	37	22	19	20

Yearly totals of the monthly maxima

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Scarce winter visitor; has declined during the past decade and a half, but is now showing some signs of recovery. Very rare inland.

Noted at three sites, one of which was unusual, up to May 9th and from Nov. 2nd.

The details are as follows:

Battery Point, Portishead – three in January, four in February and March, up to five in April, and three until May 9th, then three from Nov. 15th with four after Dec. 14th;

CI-Y – unusually three were noted here on Nov. 2nd with one seen intermittently into 2009;

Birnbeck Island, Weston-s-Mare – seven in January, eight in February, nine in March, and seven up to April 10th, then six from Nov. 17th and eight after Dec 15th.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; uncommon in mid-summer. Small numbers occur inland on passage.

Three races probably occur:

C. a. alpina - mainly as a winter visitor,

C. a. schinzii - mainly seen on passage

C. a. arctica - probably a regular migrant in small numbers, mainly in late spring, almost certainly overlooked, no published records.

WeBS status: the Estuary is currently recognised as the sixth most important site of International Importance in the UK.

YEAR	OPS	Severnside	CI-Y	Ave
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	914:357	2705:463	3944:171	2521:330
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	700:85	2535:462	1205:219	1480:255
2006/07	423:30	3320:475	1216:260	1653:255
2007/08	714:100	2350:225	2925:178	1996:168

Winter (Oct. to Feb.): Autumn passage (Aug. to Sept.) average counts

The tables above and below show that counts in 2008 were generally in line with those of the past few years, although the autumn passage was less good than usual and the Severnside counts were on the low side.

High numbers of roosting birds were noted at CI-Y in the early part of the year with the largest count, 6500, on Feb. 24th; some birds roosted on the Severn coast but most used the Yeo river banks some way from its mouth. Better numbers were reported at Sand Bay than has been the case in the past few years, the December WeBS count, 1600, being of note.

The table overleaf summarises all counts, it shows that those received so far for the 2008/09 winter are well below average.

Dunlin cont.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	850	300	250	7	20	6		100	110	100	1000	800
Littleton Warth	1	600	25				25	20	18	30	250	150
Sevenside	2000	2000	50	72	170	23	36	300	200	450	1000	760
R. Avon, Sea Mills	36	50									2	37
PW	1400	600					10	12			600	400
CI-Y	4300	6500	1800	60	95	18	18	300	60	140	1500	1200
Sand Bay								800	110			1600
Axe Est.	25	130	130	5				3	21	15	180	270
BG				1	2			1			2	
CVL			1	3	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax**Uncommon autumn passage migrant; scarce in winter and on spring passage.*

2008 was an extraordinarily bad year for this species with only three records (nine bird-days) of single birds. These were at New Passage on Sept. 13th, 15th, and from 18th to 22nd, at CVL on Oct. 15th, and at Somerdale on Dec. 15th. To put these records in context, the yearly totals of the monthly maxima for the past decade are as follows

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
10	35	47	26	26	10	35	11	35	3

Yearly totals of the monthly maxima

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyrtes minimus**Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant; probably overlooked.*

WeBS status: in the 2004/05 winter the Estuary was the twelfth most important site in the UK for this species.

Sightings of this rather elusive species were about normal overall although some sites reported above average numbers, these included Sevenside in the first winter period and Weston STW in the second. It was recorded up to April 13th (one at Washingpool Farm, Pilning, and from Oct. 2nd (one at CI-Y), the table below summarises the main counts. Otherwise single birds were noted as follows: at PW on April 8th, at Portishead (on the seafront) on Dec. 15th, and on Congresbury Moor on 17th. The Bath Peregrines took one on Oct. 10th.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites								
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	:	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sevenside	2	7	7	1		1	2	3
Washingpool Farm		2		1				1
ASW	2							1
PW				1				1
CI-Y	3	3				1	1	2
Weston STW	4	6	4	1			6	10
Keynsham		3	3					
CVL*	1	1	2					

* CVL includes the lake margins and Widcombe Common.

SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago**Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; has undergone a decline in the last decade. Rare Breeder.*

WeBS status: the Estuary is currently the third most important coastal site in the UK for this species.

YEAR	OPS	Sevenside	CI-Y	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	>8	11	14	-
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	50	18	15	28
2006/07	14	14	13	14
2007/08	41	27	15	28

November to February average counts

As with many other wader species this year, counts were about average compared with the past few years. No large numbers were reported, but no records were received from Clapton Moor which has recorded some good sightings recently. The counts at Severnside in the first winter period were high for this site. Noted up to May 5th (at BL) and from July 26th (at CVL), the table below summarises the main counts.

Some isolated counts were also received as follows: in January, three at Keynsham on 16th and eight at ASW on 28th; in February, 17 on Churchill Common on 19th; in March, eight on Widcombe Common on 13th; in November, two at Sandford on 26th and three at Hengrove, Bristol, on 27th; and in December, four at Yatton on 11th. There were no breeding records of any kind.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	:	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS/Littleton Warth	78	34	4	1					4	15	13	20
Severnside	38	45	17	6					5	3		17
R. Avon, Sea Mills	4	5	4								5	
PW	52	22		1								64
CI-Y	4	18	12					1	11	3	24	38
Axe Est./Weston STW	4	12	1	1					6	4	9	9
Washingpool Farm	39	27		18								4
Leap Valley, Downend	1		3								1	1
Oxbow Reserve, Batheaston		14	2									1
Congresbury Moor	39	25	10									
CVL	22	16	6	3			1	1	4	9	30	12
BL		8	12	4	2						4	16

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Uncommon winter visitor, but almost certainly overlooked. Has bred in the past.

Apart from the Bath records, there were only 14 sightings in 2008. This compares with 17 in 2007 and an average of 22 for the previous decade. These sightings were recorded up to March 9th, and from Nov. 1st onwards, no count was above one. As has become normal quite a few (at least seven) were taken by the Bath Peregrines, the dates were: Feb. 13th, March 25th and 28th, Sept. 27th, Oct. 31st, and Nov. 18th and 30th.

Excluding those from Bath, the records are as follows.

First winter period In January at Compton Dando on 8th, at CVL on 12th and 13th, and at Portishead Wood on 14th; in February at Folly Farm on 2nd, Queen Charlton on 4th, CVL on 7th, and New Passage (Severnside) on 16th; and one record in March at Midger Wood on 9th.

Second winter period In November at Emerson's Green on 1st, Bristol Docks on 18th (found dead on the harbour wall), Brandon Hill, Bristol, on 25th, and Pensford on 29th; and in December at Folly Farm on 2nd, Orchard's Pools (Severnside) on 13th and 14th, Kingston Seymour (near CI-Y) on 17th, and Dyer's Common, Pilning, on 23rd.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Limosa l. islandica - Uncommon passage migrant; generally more numerous in autumn. Scarce in winter.

Limosa l. limosa - Rare visitor, definite records in June and July only.

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
267	518	249	(131)	302	1037	682	554	298	192	429

Total of the maximum monthly counts for the coastal sites

The status line total shows a marked increase on the last two years, but at least half of the total refers to a flock of up to 100 seen at OPS in the autumn and probably refers to birds that regularly winter at Slimbridge in Gloucestershire. Apart from these reports, counts were generally on the low side compared with the last few years with a maximum of only 15 at Severnside. Two counts at CI-Y (36 on Feb. 24th and 42 on Dec 18th) were of flocks passing through. Similar records have been received from this site in the past few years (most recently, 48 in November 2006) and may refer to a fairly regular occurrence. The table below summarises the main sightings, the only other records were for BG on Aug. 5th and BL on 14th.

The Bath Peregrines took a Black-tailed Godwit on Feb. 23rd.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS/Littleton Warth	2		1	1			3	15	100	65	60	10
Severnside					3		10	15	3	4	1	11
PW						1	16	6				
CI-Y		36			1		2	12	5	1		42
Axe Est./Weston STW			2	1		5		8	3		2	
CVL				1		1	1	1				

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Passage migrant in varying numbers - usually uncommon, but can occur in good numbers on spring passage, often coinciding with easterly winds. Scarce in winter and inland.

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
308	222	711	(116)	191	121	382	75	112	1309	73

Total of the maximum monthly counts for the coastal sites

2008 was probably the worst year on record for this species in the Avon area. Apart from Severnside during the spring passage no count was above four, it was only reported at five sites one of which was inland.

At Severnside 50 were noted on April 16th dropping to three by 30th, then nine were seen on May 8th with two on 14th. The table summarises all remaining coastal records – such as they were!

At CVL, one flew to SW on July 29th.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted coastal sites										
	Jan	:	Apr	May	:	Aug	Sep	:	Nov	
OPS/Littleton Warth	1			1			1		1	
Severnside	1		50	9		2	4			
PW			1							
CI-Y				1			1			

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Passage migrant, uncommon in autumn, but fairly common in spring. Scarce summer visitor and very rare in winter. Uncommon inland on passage.

WeBS status: the Estuary is currently the eighth most important site in the UK for this species, in 2002 it was first.

Average first date April 10th, last date Oct. 8th.

YEAR	OPS	Severnside	CI-Y	Av.
1988 -1997 Av.	25	24	87	45
1998 -2006 Av.	27	61	63	50
2007	12	22	53	29
2008	21	34	44	30

April and May average counts

The generally below average counts of the past few years continued into 2008.

Apart from two counts in the fifties (55 at Severnside on April 23rd and 56 at CI-Y on 24th), all counts were in the low thirties or below.

Recorded from April 10th (at CI-Y) to May 30th, and from June 30th to Sept. 3rd with a late record on 30th at OPS. The table below summarises the main counts.

The only other records were of single birds at BG on Aug. 6th, and over Southville, Bristol, on 31st.

Maxima at main sites								
	Apr		May		Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
	10-20	21-30	1-10	11-31				
OPS	5	31	10	3	3		21	
Littleton Warth	5			2			1	6
Sevenside	22	55	12	3		5	6	
PW	1	33	2			5	1	
CI-Y	6	56	32	1	1	6	7	1
Sand Bay	1	6	1			2	2	
Axe Est.	3	14	12	3		1	1	
CVL	8	6	1				2	1



CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, uncommon in summer. A very rare breeder. Uncommon inland.

WebS status: in the list of sites of National Importance in the UK the Estuary is currently eighth for this species.

YEAR	OPS	S-side	CI-Y	Axe E.	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	695	152	153	76	269
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	248	177	163	64	163
2006/07	186	194	131	35	137
2007/08	329	171	127	32	165

August to February average counts

Counts were generally in line with those of the past few years but OPS was slightly up and, as with several other wader species, Sevenside was slightly down in both winter periods. In the past we received evening roost counts from OPS, with often over 1000 being recorded. For 2008 no timings were given, so it was not clear if any of the counts were of evening roosts or just day-time feeding groups.

The table below summarises the main counts at all coastal sites. Inland single birds were noted at BG on April 19th and July 28th, and at CVL on March 9th, Aug.10th and Sept. 8th.

As usual no breeding activity was reported.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	60	200	43	17	8	40	300	50	320	180	150	140
Littleton Warth	88	130	80		1	3	29	1	250	37	190	305
Sevenside	110	90	3	55	4	35	170	160	195	80	85	100
R. Avon, Sea Mills	3	2	1	2				1	2	1	2	3
PW	28	4		28								40
CI-Y	150	120	70	24	5	32	110	135	135	175	220	180
Sand Bay	22	92	27	50		40	115	85	120	110	40	32
Axe Est.	32	81	38	11	1	2	12	16	35	17	40	59

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos**Uncommon passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.*

	1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	65	70	70	(38)	65	65	56	57	29	38	93
Autumn	175	249	175	138	160	166	178	136	139	141	184

Total of the maximum monthly counts at the coastal and reservoir sites for spring and autumn passage

This is probably the only wader species showing any signs of improvement in 2008. Wintering numbers continue to increase and both spring and autumn passages were up on those of the previous few years, the spring passage markedly so.

Up to 13 were noted in at least one of the winter periods at six sites: Thornbury Pill (three), the Sea Mills area (seven), New Cut (central Bristol), CI-Y (one), Weston STW (one) and BG (one).

A particularly strong spring passage was recorded at the main reservoirs. The best counts were at BG with nine on May 8th, at CVL with 22 (including a single flock of 16) on April 26th, and at BL with ten on April 24th.

The autumn passage was also on the high side, counts over ten were noted as follows: at OPS (13 on July 6th), Severnside (twelve on Aug. 2nd), PW (14 in early August), CI-Y (eleven on July 13th and 14th), and BG (twelve on July 15th and 13 on Aug. 2nd).

The table below summarises all counts.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites															
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		May	Jun	Jul		Aug		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				1-15	16-30			1 -15	16 -31	1 -15	16 -31				
OPS					2		1	13	6	2	7	1			
Thornbury Pill	3	3													
Littleton Warth											3				
Severnside				1	3	3	6	8	10	12	3	2			
ASW					1		1		1			1			
R. Avon*	4	5	6	5	3				1		3	8	3	5	7
PW					2	4			5	14	3	3			
CI-Y			1		1	3	3	11	10	8	8	7	1	1	
Axe Est./Weston STW	1	1	1	1	3	1		6	1	5		3	1	1	
BG				6	6	9	4	12	11	13	7	3	1	1	
CVL				4	22	8		6	2	6	3	8	1		
BL				2	10	8			4	3		1			

R. Avon* includes the river bank at Sea Mills and the New Cut (Southville).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus**Uncommon passage migrant; more numerous in autumn. Scarce winter visitor.*

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
95	50	74	100	110	124	70	76	76	51	63

Total of the maximum monthly counts for coastal and reservoir sites

Overall there has not been much change in the sightings of this species recently, and it has been noted at a fairly wide range of sites. Twelve were used in both 2007 and 2008, three of which were new in 2008.

The table summarises the main counts. As last year the highest count was only five, this time at CI-Y on July 31st.

The non-tabulated sightings were as follows in date order: one at Chew Stoke STW on Jan. 29th, one on Kenn Moor on July 17th, two at Weston STW on Aug. 10th and Sept. 6th, two at the Batheaston Oxbow Reserve on Aug. 15th, one by the R. Avon at Sea Mills on Sept. 15th, and one at Chew Stoke STW again on Dec. 30th.

At Severnside on Jan. 6th one was seen being chased by two Peregrines.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	:	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS							1	1	1			
Severnside	1						1	2	1			
ASW		1				1	3	4	3		2	2
Washingpool Farm, Pilning	2	2						1				
CI-Y		1	1				5	2			1	1
Yatton	1							1				2
BG							1		1			
Chew Magna Res.			1							1	1	
CVL	1	2	5	4		1	2	2	3	4	2	1

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor, very scarce in spring.

WeBS status: in the 2004/05 winter the Estuary was the second most important site in the UK for this species.

This species which is now mainly seen in the winter periods was noted at five coastal sites up to April 16th and from July 24th onwards, there were no inland reports. All records were of single individuals and the details are as follows:

OPS – on Aug. 22nd, during October, and on Nov. 8th and Dec. 9th;

Severnside – on Aug. 31st;

PW – in March and on April 16th, and in July, August and October (actual dates not given);

CI-Y – one up to April 13th, an adult from July 29th to Aug. 17th, a juvenile from Sept. 25th to Oct. 2nd, and what is assumed to be the regular wintering individual from Oct. 30th into 2009 – so three different birds during the autumn period;

Weston STW – single individuals were seen up to April 16th (when sporting nearly full summer plumage), and on Sept. 19th and Nov. 8th.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than in spring. Scarce in winter.

	1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
CI-Y	12	10	7	9	10	8	5	3	4	3	4
CVL	12	1	1	5	4	23	4	5	1	2	1

Maximum single counts at CI-Y and CVL

The generally low counts of the past few years continued in 2008, the maximum count was four (at CI-Y on Aug. 17th). As noted in the second half of 2007, two were present on the R. Avon at Sea Mills in both winter periods of 2008 (up to April 10th and from Sept. 8th onwards), although they were not often seen together. Also the record of two at CI-Y on Dec. 14th was only the second winter record at the site (the first was in December 1998).

One at Littleton Warth on June 21st was either a non-breeder or a very early autumn migrant; otherwise present up to May 12th and from July 3rd. The table below summarises all counts:

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites														
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul		Aug		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
							1-15	16 -31	1 - 15	16 - 31				
OPS/Littleton Warth				1	1	1		1			1			
Severnside			1		3			1	1	3		1		
R. Avon, Sea Mills	2	2	2	1							2	2	2	2
PW								1						
CI-Y				2	2		1	3	3	4	2	1		2
Weston STW				1										
BG							1	1	2	1	1			
CVL					1			1		1				

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Passage migrant, very scarce in spring and scarce in autumn, most frequent at CVL.

Only one record: two adults at ASW with three Green Sandpipers on a small muddy pool with work proceeding close by on July 17th. It is unusual for there to have been no records from any of the main reservoirs.

1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	0	06	07	2008
5	8	8	3/4	1	7	7/8	8	1	1/2	2
Total numbers recorded										

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; uncommon in summer, very scarce breeder. Uncommon inland.

WeBS status: the Estuary is currently second of the sites of national importance after eleven sites of International Importance.

YEAR	OPS	Sea Mills	CI-Y	Axe E.	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	69	102	120	152	111
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	36	93	106	230	116
2006/07	37	113	168	248	141
2007/08	50	80	179	195	126

August to February average counts

Counts of this species have fluctuated only slightly over the past twenty years and more, and this continued in 2008. Unfortunately breeding activity is another matter, see below. The main table summarises the counts, the largest, 405, was for the Axe Estuary made during the WeBS count in September. The non-tabulated records were as follows: single birds were seen at BG in January, June and July, at Somerdale in March and August (with two on 14th), and at BL in June and July.

One was taken by the Bath Peregrines in December.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	73	42	36	7			5	40	60	150	70	37
Littleton Warth	70	38	28	28		1	11	14	90	190	95	75
Sevenside	110	80	130	16		5	50	78	70	130	125	180
Sea Mills, R. Avon	65	90	95	140				48	200	80	70	60
PW	56	22	65	55	1	40	150	100	55	100	80	45
CI-Y	155	140	130	130	6	10	32	24	140	170	270	220
Sand Bay	35	33	1					20			7	250
Axe Est.	40	190	290	185		3	11	130	405	145	275	110
CVL				3		3	2	4				1

Breeding The slow decline in breeding activity in the Avon area continued. Two pairs were displaying at CI-Y near the mouth of the Yeo in May and June, but as usual no nest was found and no chicks were seen. No breeding activity was noted at any other site.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Fairly common winter visitor/passage migrant. Scarce mid-summer and inland

YEAR	OPS	Sevenside	CI-Y	Av.
1988/89 - 1997/98 Av.	57	164	29	83
1998/99 - 2005/06 Av.	50	135	29	71
2006/07	58	160	27	82
2007/08	39	135	31	68

August to February average counts

This is yet another wader species with an unspectacular and slightly reduced showing in 2008, see the tables which summarise the main counts. Two counts were of some note: 90 at Littleton Warth, on Dec. 15th, was high for this site, they had probably been displaced from OPS, where a barge that they used as a roost is no longer present, and five at BG, on Aug. 10th, was a good count away from the coast. Only one was noted (in July) at PW this year. There was an unusual sighting of one in the yard of Sutton House Farm, near CVL, on May 15th.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	35	70	70					20	20	70	40	25
Littleton Warth							1				17	90
Sevenside	120	70	105	21	10	1	14	90	115	110	100	170
CI-Y	35	38	52	31	9		4	28	26	38	36	35
BG					1		1	5				

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus lobatus*

Rare vagrant.

One record: a moulting adult was at Weston STW from Aug. 23rd to 25th (PAB, *et al.*).

There have been about eleven records in the Avon area since 1900, and in the last decade two to three were noted at BL in August 1999, and one was seen at Wick St. Lawrence STW (CI-Y) in October 2002.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Scarce, wind driven visitor, usually in autumn, very rare at other times. The majority of records are inland.

Three single juvenile/first-winter birds were noted at two sites in the autumn as follows:

CVL – Sept. 4th (RMA, RMI) and from Oct 4th to 6th (DN *et al.*),

Portishead – Nov. 20th (SH).

Counts for the past decade were as follows, note the graph given in the **2007 Report** was in error, the correct data is:

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
1	2	2	0	0	1	7	1	1	3



Autumn Wader Migration

At Chew Valley Lake

In 2008 water levels remained high, even so this was the worst year on record. In 1975, the first year of this survey and when water levels were low, the status line count was 2230 and an average of 1100 Lapwing were present in each ten day period!

1989/98 Av.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
829	157	268	286	178	786	281	834	211	134	108

Excluding Lapwing, total of all wader maximum ten-day counts at CVL between July 1st and Oct. 28th

As in previous reports the table below gives the maximum count in each ten-day period from July 1st to Oct. 28th, and also includes our only migrant duck, Garganey. For the terns see the table on page 82.

Autumn migration at CVL												
	Jul			Aug			Sep			Oct		
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-9	10-19	20-29	30-8	9-18	19-28	29-8	9-18	19-28
Garganey			1	2	2	1	1	1		1	1	
Oystercatcher		1		2				1				
Little Ringed Plover			1	1								
Ringed Plover				2	2							
Golden Plover								1				
Lapwing	25	34	61	52	44	46	53				90	
Sanderling				1				1				
Dunlin		1	1	1	1	2	2	1		1		
Snipe			1				1	2	4			
Black-tailed Godwit		1			1							
Bar-tailed Godwit				1								
Whimbrel				2			1					
Curlew					1		1					
Common Sandpiper	5	2	2	6	3	2	6	8	3	1	1	
Green Sandpiper			1	1	1	2	3	3	1	4	1	
Greenshank		1			1							
Redshank	1	1	2		1	4	1					
Grey Phalarope							1			1		



On the Coast

Using the same ten-day counting method as for CVL above, the table below delineates the autumn coastal wader migration at the two best-watched coastal sites – Severnside and CI-Y.

Autumn wader migration on the coast													
		Jul			Aug			Sep			Oct		
		1-10	11-20	21-30	31-9	10-19	20-29	30-8	9-18	19-28	29-8	9-18	19-28
Little Ringed Plover	CI-Y	1			1								
	SS				2			3					
Ringed Plover	SS			2	150	200	260	60	81				
	CI-Y		1		6	260	230	300	5	2	5		10
Golden Plover	SS										6	11	
	CI-Y							1					
Grey Plover	SS								1	5	16	1	
	CI-Y					1	1				2		
Knot	SS					2	2	30	4	16	1	3	3
	CI-Y		2		1	13	1	9	20	15	1	1	7
Sanderling	SS	1	3			4	3	4					
	CI-Y				1			1					
Little Stint	SS				1			1		7	3	3	2
	CI-Y							1					
Curlew Sandpiper	SS								6	6			
	CI-Y				5				1		1		
Dunlin	SS		36		300	300	250	180	140	200	150	450	nc
	CI-Y	9	11		36	130	80	300	16		60	90	40
Ruff	SS								1	1			
Black-tailed Godwit	SS	2	10	2	3	15	13	3	1	2	3	2	1
	CI-Y		2		12	6		1			5	1	
Bar-tailed Godwit	SS						2	4	1				
	CI-Y							1	1				
Whimbrel	SS	3	3	5	6	1							
	CI-Y	2	5	1	7	3	2	1	3	1			
Common Sandpiper	SS	8	4	8	12	4		3	2	3			
	CI-Y	6	11	11	10	8	8		7		2		
Green Sandpiper	SS	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1				
	CI-Y		1		5	1	1						
Spotted Redshank	SS							1					
	CI-Y			1	1	1				1	1		
Greenshank	SS			1	1		1	3	1				1
	CI-Y	1			3	4		1	2	2	2		1

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Scarce spring passage migrant and storm-driven autumn/winter visitor. Only one inland record (at CVL in 1999).

Three records this year, all from Ladye Bay: single dark morph(s) on May 1st and 2nd and a pale morph on June 19th (RHu).

The committee has been made aware of a number of records of this species which have been reported on various local websites, but have not been submitted to the county recorder. Please remember that this species requires a description before publication - unsubstantiated records are not published in the Report (*Eds*).

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce/uncommon spring passage migrant and storm-driven visitor (mainly spring or autumn). Rare inland (mainly at CVL).

Twenty-five records this year, involving c.37 birds. Typically, most were in spring in the Estuary, although two pale morph adults at CVL on April 20th (DJA) were noteworthy.

	Apr				May								Jun		Aug		Sep		
	20	24	27	30	2	4	5	6	8	16	17	24	27	22	26	19	26	3	6
OPS							3												1
Severnside				1		1	3	2	1	1	1			1	1		1	1	1
Battery Pt					1														
Ladye Bay		2	1								1	3	3	1					
Sand Point							1												
Anchor Hd															3	1			
CVI	2																		

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Rare spring and autumn passage migrant, occasionally wind-driven.

A dark or intermediate morph juvenile flew down-channel with a juvenile Arctic Skua off OPS on Sept. 6th (AJM) and both were seen shortly afterwards, at 12.05hrs, off New Passage where they were very distant and probably in Gwent waters (JPM, BL). The birds had been observed moving down the Severn, passing Slimbridge at 11.20hrs and Sharpness from 11.30-11.34 hrs. Timings clearly indicated the same birds were involved in all these sightings.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua*

Scarce spring passage migrant and storm-driven visitor. Rare inland.

Just five records this year, probably involving only four birds:

Severnside – single birds on March 12th and Sept. 3rd;

Portishead – one on March 12th;

Ladye Bay – single birds on May 4th and June 3rd.

Skuas in the Avon area

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Pomarine Skua	2	7	1	0	0	59	4	3	13	3
Arctic Skua	19	17	34+	45+	54	65	23	50+	51	37
Long-tailed Skua	1			1						1
Great Skua	1	5+	11+	16+	16	26	10	26+	13	4
Skua sp.	2	1	3	1	1	58	11	6	7	

Total number of skuas for the last ten years

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Usually a storm-driven visitor; uncommon, but large flocks sometimes occur in the Estuary. Scarce inland, usually only at CVL.

Recorded on 23 dates this year. As usual, Severnside produced the best numbers during high winds in the spring. Records from elsewhere were less frequent than usual; not even CVL managed to produce one this year.

	Jan							Feb		Mar						
	1	7	10	14	8	21	31	26	29	1	10	11	12	21	23	28
OPS										9						
Severnside	90	9	3	7	80	90	90	18	50		100	140	120	17	170	125
Ladye Bay											80					

	Apr				May	Jun	Aug			Sep	Nov			Dec
	1	10	11	24	5	3	10	12	13	11	7	9	11	5
OPS														
Sevenside	5	40	120	16			3	1	1			200		
Battery Pt	3													
RPD														1
Ladye Bay											19	250	400	
Anchor Hd						18								
Sand Point					9									

The ten year table below summarises the sightings at the main site – Sevenside.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Av. of 3 highest counts	266	157	53	317	303	263	166	416	88	170
No. of dates recorded	23	22	27	36	22	30	29	22	27	23

Sevenside – data over last ten years

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers of non-breeding birds remain throughout the summer. Huge winter roost at CVL.

Our commonest gull, widely reported throughout the area.

Sizeable counts from the regularly monitored sites are shown below; note that flooding in the winter months provided some excellent feeding conditions – cf. CI-Y in December and Somerdale in January. The OPS counts are mainly of birds roosting on the tidal reservoir.

Widely distributed flocks of several hundred were also received from a number of inland sites.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	4000	3500	250	2	6	22	600	500	1000	467	180	6000
Littleton Warth	110	1	60				365	340	550	195	800	950
Sevenside			25		17		280			170		
CI-Y	150	250	45	1	4	35	300	450	700	550	200	2400
Sand Bay							400		750	100	330	20
Axe Estuary	450	62	48			111	334	525	400	212	115	675
Weston STW	140	59	1	3	7	88	330	404	512	369	350	115
ASW		80				6	60	2	35	50	140	120
Sea Mills	1300	400	600	35			63	149	800	40	1000	800
Somerdale area	3000		1300			1						
BG	850	700	1200									
BL	2350	750	113	150	6	5	100	52	1500	1650	186	12

Other records

Records were again received of small flocks (90 and 120) hawking flying ants over Weston-s-Mare on July 22nd and 23rd.

The first juvenile of the summer was one at Severn Beach on June 25th, followed by two at New Passage on 29th, and others at CVL and CI-Y on 30th. An albino was seen at CVL on Feb. 1st.

A dead bird recovered at Nunnery Point, CVL on March 29th was found to be wearing a Danish ring; remarkably, it was found to be over 23 years old, having been ringed as a nestling at Alborg (Jylland) on 28th June, 1984 (RMA).

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus**Uncommon passage migrant; scarce in winter.*

The table shows eleven records from seven sites, with the CVL records summarised in the second table. This year, a number of birds lingered at CVL during March, and a decent spring passage (by recent standards) followed, with a peak of ten off Ladye Bay on May 4th. Once again, autumn passage was very poor; five or six were all that was reported.

	Mar	Apr		May			Jul		Sep		
	12	1	21	4	6	8	8	13	14	20	21
Severnside			1		2	3					
Battery Pt		1									
Ladye Bay				10							
CI-Y											1
Axe Est	1										
Weston STW							1	1		1	
BG									1		

Summary for CVL								
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	:	Sep	Oct
No. of days recorded	3	10	20	12	9		8	2
Maximum count	2	1	3	9	3		1	1

The ten year table summarises sightings at the main site – CVL.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Av. of 3 highest counts Jan - Jun	7	1	1	1	13	2	2	5	3	6
Av. of 3 highest counts Jul - Dec	1	1	1	15	1	3	1	2	5	1

CVL – average counts

FRANKLIN'S GULL *Larus pipixan**Very rare Nearctic vagrant*

A fine series of records of a single bird which toured Avon for nine weeks during the first part of the year. As with the last record in Avon (in 2000), this bird was also seen in other counties prior to, and after our records.

At CVL, a second-winter was found at Herriott's Pool on Jan. 19th (JCCO). It was discovered there independently the following afternoon by KEV, who was unaware of the previous day's sighting. Much to the relief of the CVL locals, the bird reappeared on a number of occasions as follows: Jan. 29th to 31st (RL, RMi *et al.*), Feb. 12th to 17th (AHD, RMi *et al.*), then again on March 23rd, 24th, 27th and 28th (RMA *et al.*). This was the first record for the lake of this long-predicted species – see photograph opposite page 64.

The same bird was also seen at RPD on March 15th and 16th (CJS *et al.*), at Somerdale from March 18th to 23rd (JA *et al.*), then at BL on March 26th (NRM). Remarkably, it was the second to be recorded on the floods at Somerdale, the first being a second-summer in April 2000.

It was first seen in Somerset, at Torr Res, on Jan. 13th (and was again there on March 25th) and was later seen in Gloucestershire, at Newnham-on-Severn, on April 7th.

The fourth Avon record; previous records were at Severn Beach in May 1984, at Chittening Warth in June 1988 and at Keynsham in April 2000.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus**Uncommon, but increasing winter visitor and passage migrant.*

Another good year; recorded at 23 sites (the same number as 2007), with birds seen in every month. A good spread of predominantly coastal records was received for the summer/early autumn months, with the customary dip in October before the winter numbers pick up again in November and December.

Monthly maxima at every site in 2008												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS							2					
Littleton Warth							1					
Severnside	1		2	1	2		1	2	3		2	1
Avonmouth Docks							2					
ASW	1	1					1					1
RPD	3	1	2						1	4	2	3
PW			1									
Portishead area	1	1				2	2	4	3		1	1
Ladye Bay					1						2	
Sand Bay			1			1						
Axe Estuary/Weston Bay			1			2		1				
Weston STW						1			1			
Marshfield											1	
Redwick				1								
Durdham Down	1											
Westbury-on-Trym		1										
R. Avon (Sea Mills/Lamplighters)	1	1	1						1		2	
Burnett									1			
R. Avon (Keynsham)			1									
Somerdale	2	4	3									
BG										1	1	
CVL	4	7	6				3	2		2	3	2
BL			1					1				

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer. Largest flocks are usually on upland or flooded fields and are often thinly spread elsewhere. Huge winter roost at CVL.

As usual, most records were thinly spread, as this species leads a nomadic life in winter, only appearing in numbers where suitable feeding conditions are found. Such was the case in January in the Somerdale area, when flooded playing fields produced big numbers, with counts of 2500 on Jan. 14th, and 5000 on 23rd. Otherwise, generally under-recorded, with a few flocks being reported around the area, most of which were only single or double-figure counts. The OPS figures were for roost gatherings on the tidal reservoir. The CVL roost contained the usual 18000 or so during both winter periods.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	1000	1500	200		1		6	2	8	13	28	300
Littleton Warth	1	3	1					2	1		5	4
Severnside	55	80	30	2	17		1			6	8	70
Axe Estuary	4	2	1					1			1	
Weston STW	1								1	1		
Sea Mills	16	5	6								2	2
Marshfield area	1000	100	750								100	
Somerdale & area	5000		200			1						
BL	151	63	91						3	3	34	95

Other records of Common Gull

Aberrant birds recorded at CVL as follows – a white individual was seen in the roost on Jan. 12th, 14th, 20th, 21st, 30th and March 2nd; a leucistic first-winter on Feb. 21st, 24th and March 2nd (also seen at Somerdale on Jan.18th), and an adult with the primaries on its left wing resembling those of a Kumlien's Gull on March 4th (previously seen on Feb. 17th, 2007).

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*

Scarce Nearctic vagrant. Most records are from CVL; occasionally in winter, but nowadays one or two are expected to appear in the gull roost during spring passage in February or March. Very rare on the coast, and in summer.

A rather typical year, with five records, four of which were from the CVL roost as follows: adults on Jan. 6th (RMi, KEV), Feb. 17th (RJH), and Nov. 23rd (KEV), and one at Herriott's Pool on Dec. 20th (RMA, AHD, KEV *et al.*).

In addition, an adult was photographed at Shortwood landfill tip on Feb. 27th and 28th (PR *per* South Glos Birding).

Most of the birds seen each year at Chew are adults picked out at long range in the 50,000-plus gull roost, and often several months pass between records. Unless the birds are observed at very close range, or are seen very regularly and/or develop some sort of pattern of observation, it's impossible to be sure if any of the sightings relate to the same bird or not. For example, this year's CVL records could all relate to the same individual, or there could have been up to four different birds seen. On some occasions, two birds have been seen together, so it's clear that different individuals do occur at the lake. It is also possible, indeed likely, that individual adults return in consecutive winters. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the figures given for this species in the table below.

Rare gulls in the Avon area

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Sabine's Gull	1		2+			2	1		1	
Laughing Gull	1							1		
Franklin's Gull		1								1
Ring-billed Gull	1		2	2	3+	3+			2+	3+
Caspian Gull				2		1		2	1	1
Iceland Gull	1	6		3	1		1	3+	1	2
Kumlien's Gull				1	1	1	1	1		
Glaucous Gull		1	1	2				1		1

Total number of rare gulls for the last ten years

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Western race *L. f. graellsii*:

Common winter visitor, passage migrant and breeding resident. In addition to the colony on Steep Holm, there are large urban colonies in Bristol and Bath and in towns along the Severn Estuary.

Maxima at the closely-monitored sites are shown below. As with Herring Gull, despite there being some of the biggest colonies in the south-west in our cities, inland numbers away from the breeding sites were generally small.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	20	42	15	5	17	8	13	13	100	1	2	50
Littleton Warth	1		1	2	2	1		8	2	3	8	44
CI-Y	2	2	8	4	6	4	6	6	2	55	8	6
Axe Estuary	4	9	6	24		16	24	20	13	169	8	14
Weston STW	1	2	14	61	37	13	41	27	16	6	2	
Sea Mills	7	5	24	6	2		2	7	9	10	13	5
BL	59	87	561	91		7	6	46	105	34	9	

Other notes:

At Stokes Croft (Bristol) on July 29th, an adult caught a Feral Pigeon, and then flew off with it in its bill. The gull was unable to hold the pigeon, which was dropped and managed to make its escape. This behaviour has been recorded in Bristol previously, when an adult was seen to kill Feral Pigeons in the Bedminster area.

Breeding:

As usual, a few casual records of breeding pairs in Bristol were submitted, but no records were received from the Steep Holm colony this year.

Scandinavian race *L. f. intermedius*:

Winter visitor and passage migrant; almost certainly overlooked.

Individuals recorded as *intermedius* this year were single adults at Somerdale on March 24th and Dec. 13th, and at CVL on Jan. 31st and Nov. 19th.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Western race *L. a. argenteus*:

Common winter visitor, passage migrant and breeding resident; largest numbers occur near the coast, or around Bristol and Bath. In addition to the colony on Steep Holm, there are large urban colonies in Bristol and Bath and in towns along the Estuary.

Despite breeding at many sites in the cities, inland counts are never particularly large.

Monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	50	46	10	7	24	12	11	6	100	15		100
Littleton Warth	18	1	1		5	1		15	12	3	8	160
ASW	2	16		40		5	10			1	24	
CI-Y	5	10	60	50	30	15	4	30	20	12	4	6
Axe Estuary	6	90	10	240		17	19	16	31	104	28	46
Weston STW	90	91	143	266	162	12	41	21	28	8	13	27
Leap Valley, Downend	6	5	5	9	3		3	8	3	38	34	18
R. Avon (Sea Mills area)	1	2	2					1	2		4	1
BL	25	8	27	6	1		1	8	76	21	3	

Breeding:

No counts were received from any of the urban or Steep Holm colonies this year.

Scandinavian race *L. a. argentatus*:

Uncommon winter visitor; infrequently recorded.

More records were received of this race than usual, as listed below (all adults unless stated):

ASW – one on Jan. 2nd;

Shortwood Tip – at least four on Jan. 8th, two on 9th, four (two adults, first and second-winters) on 16th, two (adult and third-winter) on Feb. 8th;

Charlton Field – one on April 18th;

CVL – one on Jan. 9th, two on 17th; one on Feb. 9th; a third calendar-year on 12th; one seen on 17th had a normal primary pattern consistent with *argentatus* on its right wing, but an aberrant pattern (very reduced black only on P10 – P7) on its left wing.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Uncommon passage migrant, summer visitor and winter visitor; most occur in the autumn at CVL, but now increasingly recorded elsewhere.

A pretty uneventful year for this species. Recorded at eleven sites, with a typical small late summer peak at the reservoirs:

Yellow-legged Gull cont.

Monthly maxima at each site												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS							1					
Severnside					1						1	1
ASW	1											
PW									1			
Axe Estuary			1									
Shortwood Tip		2										
Somerdale			1									
Charlton Field			1									
BG			1		1	1	1	1		1	1	
CVL	3	2		1	1	3	4	5	3	3	1	1
BL	1		1		1	2	3	2	1	1	1	1

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Rare/very scarce passage migrant/winter visitor.

A first-winter was seen in the CVL roost on Oct. 10th (KEV).

There are six previous Avon records. First recorded in 2002 when one was seen at CVL in September with another at Harnhill Tip in December, then one at CVL in September 2004, two here in January and February 2006, and a first-winter in January and February 2007.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Scarce/very scarce winter visitor; occurs more frequently than *Glaucous Gull*.

Two records:

CVL - a juvenile/first-winter on the late date of May 2nd (DJA, AHD, RMI);

Severn Beach - a second-winter on Nov.3rd (RFR).

During the past twenty years, and excluding the Kumlien's Gull records, this species has been recorded eleven times with six in the first part of 2000.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Very scarce winter visitor

One record: a juvenile/first-winter was seen in the roost at CVL on Feb. 9th and 15th (KEV, RMI, JT *et al.*).

During the past twenty years there have been only seven records for this species in the Avon area with single juvenile or immature birds at Aust in March 1991, at CVL in March 1995 and December 2000, at the Axe Estuary in April 2001, at CVL in March 2002 with another at Northwick Warth in December, and at CVL again in December 2006.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Uncommon breeding resident - breeds in small numbers on Steep Holm. Generally uncommon elsewhere (perhaps surprisingly so); seldom recorded inland away from the reservoirs.

Again, the reservoirs produced the majority of the records this year; they do seem to be becoming more frequent here than they were a few years ago, the increase perhaps being related to the introduction of pike in 1993/94, dead ones of which provide a reliable food source.

Notable this year are records from Chew Magna Res. (Nov. 18th – probably a site first), over Leap Valley (Downend) on Dec. 7th (only the second record for the site), and Litton (Dec. 12th).

Monthly maxima at each site												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OPS	3	9	6	2	3	2	6	4	3	3	2	3
Littleton Warth				1					1		3	3
Severnside	3	2	4	2		1		2	4	1		2
Portbury Wharf					3							
Portishead		5	1									
Cl-Y	1	1	4	2	1	2	1			2	2	2
Sand Bay											1	
Axe Estuary	1	2		2		1	1	1				1
Weston STW			2	2	3			3				
Leap Valley, Downend												1
R. Avon (Shirehampton-Cumberland Basin)	3	4							2		2	3
R. Avon (Bristol)	2	2										1
BG	1	1	4	1	2	1	1	2	3	3	3	2
Chew Magna Res											1	
CVL	3	2	3	6	7	8	5	8	5	4	3	4
BL	4	3	2	4	7	3	2	4	4	2	2	2
Litton											1	

Breeding:

No records were received from the Steep Holm colony this year.

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Scarce/uncommon passage migrant; most records are from the coast. Generally the scarcest of the five 'common' terns.

Eight records this year (15 birds) of a species which is now no longer considered by the recorder's committee:

OPS – two down-channel on Aug. 20th (MP);

Severn Beach – single birds on April 24th, May 7th and 8th and two on 26th (PDB, RFR);

Layde Bay – five on May 6th, and two on 11th (RHu);

CVL – one on July 25th (AJMu, JPM, RMi *et al.*).

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Uncommon passage migrant; most frequent in the autumn when occasional influxes occur. Most records are from CVL.

A year of two halves. An excellent spring passage took place from April 26th to May 25th, with a total of at least 67 recorded.

In contrast, autumn passage was weak, the only highlight being a flock of 40 at Severn Beach on Sept. 5th. Of note in the tables below is a return to form for Severnside, which posted a nil-return in 2007:

	Apr			May										
	26	27	30	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	11	16	18	25
Severnside							3	4	12					
Battery Pt					3									
Ladye Bay			2			3	1				1		8	
Sand Point								3	1					
CVL	2	2		1			3			10		1		
BL								2						3
BG							3							

Summary for CVL						
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of days recorded	8	16	2	9	17	9
Maximum count	7	27	5	5	37	50

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Av. of 3 highest counts Apr -Jun	6	6	33	11	28	3	11	20	5	17
Av. of 3 highest counts Jul -Nov	28	15	24	37	24	37	9	35	6	38
No. days recorded (total for year)	48	30	51	43	35	27	32	44	53	61

Usually an uncommon passage migrant, but can occasionally occur in large flocks in the Estuary under favourable conditions in spring; otherwise generally occurs in smaller numbers than Common Tern. Often occurs after westerly gales.

Autumn passage was reasonable, with good counts of 18 at CVL on Sept. 5th, and 43 here on Sept. 9th during a spell of wind and heavy rain.

Of note was a first-summer at CVL on June 30th and July 1st (AHD, KEV *et al.*).

[illegible]

COMMON/ARCTIC TERN *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*

Unidentified Common or Arctic Terns were recorded as shown in the table below. Most of this year's spring passage consisted of birds too far away to identify as they flew up the Estuary:

	Apr			May												
	20	27	30	3	4	6	7	8	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19
Severnside	40	5			33	13	160	12	5	25			41	25	40	17
Ladye Bay			100	1	6			25			25	1		75		

Unidentified birds in autumn were as follows;

OPS – 40 on Aug. 17th;

Ladye Bay – 50 on Sept. 11th and 25 on 12th;

BG – 10 on July 15th.

Autumn migration at CVL

Autumn migration at CVL												
	Jul			Aug			Sep			Oct		
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-9	10-19	20-29	30-8	9-18	19-28	29-8	9-18	19-28
Little Gull							1	1			1	
Little Tern			1									
Black Tern		1		14	1		10	6				
Common Tern		1	5	11	27	6	37	50				
Arctic Tern	1				2		4	43				

COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Scarce storm-driven visitor throughout the year; no inland records prior to 2008.

Only three birds this year, two of which unfortunately met a similar fate.

One was seen at Ladye Bay on June 22nd.

A headless corpse was found at Northwick Warth on Sept. 23rd, and one was seen alive on the R. Avon underneath the Clifton Suspension Bridge on Oct. 12th (ED). An exceptional record away from the Estuary, of one which was clearly in very poor condition. It was found dead later that day.

1950 – 2004 AJP has provided a number of unpublished records from Steep Holm, as shown below. Note the large count of twelve on July 13th, 1969:

April 10th and 11th, 1950 (one); June 11th, 1962 (one); May 14th, 1967 (four); July 13th, 1969 (twelve); Sept. 26th, 1971 (one); May 6th, 1972 (one); June 5th, 1977 (one); June 6th, 1981 (two); March 9th, 1990 (one, dead on the beach); Oct. 5th, 2004 (one, dead on the beach).

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Very scarce storm-driven visitor throughout the year; no inland records.

There were no records for 2008.

1935 – 2006 AJP has provided a number of previously unpublished historical records from Steep Holm, which are given below. As with the previous species, most were seen during the breeding season:

June 23rd, 1935 (two); June 12th, 1936 (two); May 12th, 1951 (one); Aug. 16th, 1959 (one); May 28th, 1961 (one); June 27th and 29th, 1964 (one); Oct. 2nd, 1965 (one); June 11th, 1967 (three); Sept. 26th, 1971 (one); July 1st, 1972 (one); June 26th, 1979 (two); May 26th, 2001 (one) and June 15th, 2006 (one).

COMMON GUILLEMOT/RAZORBILL *Uria aalge/Alca torda*

1963 – 1987 No records for 2008 but historical records from Steep Holm were received as follows:

Aug. 27th, 1963 (one); May 15th, 1983 (one); and May 30th, 1987 (four).

Unusual Terns and Auks in the Avon area

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Little Tern	5	4	6+	2+	16	6	1	26	4	15
White-winged Black Tern				1			1			
Sandwich Tern	14	12	23+	20	86	13	6	21	4	35
Roseate Tern			1							
Guillemot	2	9	6	10	8	8	1	11	4	3
Razorbill			2	2		1	1	2		
Guillemot/Razorbill	1	4	25	16	3				1	
Little Auk			1	1				2	1	
Puffin				2						

Total number of unusual terns and auks for the past ten years.

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia* var

Introduced, common to abundant resident, mostly found in urban areas.

	WBC	WGS	CABS	WBC	England 96-06
% Change	-37	2	8	-37	-5

Survey results suggest a noticeable decline. The winter results of two years of Bird Atlas surveying suggest a decline locally in the last 30 years, both in numbers (which may have halved) and distribution.

The only three figure flocks in 2008 were in Keynsham in December, with 130 on 7th and 200 on 16th. The regular flock at Five Arches, Radstock peaked at 78 on Nov. 6th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	136	148	161	155	180	138	128	128	87

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100

2008 BBS distribution 37%. Breeding population in Bristol estimated at 1300 pairs.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Fairly common but declining breeding resident.

Population change in England 1996-2006: down 2%.

Widespread in small numbers. Bird Atlas surveying suggests a substantial decline locally over the last 30 years. Numbers may have dropped to less than a quarter of their former level and distribution may have reduced by about half.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
n/c	9+	11	16	22	17	30	33	90	73

Number of sites

Flocks The largest flock reported was of 106 at Marshfield on the late date of May 14th with another flock of 47 nearby. Good numbers, 30+, at OPS in October and December.

Breeding No records received. Observers are encouraged to report breeding of this species.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	98	86	74	63	52	60	66	56	65

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100 2008 BBS distribution 25%.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus**Abundant and increasing breeding resident.*

	WBC	WGS	CABS	WBC	England 96-06
% Change	23	22	-28	9	31

An average year.

January to May Large flocks noted as follows; 300 at R. Avon, Keynsham on late date of May 8th, 200 at Marshfield on March 9th, 200 at Keynsham STW on Feb. 2nd, 170 at Avon Valley CP on Jan. 22nd, 150 at Pixash Lane, Keynsham on Feb. 17th, and 100 at BL on Feb. 1st.

Breeding As usual very few records submitted; 14 nests at CVL, probably three pairs on Steep Holm, two nests at Leap Valley, Downend, a recently fledged juvenile at Pill on March 29th, broken egg shell at BL on Aug. 10th, and a bird still sitting on a nest in Nailsea on Sept. 23rd.

Migrants The only records of significant movements were 77 over Leap Valley, Downend on Oct. 25th and c. 600 moving to SE in two flocks over Wrington Hill in November. However there were good numbers at Weston STW during August, peaking at 164, and 150 at Burnett on Oct. 14th may have been migrants.

June to December Some large flocks in December - 450 at R. Avon, Keynsham on 7th (with up to 115 here in November), 440 at Parks Farm, Tormarton on 10th, 350 at OPS on 31st (with 300 here in Nov. 1st), 250 at Compton Dando on 9th and 200+ at Whidcombe Brake, near Chelwood on 6th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	101	116	130	130	133	134	141	142	139

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100

BBS distribution 100%. BBS population estimate 19,000 breeding pairs

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto**Common breeding resident.*

	WBC	WGS	CABS	WBC	England 96 - 06
% Change	-18	10	-18	-11	24

There are suggestions of a small decline locally.

The largest reported flocks were: 27 in January at both Nailsea Holy Trinity Church on 23rd and Wick St. Lawrence, perched on a phone line by Ebdon Farm, on 27th, 30 again at Nailsea Holy Trinity Church on Oct. 15th and 25 by R. Avon, Keynsham on Nov. 22nd.

Breeding The only reports received were: a pair nest building in Bedminster on Jan. 7th, a pair mating at Filton on Jan. 30th, a nest at Leap Valley, Downend on Feb. 24th and a juvenile in Yatton on June 2nd.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	117	124	131	145	139	119	120	107	96

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100

2008 BBS distribution 72%. BBS population estimate 3500 breeding pairs

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur**Scarce passage migrant. Last breeding record in 1983.*

Population change in England 1996 - 2006: down 57%.

As has become normal there were again low numbers with only two records of single birds as follows:

Sand Bay – May 29th, photographed (PAB);

Marshfield – flew to S on Sept. 12th (RL).

The average number of individuals each year in the ten year period 1989 to 1998 was 12 but the last year with a double figure count was as long ago as 1994.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of bird-days	3+	6	2	3	3	10+	5	7	2	2
No. of individuals	3+	6	2	3	3	1	2	3	2	2

Total annual bird-days and number of individuals

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Status uncertain, some records may refer to wanderers from the substantial home counties feral population.

More records than normal with single birds noted as follows:

OPS – flew over calling on April 16th;

New Passage – April 16th (seen 90 minutes prior to the above individual at OPS);

Clevedon – on a nut feeder in a garden on Feb. 17th, 18th and 19th;

Wains Hill, CI-Y – April 6th;

Keynsham area – reported from three different localities, on May 6th, June 3rd and June 23rd;

Whitchurch – flew over calling on Aug. 24th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Uncommon and declining (since early 1980s) spring migrant and breeding summer visitor. Very scarce after July.

Nationally it is Amber Listed (moderate decline) but the latest data meet the Red Listing criteria (rapid decline).

Population change in England 1996 - 2006: down 46%.

Probably an average year by recent standards but fewer than recorded in 2007; mainly single birds were recorded from a total of 26 sites.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of bird-days	105+	102	38	66	93	74	97	75	100	74
No. of records	96	86	32	58	87	69	78	63	98	70

Total bird-days and records

First noted at OPS on April 13th (*cf.* 6th in 2005, 12th in 2006 and 11th in 2007). There was then a gap until 20th (at Shirehampton) and 22nd (at CVL).

The last, and the only record in July, was of a juvenile at Cribbs Causeway on July 17th - it flew across the road and landed on the crash barrier of a roundabout.

	April	May	June	July	September
Bird-days	15 (39)	49 (43)	9 (16)	1 (0)	0 (5)
Records	15 (35)	45 (43)	9 (15)	1 (0)	0 (5)
Sites	10 (17)	17 (19)	9 (9)	1 (0)	0 (1)

Month-by-month breakdown of bird-days, records and sites (2007 in brackets)

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Breeding resident, uncommon after long-term decline, but slowly recovering locally in recent years and benefiting from conservation effort in several areas.

A total of 115 records from 35 sites was received - a good number, the second highest in the last decade, but the number of sites was only average by recent standards.

Regularly seen at the following sites (in alphabetical order): BL, Congresbury Moor, Herons Green CVL and Weston STW.

One at BG on Jan. 3rd was, surprisingly, the first record for the site. Pellets found at Flax Bourton on Jan. 21st contained the remains of both Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens* and Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*.

Breeding In NS two pairs bred raising seven young; in BA two pairs raised five young. Again no information was received in respect of the Cam Valley population.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of records	56	38	24	65	88	93	94	119	91	115
No. of sites	n/c	25	20	30	35	38	43	44	26	35

Barn Owl - total number of records and sites per year

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Introduced in the 19th century. Fairly common breeding resident.

UK 25-yr change: - 46%.

There was a number of reports of a local decline, for example the species has all but disappeared from CVL, where previously it was a regular breeder. However the 135 records received was in line with the recent average and the 65 sites was the highest in the last decade.

By way of comparison 20 years ago, in the 1988 Report, there were 289 records and a report, probably exaggerated, of 32 pairs breeding in the Gordano Valley. The preliminary results of the Bird Atlas surveying suggest a significant decline locally in the last 30 years.

Although records in 2008 were from a wide scatter of localities, birds were only regularly reported from three sites; Queen Charlton, OPS and Wrington.

Breeding The only records were from Dundry, of two pairs around the village, and Droveaway, near Sandford, where two possible juveniles were heard calling in July.

The Bath Peregrines took birds in February and March.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of records	134	149	94	141	126	128	114	147	134	139
No. of sites	n/c	64	39	47	58	48	48	49	46	66

Total number of records and sites per year

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Fairly common breeding resident.

UK 25-yr change: - 25%.

An average year with total of 213 records from 81 sites.

A pair was watched apparently hunting in tandem, flying in mirror formation up and down the opposite sides of a beech tree, at Claverton Down at 0610 hrs on Dec. 1st.

Breeding Little evidence submitted, the only records were from Beacon Hill, Bath (young squeaking on July 16th), CVL (pair at Nunnery point), Dundry (two pairs around the village), Langford (calling juvenile on June 29th) and Leigh Woods (two young calling).

Counts The highest count was again from Wrington with eight recorded on Oct. 10th.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of records	136	149	124	145	125	227	220	235	293	213
No. of sites	n/c	65	50	55	54	66	89	57	95	81

Total number of records and sites per year

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Scarce/very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Very rare in summer, bred successfully in 1991.

Two records of single birds:

Aust Warth – Feb. 6th and 9th (PDB, ADS *et al.*);

CVL – June 4th, photographed (JA *et al.*). There was a June record from this site in 2006.

The table on the next page shows the records for the last ten years.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of individuals seen	1	3	2	3	3	0	0	2	1	2
Number of individuals seen										

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly on the coast.

An excellent year with a total of 186 records representing 260 bird-days (*cf.* 56 records and 105 bird-days in 2005, 79 records and 100 bird-days in 2006 and 102 records and 100 bird-days in 2007). Most of the records came from Aust Warth, where the resident birds in both winter periods proved particularly popular. On several occasions when a number of birds were present, some aggressive behaviour including rasping calls and feet clashing was noted.

First winter period :

OPS – one on Feb. 2nd and 23rd, March 9th, April 6th, 13th, 16th and 20th and May 2nd and 3rd. Two different birds in April;

Aust Warth – a maximum of two birds present, recorded on 14 dates in January, 13 in February, ten in March and four in April;

Severn Beach – two of Feb. 10th with one on March 9th, 10th and 25th and April 6th and 15th;

Chittening Warth – one on April 10th and May 9th;

Cl-Y – one on Jan. 1st and 9th, Feb. 12th and March 2nd, 13th and 14th;

R. Axe – two on Feb. 28th, one on March 25th and 30th and two on May 4th;

Weston STW – in January five on 3rd, two on 11th and three on 19th, single on Feb. 17th, in March one on 18th and two on 30th, in April three on 8th and 23rd, two on 15th and 20th and one on 13th, 16th and 25th and one on May 1st.

There were also inland records from Marshfield (single birds on April 3rd and 15th).

An unusual summer record came from Aust Warth of a bird seen on June 12th, 13th and 14th.

The first record of the autumn was inland at Marshfield, one on Sept. 28th. Another inland record came from CVL on Oct. 30th.

Second winter period :

Aust Warth – recorded on 13 dates in October (maximum of two), 22 dates in November (maximum of four on 20th and 22nd), and 25 dates in December (maximum of five on 7th with four on 8th, 9th, 17th and 23rd);

Severn Beach – one on Oct. 16th and 19th and Nov. 1st;

Chittening Warth – one on Dec. 28th.

Monthly breakdown												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	:	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	2008 (2007)
Records	25	23	24	23	6	3		1	21	25	35	186 (102)
Bird-days	31	25	23	28	6	3		1	22	50	71	260 (100)
Max. count	5	2	2	3	2	1		1	2	4	5	5 (5)

2007 – a late record of one at BG on Sept. 5th was the first record for the site (see also Barn Owl).

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Very scarce passage migrant and occasional breeding summer visitor.

A poor year. The only reports were from Burrington (one on June 12th and a male on July 27th) and nearby Rod's Pot on the Somerset border (a male churring in Avon on July 22nd).

No birds were trapped this year despite three attempts.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Churring males	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	2	3	1
No. of reports	3	3	0	1	0	6	1	8	5	3

SWIFT *Apus apus**Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.*

Population change in England 1996 - 2006: down 25%.

Ten-yr av. first date April 17th. Ten-yr av. last date Sept. 9th.

Arrival The first were single birds at CVL on April 16th and BL on 17th; on 18th there were 10+ at CVL. By 20th records came from Severn Beach and BG and by 26th birds were widespread, including sites in Bristol, and there were 500 at CVL.

Regular monitoring at Montrose Avenue, Redland showed the first bird arriving on April 25th; the next morning there were 16, and in the evening 131 were counted in 75 minutes.

Summer flocks Numbers were high at CVL for the last few days of April, with 3,000 on 30th, and during May with 4,000 on 1st, 1,000 on 19th/20th and 5,000 on 26th, while at BL there were 500 on 16th May. In June the numbers at CVL continued with 3,000 on 12th, 1,000 on 13th, 1,500 on 21st and 1,000 on 27th; during the first week of July there were 2,000 at CVL.

Breeding There was a number of reports of a poor year; Stoke Bishop, where none bred for the first time in many years, Leap Valley, Downend with all months being reported as below the five-year median, and Bishop Sutton, where the breeding population was down on previous years, possibly by as much as 75%. BBS data suggests a decline in the local breeding population over the last four years to half the previous level.

In Montrose Avenue, Redland five pairs nested, at least three of which were definitely successful, with fledging around July 24th. In Church Road, Hanham there were four pairs, with arrival on April 27th and departure on Aug. 15th. In Oldfield Place, Hotwells three pairs nested, with arrival on May 5th.

Departure Most departed during mid August, although there was still 1,000 at CVL on 16th. The last double figure count for August was 25 at CVL on 20th. There were four records during September; one at CVL on 3rd, three at Warmley on 7th, two at Dundry on 14th and one over Steep Holm on 19th.

The Bath Peregrines took one in July.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	95	89	82	107	98	72	64	69	52

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100

2008 BBS distribution 61%. BBS population estimate 2000 pairs

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis**Fairly common breeding resident, distributed in small numbers on waters throughout the area.*

Population change in England 1996 - 2006: up 24%.

An excellent year, probably the best in the last decade, with records from 95 sites.

January to March records came from 26 sites (*cf.* 23 in 2004, 30 in 2005, 31 in 2006, and 33 in 2007) but regular records only came from CVL and Winford Brook. All records related to single birds apart from two at Upper Litton on Feb. 24th, Hollow Brook, CVL on March 1st, Winford Brook on March 9th and 25th and Wrington on March 13th.

Breeding Records for the period April to June came from 40 sites (*cf.* 17 in 2004, 13 in 2005, 16 in 2006, and 23 in 2007) but the only evidence of breeding was a juvenile at BL on Aug. 23rd and eight first years trapped and ringed at CVL during the summer. Two birds together were recorded from a further seven sites (*cf.* two in 2007).

As usual recorded more widely from July to the end of the year, with 55 sites (*cf.* 36 in 2004, 67 in 2005, 50 in 2006, and 53 in 2007). Regular reports of one or two came from BG, BL, CVL (where four seen on Oct. 5th and three on 14th), Frome Valley, Keynsham, Kenn Moor, New Passage, Portishead and Winford Brook.

Year.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of sites	n/c	46	36	52	n/c	56	86	74	80	95

Number of sites each year

BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster**Rare summer vagrant*

One record : Ladye Bay – one flying over calling on May 3rd (RHu, HT).

This is the seventh Avon area record. The last was in June 2002 at Wraxall.

HOOPOE *Upapa epops**Very scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn*

Three records involving two individuals, the first since 2004:

Sands Farm, Dyrham – April 11th and 12th (RL *et al.*, per JPM);

Aust Warth – at 0815hrs on April 27th (RWLB);

Severn Beach – at 0845hrs on April 27th (S&NB), presumed same as above.

The last records were in September 2002 from Norton Hawkfield, May 2003 from Weston STW and August 2004 from Yate. From 1973 to 1995 the species was recorded almost annually.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla**Very scarce autumn passage migrant. Very rare in spring.*

An exceptional autumn with six records. The records, of single birds unless otherwise stated, are listed below in date order:

Portishead – Aug. 31st., photographed in a garden (JCu);

Keynsham – Sept. 4th, photographed in a garden (RP, AHD, RMi *et al.*);

Kenn – Sept. 5th, photographed in a garden (J Croxton per TR);

Charlton Field – Sept. 12th - 19th, photographed (AHD, JA *et al.*);

Cl-Y – Sept 12th - 16th with two present on 13th and 14th, photographed (many observers);

Sand Pt – Sept 16th and 21st (PAB).

Year.	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of individuals	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	3	1	7

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis**Fairly common breeding resident, increasing nationally and probably locally.*

	WBC	WGS	CABS	WBC	England 96-06
% Change	0	-6	24	-3	+43

Another excellent year with a total of 524 records from 227 sites.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of records	215	223	137	165	323	236	333	231	529	524
No. of sites	n/c	87	63	75	127	103	127	93	235	227

Number of records and sites each year

Breeding There were 241 records from 130 sites during April, May and June (*cf.* 77 records from 57 sites in 2006 and 220 records from 132 sites in 2007), distributed as follows:

April – 91 records from 63 sites (*cf.* 26 sites in 2004, 61 in 2005, 30 in 2006 and 67 in 2007)

May – 87 records from 67 sites (*cf.* 17 sites in 2004, 53 in 2005, 21 in 2006 and 54 in 2007)

June – 63 records from 53 sites (*cf.* 6 sites in 2004, 36 in 2005, 14 in 2006 and 58 in 2007).

At CVL seven singing males were located (*cf.* five in 2006 and six in 2007), a pair nested in Sheep Wood, Westbury-on-Trym and young/juveniles were seen in a Clevedon garden (Sept. 9th), Leap Valley, Downend (two on Aug. 4th), Nailsea, Park Woods (July 26th), OPS (two on July 18th), a Thornbury garden, Weston-s-Mare, Milton Road Cemetery (four on July 3rd) and Wooscombe Bottom (July 23rd).

The Bath Peregrines took a Green Woodpecker in March.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	2007	2008
100	120	115	110	106	119	132	127	103	138

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100 2008 BBS distribution 57%.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Fairly common breeding resident increasing nationally and locally.

Population change in England 1996 - 2006: up 92%.

Another good year, with 372 records from 172 sites.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of records	280	142	113	226	172	149	339	193	415	372
No. of sites	n/c	62	53	66	76	77	173	80	191	172

Total number of records and sites per year

The regular pair in a Banwell garden were present for most of the year, only being absent between mid-August and late September.

Breeding

Drumming was recorded up to May 5th at 23 sites (*cf.* seven in 2004, 14 in 2005, 19 in 2006 and 28 in 2007). At CVL there were seven pairs (*cf.* six in 2005, seven in 2006 and ten pairs in 2007). Breeding was recorded from Banwell (two juveniles visiting the garden from June 7th and present for a total of eight weeks), BL (two juveniles), Coalpit Heath (juveniles being fed at nest on May 27th), Hay Wood, Elberton (nest with two calling young on April 24th), Kenn Moor (juvenile calling from nest hole on May 27th), Leap Valley, Downend (juvenile on July 26th) and Somerdale (nest in tree above the BMX track). Drumming was recorded again from Dec. 25th.

The Bath Peregrines took one in January; on Steep Holm a Peregrine killed another on Aug. 22nd.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	108	114	121	137	126	153	169	206	206

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100 2008 BBS distribution 44%.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

Uncommon, declining and elusive breeding resident. Last bred in 2003. Recently Red Listed because of rapid national decline.

Probably the worst year ever, with just two records, both from CVL, possibly relating to the same individual:

Heard calling and then seen in flight on May 3rd;

Adult male trapped and ringed on Sept. 21st.

Year	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
No. of bird-days	9	7	10+	16+	20+	3	7	3	3	2
No. of individuals	7	6	5	11	9	3	7	2	3	1

Total number of bird-days and individuals

SKY LARK *Alauda arvensis*

Declining common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

	WBC	BBS	WBC	Local 10 year	UK 25 yr
% Change	17	-23	-31	-14	-61

Winter 2007/08 There were some large flocks in the Marshfield area in January: with an exceptional 400 at Rushmead Farm on 6th; three other reports of between 100 and 180; and three more of between 50 and 60 (MH). Elsewhere in January there were 47 at OPS on 6th and five other flocks of between 10 and 22. Large numbers remained at Marshfield into February with two flocks, each of 200, at Lark Lane (!) and South Barn Fields, both on 18th. A total of 30 at Marshfield on March 1st was the last flock of the winter.

Breeding Still widespread with reports received from at least 62 localities in the breeding season. Only locally common, with larger counts of 24 singing males at Weston STW, 23 near Bodkin Hazel Wood, 19 at Charmy Down, 16 at West Littleton and lower double figure counts from a further seven sites in May and June. Some 14 including juveniles were at Cake Pill, Aust on July 27th. Scarce around CVL but two singing males were noted in the usual area behind the Northeast Shore.

Autumn/Winter The 15 noted at New Passage on Sept. 21st probably involved local breeding birds but 53 on Bleadon Level on Oct. 2nd and 30 at CI-Y on 17th presumably involved migrants. Visible migration was poor during October with peaks of just seven to SW at New Passage on 22nd and 16 to NW at OPS on 31st. Well-watched Leap Valley, Downend had an even poorer year than in 2007, with just two over on Oct. 26th. Numbers at Weston STW peaked at 51 in November. In December there were 80 at Flax Bourton and 18 on salt marsh at PW, both on 11th.

Peregrine victims were recorded at St John's Church, Bath in January (two), February (two), March (two) and May (one).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	91	78	66	71	75	95	86	88	86

Avon BBS Index 1999 = 100

BBS distribution 41%, BBS Avon population estimate, 5200 pairs

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

Very scarce passage migrant, rare in winter.

No records this year.

2007 One at PW on Nov. 5th (CJS). Recorded in only three of the previous ten years, all in late autumn: one record in October 2001, two records in November 2003 (including a party of six) and one record in October 2006 (four birds).

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Fairly common passage migrant; local and uncommon breeding summer visitor.

BBS distribution 2%. UK ten-yr change: down 46%.

Ten-yr av. first date: March 17th in 1970, 22nd by 1980, 12th today.

Ten-yr av. last date: Oct. 12th in 1970, 2nd by 1990, 3rd today. Days present: 209 in 1970, 199 in 1990, 207 today.

Arrival and passage The first was very early to N at Herriott's Pool, CVL on Feb. 23rd (RMA, RMC, RP). The previous earliest record for our area was on Feb. 25th, 1990. Ten were then at CVL on March 2nd after which they were regular here, increasing to 18 by 4th. March 15th saw a huge increase with 500 at CVL and others at BL (80), Portishead (20), OPS (three) and Flax Bourton (one). Numbers then fluctuated at CVL for the rest of the month with a peak of 750 on 20th and much smaller numbers were reported from other reservoirs and coastal sites during this period. Several days of cold wet weather produced a large build up in numbers at CVL in the first week of April with 2000 on 2nd and a peak of 7000 on 7th (KEV), a record count for the lake. 4000 were still present next day (RJH, DJN). Counts at BL around this time were much lower with up to 250, apart from an estimate of 2000 on 12th.

Coastal numbers in April were as always more modest but included 100 at Weston STW on 2nd, 120 at PW on 10th and 51 to NE in 3 hours on Severnside on 20th when there was also an influx of 80 at Weston STW. At CVL 1000 were still present on 17th and 500 on 20th but much lower counts thereafter. As always numbers tailed off rapidly in May and the last migrant was perhaps one to NE at Severn Beach on 17th.

Breeding Numbers at the regular site in Batheaston were noted as small, with only one active nest hole confirmed in late June. On the R. Avon at Keynsham up to seven adults were present in May and a fledged juvenile was noted in late June while adults regularly took food to a nest hole. Three pairs bred in a newly created 'nesting wall' at BG, one of which was successful and raised three young. The site was occupied in mid-May the day after the structure was put in place!

Return passage and departure One was at CVL on June 13th with eight by 26th and 25 on July 7th. A handful was noted on the coast from mid-July and numbers at CVL peaked at 35 on 10th. Passage in August went almost unnoticed with low single figures at a few sites with CVL being the only exception when there were three figure counts from 12th to 19th with a peak of 180 on 17th.

CVL dominated again in September where 1000 were present on 3rd, 500 on 5th and 9th but very few thereafter. Otherwise there were low single figures at five other sites until 14th. Then twelve were on Steep Holm on Sept. 19th and three here on 24th, followed by a gap of eleven days to the last two at CVL on Oct. 4th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common to abundant passage migrant and common breeder.

UK 25-yr change: down 2%. Local ten-yr change: down 14%.

Ten-yr av. first date: March 28th in 1970, April 1st by 1975, March 19th by 1995, and 21st today.

Ten-yr av. last date: Nov. 10th in 1970, Oct. 30th by 1990, Nov. 7th today.

Days present: 227 in 1970, 215 in 1975, 231 today.

Arrival Early sightings were reported from Charlton Field on March 13th (two), Portishead (one) and PW on 15th (five), and BL (two) on 23rd. Reports were almost daily from 28th onwards with numbers building to 20 at Weston STW by April 2nd, 40 at BL on 5th and 100 at PW on 7th. Numbers at CVL increased from 75 on April 10th to 500 on 17th. A big influx on 20th saw 1000 at CVL, 580 at BL, 470 to NE in 3 hours at Severn Beach and the spring peak of 300 at BG. Early May produced 380 at Weston STW on 1st and 147 to NE at Severn Beach in 100 minutes on 5th. Only small numbers were recorded later in the month. Reported numbers at the reservoirs were significantly lower than in 2007, this was probably due to the better weather conditions in 2008. The spring peak on Steep Holm was twelve on May 11th.

Breeding Again widespread but no significant records reported.

Return passage and departure Numbers were building by mid-August with 250 at CVL on 11th. Noticeable coastal movements were underway by the end of the month with 200 at Sand Point on 31st. September numbers peaked with 2000 at CVL on 9th, and 800 at Weston STW on 17th. Much smaller numbers noted thereafter with regular reports of small numbers from early to mid-October. Recorded autumn passage on Steep Holm totalled about 8,500 between Aug. 31st and Sept. 28th, of which 95 were trapped and ringed. Late individuals were noted at the River Avon, Keynsham on Nov. 9th and Cl-Y on 16th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	88	77	67	61	93	88	95	135	92

Avon BBS Index 1999=100

BBS distribution 71%. BBS Avon population estimate, 7400 pairs

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common passage migrant and breeder..

UK 25-yr change: down 65%. Local ten-yr change: down 31%.

Ten-yr av. first date: March 30th in 1970, April 1st in 1990, March 25rd today.

Ten-yr av. last date: Nov. 15th in 1970, Oct. 25th by 2000, 27th today.

Days present: 230 in 1970, 216 days by 1980, and today.

Arrival An early bird was at CVL on March 21st and perhaps the same individual remained here until at least 28th. Five were reported at ASW on March 29th then no more until early April when small numbers were noted at more sites from 5th. Steep Holm had its only spring record on April 9th. At CVL 100 were reported on 12th but elsewhere numbers were much smaller and birds were not truly widespread until 20th, when BG had its first double figure count of the year (10). Later in the month there were 100 at BL on 25th, 40 at BG on 26th and 50 at CVL on 30th. They were still arriving in mid May with 500 at CVL on 15th (and again on 26th), 250 at BG and 140 moving up channel at Severn Beach on 17th, 100 at PW on 25th and the spring peak at BG was of 350 the next day.

High summer concentrations were noted at or near the reservoirs and presumably involved breeding birds trying to find food in poor weather rather than late migrants. They included 1500 at Ubley on June 26th and 500 at CVL on July 7th.

Breeding A colony in the Portishead Pier area comprised about 60 nests and used both old and new buildings. The number of pairs here was about the same as in 2007 (EGMN). Five nest boxes were occupied (out of seven) at Bishop Sutton with two pairs being double brooded and the others producing a single brood (although two of the latter did lay unsuccessful second clutches). A total of 24 young fledged.

Post-breeding and departure Concentrations at the reservoirs were noted again in mid-August with 500 at CVL on 11th, 12th and 25th, and 200 at Sand Point on 31st being presumably migrants. Numbers at CVL rose to exceptional levels in early September with estimates of 1500 on 5th (RGM), 5000 on 6th and 7th (DN, KEV) and 4500 on 9th (RGM) after which no further large counts were noted here until October. About 500 migrants gathered at OPS on Sept. 21st. CVL numbers picked up again in early October with 1000 on 4th, a day when 50 were at both BL and BG. Some 30 were still at Clevedon, 25 at CVL and 10 at OPS on 7th and Walton-in-Gordano had 80 on 8th, but none was reported thereafter – a very early last date. In autumn on Steep Holm, about 900 were recorded between Aug. 31st and Sept. 27th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	113	102	92	104	106	93	82	136	93

Avon BBS Index. 1999=100
BBS distribution, 38%. BBS Avon population estimate, 4300 pairs

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Uncommon passage migrant and very scarce breeder.

UK 25-yr change: down 81%.

Ten-yr av. first date: April 7th in 1970, March 31st by 1995, April 1st today.

Ten-yr av. last date: Oct. 5th in 1970, Sept 26th in 1990, 27th today.

A below average spring but there were few reports from the best site, Sand Point.

Spring The first was an early bird over Dundry on March 30th, followed by others at CI-Y on April 5th and Avonmouth Docks on 7th. Numbers picked up somewhat in mid-month with two at Marshfield on 15th and three at CI-Y and two more at Sand Point next day. On 20th there was an exceptional movement with 16 up channel in 3 hours from 0650 on Severnside (JPM *et al.*) with three more at Northwick later in the day and also six at CI-Y, two at CVL and one at OPS. A further seven were noted at four sites up to the end of the month. In May there were just two on Severnside on 7th and the last of the spring was one at Sand Point on May 11th. In addition to sites mentioned above also noted at Marshfield and Shirehampton.

Breeding Three at Dolebury Warren on July 26th might have been migrants, but this site has held singing birds in the breeding season in recent years.

Autumn Early migrants were at Avonmouth Docks on July 9th and Sand Point on 13th. Apart from the Dolebury birds none was then noted until mid-August after which there were 14 records of one or two at Axe Estuary, CI-Y, Dundry, Middle Hope, OPS, Sand Point and Severnside between Aug. 16th and Sept. 28th when the last of the year, two, were at Sand Point. No obvious peak occurred with a fairly even trickle of records between these dates.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	61	179	54	25	68	24	61	111	55	48
Autumn	26	32	6	12	22	14	37	30	25	23

Passage: total individuals

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor. A few breed.

BBS distribution 4%.

UK 25-yr change: down 46%.

2007/08 Winter Numbers in January were modest with 40 at CVL on 12th, 20 at Old Down on 2nd and 15 at South View Farm, Stony Littleton on 9th the only double figure counts reported. February counts included 52 at Ubley on 2nd, 50 at Abbots Leigh on two dates, 30 at Bishop Sutton on 21st and at CI-Y on 12th with 10-25 at five other sites.

Spring An influx of 25 at PW on Feb. 27th could have involved early migrants and six at Northwick Warth on March 6th probably did. There were twelve on the YACWAG reserve at Yatton on 14th and next day 150 were at Northwick Warth and 30 moved to N over PW. An influx of 80 was noted at CI-Y on March 23rd and 80 were at Northwick Warth on April 8th. Steep Holm had its only two of the spring on April 9th. The biggest movement during this period was on April 20th when 430 were counted moving up channel at Severn Beach in three hours from 0650.

Breeding From May to July small numbers were reported at Aust, Marshfield, Northwick Warth, Sand Point and Wick Warth. Three at Aust on July 27th included at least one juvenile.

Autumn passage The first migrants were noted on Sept. 7th when there were seven at New Passage and three at Yate Common, then one to S over Bishopston on 9th. Larger numbers were soon on the move with 200 at Sand Point on 13th, 90 at New Passage on 16th, 167 to SE in 30 minutes of Weston STW on 19th and 150 at CI-Y on 21st. Steep Holm logged about 2,300 between Sept. 17th and 28th with a peak of about 750 on 22nd. A total of 36 was trapped and ringed on the island at this time. The highest October counts were 100 at CI-Y on 17th, 61 at Littleton Warth on 18th, 50 at CVL on 6th, 45 at Northwick Warth on 3rd and at Severn Beach on 5th, and 40 at Blagdon on 25th. Visible migration was generally poor this month with single figure counts from a scatter of sites including urban Bristol, and just ten to SW in 50 minutes over New Passage on 19th was the best passage recorded.

Meadow Pipit 2008/09 winter In the second winter period the largest counts were 30 at OPS on Dec. 24th, 28 at Severnside and 20 at CVL on 6th, and 16 at Hinton Blewitt on 22nd with low double figure counts from three other sites.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

A.p.petrosus - Uncommon breeding resident on the coast. Fairly common and more widespread as a coastal passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce inland on spring or autumn passage.

A.p.littoralis Wintering birds are assumed to include an unknown proportion of this subspecies.

First winter period In January and February birds were present at the usual coastal wintering sites with peak counts: twelve at Portishead marina; eight at PW and Portishead seafront; six at Severn Beach; four at Littleton Warth and CI-Y; three at Aust Warth and two at OPS. At least one was again noted wintering in Bristol with single birds seen at the New Cut on Jan. 12th and Wapping Warth on Feb. 16th. Only small numbers were reported from some of the coastal sites in early to mid-March apart from six at Littleton Warth on 8th.

Breeding On Steep Holm one (or possibly two) were calling by south landing on May 7th (the noise of the gulls at this time made detection extremely difficult). Three were on the island on Aug. 27th but there was no direct evidence of breeding this year. Up to four were noted at Sand Point in May and June. At CI-Y one was carrying food to juveniles in late July. A singing male was at Battery Point in April and a juvenile with an adult nearby in late May. Three males were singing in the Portishead Marina area as early as Feb. 20th and four nest sites were located here in April. Three were present at Avonmouth Docks on May 23rd (SH). Lack of access here might mean they have been overlooked up to now or it could be a new site (see below).

Autumn and winter One at Severn Beach on Aug. 17th and 18th was unusual and was likely to be a local breeder – maybe from Avonmouth. Two at CI-Y on 13th and 21st were much closer to known breeding sites, as were six at Portishead on 21st. Two at New Passage on Sept. 29th were new in and 17 at Portishead next day might have included migrants as well as local breeders. From mid-October the wintering birds on coastal salt marshes were back, with 22 at Portishead on Oct. 16th with further counts here of up to eight in November and twelve in December. The second winter period also saw up to seven at Littleton Warth and Severn Beach; five at Aust Warth; four at CI-Y; three at OPS and New Passage and another bird in Bristol at the New Cut on Dec. 22nd.

Inland one was at CVL on Oct. 11th and another at BG on Nov. 1st.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant to CVL, Scarce on the coast.

High water levels at CVL again produced poor numbers here in each winter period. There was a more normal series of records from the coast.

Inland sites Only recorded from CVL where one or two were reported occasionally through January. There were then up to three in February until the month's end when an isolated peak of seven was noted on Moreton Bank on 28th. One or two were then present for much of March with three on both 1st and 27th and the last of the spring were two on April 2nd. In autumn two arrived very early at CVL on Oct. 6th (RMI) with regular reports of at least one or two from 29th through November and on two dates in mid December plus four on Moreton Bank on 27th.

Coastal sites The most regular site early in the year was Severn Beach with one from Jan. 2nd and then on many dates until March 1st with two on 15th. Presumably different Severnside birds were at New Passage on March 10th and 11th, and Chittening Warth on 30th. The first winter period also saw two at PW on Jan. 1st and single birds at Sand Bay on 6th, PW on Feb. 27th, and Littleton Warth on March 8th. At the end of the year three were at Sand Bay on Dec. 28th.

2007 One was at PW on Nov. 10th.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

M. f. flavissima. Uncommon passage migrant and very scarce summer visitor.

UK 25-yr change: down 66%.

Ten-yr av. first date: March 30th in 1970, April 9th by 1990, 6th today.

Ten-yr av. last date: Oct. 5th in 1970, 22nd by 1980, 9th today.

Spring A late arrival with the first at CI-Y on April 15th followed by one on Severnside and three at CVL on 17th. An exceptional passage of visible migrants on Severnside on 20th comprised 89 up channel in 3 hours from 0650 (JPM *et al.*) with ten more at Chittening Warth later in the morning and three at Aust in the afternoon making a Severnside day

total of 102 (this exceeds the entire Avon spring passage in three of the last five years). The only other reports on 20th were of one to three at BL, CVL and Marshfield. Five were at Aust and CVL next day then passage remained at a steady trickle until mid-May with the last at Littleton Warth on 18th apart from a late bird at Northwick Warth on June 9th. Other locations were: Dunkirk; Portishead; Sand Bay and Weston STW. The total spring passage of about 164 is the best of recent years (cf. 59 in 2003, 121 in 2004, 67 in 2005, 125 in 2006 and 86 in 2007) but is skewed by the big Severnside count on April 20th.

Spring migrants				
Date	Apr 11-20	Apr 21-30	May 1-10	May 11-20
Bird-days	115	19	25	9
Max count	102	5	3	2

Breeding season As last year recorded at Park Farm, Tormarton with two noted on three dates in early to mid-June including a female carrying food – the first proof of breeding in our area since 2002. Four at Warleigh on July 12th and one at Marshfield on 16th raise the possibility of further breeding sites. Three juveniles at New Passage on 20th however show that birds at this time might have wandered some distance and these are included in the table as autumn migrants.

Autumn After the July records described above further birds were hard to find in early August with two at CI-Y on 3rd, one at Sand Point on 7th and two at Weston STW on 10th the only records in the first ten days of the month. Numbers picked up from mid month with regular small numbers at the usual coastal sites and peaks of eleven at Weston STW on 16th, ten at Northwick Warth and eight at Severn Beach on 30th. Passage fell to a steady trickle in the first half of September with regular sightings at Severnside peaking at just three on 2nd and four on 15th. The last few were two here and one at Sand Point on 21st, and one at New Passage on 28th.

Apart from the sites mentioned above also recorded in the autumn at BG, CVL, Downend, Emerson's Green, Leap Valley, Marshfield, OPS and St Catherine's Valley. The autumn total of 102 is the lowest on record in recent years (cf. 132 in 2003, 386 in 2004, 160 in 2005, 125 in 2006 and 156 in 2007).

Autumn migrants								
Date	Jul 11-20	Jul 21-31	Aug 1-10	Aug 11-20	Aug 21-30	Sep 1-10	Sep 11-20	Sep 21-30
Bird-days	9	0	5	18	44	13	12	2
Max count	4	0	2	11	10	3	4	1

2007 A late bird was at RPD on Oct. 7th.

Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava*

Rare spring passage migrant.

One record: a male at Severn Beach on April 20th, with the large movement of Yellow Wagtails and other visible migrants, landed on the beach for a few minutes before continuing up channel (JPM *et al.*). Only the third record since 2000.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

UK 25-yr change: down 12%. Local ten-yr change; stable.

Winter and migrants

Again widely reported, winter atlas records coming from 103 tetrads (27%), outside the breeding season. The vast majority of winter records related to one or two birds but seven at Wrington on Nov. 7th was an exception.

The largest numbers were during autumn migration with eleven to SW over Littleton Warth in two hours and eleven at Sand Point both on Sept. 14th. Four at New Passage on Aug. 30th and four up channel at Sand Point next day were the next largest autumn counts. KEV noted regular sightings in the Broadmead/central Bristol areas in both winter periods and considered them to be commoner here than in 2007 when numbers seemed low.

Breeding

Breeding season reports from at least 31 atlas tetrads but proved breeding records again only came from a handful of sites.

WHITE/PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba***Pied Wagtail** *M.a yarrelli*

Common breeding resident, winter visitor, and uncommon migrant.

UK 25-yr change: down 5%. Local ten-yr change; up 33%.

Winter 2007/08 The largest number reported at the start of the year was a pre-roost gathering of 150 at Bristol Airport on Feb. 6th. Otherwise peak counts were just 15 at Fishpool Hill on Jan. 12th and 14 at Weston STW (the highest count of the year here). February ended with 35 at Latteridge on 29th, which might have included early migrants.

Spring migration A flock of 15 at Northwick Warth on March 2nd was considered to be migrants. Larger numbers later in the month included 50 roosting at Blagdon on 23rd and 15 at BL next day. Flocks of 15 to 18 were noted on several occasions on Northwick Warth in early to mid-April.

Breeding season Widely reported in the breeding season.

Autumn migration and second winter period Post breeding gatherings included 33 at OPS on July 29th and 18 at New Passage (pre-roost) on Aug. 5th. Later in August up to 30 were regular at New Passage/Northwick Warth, 32 at PW on 22nd and 30 at Puxton Moor on Aug. 31st. In September there were regular double figure counts on Severnside with at least 37 on 16th, 25 at Bath Golf Course on 14th and 16 at OPS on 22nd. On Steep Holm a total of 16 was recorded between Sept. 17th and 28th. In October 18 were at New Passage on 4th, 25 at Lower Littleton on 6th and 10 at CI-Y on Oct. 19th. Up to 40 at Marshfield on Nov. 22nd and 17 at Severn Beach on Dec. 16th were the only significant counts in the second winter period.

CVRS trapped and ringed 46 at CVL and 77 at BL during the year.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	73	80	88	88	81	96	58	77	88

Avon BBS Index 1999=100 BBS distribution 39%.

White Wagtail *M. a. alba*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Ten-yr av. first date: April 1st in 1970, 5th in 1985, March 26th today.

Ten-yr av. last date: Sept. 27th in 1970, 18th in 1980, Oct. 17th today. These results have been influenced by one or two exceptionally late records.

Another rather poor spring, although slightly up on last year. More autumn records probably reflect greater scrutiny at a season when particular care needs to be taken with identification of this subspecies.

Spring passage The first was at PW on March 15th followed by other single birds at BG on 21st, Portishead on 25th and CI-Y on 27th plus five at Marshfield from 25th to 28th. A small passage continued through April with an ill defined peak in mid month including six at CVL on 15th and seven at Portishead on 21st. The last few in spring were single birds at Severn Beach on May 2nd, CVL on 3rd and BG on 10th. A male at CVL on June 14th had an injured leg, which might explain the late date (KEV). In addition to the sites mentioned above records came from Dundry and Stowey.

Autumn passage The first of the autumn was at New Passage on Aug. 25th after which one or two were regularly seen here until Sept. 19th, mostly with a small flock of Pied Wagtails on Northwick Warth, and also along the sea wall at New Passage and Severn Beach. One or two were also at BG on three dates from Aug. 31st to Sept. 7th; four at CVL on Sept. 8th, two on 12th and one on 14th, plus at least one at the Axe Estuary on Sept. 2nd.

Spring records						
Date	Mar 11-20	Mar 21-31	Apr 1-10	Apr 11-20	Apr 21-30	May 1-10
Bird-days	1	15	9	20	17	3
Max count	1	5	3	6	7	1

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Scarce irruptive winter visitor. Erratic locally with big influx in 2005.

One record: nine were at Nailsea on Dec. 23rd and 24th with two there, presumably part of the same party, on 27th and 28th (S&SEP, GJ *et al.*).

Last recorded in November 2005, and prior to that in unprecedented numbers from December 2004 to April 2005.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Uncommon breeding resident, present on many suitable streams.

UK 25-yr change: down 3%. Ten-yr local change: stable.

One again records were dominated by RMI who reported 56 sightings amounting to 68 bird-days at the Winford Brook. Present throughout the year here, they were watched gathering nest material in March and visiting the presumed nest site in April. An adult was seen with a fledged juvenile in late May, the only proved breeding record submitted for the year.

North of the Avon single birds were noted at the Golden Valley Nature Reserve, Wick in March and July with two in December. Also noted singly on the River Frome in March and July.

South of the Avon noted at Compton Dando (two in October), Midford (one in February), Pensford (one in March), South Stoke (two in July) and Woollard (two in April, one in May).

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Bird-days	79	72	39	29	38	56	51	89	77	84

Avon area - total bird-days

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant breeding resident.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	0	27	2	-22	-29	51

Population stable.

Winter records from the Atlas survey suggested a 41% increase in numbers since the last winter Atlas, but the distribution, at 95%, was the same as thirty years ago.

Last year's fears that there was a poor breeding season in 2007 seem to have been unfounded, as winter numbers were stable, and the BBS in 2008 showed a small increase. However the cold summer of 2008 produced CABS figures that showed a considerable fall over the year, as did the 2008/09 WBC.

Song was again recorded on 88% of CABS visits, and was almost continuous from the start of the year, although it almost vanished between mid-November and the end of December.

There were at least 28 territories on Steep Holm, the best figure since 1999.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
BBS Index	100	103	108	113	106	105	107	84	94	89
Steep Holm territories	30	Nc	9	25	nc	9	19	16	18	28

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS distribution 99%. BBS Avon population estimate 53,000 pairs

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Abundant breeding resident.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	-8	30	-4	-33	-22	-6

A slight population fall.

Winter results from the Atlas survey suggest an increase of 69% in the winter population over the past 30 years, with an unchanged distribution at 95% of tetrads.

The breeding population has fallen since 2003 to the level of ten years ago. The fall in year-on-year numbers recorded by CABS may reflect a poor breeding season. Song was recorded on 51% of visits, and was more or less continuous from January to August. The fall in both CABS and WBC figures suggests that the cold summer of 2008 caused a poor breeding season.

Dunnock cont.

On Steep Holm it is the commonest passerine, and there used to be around 30 pairs. The population collapsed in 2000, but a recovery to 21 pairs in 2004 was noted and, although there were fewer in 2005 and 2006, 18 pairs were recorded here in 2008 and during the summer 70 individuals were caught and ringed.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	103	114	125	133	118	121	123	114	100

Avon BBS index 1999=100

BBS distribution 90%. BBS Avon population estimate 19,000 pairs.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant breeding resident and passage migrant.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
%Change	19	12	8	1	-29	44

A small population increase.

Winter results from the Atlas survey suggest that numbers have risen by 165% in the past thirty years, and their universal distribution remains unchanged.

The breeding population is increasing slowly. The increases recorded by WGS and BBS probably reflect a good breeding season in 2007, but the CABS year-on-year figure suggests that 2008 was a less good year, and the fall in WBC would tend to confirm this. Song was recorded on 86% of CABS visits, and was only broken by a rest from mid June to late July.

One pair was present on Steep Holm in the breeding season, but in September 29 were caught and ringed, and a total of 50 was estimated.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	99	102	105	109	110	105	105	113	114

Avon BBS index 1999=100

BBS distribution 98%. BBS Avon population estimate 40,400 pairs

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Scarce breeding summer migrant; Scarce/very scarce passage migrant.

Local 10 yr change: down 70%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 20th in 1970, 25th by 1980, 22nd today.

One was heard at Frenchay Hospital on May 7th, and another was recorded in Lower Woods on the same day. During the breeding season there were two pairs in the Horwood Farm area of Lower Woods, one of which fledged three young. There was a record of two in song at Inglestone, and another in song in the southern part of Lower Woods. This suggests a possible maximum of five pairs.

There were no autumn records.

1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
15	14	6	7	5	2	3	11	8	6	5

Estimate of total numbers of pairs attempting to breed

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Scarce/uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare in summer; in recent years it bred unsuccessfully in 2007.

A female was seen at Keynsham on Jan. 4th and 23rd. On April 12th one was at Sand's Farm, near Dyrham. In May one was seen regularly in RPD, and a pair nested successfully, but the young died during the heavy rain at the end of the month. One was seen on July 27th at RPD.

In the second half of October there were five sightings of single birds from five sites and in November one was seen on 4th, and another on 5th. One was present at OPS from 22nd to 29th and another at Avonmouth Docks from 25th to the end of the month. In December one was at OPS on 9th, and one arrived in a Keynsham garden on 18th and stayed until Christmas.

1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
18	6+	22	80	17	25	24+	16	12	33	45+
Total bird-days										

Uncommon passage migrant and very scarce summer visitor.

England 25-yr change: up 93%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 6th in 1970, 13th in 1980, 6th now.

Ten-yr av last date: Sept. 28th in 1970, Oct. 22nd by 1980, stable around Oct. 12th 1986-2002, and Oct. 16th now.

Total time spent averaged 187 days until 2000. 194 days now.

A normal year.

Spring passage Between April 6th, when four were seen at three different sites, and 22nd, 26 were noted. It is striking that the average number seen on spring passage since 1984 is also 26 (maximum 65), despite a huge increase in the total number of records received and despite a dramatic increase in the English population in the past 25 years. Almost half the passage came on April 16th when a total of twelve was seen at seven sites.

Autumn passage The first on passage was a juvenile on Aug. 8th, and 18 more were seen at intervals up to Sept. 21st, and there was a late last individual on Oct. 11th at Severn Beach. The average since 1984 is 28 (maximum 50).

	1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	23	8	32	25	37	26	49	34	65	18	26
Autumn	32	17	27	21	27	35	30	26	36	16	20

Total birds recorded on spring and autumn passage

A BBRC review of British claims of the eastern race of Common Redstart, found that variation in both *samamisicus* and nominate Common Redstart *P. p. phoenicurus* was poorly understood. Brian Small summarised recent research in 'The identification of male 'Ehrenberg's Redstart', with comments on British claims', *British Birds* **102**, February 2009, 84-97. As part of this review the male at Keynsham on Sept. 22nd and 23rd, 1989 was considered no longer acceptable. See page 56 of the 1989 ABR for details of this record. All remaining British records have now been either found unacceptable or are still under review.

Uncommon passage migrant, usually more numerous in autumn. Formerly bred, now rare in mid-summer.

England ten-yr change: down 32%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 12th in 1970, 22nd by 1994, 21st now.

Ten-yr av last date: Oct 10th in 1970. 21st by 1990. 9th now.

Average time spent 180 days to 2002. 173 now.

A poor spring passage and a good autumn one.

Spring The worst spring passage since 2002. A total of four was seen at BL, OPS, and Weston STW on April 20th, which is the average first date for the past 25 years, but it is striking that dates in the 1960s were a week earlier. There were six together at Weston STW on May 3rd, otherwise one or two were seen daily up to May 10th, and the last were single birds on May 17th and 18th.

Autumn As has always been the case, autumn passage was much larger than spring, and the 2008 total was very close to the long term average. The first was seen on the early date of July 4th, and 17 were noted together near Marshfield on the 16th. The main body came through between Aug. 30th and Sept. 16th, but a few individuals continued to be found on the coast up to Oct. 11th. This last date is very close to the average since 1966, which is Oct. 12th.

	1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	44	60	73	50	22	45	46	41	48	31	24
Autumn	119	65	184	121	180	188	71	90	138	33	127

Total birds recorded on spring and autumn passage

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquatus*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant and scarce breeding species.

England ten-yr change: up 184%. Local ten- yr change: has begun to breed again.

Another good year.

The winter results from the Atlas survey show that it was present in 22% of tetrads, sharply up from 7% thirty years ago. A total of 170 was counted, which gives a probable minimum winter population. This is about three times as many as the totals derived from the casual records from around the region. In the breeding season Atlas observers covering half the region found it in 5% of tetrads, compared with none in 1992, and they counted 31 birds.

First winter period A maximum of around 55 was recorded at 26 sites, ten of them coastal.

Spring passage During March a total of 72 was reported, 52 of them on the coast, and 28 between 13th and 17th. The largest group was six.

Breeding During the breeding season 15 possible pairs were present at 14 sites, although only two pairs were proved to breed.

1996	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
0	0	1	2	2	5	3	3	8	11	12	7	15

Total breeding pairs 1996-2008

Autumn passage Passage began on Sept. 20th, and 176 were recorded between then and the end of October. Passage peaked between Oct. 11th and 19th when 91 were recorded.

Second winter period A maximum of around 69 was recorded at 26 sites, eight of them coastal in November and December.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Max Jan, Feb	22	36	30	25	38	44	48	57	44	55
Breeding pairs	2	2	5	3	3	8	11	12	7	15
Max Nov, Dec	27	59	47	58	40	45	62	55	63	69

Apparent number of individuals present in the two winter periods and total breeding pairs

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Fairly common passage migrant, mainly on the coast.

UK ten-yr change: up 2%.

Ten-yr first date: March 10th in 1970, became later to 16th in 1988, then sharply earlier to 6th in 2000, since when it has become later to 11th now.

Ten-yr av last date Oct. 31st in 1970, 23rd in 1979, then steadily later to Nov. 1st today.

The best autumn passage since figures began to be recorded in 1985.

Spring passage Spring passage, totalling 496, was close to the recent average, although well below the extraordinary totals in 2006. The first sighting was at CI-Y on March 7th, but passage proper began on March 15th when eight were seen at three coastal sites, but numbers dropped right off from 18th to 28th. There was an abrupt peak of 20 on March 30th. Numbers remained low throughout April until 20th and 21st, and then a huge peak on 26th and 27th, when 160 passed through, almost half the total, There was a last wave on May 2nd to 4th, and then ones and twos to 22nd, and the last two birds on 29th at CI-Y.

Autumn passage The first returning bird was seen on July 10th, and passage became continuous from Aug. 6th. There were peaks between Aug. 21st to 23rd, 29th to 31st, and Sept. 6th to 14th. Numbers fell off from the end of September, and passage appeared to have ended on Oct. 16th. But the last were single birds seen at CI-Y on Oct. 30th, Nov. 1st and Nov. 2nd. This is virtually the same as the average last date since 1966.

	1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	504	503	571	491	219	338	820	814	1894	450	496
Autumn	347	452	565	338	518	603	546	651	560	332	670

Spring and autumn passage total bird-days

Greenland Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*

A male of the Greenland race was trapped and ringed on Dundry Hill on April 11th (DN).

This form is almost certainly regular and probably quite common but not often detected because of the lack of clear cut features allowing certain field identification.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce passage migrant, very scarce in autumn, mostly on or near the coast.

25-yr av first date: March 31st, last date Oct. 22nd.

A male was present at Ham Green from Feb. 9th to 27th, surviving ten days of frost and snow, and was seen by a number of observers. This exceptional wintering individual was possibly first seen in early January.

"Spring Passage" consisted of two birds only, the first a male at Severn Beach on April 18th, and the second on Redland Green on May 3rd.

In the autumn one was found dead at RPD on Sept. 15th, and one was seen on Dundry on Oct. 10th.

	1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	2	3	11	2	3	5	3	3	10	20	2
Autumn	1	0	1	2	1	2	1	19	1	0	2

Spring and autumn passage, total bird-days

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident, passage status uncertain.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	84	50	3	-15	-22	2

Evidence of a very poor breeding season.

Results from the Atlas survey suggest that winter numbers are 38% greater than thirty years ago, and their universal distribution is unchanged. Summing the maximum counts in each tetrad gives a total of 8600 birds, a figure which can be compared with that of other thrush species to suggest relative abundance, although it is perhaps just a tenth of the actual population. This suggests that there are 23 Blackbirds to each Mistle Thrush and eight to each Song Thrush.

Compared with the previous winter numbers were sharply up in the winter of 2007/08, both in the field and in gardens. BBS however showed only a small increase, so some of these may have been migrants.

First song was recorded on Jan. 18th. CABS recorded song on 24% of visits, between April 6th and June 29th. The first fledgling was recorded in Castle Park, central Bristol, on April 3rd.

However the cold and wet summer probably led to high mortality, and both the year-on-year fall recorded by CABS and the WBC figures for 2008/09 reflect low numbers in the second half of the year.

On Steep Holm there were 19 territories, and 20 were caught and ringed. It was a poor breeding season here, and there were only 30 on the island in September.

At OPS on Oct. 30th a fall of 30 was recorded, eating haws. In winter fewer are seen for each hour of observation than in summer, which suggests possibly that migrants may only form a small proportion of the winter population.

In the course of the year eleven were recorded as part of the diet of the Peregrines in Bath.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	106	114	122	116	116	113	109	115	109

Avon BBS Index 1999=100

BBS distribution 100%. BBS Avon population estimate 39,300 pairs.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; can occur in large numbers in hard winters.

Ten-yr av first date: Oct. 11th in 1970, falling to Sept. 22nd by 1995, then becoming later to Oct. 12th in 2005, 9th today.

Ten-yr av last date: April 18th in 1970, falling to March 30th in 1976, then rising to April 21st in 1995, and 15th now.

Days present; 176 in 1970, 192 by 1976, falling to 161 by 1997, 181 in 2005, 178 today.

A better first winter.

2007/08 winter Winter results from the Atlas survey show a 27% population fall from the levels of thirty years ago, although numbers, as the chart below shows, fluctuate considerably from year to year. Winter distribution showed an 18% fall from 89% to 71% of tetrads, but this may have been caused by the difference in methodology between the two surveys. Summing the maximum count from each tetrad gives a total of just under 13,000 birds, which must represent a minimum winter population.

Surveys suggested that there were almost three times as many in the region this winter compared with 2006/07. The largest flock was 800 seen on Feb. 29th at Marshfield. The largest flock in March was 300 on 6th at Aust, and numbers fell rapidly through the rest of that month. However a flock of 200 was seen at Marshfield on April 4th and another flock of the same size there on 21st, the last record for the year. This is a late last date, the average since 1966 being April 13th.

Second half-year The first arrivals appeared abruptly on Oct. 18th when 220 were seen on Severnside and a total of 36 at three other sites. A few more were seen the following day, but then there was a long gap until the end of the month. Between Oct. 31st and Nov. 15th flocks of up to 500 appeared, and on 16th a total of 2000 was recorded at Kenn, the largest flock for several years. From then to the end of the year records were sparse.

In the course of the year eleven were recorded as part of the prey of the Peregrines at Bath.

1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
10	24.3	11.2	17.3	9.9	14.3	19.8	21.2	3.4	12.2

Rate per hour recorded by WBC

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common breeding resident, which declined in the 1980s. Status as a passage migrant and winter visitor uncertain.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	0	55	19	-35	-19	-16

Possibly a poor breeding season.

Results from the Atlas survey suggest, surprisingly, that winter numbers are 8% higher than they were thirty years ago, although their distribution has fallen from 91% to 81% of tetrads. Summing the maximum counts in each tetrad gives a total of 1100 birds, which is perhaps a tenth of the actual population, but it can be compared with other thrushes. In the summer they were found in 87% of tetrads, which is an encouraging improvement on the 69% recorded in 1992.

CABS recorded song from Jan. 27th until June 15th, and on 29% of visits. Several observers recorded song again in December. BBS totals were almost back to the 2002 levels, but the declines in year-on-year figures recorded by CABS, and the fall in the 2008/09 WBS figures suggest a poor breeding season.

There were three territories on Steep Holm, and 20 here in September of which 12 were caught and ringed.

In the course of the year eight fell victim to the Bath Peregrines.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
BBS	100	109	119	129	113	122	121	106	111	125

BBS index, 1999=100 BBS distribution 89%. BBS Avon population estimate 6400 pairs

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Can occur in large numbers in hard winters.

Ten-yr av first date: Sept. 29th in 1970, growing later to Oct. 5th by 1988, falling fairly steadily to Sept. 17th in 2005, 26th now.

Ten-yr av last date: Around April 12th from 1970 to 1997, falling to 6th now. Days present constant at about 190.

A good first winter.

Winter 2007/08 Results from the Atlas suggest a 32% fall in numbers in the past thirty years, although they fluctuate sharply from winter to winter. However winter distribution, at 87% of tetrads, remained virtually unchanged. Summing the maximum counts from all tetrads gives a figure of 15,750, which must be a minimum winter population, and is a little larger than the Fieldfare total.

The WBC counts suggested that it was the best winter since 2003/04 for Redwing despite the fact that it was the warmest winter since 1998/99, but there was only one report of a large flock, 400 at Northwick Warth on Jan. 26th. They were present in 50% of WGS gardens, the highest proportion since 2001/02. Records continued at low levels throughout March, and the last was a flock of 30 at BL on April 1st. This appears to be part of a trend to earlier return.

Second half-year Two were seen at Sand Point on Sept. 26th and eight at CVL the following day. Numbers remained very low until Oct. 18th when 250 were seen at OPS, and another 250 at four other coastal sites. A total of 3000 was counted in three hours travelling NW at OPS on 31st. Smaller numbers were reported throughout November, and very small numbers in December. WBC figures suggested 35% fewer were present than in the 2007/08 winter.

1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
9.7	12.3	12.3	12.2	4.9	11.2	17.2	13.4	7.9	17.1

Rate per hour recorded by WBC

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Uncommon breeding resident, passage migrant and probable winter visitor.

England 25-yr change: down 41%. Local ten-yr change: down 31%.

A lower population appears to be stable. Results from the Atlas suggest a fall of 57% in winter numbers in the past thirty years, and a 42% fall in winter distribution from 83% to 41% of tetrads.

Summing the maximum count in each tetrad gives a figure of 368 birds, which can be compared with other thrush species. In the summer they were found in 37% of tetrads, which is virtually the same as in the 1992 Atlas.

There were an encouraging ten records of flocks of ten or more between June and September at very widely scattered locations, the largest being 40 at Pilning in September. Eleven were recorded during a migration watch travelling SW at New Passage on Oct. 18th.

Song was recorded from November onwards.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	94	95	96	110	73	82	67	63	69

Avon BBS index 1999=100 BBS Distribution 28%.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Uncommon resident, scarce winter visitor, and passage migrant. First definitely bred in 1995.

BBS distribution 2%.

The expansion continues.

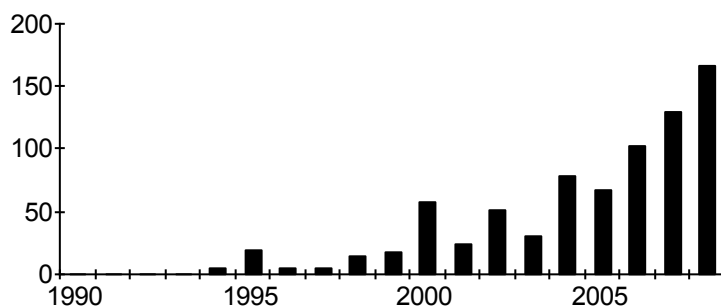
CVL There were 21 singing males around the lake, so it looks as if the expansion is all now to new sites. One retrapped at CVL on Oct. 18th had been ringed at CVL on June 20th, 1999, making it at least 9 years, 120 days old - a new longevity record for the species.

Elsewhere In the breeding season a total of 32 singing males was recorded from 16 sites. New sites were ASW, Backwell Lake, Clapton, Weston and Walton Moors, Yatton Strawberry line, Worle, Sandford, Uphill, and Yeo Bank Farm. Atlas observers found them in just 8 tetrads.

The recent Cetti's Warbler records are summarised in the table below.

	1995	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
CVL Singing males	1	2	4	8	12	10	12	14	18	15	17	22	21	21
Other Records	19	4	5	14	18	57	24	51	31	78	67	103	130	166

Singing males at CVL, and total records from all other sites



Total all sites

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Uncommon passage migrant; scarce breeding summer visitor.

UK 10-yr change: up 59%. Ten-yr av first date: April 20th in 1970, falling to 14th in 1981, and 15th now.

Ten-yr av last date: as autumn records are rare, this has fluctuated around Sept.20th.

An apparent fall in breeding records.

Spring Passage The first was heard at Sand Farm, near Dyrham, on April 13th and the next at PW on 15th. A further 17 were heard to the end of April, and then ten to May 9th.

Breeding season There were single records from four sites in late May and June of singing birds, but no other evidence of breeding.

Autumn Two were seen on Severnside on Sept. 2nd, and four were caught and ringed on Steep Holm between Sept. 20th and 27th.

	1989/98	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	15	9	23	13	20	6	39	37	47	32	29
Breeding season		0	2	2	1	1	2	2	7	11	4
Autumn	12	7	11	38	24	12	6	29	6	3	6

Spring and autumn passage and breeding season records.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Fairly common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.

BBS distribution 12%. BBS population estimate 500 pairs.

England 25-yr change: down 2%. Local ten-yr change: up 11%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 12th in 1970, becoming later to 18th in 1978, then steadily earlier to 9th today.

Ten-yr av last date: Sept. 26th in 1970, rising to Oct. 6th in 1988, falling from then to Sept. 21st in 1996, then rising to Sept 26th today

Days present: Fluctuating around the average of 169.

Good numbers present, but the ringing report suggests a poor breeding season.

Spring The first was seen at Keynsham on April 1st, the third earliest date recorded in the region. The earliest was March 30th in 1967. The next was seen on 12th at CVL, and records were then regular for the rest of the month. On 29th one was found as a prey of the Bath Peregrines.

Breeding BBS totals were almost the same as in 2007, but too few are counted in ordinary farmland to be able to construct an index. Breeding season records were received from 22 sites. There were 41 singing males around the CVL perimeter, the largest number since 1997 when there were 58.

Autumn There were four records from the coast in August, and five inland in September, the last from BL on 28th. This is the same as the average last date since 1966. There was a sharp drop in the numbers ringed, which may reflect a poor breeding season.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Fairly common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.

BBS distribution 12%. BBS population estimate 1200 pairs.

England 25-yr change: up 62%. Local ten-yr change: up 53%

Ten-yr av first date: falling steadily from April 26th in 1970, to 10th today.

Ten-yr av last date: increasing from Sept. 24th in 1970, to Oct. 6th today.

Days present: increasing sharply from 145 in 1970 to 179 today.

Arrival The first was recorded at CVL on April 5th, an early date, but not as early as 2001 and 2002 when birds arrived on 3rd. The next record was not until 14th; reports became regular from 20th, but substantial numbers were not recorded until 30th.

Breeding It was a second cold wet year but at CVL DW managed to find 105 nests and ringed 208 pulli. There were records of 178 singing males from 26 other sites, including 45 at Weston STW, 27 at the Yatton reserve, 15 at both RPD and OPS, and 10 at BL. Atlas observers in the summer found them in 15% of tetrads, compared with 7% in 1992, confirming the spread recorded by BBS.

Autumn passage Few records were received. However one was trapped at CVRS on the late date of 18th October, then another on Nov. 2nd, and finally another on 16th, all the latest ever.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
218	243	247	349	159	282	137	148	59	105

Nests found at CVL by DW

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Very rare vagrant

A male in song was in the reeds in front of Herriott's Bridge, CVL on May 12th (AHD *et al.*). The bird sang frequently in the late afternoon and early evening but only showed occasionally. Towards dusk the bird stopped singing and it was not present the next morning.

This is only the second record for the Avon area following another singing male seen at CVL on May 18th, 1992.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor. It is now also a common winter visitor, most frequently recorded in gardens.

	WGS	BBS	CABS	Local 10 year	England 25 year
% Change	24	-10	-12	-7	108

A stable breeding population.

Winter 2007/08 Although the WGS figures showed an increase on the poor previous winter, the total of winter bird-days from all observers fell considerably for the second year running. This may well be a consequence of the fact that they are now so frequent in winter that they are often not recorded. The numbers present peaked in mid February, fell to early March, and then there was a sharp increase on the 14th and 15th, and another from 23rd to the end of the month. These changes may represent wintering birds moving east through the region, and at the end of the month incoming birds from the south mixing with those heading back to Germany. Probable garden over-winterers were recorded up to April 3rd.

Spring arrival and breeding season Males that may have been summer migrants were seen outside gardens on March 27th, 29th, and 30th. On April 2nd one was at CVL, and on 3rd twelve were seen at eight sites. 14 were counted round BL on 6th, 17 were seen on 12th and 13th, and 20 on 20th, but these may be chance maxima rather than representing real passage patterns because few observers record them. A very steep fall in the numbers ringed may indicate a poor breeding season.

In the breeding season numbers recorded by BBS were slightly down, but the population has been broadly stable over the past decade. A record 45 was in song around CVL - the next highest total was 40 in 2002. A fall in the totals ringed suggests there may have been a poor breeding season.

Blackcap cont.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	97	105	113	102	109	109	92	103	93

Avon BBS index 1998=100
BBS distribution 78%. BBS Avon population estimate 8500 pairs

Autumn passage There were occasional records through July and August, but the main passage was between Aug. 31st and Sept. 17th. Ten were present on Steep Holm during September. In October 17 were recorded of which seven were in gardens, and most of the others were on the coast.

Second winter period The first appeared in a garden on Oct. 21st. There was a slow build up in November, when 156 bird-days were recorded, and a peak by the end of December, with a total of 436 bird-days.

In the course of the year three fell prey to the Bath Peregrines.

1988/9-1997/98	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
1899	2103	2233	2728	3472	3875	2603	3395	4584	2753	1867

Total winter bird-days

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

Formerly rare, now a scarce visitor. Has bred.

This species is regularly reported from the area immediately south of the county boundary on Crook Peak, in Somerset. There were two very unusual autumn/winter records. At Marshfield one on Oct. 10th and 11th (*per* AHD) and one at Flax Bourton on Dec. 10th (GJ).

Now also more regularly reported in the Avon area, it has been seen here in every year in the last decade except 2001.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Fairly common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.

England 25-yr change: up 15%. Local ten-yr change: down 63%.

Ten-yr av first date: falling from April 24th in 1970, to April 14th today.

Ten-year av last date: Fluctuating around Sept. 20th throughout.

Days present: Increasing from 149 in 1970, to 167 in 2005, 161 today.

Possibly some recovery.

The first was recorded on April 21st at Shirehampton, the next the following day at Ashton Hill Plantation. Records were regular thereafter. In the breeding season 48 singing males were recorded from 31 sites, and 32 were recorded in 21 one-km squares by BBS. There were 29 singing males around the perimeter of CVL, the highest total since 33 in 1995. However ringing totals were down, possibly suggesting a poor breeding season. A total of 14 was recorded during August, including four on 31st at PW. There were no more sightings until one at Severn Beach on Sept. 24th and one at PW on 28th. The last, late bird was seen in an Emerson's Green garden on Oct. 19th (ADJ). This is the third equal latest date. The latest date is Nov. 21st, 1993, then Nov. 3rd 1975, and Oct. 19th 1977.

In the summer Atlas observers found them in just 14% of tetrads, compared with 22% in 1992, confirming the local decline.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	80	69	57	73	83	81	43	49	57

Avon BBS Index 1998=100 BBS distribution 10%.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Fairly common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.

England 25-yr change: down 34%. Local ten-yr change: stable.

Ten-yr av first arrival date: April 21st in 1974, 18th now.

Ten-yr av last date: Sept. 15th in 1970, Sept 22nd in 1985, and today.

Days present: 144 days in 1970, 158 now.

A stable population.

Three were recorded on April 20th from different sites, and reports were widespread for the rest of the month. A total of 60 was counted in 30 one-km squares by BBS, and a further 85 were recorded from 48 different sites. They were regularly reported from Severnside in the last week of August, when passage seems to have peaked. Seven were noted in September, the last was ringed on Steep Holm on Sept. 13th.

Atlas observers in the summer found them in 24% of tetrads, effectively the same as the 22% figure in the 1992 Atlas

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	64	69	74	55	61	40	65	64	64

Avon BBS index 1999=100 BBS distribution 17%.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor..

England 25-yr change: up 48%. Local ten-yr change: down 12%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 12th in 1970, becoming later to 19th by 1994, and then sharply earlier to 11th today.

Ten-yr av last date: Fluctuating around Sept 27th.

Days present: fluctuating around 165.

Arrival A pair were seen at Weston STW on April 8th, and the next was noted at ASW on 10th. Passage proper began on 19th and peaked on 27th.

Breeding After several stable years, BBS recorded a fall of 18% and Atlas observers found them in 57% of tetrads, which is very close to the figure of 53% in the 1992 Atlas, and confirms the BBS distribution figure. Six singing males were found around the perimeter of CVL, the highest number since eight in 1982.

Autumn Passage began on Aug. 22nd, and peaked around the end of the month. There was a scatter of records in September. One was ringed on Steep Holm on 18th. Individuals were seen at OPS and Aust on 20th, and the last was at OPS on 21st, an early last date.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	99	106	114	76	91	96	93	92	76

Avon BBS Index 1999=100

BBS distribution 53%. BBS Avon population estimate 2900 pairs

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Formerly a rare vagrant, now a very scarce autumn visitor, rare in winter.

A record year equalling the number seen in 1986.

Another winter record, following that in February 2007, involved one at Chew Stoke STW from Jan. 29th to Feb. 21st, (Rmi *et al.*) – see photograph opposite page 96.

The first of the autumn was caught and ringed on Steep Holm on Sept. 26th (AJP). Next day one was trapped and ringed in a garden at Cameley (RMe). Later in the autumn one was at Sand Point on Oct. 11th (PAB *et al*) and one in a Dundry garden on 27th (DN, Rmi).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
0	0	1	0	2	0	2	2	2	5

Total birds seen

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Uncommon spring passage migrant. Rare on autumn passage. Last bred in 1996.

UK 10-yr change: down 68%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 18th in 1973, 24th 1986 18th by 1988, and around 21st since. There are too few departure dates to create an average.

There were only five records, all of single birds with three in spring, one in mid-summer, and, unusually nowadays, one an early autumn migrant.

The dates and sites are as follows: at CVL in song on May 2nd, at Aust on 4th, on Steep Holm on 8th (ringed), near the car park at Sand Bay in song on June 14th, and at Emerson's Green with a tit flock on July 7th (ADJ).

Wood Warbler cont.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	15	12	na	10	8	9	8	10	5	3
Passage totals										

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

P. c. collybita Common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor. Also an uncommon winter visitor, and therefore possibly an uncommon resident.

England 25-yr change: up 152%. Local ten-yr change: down 23%. Change since 2005 down 14%.

A second good year.

The winter results from the Atlas survey show their presence in 6% of tetrads. This is less than the 14% recorded in the first winter Atlas, but the methods were different. A total of 33 was counted.

Winter 2007/08 In January 13 were counted at eight sites, and in February 14 from nine sites.

Spring passage and breeding season Passage started slowly in March, but there were two sharp peaks on the weekends of March 29th and 30th, when 45 and 47 were recorded, and April 5th and 6th when 44 and 55 were recorded. It seems probable that “weekend bias” affected this pattern. One fell prey to the Bath Peregrines in April.

Atlas observers found them in 91% of tetrads, slightly higher than in 1992 when the figure was 87%. BBS recorded a second year of increase, and the population seems to have made a complete recovery from 2006, although it is not yet back to the peak in 2004.

Around the perimeter of CVL 38 singing males were recorded.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	123	130	138	181	206	127	107	144	162
Avon BBS index 1999=100									
BBS Distribution 87%. BBS Avon population estimate 9100 pairs.									

Autumn passage 50 were caught and ringed on Steep Holm in September.

Winter In November there were reports of single birds from ten sites, and in December 22 were recorded from twelve sites, including five at CVL.

1988/89-1997/98 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
151	273	117	100	83	129	209	193	236	117	94
Winter total individuals counted										

Siberian Chiffchaff *P. c. tristis*

Rare vagrant.

Notes on one at CVL from Dec. 28th to Jan. 2nd 2009 (CJS, JPM, RMi *et al.*) were examined by BBRC's '*tristis* panel' and were considered to meet the criteria for *tristis* (or '*fulvescens*') as applied by the panel. It was considered that this individual showed '*fulvescens*' characters – see photograph opposite page 96.

Future records of this form will be assessed at the local level.

2007 - Correction The caption to plate 16 in ABR 2007 (facing page 129) should have read 'Siberian Chiffchaff, *P. c. tristis*. Portland Bill, November 2007. M Cade'. It is a typical example of the form.

Eastern Chiffchaff *P. c. abietinus/tristis*

One at CVL on Dec. 16th (RMi) showed characters of an eastern race but was not considered to be proven as *tristis* by BBRC's *tristis* panel, mainly because the views did not allow quite enough detail to be noted.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus**Common passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.*

England 25-yr change: down 55%. Local ten-yr change: down 59%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 1st in 1970, falling to March 24th by 1981, rising back to April 1st by 1993 and falling steadily to March 22nd today.

Ten-yr av last date: Sept. 14th in 1970, Oct. 3rd by 1986, then falling back to around Sept. 21st in 1992, and Sept. 23rd now.

Days present: 167 in 1970, rising to 191 in 1981, falling to 172 in 1992 and then increasing to 185 today.

The long term decline continues.

Arrival The first spring arrival was seen on March 29th at BL, and there was one at Weston STW on 30th. A total of 62 were counted at six separate sites on the weekend of April 5th and 6th, but numbers then fell right back until the second wave on the weekend of 19th to 21st which totalled 95.

Breeding In the breeding season there were eight pairs at Burrington Ham, and 22 others reported from 15 sites. The majority of the BBS records were during the early count, before May 15th, and most will have been migrants. Nine were found in song around CVL, the highest since the same number in 2000. There was a very steep fall in the numbers ringed, which may indicate a poor breeding season.

Departure A fall of 20 was recorded at PW on July 31st, but otherwise numbers were very small throughout August, and to mid-September. Three were ringed on Steep Holm on 18th, one was at Northwick Warth on 19th, and the last was at OPS on 21st.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	95	72	49	29	56	34	48	44	41

Avon BBS index 1999=100 BBS distribution 27%.

Warblers at CVL

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Sedge Warbler	17	16	7	18	4	7	11	11	7	41
Garden Warbler	19	20	28	26	17	15	14	28	27	29
Blackcap	34	29	29	40	32	23	23	31	35	45
Chiffchaff	23	34	18	35	35	29	25	30	38	38
Willow Warbler	21	9	5	0	2	6	6	0	7	9

Singing males within the perimeter of CVL counted by KEV using a standardised method

Spring and Autumn Passerine Migration

Spring passerine migration						
	Mar 1-15	Mar 16-31	Apr 1-15	Apr 16-30	May 1-15	May 16-31
Redstart	0	0	6	21	0	0
Whinchat	0	0	0	12	10	2
Wheatear	9	83	50	256	92	6
Ring Ouzel	0	0	0	1	1	0
Grasshopper Warbler	0	0	2	17	9	0
Sedge Warbler	0	0	4	38	0	0
Reed Warbler	0	0	2	120	0	0
Blackcap	0	0	98	50	0	0
Garden Warbler	0	0	0	14	2	0
Lesser Whitethroat	0	0	0	75	0	0
Whitethroat	0	0	6	98	0	0
Wood Warbler	0	0	0	0	3	0
Chiffchaff	17	214	167	0	0	0
Willow Warbler	0	2	87	124	0	0
Spotted Flycatcher	0	0	0	0	14	0
Pied Flycatcher	0	0	0	22	0	0

Total numbers recorded in each period

Autumn passerine migration								
	Jul1-15	Jul 16-31	Aug 1-15	Aug 16-31	Sep 1-15	Sep 16-30	Oct 1-15	Oct 16-31
Tree Pipit	2	3	0	7	7	4	0	0
Redstart	0	0	3	10	3	3	1	0
Whinchat	4	26	17	35	25	12	4	0
Wheatear	2	12	35	204	271	97	46	3
Sedge Warbler	5	3	2	6	1	2	0	0
Reed warbler	27	17	8	8	6	2	0	0
Blackcap	9	16	6	45	42	33	6	1
Lesser Whitethroat	2	2	7	40	14	4	0	0
Spotted Flycatcher	0	0	0	15	13	3	1	0
Whitethroat	9	6	11	44	32	4	0	0
Wood Warbler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chiffchaff	10	16	4	92	88	128	58	17
Willow Warbler	1	22	13	14	11	10	0	0

Total numbers recorded in each period

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. The population suffers badly in harsh winters.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	0	20	-17	28	-31	-18

Winter results from the Atlas show a small distribution increase from 59% to 66% of tetrads. In the summer they were seen in 52% of tetrads compared with 20% in 1992. The species is so elusive that differences in counts have little meaning, and the BBS figures are probably the most accurate, as they are a large sample based on like-for-like comparisons. 18 were counted around CVL, the highest figure since 19 in 2000. The fall in the 2008/09 WBC may well be caused by the difference in the areas surveyed.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
BBS	100	112	124	136	173	157	157	94	144	119
CVL	15	19	6	14	13	6	10	15	12	18

Avon BBS Index 1999=100 BBS distribution 38%.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

In the first winter period one was at Blaise on at least Jan.12th and 26th (BL), two at Malago Greenway, Bedminster from Feb. 28th to March 2nd, and one remaining to 7th (RMA *et al.*), and one at Grove Park, Weston-s-Mare on Feb. 27th (MSP).

Single birds at Northwick Warth on March 20th (BL) and at Wain's Hill from 27th to 28th (RHu) were likely to have been spring migrants.

The first of the autumn was at OPS on Sept. 7th (PJH, MP) then a first winter was trapped and ringed on Steep Holm on Sept. 26th (AJP).

One returned to winter at Malago Greenway, Bedminster from Oct. 27th to the end of the year, with two here on Nov. 14th (RMA *et al.*) and one was again at Blaise from Dec. 6th to 13th (BL). Two were at Severn Beach from Dec 13th to 31st (PDB, RFR *et al.*). Other records in the second winter period involved birds seen on just one date: Locking on Nov. 6th (GW); ASW on Dec. 8th (SH); CVL first-winter, caught and ringed, Dec. 28th (per CVL Birding); and Dyers Common on Dec. 31st (RJH).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
1	6	14	8	15+	4	6	9 - 14	6	13

Total birds

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata**Uncommon passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.*

BBS distribution 3%. BBS population estimate 50 breeding pairs.

England 25-yr change: down 82%. Local ten-yr change: down 80%.

Ten-yr av first date: April 30th in 1970, increasing to May 5th by 1988, then falling back to April 29th today.

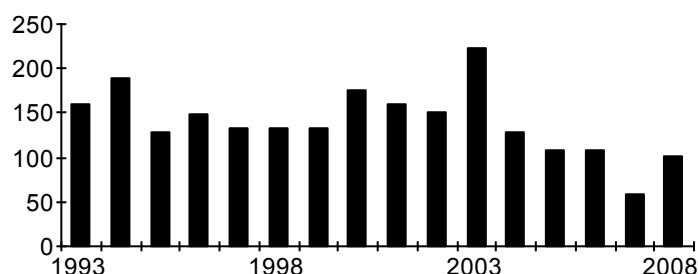
Ten-yr av last date: Sept. 24th in 1970, falling to 17th by 1988 and rising to Oct. 2nd today.

Days present: 147 days in 1970, falling to 135 by 1988, then rising sharply to 156 today.

A better year.

The first was seen at Blagdon on May 2nd and the next at Leigh Woods on 3rd. A further 36 were recorded from 20 sites to the end of May. During June and July 26 were recorded from 15 sites. There was proof of breeding only from Ashton Park where a pair was seen taking food to young. During August and September 34 were seen from Aug. 21st, and sightings were frequent to Sept. 14th. Two were seen on the 18th at Sands Farm, near Dyrham, and one was at PW on the 20th. The last record came from Kenn on Oct. 1st.

The Atlas survey found them in 8% of tetrads, a decline from the 12% in the 1992 Atlas.



Spotted Flycatcher total records 1993-2008

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca**Uncommon passage migrant, scarce in autumn, and rare summer visitor; bred in 1988.*

UK 10-yr change: down 35%.

Ten-yr av first arrival date: April 20th in 1970, falling to 11th today.

Until recently there have been very few autumn records, but over the past 25 years the average last date is Sept. 7th.

An excellent brief spring passage began on April 16th with a female at Sand Point and two males on the Strawberry Line Reserve. Records peaked on 22nd when eight were seen at six different sites, and the last was a male at Charlcombe on 24th. There were no further records.

	1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Spring	15	4	20	18	22	1	7	14	22	2	22
Autumn	4	4	2	6	2	3	1	12	0	1	0

Total Spring and Autumn passage

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus**Common breeding resident.*

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	63	37	8	54	-23	67

A successful breeding season in 2007 has led to a sharp population increase.

Winter results from the Atlas survey show a huge 271% increase over the past thirty years. The last winter Atlas took place when three severe winters devastated the winter populations. Winter distribution has also increased from 53% to 83% of tetrads. The summer survey found them in 62% of tetrads, compared with 27% in the 1992 Atlas.

Long-tailed Tit cont

In the 2007/08 winter they were present in 90% of WGS gardens, and BBS produced exceptional results for the second summer running. They had a good breeding season, because they nest early, and were not affected by the cold summer. There were fifteen records of flocks of 15 or more from July onwards, and they were frequently reported from gardens. Although the 2008/09 WBC figures show a fall, this probably reflects the areas surveyed.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	134	142	153	148	161	131	122	174	188

Avon BBS index 1999=100 BBS distribution 53%.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant breeding resident.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	-5	-2	-3	-8	-27	23

A small population fall, caused by two poor breeding seasons.

Results from the Atlas survey suggest that the winter population has remained essentially stable over the past thirty years, and it has an almost universal distribution.

They had a poor breeding season in both 2007 and 2008, reflecting two cold summers, and this was reflected in the fall in CABS and 2008/09 WBC figures. At CVL 55 nests were recorded, bearing 472 eggs, and 311 young fledged, a 65% success rate, although 89 chicks died in the nest, probably from starvation. The total numbers ringed was normal.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	94	102	110	109	112	114	102	94	84

Avon BBS index 1999 = 100

BBS distribution 98%. BBS Avon population estimate 38000 pairs

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant breeding resident..

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	0	5	6	-33	-18	53

A poor breeding season.

Results from the Atlas survey show a 43% increase in winter population over the past thirty years, but no change in the near universal winter distribution.

They appeared to have a better breeding season in 2007 than Blue Tits, but a poor one in 2008 as reflected in the CABS and WBC figures for the latter part of the year. CABS recorded song on 33% of visits, from the start of the year to June 1st. At CVL 68 nests were recorded, containing 442 eggs, and 308 young fledged, a 69% success rate. A total of 77 young died in the nest probably of starvation. The total numbers ringed was normal.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	107	113	120	128	138	134	147	133	139

Avon BBS Index 1999=100

BBS Distribution 96%. BBS Avon population estimate 32,300 pairs

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common breeding resident, probably also a passage migrant.

	WGS	BBS	CABS	Local 10 year	England 10 year
% Change	12	-33	-19	-1	9

The population may have fallen as a result of a poor breeding season in 2007.

Results from the Atlas survey show virtually no change in the winter population over the past thirty years, and the distribution too stayed stable at around 45% of tetrads. The summer survey found them in 28% of tetrads, a small increase on the 20% figure for the 1992 Atlas.

BBS results showed a sharp fall both in distribution and numbers counted, but because they are an uncommon species the figures tend to fluctuate wildly.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	110	150	192	198	208	159	132	149	99

Avon BBS Index. 1999=100 BBS distribution 24%.

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

Uncommon breeding resident.

BBS distribution 3%. BBS population estimate 250 pairs.
England 25-yr change: down 30%.

The population appears stable at a low level.

Winter results from the Atlas survey show a 62% decline in the population of this elusive species over the past thirty years, and a collapse in distribution from 33% to 8% of tetrads. The summer survey found them in only 4% of tetrads compared with 10% in 1992.

They were recorded in 30 different tetrads, and in many of their traditional sites, including Leigh Woods, Bourton and Brockley Combe, Folly Farm Wood, Lords Wood, Lower Woods, Priors Wood, St Catherines Valley and Wrington Warren.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
35	21	20	48	27	58	37	35	36	30

Annual total of one-km squares in which this species was seen

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Fairly common/common breeding resident. Scarce away from established sites.

BBS distribution 11%. BBS population estimate 1000 pairs.
England 25-yr change: up 89%. Local ten-yr change: up 89%.

Results from the Atlas survey suggest a 73% increase in the winter population, but almost no change in the distribution at 23% of tetrads. In the summer survey they were found in 16% of tetrads.

Since 2000 this species has been reported in 243 of the 1500 one-km squares in the region, and four of the 42 one-km squares in which it was recorded this year were new since 2000.

	2001	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
One-km Squares	21	59	69	80	87	34	54	42

Total number of one-km squares in which this species was reported.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common breeding resident; possibly an uncommon passage migrant.

BBS Distribution 8%. BBS population estimate 700 breeding pairs.
England 25-yr change: down 17%.

Winter results from the current Atlas survey show little change in the status of this rather local species which is showing some signs of a decline. There was a fall from 40% to 20% in the number of tetrads in which it was recorded, but due to a change in the survey methodology, this drop may exaggerate the decline.

Since 2000 it has been found in 209 of the 1500 one-km squares in the region, and this year it was seen in 36 of them, twelve were new. Eleven males were found around the perimeter of CVL. One pair nested behind a plank in a fisherman's hut.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
36	18	19	35	49	26	61	26	41	36

Annual total of one-km squares in which this species was reported

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Rare passage migrant, formerly bred, most recently in 1975.

One record: a female at Portbury Warth on May 29th (CJS, SH *et al.*).

The most recent records are of one in June 1988, one in June and one in August 2003; and one or two in May 2006.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Rare winter visitor

The first record since 2005: one at Cl-Y on Oct. 10th (HT *per* BRERC).

Recent records (all of single individuals) come from: Cl-Y, in January 1991; ASW/Severnside from January to April 1999 and again in February and March 2000; Severnside in January and February 2004; and Lansdown in March 2005.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Fairly common breeding resident.

BBS distribution 42%. England 25-yr change: down 5%. Local ten-yr change: up 140%.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC
% Change	-38	26	-13	-8	-2

A slight fall from previous high population levels.

Winter results from the Atlas survey show a 20% increase in numbers over the past thirty years, and a 5% increase in distribution to 64% of tetrads. Summer results show a remarkable increase in distribution from 24% in the 1992 Atlas to 50% now. In part the differences between the winter and summer surveys reflect differences in methodology.

Jays were seen in 77% of WGS gardens, the equal highest proportion on record. BBS figures were slightly down, but the index exaggerates the change because the base year, 1999, had unusually low figures. The counts in 2008 were slightly above the average since 1994.

A group of 16 were seen displaying together on Feb. 19th at Banwell. This behaviour is rarely observed.

Jays were found as prey of the Bath Peregrines in April and September.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	178	220	245	325	287	214	216	280	243

Avon BBS Index 1999=100

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Common breeding resident.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	5	1	-9	-2	-45	27

Results from the Atlas survey suggest that there has been a 64% increase in winter populations over the past thirty years, but no change in the universal distribution. Summing the maximum totals for each tetrad gives a figure of 4240, which must be a minimum population, and fits in well with the BBS estimate of 3650 pairs.

They were present in every WGS garden, and in the highest numbers ever. BBS showed a small fall in the overall rate, but a like-for-like increase of 1%. The fall in the 2008/09 WBC figures may be a consequence of the areas observed.

A total of four were found as prey of the Bath Peregrines during July to September.

Large flocks A total of 24 flocks containing more than ten was reported: the largest, 31, at Pen Park, Bristol, on Sept. 14th. In February 26 were reported at Brentry. OPS reported three flocks, numbering 20 to 25 in the first three months, Ham Brook had 23 in January, and Somerdale 27 in November.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	115	116	117	125	111	112	116	111	102

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS Distribution 89%. BBS Avon population estimate 3650 pairs.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Common breeding resident; uncommon passage migrant.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	-44	17	-4	-17	135	62

A stable population.

Results from the Atlas survey show almost no change in the winter population over the past thirty years, and an almost universal tetrad distribution. Summing the maximum counts for each tetrad gives a total of 13800, which is a minimum population figure, and fits in well with the BBS breeding estimate. Results from the summer Atlas show it to be present in 91% of tetrads, up from 78% in 1992.

The largest flock was 2000 at Marshfield on Feb. 10th. Stubble fields in the area attracted flocks of several species. BBS like-for-like records show a slight fall, but the BBS Index, based on the overall rate of observation, showed an increase.

Two were prey for the Bath Peregrines in July.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	100	103	106	104	100	108	110	115	124

Avon BBS index 1999=100
BBS distribution 86% BBS Avon population estimate 9500 pairs

'Nordic Jackdaw' *Corvus monedula monedula*

Very rare winter vagrant

A large national influx in November/December 2007 and the first winter period of 2008 produced the first records for our area. One was at Somerdale, Keynsham, from Jan. 14th to 22nd with two here on 22nd (AHD, RMi), and probably one of the same nearby by the River Chew at Keynsham on 23rd (AHD, RMi) and March 3rd (RP). Another was at Marshfield, first seen on Jan. 25th (RL), and then on Feb. 10th and March 1st (MH) with a fourth individual seen at West Harptree in fields adjacent to CVL on Feb. 6th and 7th and March 18th and 29th (RMi, KEV).

One at Keynsham on Nov. 26th (AHD) might have been a returning bird.

See article on page 155.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Common breeding resident.

England ten-year change; up 1%. Local ten-yr change; down 41%.

Observations tend to confirm a fall in population.

Results from the Atlas survey show a huge 70% fall in wintering numbers over the past thirty years, accompanied by a 25 point fall in distribution from 92% to 67% of tetrads. Summing the maximum population in all tetrads gives a figure of 9700 birds, which is a minimum, and fits in well with the BBS population estimate of 7200 pairs. In the summer survey they were found in 56% of tetrads, compared with 62% in 1992, and a total of 5000 was counted which, as the survey covered just over half the total area, fits in very well with the winter result. The distribution confirms the BBS figure.

The largest winter flock was 200 at OPS on Feb. 2nd. BBS figures have been stable for the past three years. The distribution has fallen from 64% to 49% since 1994. The 2005 Avon Rookery survey recorded just under 6000 nests, a 19% fall on the 2000 survey when there were 7900 nests. The causes of this decline are unknown.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	107	88	70	54	61	71	56	58	59

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS distribution 49%. Avon population count 7200 pairs.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone**Common breeding resident.*

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	55	-20	-3	4	-8	49

A stable population.

Results from the Atlas survey suggest a 35% increase in winter populations over the past thirty years, but no change in the universal distribution of the species. Summing the maximum counts in all tetrads gives a figure of just over 9000 birds, which must be a minimum regional population, and fits in well with the BBS estimate of 8000 pairs.

Although up to 58 were present at Weston STW in April, only three pairs bred. The largest flock was 120 on the coast at CI-Y in November. BBS results were almost the same as in 2007, and the population seems to be entirely stable.

Two were present on Steep Holm throughout but did not breed.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	100	98	97	89	92	104	102	98	95

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS distribution 100 %. BBS Avon population estimate 8200 pairs.

RAVEN *Corvus corax**Scarce breeding resident, and uncommon passage migrant.*

BBS distribution 10%.

England ten-yr change: up 280%. Local ten-yr change: Up 700%.

Winter results from the Atlas survey show that it was found in 30% of tetrads, which compares with just 1% thirty years ago. Summing the maximum counts in each tetrad gave a total for the region of 250, which must be regarded as a minimum population figure. In the summer survey they were found in 18% of the tetrads visited, and 88 were counted.

Breeding. Since 1988, 43 breeding sites have been identified, but very few are reported on regularly. Three new sites were recorded this year, and six established ones. Two pairs nested within the perimeter of CVL. Three sites fledged five young. It is clear from the Atlas figures that there are probably approaching 100 breeding pairs, but they are very elusive at the nest.

Most records are of ones or twos flying over, but there have been several flocks. A CVL record count of 22 were seen along the ridge to SE of Herriott's Bridge on Feb. 1st with ten here on 4th and 14th, ten in the Marshfield area on April 6th, 15 there on Aug. 26th and 23 on Sept. 2nd.

	1989/98 Av	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Breeding pairs	3	6	8	10	9	12	19	19	12	8	9

Total reported breeding pairs

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris**Still abundant breeding resident, declining rapidly; passage migrant and winter visitor.*

	WBC	WGS	BBS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	250	13	-22	22	-78

The resident population continues to fall.

Winter results from the Atlas survey show a small decline in distribution from 97% to 91% of tetrads, but a decline of 44% in the population since 1982. Summing the maximum counts for all tetrads gave a figure of 42,000, twice as many as the next most frequent species, the Wood Pigeon, representing 17% of the total winter counts. Given its highly mobile habits, and the fact that an unknown proportion of the winter population comes from Europe, this figure will not have a precise relationship with the actual population.

It was present in 73% of WGS gardens, up from 55% the previous winter, and average numbers rose by 13%. This may imply an unusually large number of migrants.

Roosts

A substantial roost existed in the Chepstow area during the 2007/08 winter, and an immense flock, estimated at 120,000, was seen at sunset on Jan. 12th flying west across the Estuary at Aust. Roosts were noted at CVL as follows: in the first winter period at least 50,000 were seen on some evenings but no formal count was made, 20,000 were recorded here on Nov. 14th, and 'thousands' were noted on Dec. 20th.

Migration

A total of 3000 was recorded on Oct. 31st at OPS in a three hour migration watch, and 1000 were moving west in half an hour at Severn Beach on Nov. 9th.

The steep decline in BBS figures suggests that the cold summer of 2007 may have reduced the resident population. The counts from Bristol Birdwatch for the 2008/09 winter show a sharp drop, and a fall since 2000/01 of 43%.

Eleven fell prey to the Bath Peregrines during the course of the year.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	91	92	93	82	71	70	70	69	45

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS distribution 74%. BBS Avon population estimate 10,800 pairs

1988/9-1997/8 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
7.6	6.1	5.6	4.6	3.9	4.8	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.0	4.5

WGS - average number per garden per week in winter

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Still abundant but declining breeding resident.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	100	16	2	-14	-59

Results from the Atlas show that the distribution has shrunk by 14% from 93% of tetrads in the first winter atlas to 79% today. At the same time the population has fallen by 32%. Summing the maximum counts in each tetrad gave a total of 5500, making it the 13th most abundant species, just below Robin.

It was present in 57% of WGS gardens, the lowest proportion yet recorded. Twenty years ago the figure was 90%. Numbers were above those of the previous winter, but still suggest a 34% fall in twenty years.

BBS recorded small like-for-like increase, but the index below, based on total sightings, shows a fall. This discrepancy is caused partly by the fact that the distribution is highly skewed, and hence changes in the squares visited will have an impact on the numbers counted.

Amidst this tale of gloom it is worth commenting that BBS figures do actually show a population increase over the past decade.

Atlas recorders in the summer found them in 88% of tetrads visited, a small increase on the 79% in the 1992 Atlas.

A number of gardens recorded normal maximum counts during the year of 20 to 30 birds, and 60 were seen on the Flax Bourton cycle track on July 1st. Weston STW had a maximum of 45 during September.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	103	115	131	157	141	146	135	133	116

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS distribution 69%. BBS Avon population estimate 40,100 pairs

1988/9-1997/8 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
5.8	5.8	4.2	3.5	3.2	3.9	4.0	4.1	3.7	2.9	3.4

WGS - average numbers per garden per week in winter.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Very scarce passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. Now probably extinct as a breeding bird.

England 25-yr change: down 96%.

There were just two records both on Oct.10th probably both passage migrants; one at Battery Point seen during a migration watch, and one at Northwick Warth.

Atlas field work shows that a small population persists just outside our area on the Mendips of Somerset.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
Bird-days	207	31	6	288	72	52	40	18	5	2
Sites	14	7	3	9	7	3	4	4	3	2

Total individuals counted and sites

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	39	43	-4	-23	-15	19

A slow decline continues.

Results from the Atlas show that its winter distribution is unchanged from 30 years ago, but the population is 23% lower. Since winter numbers are strongly affected by migrants, and in particular by the Beech crop, of which there was none in the 2008/09 winter, this figure of itself is of little value. In the first Atlas survey with 3000 hours of observation over three winters Chaffinches were recorded at a rate of 10.8 an hour. The new Atlas recorded a rate of 8.2 an hour over 1400 hours, and this is higher than the average WBC since 1998 of 7.1 an hour. This does suggest that there has been a real fall in winter numbers of around a quarter.

The largest reported flock in the first winter was 200 at Marshfield in both January and February. The numbers in WGS gardens were the highest in the thirty years of the survey.

The breeding season results from BBS also confirmed a downward trend as the index below shows. Indeed since 1994 the figures have fallen by 39%, and the fall has been more or less continuous. This contrasts with national BBS data showing a 16% increase over the same period. Two pairs bred on Steep Holm. CABS reported song on 37% of visits, which was more or less continuous from Feb.10th to June 23rd.

Atlas recorders found them in 96% of tetrads, compared with 92% in the 1992 Atlas.

It was a poor October for diurnal migration but there were two substantial counts at Sand Point of 3390 on 18th and 3500 on 23rd, and 800 were counted in three hours at OPS on Nov. 4th. A total of 1000 was present on stubble at Marshfield on Nov. 14th.

Nine fell prey to the Bath Peregrines during the year.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	95	92	90	82	88	85	83	77	73

Avon BBS Index 1999 =100

BBS distribution 99%. BBS Avon population estimate 13,500 pairs.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Ten-year av. first date: Sept. 26th in 1970, rising to Oct. 12th by 1985, and Oct. 3rd today.

Ten-year av. last date: April 5th in 1970, 25th by 1987, 10th today.

Days present 185 in 1970, 191 in 1995, 183 today.

The winter results from the Atlas survey found them present in 23 tetrads, 6% of the total. In the first winter Atlas, over three years they were found in 19% of tetrads, but the difference may be caused by the differing methodology.

Winter 2007/08 In January a flock of 40 was seen at Marshfield on 19th, and in February there were reports of a total of 161 from 14 sites, including a few gardens. Indeed 28% of WGS gardens saw them, the highest proportion yet recorded.

In March there were records of 27 from five sites. In April two groups of five were seen on the 5th, and four single birds from different sites between 8th and 16th. Five were also present in a garden in Bath daily until the 16th, which was the last date. This is the same as the average date since 1966, although later than in the past decade. Unusually high numbers were ringed (see Ringing Report on page 169 for details).

Second winter period The first record came on Oct. 13th, rather later than the recent average, a bird flying to NE at New Passage. Three were seen on migration watches on 18th and one on 24th. The first record away from the coast came on Nov. 4th when two were seen at Marshfield. There were just two others in November. In December there was a flock of 20 at Marshfield on 2nd and ten on 4th, and three other birds were seen.

1988/89-97/98 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
451	442	140	18	109	103	270	20	3065	25	246
Total bird-days October-March										

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant, and winter visitor.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	-59	-27	-30	-36	-13	46

A further decline.

The impact of the parasitic infection in the autumn of 2006 coupled with two cold summers has cut back numbers. The winter results of the Atlas survey show that distribution has increased from 78% of tetrads to 83%. The population has fallen by 11% over the thirty year period. The local winter population is increased by birds that move west in the autumn.

The two successive WBC figures also showed a decline. They were present in 90% of WGS gardens in the 2007/08 winter, but numbers were back to the level of 2001/02.

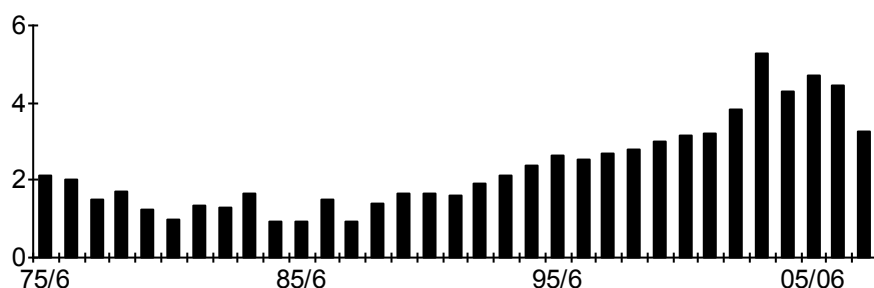
BBS showed a sharp fall for the second year running, and the results suggested that the population is now below what it was in 1994. The falls recorded by CABS and WBC in 2008/09 suggest that it was a poor breeding season. CABS recorded song on 39% of visits, and it was more or less continuous from Feb. 10th to July 12th. The totals ringed during the year were also down 30% on the recent average.

In the summer Atlas recorders found them in 91% of tetrads, a sharp increase on the 66% recorded in the 1992 Atlas. This confirms the BBS distribution.

Eight were recorded on Steep Holm on Sept. 22nd, and two fell prey to the Bath Peregrines during the year.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	100	109	119	125	130	123	136	101	64

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS distribution 86%. BBS Avon population estimate 8200 pairs



Average number of Greenfinch per garden-week 1975/6-2007/8

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant, and winter visitor.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	WBC	England 25 year
% Change	-13	270	28	22	28

The increase continues.

The winter results from the Atlas show an astonishing increase of 288% in the population, and an increase in distribution from 56% to 80% of tetrads.

It was present in 70% of WGS gardens in the 2007/08 winter, and in numbers three times as great as the previous best winter in 2001/02.

Some exceptional movements were noted in April; 590 were recorded in three hours (0650 – 0950hrs) on April 20th flying to NE at Severn Beach, and 600 were reported at OPS on the same day.

BBS recorded them in the highest proportion of squares, and the greatest numbers since the survey began in 1994. Atlas observers in the summer found them in 84% of tetrads compared with only 55% in the 1992 Atlas, confirming the BBS figure.

Flock sizes built up at the end of August; 130 were present at Sand Point on the 30th and 140 at Weston STW on Sept. 9th, 250 at Marshfield on 23rd and 350 at Sand Point on 26th. On Steep Holm birds were present throughout September with a maximum of 26 on 23rd.

The 2008/09 WBC suggested that they had had a good breeding season despite the cold summer. The largest winter flock was 200 at Bath University on Dec. 15th.

Two fell prey to the Bath Peregrines during the year.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	101	101	100	111	112	134	158	137	182

Avon BBS Index 1999=100
BBS Distribution 79%. BBS Avon population estimate 7700 pairs

1988/9-1997/8 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
23	30	76	72	100	45	60	83	83	84	311

WGS - numbers per 100 garden-weeks

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Irruptive winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer.

England ten-yr change: down 34%.

A better winter. The winter results from the Atlas show almost no change in the distribution, which was 16% in the first Winter Atlas, and 18% today. A maximum of 636 was counted during the two winters, the majority in 2007/08.

Winter 2007/08 An average winter, much better than 2006/07. Numbers were greatest in January, least in March. They were present in 33% of WBC gardens, the best since 2002/03, and in the largest numbers since 1997/98, and most came into gardens in March, presumably when other foods became scarce. There were April records of single birds from Blagdon, Sidcot, and OPS, and on 19th and 20th four and two on the coast travelling to NE. Exceptional numbers were ringed in this period (see Ringing Report on page 169).

Breeding season There were records from Blagdon during May and June, including a pair on May 27th, and a male was seen displaying on May 12th in Sidcot. There is no good reason why they should not breed, but proof has yet to be obtained.

Autumn passage The first were noted on Aug. 28th at New Passage, and 80 were seen at Sand Point on Sept. 14th. They were present on Steep Holm throughout September, peaking at 17 on 19th.

Winter In October 161 were recorded, many of them on the coast, although there were 30 at CVL on 13th. Only 34 were seen in November, but numbers built up in December. At Littlewood Reserve on Kenn Moor 50 were seen on 5th, and this flock was seen twice more during the month. A Thornbury garden held 30 on 30th and the same number were at Wrington on the same date. Bird-days totalled 285.

1988/9-97/8 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
2673	1012	2945	783	3520	1938	1060	73	3683	104	1419

Total individuals counted in six winter months, October-March

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant, and winter visitor

England 25-yr change: down 48%. Local ten-yr change: down 9%.

A better year.

The winter results from the Atlas show that distribution fell from 23% of tetrads to 19%, although the difference in methodology may have caused this change as the population increased by 212%.

During the first winter up to 500 were present on stubble fields at Marshfield throughout February, falling to 100 in March, but 200 were still present in April. A strong passage of 400/hr was observed at OPS on April 18th and 190 were seen in three hours (0650 – 0950hrs) on 20th at Severn Beach moving to NE up river.

BBS counted the greatest number since 1999, reversing the downward trend of the past few years. Atlas observers in the summer found them in 37% of tetrads compared with 31% in the 1992 Atlas. This confirms the BBS figure.

Flocks built up in July, when 60 were counted at CI-Y on 17th. There were 275 at Weston STW on Aug. 3rd and 700 here on the 8th. In September 290 were counted on Steep Holm, and 300 at Marshfield on Sept. 19th. This flock had grown to 800 by Nov. 14th, and was still this size on Dec. 4th. Up to 300 were present at Burnett in December.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	87	83	79	67	72	77	60	57	91

Avon BBS Index 1999=100

BBS distribution 36%. BBS Avon population estimate 4800 pairs.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer. Records received as 'Redpoll' are included in this account, and so a few may actually refer to Common Redpolls.

England 25-yr change: down 97%.

A better winter.

The winter results from the Atlas survey show a fall in distribution from 9% of tetrads in the first winter atlas to 5% today-although changes in methodology may be responsible for this.

Winter 2007/08 A total of 101 bird-days was recorded, about half of them in February. The largest group was nine at Backwell Lake on Jan. 7th. Exceptional numbers were ringed in February and March – see Ringing Report on page 169.

Spring Passage During March and April 56 bird-days were recorded, including a flock of 16 on April 14th at Lower Knole Farm. In the first week of May 42 were seen, mainly on the coast, including 27 on May 7th at Sand Point.

Autumn passage Passage began with one on Steep Holm on Sept. 25th, and 36 bird-days were recorded to the end of October, all in ones and twos.

Second winter In November and December a total of 31 bird-days were recorded.

1988/89-97/8 Av	1998/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	2007/08
220	303	289	300	526	159	481	51	578	33	101

Winter totals November to February

COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea flammea*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, formerly rare, but more regularly reported in recent times.

One was at R. Chew, Keynsham from Feb. 23rd to 25th, (AHD, JA, RMI) and a female or first winter at Severn Beach on April 20th (JPM, BL).

Both of these individuals showed cold grey tones to the head and mantle, whitish 'tram lines', white wing bars, a lack of brown tones to the underparts and appeared structurally to fit this form. Neither, however, was at the more obvious end of the spectrum of variation within *flammea*. As this species hybridises with Lesser Redpoll at least in Southern Scandinavia it is not possible to eliminate Lesser Redpoll influence in less obvious apparent *flammea* such as these.

CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant, whose number vary very sharply from year to year

An average year for this irruptive species.

The first was seen over Sand Point on May 1st, and the next at the same place on June 1st. On June 10th, 15 flew west at Henbury, and in the next three days nine more were seen. Eleven were recorded in July, and on Aug. 1st eleven were seen at Portishead Police Station. On Aug. 31st single birds were noted at three sites, and five were recorded in September. In October one was seen at CVL on 4th and on 21st nine landed in a Dundry garden and stayed for a day.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
20	17	12	100	100	4	130	1	0	75
Total annual bird-days									

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Fairly common breeding resident.

	WBC	WGS	BBS	CABS	WBC	Local 10 year	England 25 year
% Change	25	33	19	-5	27	15	-28

A good year. Results from the Atlas survey suggest that there has been very little change since the first winter Atlas thirty years ago. Distribution has fallen from 65% to 59% of tetrads, but this may well be caused by the difference in methodology, and the population appears to have increased by 23%, against the national trend.

In the 2007/08 winter they were present in fewer WGS gardens than the previous winter, but were more frequent, perhaps because it was a very poor winter for Ash keys.

BBS counts so few that the index fluctuates wildly, and there has been very little apparent change in the population since 1994. Atlas recorders in the summer found them in 38% of tetrads, compared with 31% in the 1992 Atlas. This confirms the BBS distribution figures.

One or two records came from the coast in September and October of birds apparently on migration, and twelve were recorded at OPS on Oct. 25th, a much higher number than normal. Records are normally of pairs, but there was a flock of eight at PW on Dec. 27th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	93	110	128	151	124	137	97	97	115
Avon BBS Index 1999=100 BBS distribution 33%.									

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce winter visitor, formerly bred

About five were recorded in 2008 as follows:

One at Leigh Woods, a former breeding site, on April 18th (JPM).

In the autumn there were up to three at Ringswell Valley, near Marshfield, from Nov. 26th to Dec. 3rd (*per* The Birds of South Gloucestershire website) and another at nearby St Catherine's Valley on Dec. 7th (AM).

2007 Addendum : One at Hawkesbury Upton on Jan. 9th (DRS).

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
0	0	0	1	1	0	12	17	1	5
Total individuals									

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to the estuary. Very rare inland.

One record; a female at Marshfield from March 24th to 27th, (MH, RL, JB *et al.*). The first inland record in spring.

In the past decade this species has been recorded in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2007.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Common but declining breeding resident, possibly uncommon passage migrant.

England 25-yr change: down 55%. Local ten-yr change: down 27%.

Some signs of an increase.

The winter results from the Atlas survey make clear the decline over the past thirty years. Distribution has fallen from 52% of tetrads to 21%, and the population has fallen by 49%. The population is greatest in the east of the region, and survey results that are not like-for-like fluctuate depending on the areas covered rather than on real population changes.

First winter The largest flock was in the Marshfield area where 200 were recorded in February, falling to 50 in March, but 80 were still present on April 16th.

In the breeding season BBS figures showed an encouraging increase, back to the level of 2000. However distribution, at 28% of one-km squares, has declined steeply from 51% in 1994.

Second winter. The largest flock was 40 at Marshfield on Nov. 4th.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
100	109	101	92	73	76	81	82	89	111
Avon BBS Index 1999=100									
BBS distribution 28%. BBS Avon population estimate 2100 pairs.									

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Uncommon breeding resident, and passage migrant.

England 25-yr change: down 40%. Local ten-yr change: up 6%.

A stable population

Among the few records in the first winter period was an interesting report of six in a field of Elephant Grass near CVL. This is an increasing crop in the area, and its significance for birds is worth noting.

First song was recorded on March 1st. BBS counted 53 at a slightly lower rate than normal. So few are recorded that the index fluctuates violently. There were 31 singing males at CVL, as has become usual, and there were 27 singing males at Weston STW, nine at BL, five on Clapton Moor, and 26 from twelve other sites, a total of 98 probable breeding pairs.

Atlas observers found them in 34 of 235 tetrads (15%), which compares with their presence in 13% of tetrads in the 1992 breeding Atlas. They counted 101, an average of just three in each occupied tetrad. These observations tend to confirm the small size of the population, perhaps 150 pairs, and also show that its distribution is largely unchanged in twenty years.

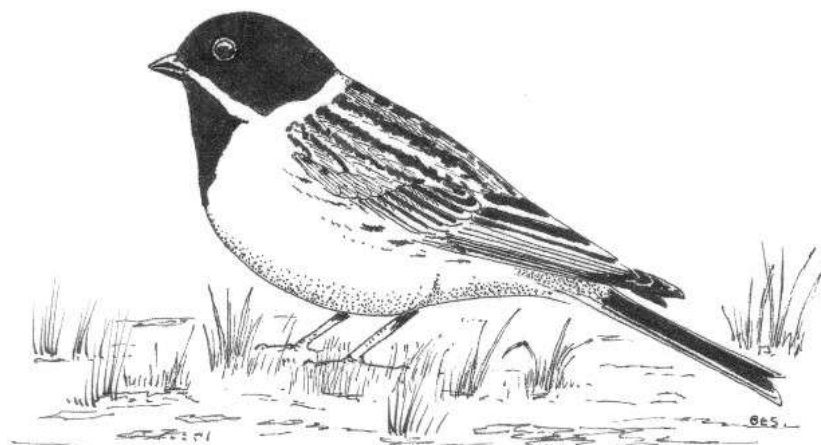
There were two indications of migration: at Sand Point 15 were noted on Sept. 26th and then there was an influx of ten at PW on Oct. 8th.

On Dec. 31st at Lower Knole Farm, near Almondsbury, there was an unprecedented record of 40 feeding in a stubble field.

Reed Bunting cont.

	1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
BBS	104	93	83	67	60	119	180	156	140	106
CVL	21	30	24	36	29	20	13	31	32	31

Avon BBS index 1999=100 BBS distribution 10%. CVL total singing males

**CORN BUNTING** *Miliaria calandra*

Local and uncommon breeding resident; confined to arable areas in the east of the region. Rare elsewhere as a passage migrant/winter visitor.

BBS distribution 2%. Winter population about 90.

England 25-yr change: down 86%. Local ten-yr change: probably stable.

The population is possibly increasing.

The usual winter flock at Marshfield contained 90 individuals in February.

BBS counted 33 in seven squares, the best count yet. Records representing perhaps 36 pairs came from 10 squares on the Cotswolds, although many records are imprecise about site, and whether birds were in song or not.

In November there was a flock of 30 at Marshfield, which may suggest a poor breeding season.

1999	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	2008
41	16	11	21	18	18	23	12	NA	NA

Total singing males

ESCAPED AND RELEASED BIRDS**BLACK SWAN** *Cygnus atratus*

Australia

Latteridge – two on May 27th;

CVL – an adult from Jan. 29th to 31st;

BL – one on June 4th.

CHINESE GOOSE *Anser cygnoides*

Asia

Bristol Docks – one present all year, with two on Feb. 11th.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Asia

CVL – two on May 18th.

AUSTRALIAN SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadornoides*

Australia

OPS – male paired with Common Shelduck, April 30th and May 3rd and 10th.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

Central & South America

Bristol Harbour – Pair present until July when male disappeared. Bred, with three young seen on July 7th and a single young until July 15th;

New Passage – fully winged albino from March 17th until April 13th;

R. Frome, Iron Acton – three on June 7th;

Oveston Village Pond, near Thornbury – two on March 2nd and July 6th with one on June 1st and 30th, and Nov. 2nd;

Backwell Lake – one on nine dates between April 4th and July 26th.

NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Eurasia

CVL – a male with a white plastic ring from Dec. 7th into 2009.

CHILEAN PINTAIL *Anas georgica spinicauda*

South America

BL – from Aug. 6th to 23rd;

CVL – Aug. 30th. Presumably the same bird.

HOODED MERGANSER *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Nearctic

The record of a female at BG on Dec. 21st, 1996 was reconsidered by BOURC at the request of the observers, following the admission of the species to category A of the British list but was considered most likely to be an escape.

HARRIS'S HAWK *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Neotropics

Bristol Parkway – bird with jesses flew to E on Oct. 16th.

GREAT BUSTARD *Otis tarda*

Eurasia

The wing tagged female (orange 15) from the Salisbury Plain reintroduction scheme, first seen in Avon in February/March 2006, was present by the R. Avon, Keynsham from Jan. 10th to 17th, see photograph opposite page 128. It then moved to the nearby Avon Valley Country Park on Jan. 22nd and finally to OPS on Jan. 26th.

COCKATIEL *Nymphicus hollandicus*

Australia

Keynsham – from June 15th to 17th

New Passage – July 16th

R. Avon, Keynsham – Nov. 11th.

PARAKEET *sp*

Clevedon – two different birds; white with a yellow neck collar on April 8th and 10th, and a grey bird on Nov. 25th.

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

Eurasia

A male roosted in Woodland Road (Bristol) from mid-September into 2009 - see article on page 162 and photograph opposite page 128.

HYBRIDS

It should be noted that the parentages reported in this section are what seemed to the observer(s) to be the most likely.

CANADA GOOSE x GREYLAG GOOSE *Branta canadensis x Anser anser*

Two at CVL on Aug. 28th.

CANADA GOOSE x CHINESE GOOSE *Branta canadensis x Anser cygnoides*

BL - from Dec. 20th to 25th.

HYBRID SHELDUCK *Tadorna sp.*

A Shelduck photographed at OPS on March 15th resembled Australian Shelduck but had an orange rather than grey breast and belly and was presumably a hybrid.

A hybrid Shelduck photographed at R. Avon, Keynsham on March 31st was thought likely to be a Common x Australian or possibly Common x Paradise as it showed mixed features of these species e.g. pinkish bare parts suggesting Common ancestry with much of the plumage fitting either of the two southern hemisphere species - see photograph opposite page 97. It or a very similar hybrid was subsequently seen at Slimbridge in early 2009 at least.

AYTHYA HYBRIDS

Unless stated otherwise all records relate to CVL, where the number of individuals seen was well down on 2007.

(a) The regularly returning male, first seen as a first winter on Dec. 31st, 1999, that resembles a Scaup, the principal difference being the bulge on the rear of the crown, and which is considered probably to be a Scaup x Tufted, remained from 2007 and was last seen on April 12th. It did not return in the autumn.

(b) The female, from 2007, that resembles a Pochard but with a large white facial blaze, was present up to Feb. 28th.

(c) A female at ASW on Feb. 8th.

(d) The regularly returning male, showing some characters of Canvasback, and considered probably to be a Canvasback x Pochard, was seen on April 5th, May 15th, June 7th and 21st, Aug. 15th and Nov. 9th.

(e) A male, resembling a Lesser Scaup but too large, on April 10th and May 14th.

(f) A male, like a Pochard but with pale eyes, on June 22nd.

(g) At BG a female Pochard type, with a facial blaze, was present from Sept. 22nd into 2009. It was at CVL on Oct. 31st.

(h) Another male, similar to (e) but with differently coloured undertail coverts, on a number of dates between Oct. 22nd and Nov. 7th.

(i) At BL a male Pochard type, but smaller with a domed head, dark charcoal back, chestnut breast and an orange eye, was present from Dec. 20th into 2009.

GOLDENEYE x BARROW'S GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula x Bucephala islandica*

The female from 2007, possibly this hybrid, remained at CVL until at least Jan. 14th.

HERRING GULL x LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus argentatus x Larus fuscus*

A very high number of records this year but presumably a much smaller number of individuals involved. All adults unless otherwise stated.

BL – one on Sept. 23rd;

CVL – in January two adults and a fourth calendar year on 7th, two on 17th and one on 2nd, 3rd, 15th, 20th, 21st and 31st. In February one on 1st, 3rd and 22nd with a fourth calendar year on 14th. One also seen on March 8th, Aug. 20th, Nov. 15th and 28th and a fourth calendar year on Oct. 30th;

Shortwood Tip – two on Jan. 8th and 16th with one on Jan. 9th and Feb. 8th;

St. Phillips – one on roof on Jan. 30th;

Temple Meads – one on June 17th.

LARUS sp

A large adult Herring type gull was at CVL from May 8th until July 4th and on July 10th and 27th.

It attracted considerable interest and discussion, showing some characteristics associated with the recently split American Herring Gull *L. smithsonianus* although it did not meet the strict criteria for identification of adult *smithsonianus* in a vagrancy context. Although DNA analysis of a moulted contour feather proved that it was not an American Herring Gull, it could not resolve its identity with certainty either.

Details of the bird and the results of the DNA analysis are set out in articles in the August 2008 and April 2009 issues of *Birdwatch* magazine.

BIRDS OF THE DOWNS, 1994-2008

R. L. Bland

Introduction

Averil Morley might have been very surprised that we reprinted her 1931 pamphlet on the Birds of the Downs in the **2007** edition of the **Avon Bird Report** as she would probably have regarded it as juvenilia. She became a significant ornithologist and, as secretary of the Edward Grey Institute in Oxford, did important work on the Marsh Tits in Bagley Woods, whose tit populations are now perhaps the most studied in the world. She understood the importance of statistics, and of finding methods for monitoring populations, and this has been my life-long interest.

Since 1994 I have done a standard 2km Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) walk every week through square ST5673, using a route that runs along the edge of the Downs from the Suspension Bridge to the Peregrine Watch point, and back from the Zoo entrance to the Mall gardens. The walk takes me an average of an hour to do, and in 15 years I have walked 1500 kilometres in 750 hours, and counted approximately 154,000 birds at an average rate of 205 per hour. I have recorded 66 species, with an average of 48 per year. However most species are seen very infrequently, and this paper examines the data for the 17 most common species.

General Results

Two things became apparent very early in the survey. The numbers of different species were very stable from year to year, but varied very sharply seasonally. The stable population derived from the fact that the habitat has remained essentially unchanged over the whole period. The sharp seasonal variation was a consequence primarily of changing bird behaviour, and hence visibility, but also of the change from a leafless to a leafy landscape and, to a much lesser extent for most species, of a real change in their populations between winter and summer. What is very striking is that in July and August, the point in the year when the resident bird population is at its greatest, the numbers recorded were at their lowest. This brought home the fact that counts are always a proportion of the actual numbers present, but that this proportion differs for each species and, to some extent, it differs each week of the year. It is for this reason that the BBS instructions to observers ask that each year's survey be done in the same week as the previous year.

Factors affecting variation

1 - Weather

The apparent stability of the habitat hides two significant patterns of change. The first obviously is the weather, which can alter bird populations quite strikingly primarily in two ways. A cold wet summer, and in particular a cold wet May, can seriously damage the breeding season for single-brooded species. During the survey there were three summers, 1996, 2002 and 2007, when a combination of low temperatures and high rainfall created a very poor breeding season for some species, especially Blue and Great Tits. Cold winters can also have a striking impact on the populations of small insectivorous species, such as Goldcrest or Long-tailed Tit. For three winters the average temperature was below the general average for the period, these were 1995/96, 1996/97 and 2005/06, but for all the others it was above the general winter average which since 1950 is 7.7°C.

Weather patterns, 1994-2008

In general the survey period was warmer and wetter than previous years, without exceptional storms, frosts, or droughts.

The mean annual maximum temperature was 14.2°C, a little above the average since 1950 of 13.8°C. (The average in the 15 years before Miss Morley wrote her paper was 13.7°C). The hottest year was 2003, the coldest 1996. Despite a great deal of media discussion of climate change, although the thirty-year average temperature rose, it remained below the figure for the 1950s.

Average annual rainfall for the period was 979mm, above both the average since 1950 (916mm) and the long term average since 1853 (894mm). The year 2000 was the wettest, but seven of the years had more than 1000mm, and only 1996 and 2003 were dry years. In climate terms average rainfall rose from 908mm to 956mm, so that the period was part of an upswing in rainfall, which began in 1980, and which has reached previously unrecorded levels.

The table below shows average monthly temperature and rainfall compared with the long term average since 1853.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Temp °C													Av.
Av 1994-2008	8.1	8.6	10.5	13.1	16.3	19.2	21.2	21.3	18.6	14.7	11.0	7.9	14.2
Av 1853-2008	7.1	7.5	9.8	12.8	16.2	19.3	20.8	20.5	18.0	14.0	9.8	7.7	13.6
Rainfall mm													Sum
Av 1994-2008	96	75	68	70	78	59	67	79	78	109	96	104	979
Av 1853-2008	84	62	60	57	62	62	72	85	80	95	87	87	893

2 - Harvest

The second factor in the environment that changed significantly from year to year during the survey was the autumn harvest of nuts and berries. This harvest starts in early June with Cherries, and continues right the way through to the end of March when Ivy berries usually become exhausted. The harvest is much more difficult to quantify than the weather, but probably at least as important. I have only attempted to record the harvest since 2001. The most obvious changes occur when there is a total failure of a particular species to produce any fruit. This was true of Whitebeam in 2003 and 2008, of Beech in 2003, 2005 and 2008, of Oak in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008, and of Ash in 2007.

A rough and ready method of assessment of 17 fruiting tree and shrub species since 2001, in which the quality of the harvest is assessed from 0 to 5 for each species, suggests that the best harvest was in 2006, the worst in 2008, with a poor harvest in 2005, the others being average. Wintering Chaffinch and Coal Tit numbers are affected by the size of the Beech harvest. The activities of the Oak gall wasp vary from year to year, but seem to be ruining the Oak harvest with increasing regularity, which may damage the Jay population. Of course the presence of substantial numbers of garden feeding stations may ensure that gaps in the natural harvest have less impact than might otherwise be the case.

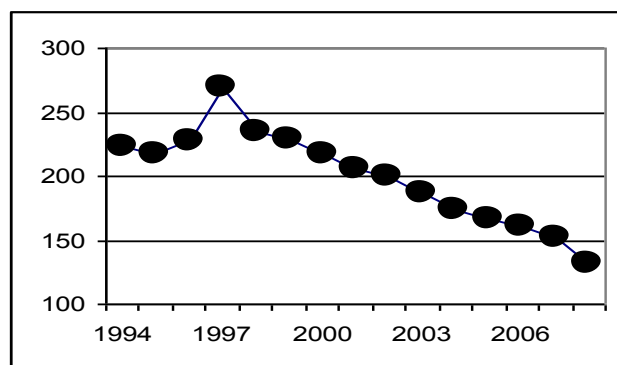
Overall patterns of change and their relation to population

Because there is huge seasonal variation in the numbers apparently present I have attempted to assess the actual average population of the 66 hectares of the square ST5673 that are crossed by the two legs of the survey. Because the two parallel transects are close to one another, rather than 500m apart which is the BBS ideal, I can be fairly confident that a large proportion of the actual population is being seen. I have thus estimated for every species the numbers actually breeding, and the density in pairs per square kilometre.

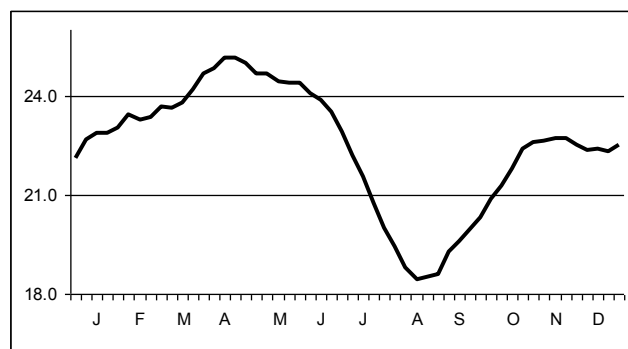
Two different charts are presented. Annual charts for a few species show change in the annual average number per walk, and seasonal charts which show the average number seen in each week of the year over the whole 15 year period. Species with winter maxima are shown from June to May, those with summer maxima run from January to December.

Total numbers and species

Annual average total numbers seen per visit are shown in the chart to the right. The main cause of the apparently alarming change has been a steady fall in the number of Feral Pigeons. In 1994 they averaged 82 a week, and in 1997 they peaked at 99, but then fell annually to 15 by 2007.



The average annual number of species has varied between 21 and 24, but varies seasonally with a peak in early April associated with spring passage birds passing through, and a sharp fall from the end of June when song ceases. There is a slow build through September and a plateau in the last two months.

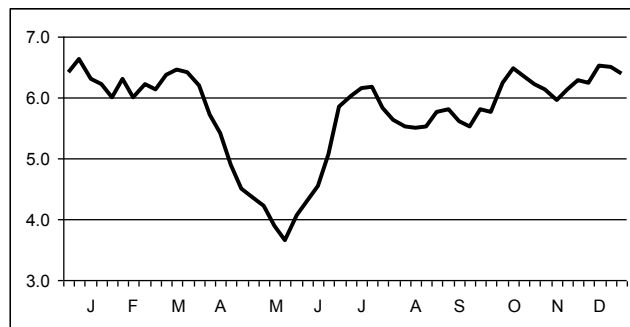


Annual and Seasonal trends

Species are listed by order of the week in which their apparent numbers are at a maximum. The seasonal difference between maximum and minimum counts lies between a doubling and sevenfold. A few species almost vanish from view during part of the year, even though they are resident species. Most of the 17 species are sedentary residents, whose actual numbers are roughly stable from October to April, and then theoretically double or quadruple in size. Greenfinch and Chaffinch are the only species whose winter populations are sometimes apparently increased by migrants. The factors involved in the seasonal variation in apparent numbers include the amount of song, the leafing of trees, nesting, fledging, activities of fledglings, moult, and flocking behaviour.

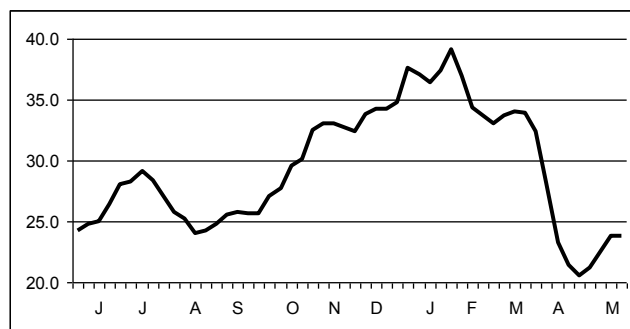
Carrion Crow

The annual average population is six, three pairs, although this has varied between a minimum of 4.8 in 2007 to a maximum of 7.2 in 2001. In that year five pairs may have nested, normally it is three, a density of around six pairs per km² which is typical locally. Throughout the year the numbers seen scarcely alters, until the beginning of April, when numbers fall, presumably because incubation has begun. Counts start to increase at the end of May, and are back to their normal level, by the beginning of July.



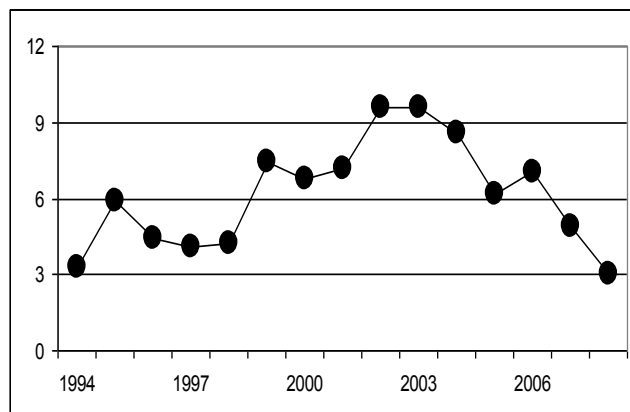
Jackdaw

The annual average count is 23, although the maximum was 40 in 2001, and the minimum was 21 in 2008. Observed Jackdaw numbers peak at the end of January, when they gather in large numbers, usually in pairs, around the nesting colony by the Suspension Bridge. A maximum of 90 was seen at the end of January 2001, representing probably 50 pairs. In most years there have been around 30 pairs. Observed numbers reach a minimum at the end of April, when incubation is taking place, and then increase as the young emerge, after which they fall back again to the end of September, presumably during moult.

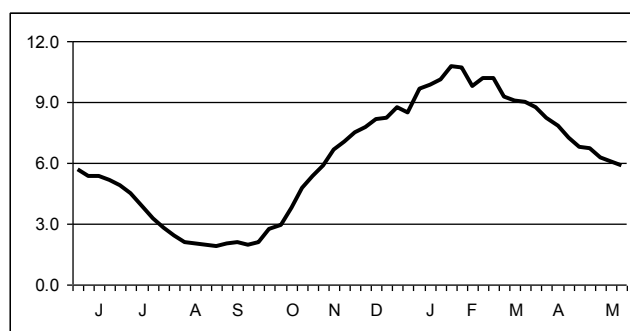


Greenfinch

Annual totals tripled between 1994 and 2003, and then declined to 2006, after which numbers halved to 2008, back to the original level in 1994. BBS figures for the region over the same period show a 73% increase to 2006. In the autumn of that year they were attacked by a parasitic infection, and declined back to the 1994 level by the end of 2008.

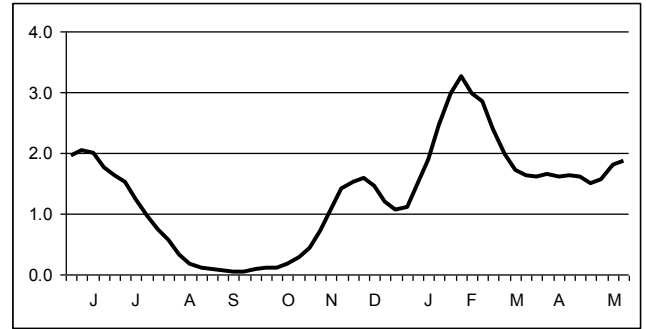


A large part of the Greenfinch population is resident, but there is probably a variable winter rise of migrants from further east. Observed numbers increase fivefold from the end of September to the end of January, then fall off steadily to the end of July and are then stable at a low level through September. The largest winter count, of 31 in 2002, was more than double the apparent resident population. The average winter maximum is very similar to the resident population, measured at the start of April, of nine singing males, varying from around 4 singing males to 13, suggesting a maximum resident population of about 13 pairs, and a density of 23 pairs per km². This is well above normal farmland density, but they are very much a suburban bird.



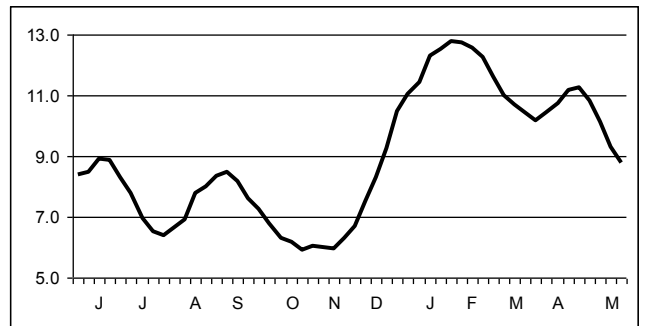
Song Thrush

Annual average numbers have varied from a maximum of 2.0 to a minimum of 0.6, but they have fluctuated wildly without any obvious trend. Observed numbers peak in early February, which is when most males are singing. There is a slight increase at the end of June, presumably the juveniles, but sightings fall to zero in August and September. There is an increase in November, associated in warm winters with renewed song, which falls off in December as the days shorten. The maximum breeding population has been six pairs spread out along the edge of the Avon Gorge, giving a relatively high density of nine pairs per km².



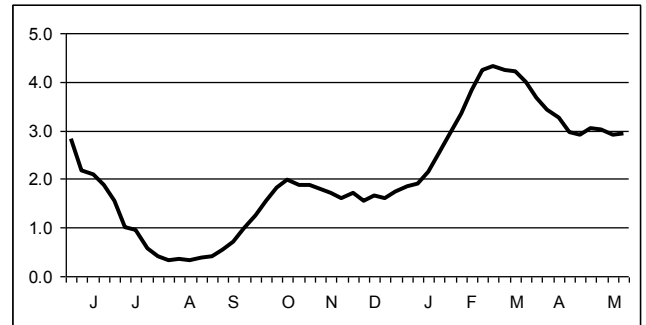
Blue Tit

Until the last two years of the survey Blue Tit numbers averaged annually between 8 and 12 per walk but, probably because of two very poor breeding seasons, in 2007 and 2008 they fell back to 6. Observed numbers peak at the start of February, as they begin to seek mates, and become far more vocal. The maximum in 1998 was 22, probably representing about 40 pairs, a density of 60 per km². This is higher than the usual farmland average of between 20 and 30 pairs, but below the density for highly residential areas with many nest boxes which can be as high as 120 pairs. Numbers fall through the breeding season, pick up in August, but October is the nadir, before numbers appear to increase as the leaves fall and winter flocks develop.



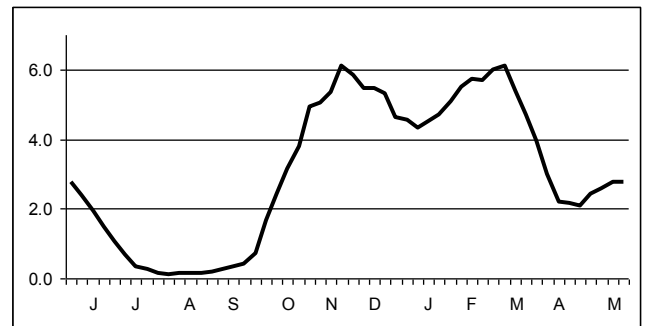
Dunnock

Average annual numbers are very low as they are extremely elusive, and even in 2002, their best year, only a maximum of six singing males was recorded. It is probable that the real population is at least 20 pairs, a density of 30 pairs per km². This is higher than normal, but the habitat is ideal. Apparent numbers peak in week 10, early March, when song and display is at its maximum. They fall off steadily through the breeding season, and become almost invisible in September. Numbers are level from October to December, and then rise as song starts.



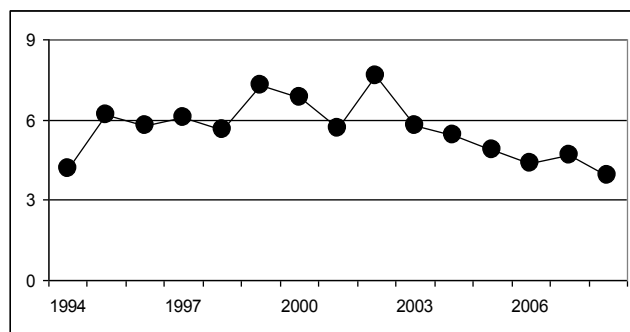
Chaffinch

Normally small numbers, with an average count of about three, are present in both winter and summer, but occasionally large flocks move through, creating the twin peaks seen in the chart to the right. The years 1994, 1995, 1997 and 2006 all saw large late autumn movements, and there were early spring movements in 1994, 1996 and 2001. The maximum number of singing males in the breeding season was six in 1996. This suggests a breeding population of ten pairs, and a density of 15 per km², about half the farmland density. This is a marked contrast with Morley's day. Song stops by the end of May, and numbers fall to invisibility in late July.

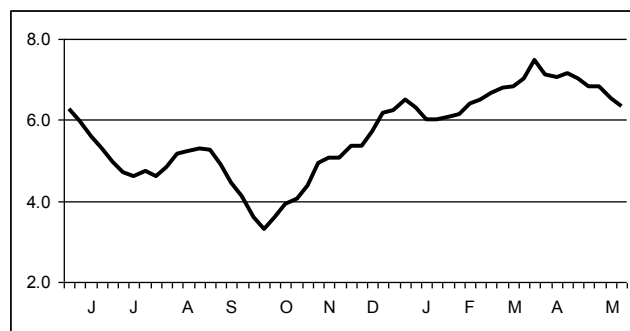


Collared Dove

Numbers recorded in this survey were more or less stable from 1995 to 2002, but declined steadily from then on, almost halving by 2008. BBS data for the region reached to a peak in 2003, after a steady increase since their arrival in 1961. They had fallen by 30% by 2008. The cause of this decline is uncertain. At the peak there were probably six pairs in the study area.



Although they breed throughout the year, apparent numbers peak at the end of March, when song and display is at its height. Numbers fall through the breeding season, rise, presumably with juveniles, in August, and fall through September, probably because of the moult.



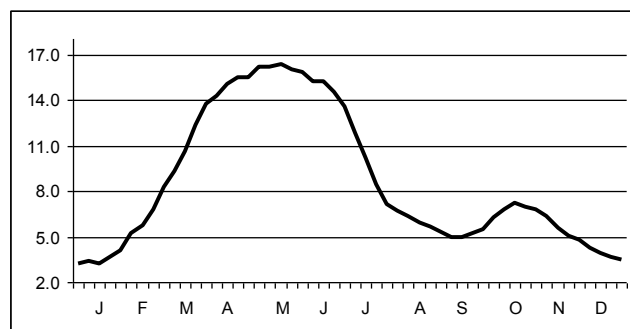
Great Tit

The best year was 2005, and the maximum number of singing males at the start of April then was 14. This suggests a population of perhaps 20 pairs in the area, giving a fairly typical density of about 30 pairs per km². Apparent numbers peak in mid April, when song and display are at their greatest, and fall very rapidly to the end of June. There is a very slow increase through the rest of the year.



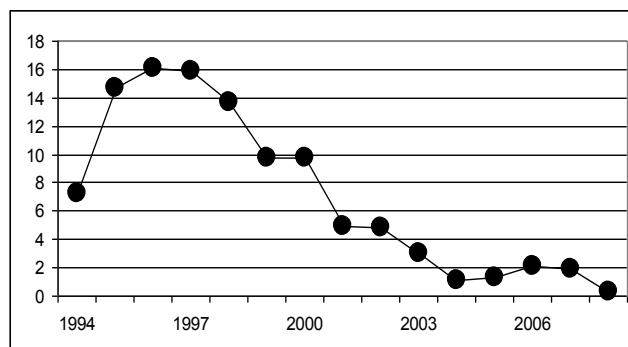
Wren

The best year was 2004, when a maximum of 23 singing males was recorded, suggesting a probable population of 40 pairs, and a density of 60 pairs per km². This is rather higher than is often recorded, but the habitat is ideal. Wrens are most obvious when they are singing, so it is unsurprising that numbers peak in mid May and, despite their large broods, fall off rapidly to the end of September. There is then a renewal of song in October, but as temperatures drop they often fall silent.

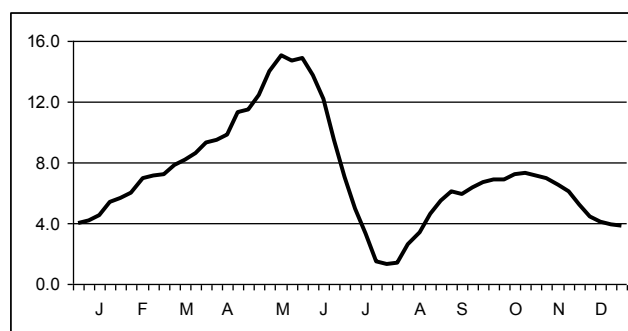


Starling

During the survey numbers have fallen sharply. Originally they bred in the area, and large numbers fed on Clifton Green in mid summer. Feeding flocks were also present in winter. Numbers peaked in 1996, and then fell rapidly to 2004, since when they have been erratic and occasional visitors have been noted. The autumn maximum came in 1997 when 22 would be recorded regularly, but very few have been reported recently. In 1996, 1997 and 1998 there were probably at least 30 breeding pairs, now there are none. This coincides with a steady fall in breeding numbers recorded by BBS in the region since 1994, the cause of which is uncertain.

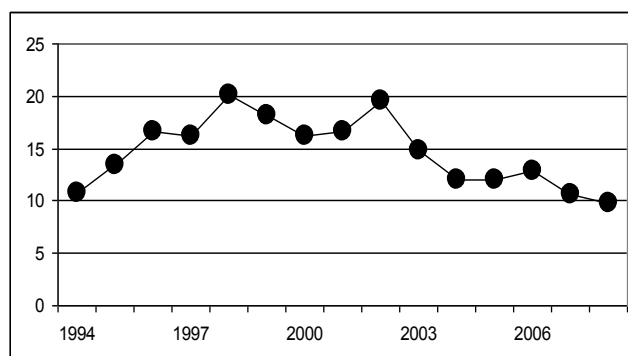


The seasonal chart reflects the fact that numbers peak as the young leave the nest in mid May, and fed in large flocks on Clifton Green in weeks 20-22 (late May to early June) before vanishing to better food sources. The increase in weeks 39-43 (late September to mid October), may reflect passage birds, as mid winter numbers are low. Today numbers are so low that the pattern shown in this chart has entirely ceased to be valid.

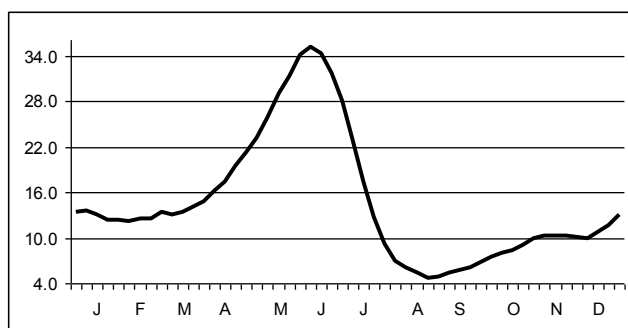


Blackbird

Average numbers doubled in the first five years of the survey, held a high level for five years, and then fell back to their original level. This pattern was not exactly the same as that recorded by BBS in the region as a whole, the decline since the 2002 peak was not as steep as that shown by BBS. The fall in the past two years is related to poor breeding seasons. At the peak in 1998 there were probably 40 breeding pairs in the area, a density of 60 pairs per km², but this has now been halved.

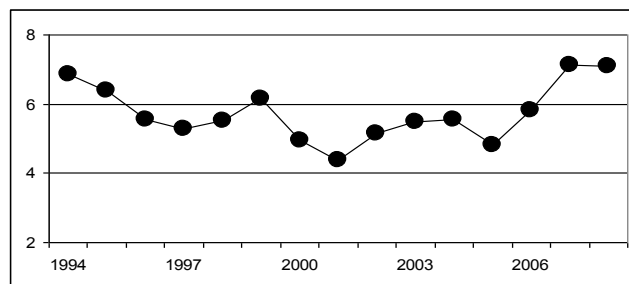


The seasonal pattern is for numbers to peak when the young leave the nest and, like Starlings, large numbers feed on Clifton Green. Numbers fall off very rapidly to the end of August, and there is then a very gradual increase through the winter to the start of April, that is when song begins and apparent numbers rise fast.

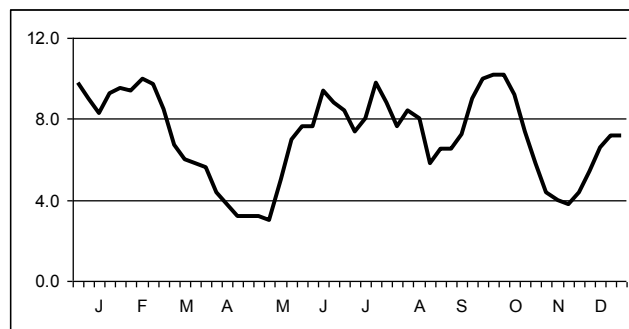


Magpie

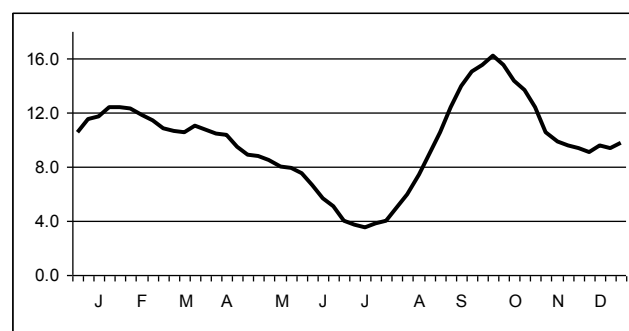
Annual average numbers fell from 1994 to 2001, and then rose back to the original level by 2008. At the maximum there are probably five breeding pairs in the area.



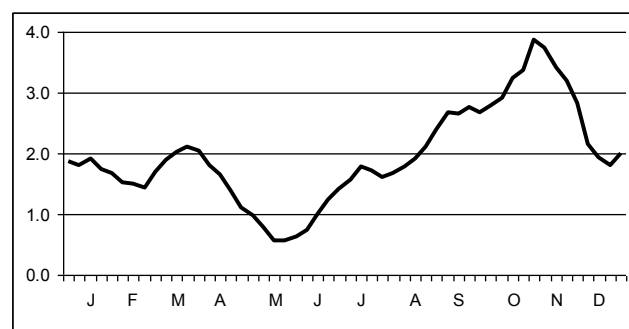
Seasonally, apparent numbers fall from the start of March to early May, coinciding with incubation and when the young are being fed. There is then a very sharp rise as the young fledge, to mid June. After that numbers fluctuate erratically.

**Robin**

The best year was 2000, when 18 singing males were recorded in February, implying a population of about 25 breeding pairs, and a density of 38 pairs per km², which is fairly typical. Apparent numbers peak in early October when winter territories are being created by both males and females, which will later amalgamate to form the breeding territories. There is a spring song peak which comes in early February, after which apparent numbers fall continually to early July, when song ceases for six weeks.

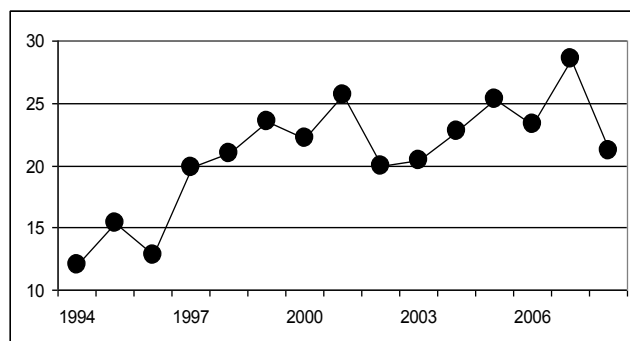
**Jay**

Apparent numbers peak at the end of October when Jays are gathering and burying acorns to provide for the winter ahead. They fall from the start of April to the end of May, when they are nesting and are very elusive, before rising quite fast in June as the young fledge. The breeding population is probably fairly constant at three pairs.

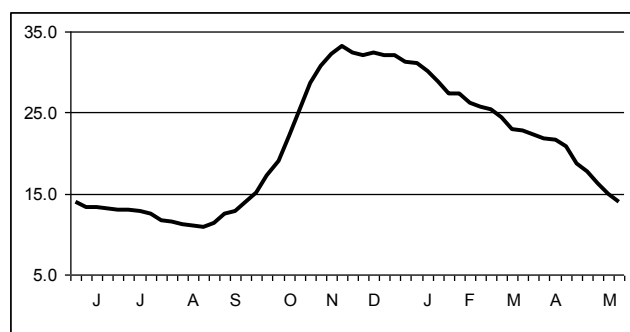


Wood Pigeon

During the survey average numbers have grown rather erratically and peaked in 2007 at over double the numbers in 1994. This pattern correlates very closely both with the BBS results for the region as a whole, and with the winter records of a panel of gardens in the region. The breeding population is probably 16 pairs, a density of 24 pairs per km²

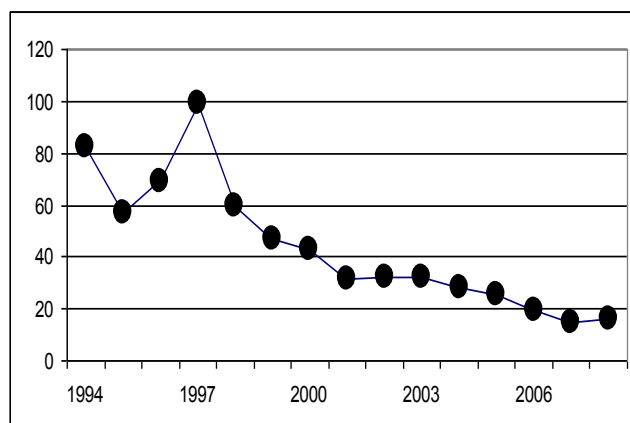


Seasonally, apparent numbers peak in late November, which may be associated with leaf fall revealing their presence rather than any real change in numbers. Apparent numbers fall back through the breeding season, and reach a minimum in mid August. Ringing evidence shows that for the most part Woodpigeons are fairly sedentary, despite gathering into significant flocks in winter.

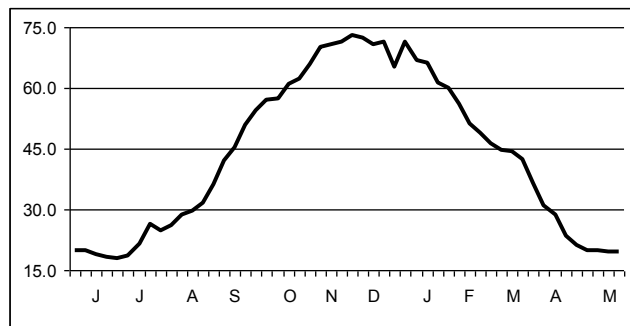


Feral Pigeon

Feral Pigeon numbers have collapsed during the course of the survey from a peak in 1999 when there were three separate flocks on Christ Church, on the Suspension Bridge and at Clifton Zoo, and their combined total in that year averaged 99 throughout the year, 37% of the total numbers recorded. It is usually the case that a Feral Pigeon flock is maintained by a feeder or feeders, although the Zoo flock was sustained by a wasteful animal feeding regime. Today there is sometimes a small flock around the Suspension Bridge, but there are none at Christ Church, and only a few in the Zoo.

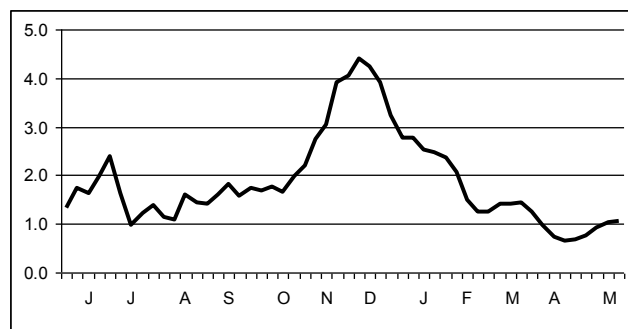


Seasonally the pattern of numbers is similar to that for the Woodpigeon. There is a peak between late October and mid January, and numbers remain at a consistently low level throughout the breeding season, despite the fact that those individuals that have nest sites breed throughout the season. Breeders nest under the Suspension Bridge canopy throughout the year, and a few nest on the cliffs as their ancestors the Rock Pigeons did.



Long-tailed Tit

Apparent numbers peak at the start of December, and fall off rapidly to mid April. They nest early and so numbers increase from the start of May as family flocks begin to be seen, although numbers are very low through July and August. As they are usually encountered in winter as large family flocks it is not at all clear what the actual breeding population is. Numbers fall after cold winters but during this survey they have fluctuated randomly.



Conclusions

The total area of the Downs, including the section covered by this survey is approximately 200 hectares, and much of this will have a lower breeding density than that of the survey area, but the patterns of species' use will be similar. The implication is that the present breeding population of the Downs is probably around 600 pairs. Some species have clearly declined since Morley's day, and others have increased, as the habitat has altered continuously, and as the national populations of different species have waxed and waned. Morley gives no real indication of numbers, as she is more interested in behaviour, and is also, like most birders, more fascinated by birds that are unusual rather than those that are very ordinary. She does not mention Feral Pigeons, which were probably confined to the city centre at the time, and gives little indication of Starlings in the breeding season. Several species, such as House Sparrow, Garden Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher are now never seen, but she would have rejoiced in the return of the Raven. The change column in the table gives an idea of which of the species I have detailed have probably increased or decreased. Those with no comment are likely to have stayed much the same.

	Breeding Pairs Maximum	Annual Counts Max Av.	Annual Counts Min Av.	Change since 1931
Carrion Crow	5	7	5	Increase
Jackdaw	30	40	21	
Greenfinch	13	9	3	
Song Thrush	6	2	1	Decline
Blue Tit	40	12	6	
Dunnock	20	3	1	
Chaffinch	10	5	2	Decline
Collared Dove	6	8	4	New
Great Tit	20	5	2	
Wren	40	10	6	
Starling	30	16	0	Decline
Blackbird	40	20	10	Increase
Magpie	5	7	4	Increase
Robin	25	12	7	
Jay	3	2	1	Increase
Wood Pigeon	16	29	12	Increase
Feral Pigeon	10	99	15	Increase
Long-Tailed Tit	3	3	1	Increase
Total	322			
Density	488prs/km2			



METAL POLLUTION IN BRISTOL: An Assessment using Bird of Prey Feathers

S.M. Murgatroyd

Introduction

This study was carried out as a final year Conservation Biology BSc (Hons) project at the University of the West of England, Bristol. The aim was to assess the value of bird of prey feathers as a tool for monitoring metal pollution and evaluate the level of metal contamination in Bristol's birds of prey in comparison to rural predators. Levels of ten metals (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, mercury, manganese, iron, nickel, lead and zinc) were examined in 30 feather samples from seven different bird species (Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Barn Owl *Tyto albus* and Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*).

Metals

All metals occur naturally to varying extents within the environment where the concentration depends largely on the original concentration of the parent rock and anthropogenic activities. Zinc smelting was carried out in Avonmouth for more than 70 years (Environment Agency, 1999) until the closure of Britannia Zinc Ltd in March 2003. The smelting processes extracted zinc and lead simultaneously while yielding refined cadmium and lead bullion as by products. Environmental monitoring of soils, vegetation (Little & Martin, 1972), *Annelids* (Spurgeon & Hopkins, 1996) and Woodlice (Hardisty & Martin, 1986) have all shown elevated levels of lead, zinc and cadmium in relation to the proximity of the smelter.

Birds of prey

As top carnivores, birds of prey are vulnerable to biomagnification and bioaccumulation. Bioaccumulation is the tendency for contaminants to accumulate in tissues over time. Biomagnification occurs when the rate of accumulation is greater than the rate of excretion so that concentration of a contaminant in an organism can become greater than that of its environment (Wright, 2003). When an organism is part of a food-web, a chemical can be concentrated further up the trophic levels; this leaves top-predators most at risk. This can affect the physiology and reproduction of the birds and even cause death. These responses can lead to a population decline, and have been in the past early warnings of environmental change. This was first demonstrated in Sweden in the 1950's when populations of various bird species, in particular raptors, declined suddenly and rapidly as a result of contamination from methyl and ethyl mercury compounds used as fungicides in seed dressings (Becker, 2003). Since then the usefulness of birds as biomonitors has been well established. Consequently, this review examines levels of metal contamination in urban and rural birds of prey.

Feathers

Feathers provide a non-invasive matrix for testing. During feather growth metals are deposited in feathers, via the blood vessel, where they bind to keratin molecules (Furness & Greenwood, 1993). When feather growth is complete the blood supply atrophies and no further deposition can occur until the next molt (Braune & Gaskin, 1987). This process provides a sample of the body burden at the time of growth and reflects levels in the environment. In this study all feathers have been collected from dead specimens which also provides a retrospective analysis of metal concentrations. However, there is also potential for testing of live birds.

Methods

Body feather samples were collected from Bristol City Museum and Art Galleries and the Barn Owl Trust (see photograph opposite page 129). For comparison, samples were either taken from urban birds (Bristol) or from rural birds (Cornwall, Devon and Wiltshire). The feathers were digested in nitric acid and levels of metals were analysed by Inductively Coupled Plasma-Optical Emission Spectroscopy.

Results

All the feather samples in this analysis contained traces of the ten metals tested. Generally the highest levels of metals were found in samples from Bristol, with the exception of nickel (Figure 1). These trends were examined further with statistical tests which showed levels of arsenic, cadmium, lead and zinc were significantly higher in urban samples compared to rural ones.

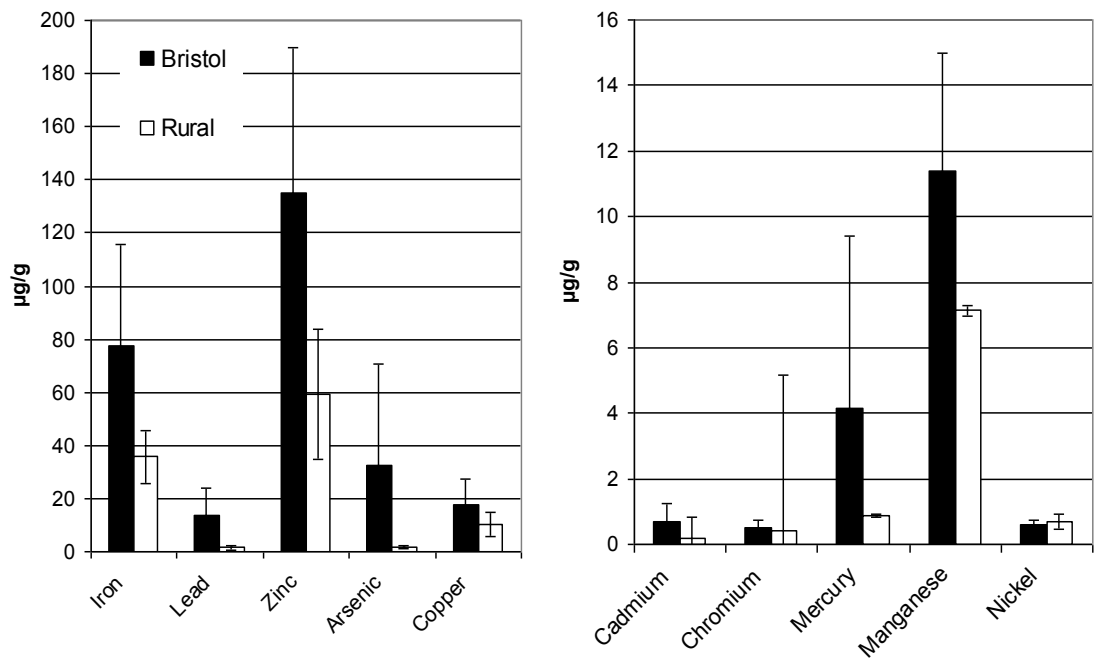


Figure 1: Mean metal content (µg/g) of feather samples from urban and rural birds, with 95% confidence intervals.

The concentrations of metals were generally higher in Sparrowhawks than Barn Owls. However, urban Barn Owls showed higher levels of cadmium than urban Sparrowhawks (Figure 2).

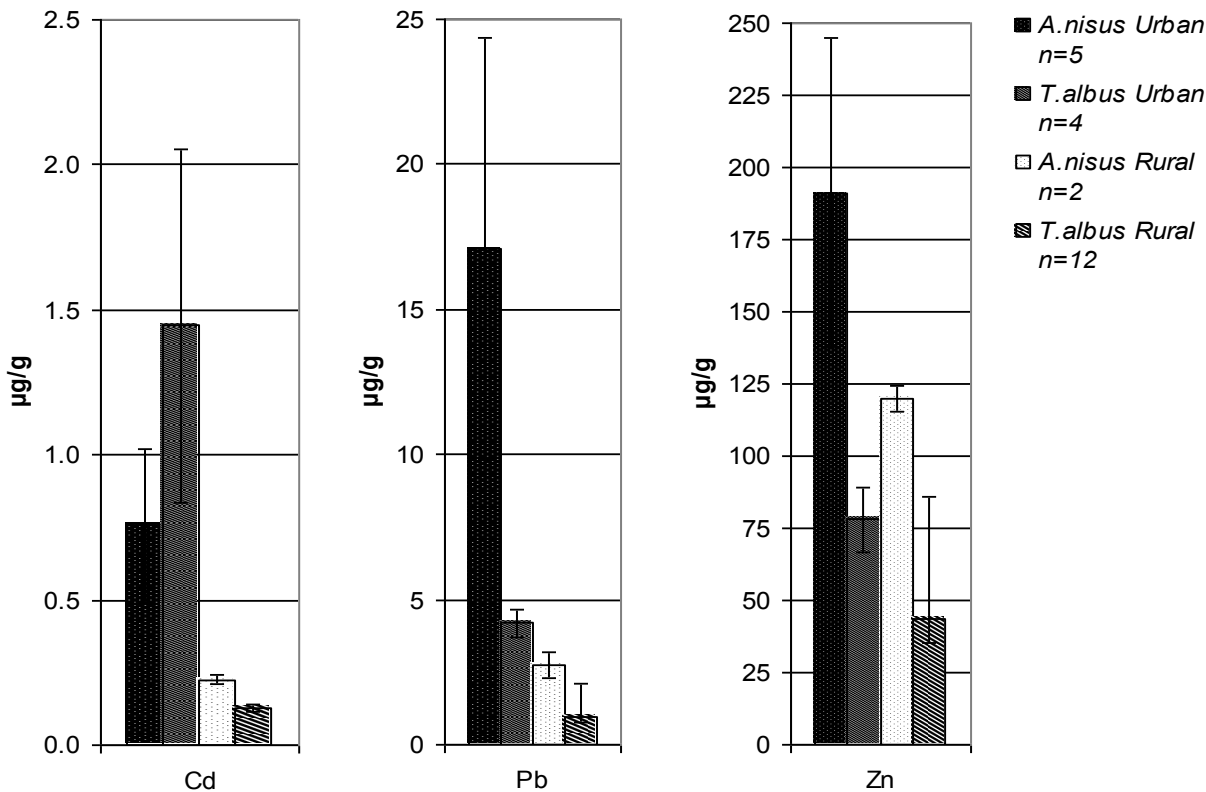


Figure 2: Mean metal content (µg/g) of feathers from urban and rural Sparrowhawk and Barn Owl, with 95% confidence intervals (Note: scale change between graphs).

Discussion

Despite the limitations of this study, it is clear that there are elevated levels of metals in birds of prey which can be associated with anthropogenic causes. In general terms, this is associated with industry and urbanization (Ashman & Puri, 2003) and can cause adverse reproductive effects in birds (Burger, 1994). The statistically higher urban metal accumulations (arsenic, cadmium, lead and zinc) have all been reviewed individually to ascertain sources and causes of contamination and draw attention to any possible toxic effects.

Arsenic

More than half of the feather samples came from Bristol City Museum with collection dates varying from 1920 – 2009. During this period preservation techniques have varied and at times included arsenic. Although the effects of taxidermy have not been assessed in this study, it is likely that arsenic contamination has occurred and therefore this metal will not be attributed to pollution.

Cadmium

Previous studies have reported feather cadmium to range from 0-24µg/g in various species of birds (Burger, 1994). In this study, the mean level of urban and rural body feathers were 0.70µg/g (range: 0.07 - 4.15µg/g) and 0.17µg/g (range: 0.06 - 0.41µg/g) respectively. Cadmium is produced as a by product of smelting zinc and was emitted into the environment from Britannia Zinc during production. Ultimately it is likely that the past emissions from the zinc smelter in Avonmouth have contributed to the elevated cadmium levels in bird feathers from Bristol compared to those from rural England.

Cadmium has been described as one of the most dangerous trace elements in the environment, not only for its high toxicity but also for its persistence (Battaglia *et al.*, 2005). When ingested by birds, cadmium can cause decreased testis weight, failure of spermatogenesis, reduced egg production and eggshell thinning (Burger, 1994). Generally, low levels in the environment and the lack of biomagnification (due to not being lipid soluble) means that levels of cadmium in feathers are often low or undetectable (Furness & Greenwood, 1993). However, if cadmium is found in feathers, it clearly bears importance as the levels are likely to be due to cadmium which has entered the bird from contamination of the environment and its diet.

Lead

Lead levels of urban feathers (mean: 13.45µg/g, range: 0 - 57.48µg/g) are considerably higher than both rural samples (mean: 1.46µg/g, range: 0 - 4.74µg/g) and previous studies (mean; 1.4µg/g, range: 0 - 32.7µg/g). This indicates substantial lead pollution amongst urban birds collected from Avonmouth and the surrounding area. Sources of lead pollution include; road traffic, sewage sludge, phosphate fertilizers (Yost, 1979), refuse incineration (Gallorini *et al.*, 1981) and lead and zinc smelters (Little & Martin, 1972). Although point-source pollution cannot be established from this study, it is likely that much of the elevated lead levels in Bristol's urban bird samples are derived from a combination of road traffic and the Britannia Zinc smelter during operation.

Although lead emissions decreased during the final decade of the plants operation in accordance with improvements in plant production and reduction of water discharge by recycling, they have undoubtedly impacted on the surrounding area. Since having been abandoned as an additive in fuels and the closure of Avonmouth's Britannia Zinc smelter trends in atmospheric lead are likely to have decreased. This was reflected by this study when data was organized by year of sample collection, however, more samples would need to be analysed for a clearer correlation. Previous studies by Sheifler *et al.* suggest that lead may be an environmental concern in urban areas due to its persistence in soils and transfer through trophic levels.

Possible toxic effects of lead on various avian species have been investigated in laboratory studies. Lead toxicity has been linked to reduced egg production and hatching, lowered testis weight, reduced chick growth, chick behaviour abnormalities (Burger & Gochfeld, 1985) and eggshell thinning (Grandjean, 1976).

Zinc

Samples of body feathers from Bristol contained a mean of 134.9µg/g zinc (range: 46.5 - 507.3µg/g), while the mean of rural body feathers was 59.3µg/g zinc (range: 18.9 - 141.2µg/g). Previous studies of various species of birds showed wide-ranging levels of zinc (mean: 87.1µg/g, range: 0.85 - 167µg/g). The zinc found in this study in feathers from Bristol greatly exceeded past findings.

Zinc comes from a variety of anthropogenic sources, including sewage treatment, phosphate fertilizers (Yost, 1979) and zinc smelting. It is widely agreed that zinc smelting is one of the most important anthropogenic sources of metal pollution to the environment (Bi *et al.*, 2006; Spurgeon & Hopkin, 1996). Spurgeon and Hopkin (1996) found levels of 22,400µg/g

Zn g⁻¹ in soil close to the Avonmouth smelter, compared to 34µg/g Zn g⁻¹ in soil at a control site and concluded toxicity effecting the distribution of earthworms. Smelting emitted metals are transferred to environmental compartments such as water, soil and vegetation (Bi *et al.*, 2006) from where they can enter the food chain. Although the sources of the feather-zinc cannot be identified precisely, undoubtedly a large proportion of it was derived from the Avonmouth smelter.

Zinc is an essential element in feather formation (Burger, 1994) but when in elevated concentrations it can cause serious toxicological problems (Pérez-López, 2006). Furthermore it is known to biomagnify through the food chain (Burger, 1994) and bioaccumulate in internal tissues (Braune & Gaskin, 1987).

Concentration of metals in two bird of prey species

Differences in metal accumulation between Sparrowhawks and Barn Owls (Figure 2) are likely to be due to differences in their diets. Sparrowhawks primarily hunt on avifauna (Rytkoenen, 1998), while Barn Owls most commonly prey on small mammals (Taylor, 1994). In the UK, the most common prey of Barn Owls is the herbivorous field vole (*Microtus agrestis*) which makes up 40-80% of its diet (Taylor, 1994; Ferns, 1976). Over 90% of the diet of Sparrowhawks is made up of small-medium sized birds (Raptor Foundation, 2009). This probably results in different foraging grounds, taking prey from different trophic levels and different average sizes of prey. All of these factors can result in different levels of metal exposure and alter the opportunity for biomagnification and accumulation to occur. This might affect the levels of metals in the predator and account for variation of metals between bird species.

What does this mean for birds of prey?

The concentrations and detrimental effects of elevated metals have been outlined. However, the actual level of each metal required to cause toxicity has not been assessed here. Furthermore, the differences which have been outlined between species will alter the susceptibility of a bird to bioaccumulation of toxic metals.

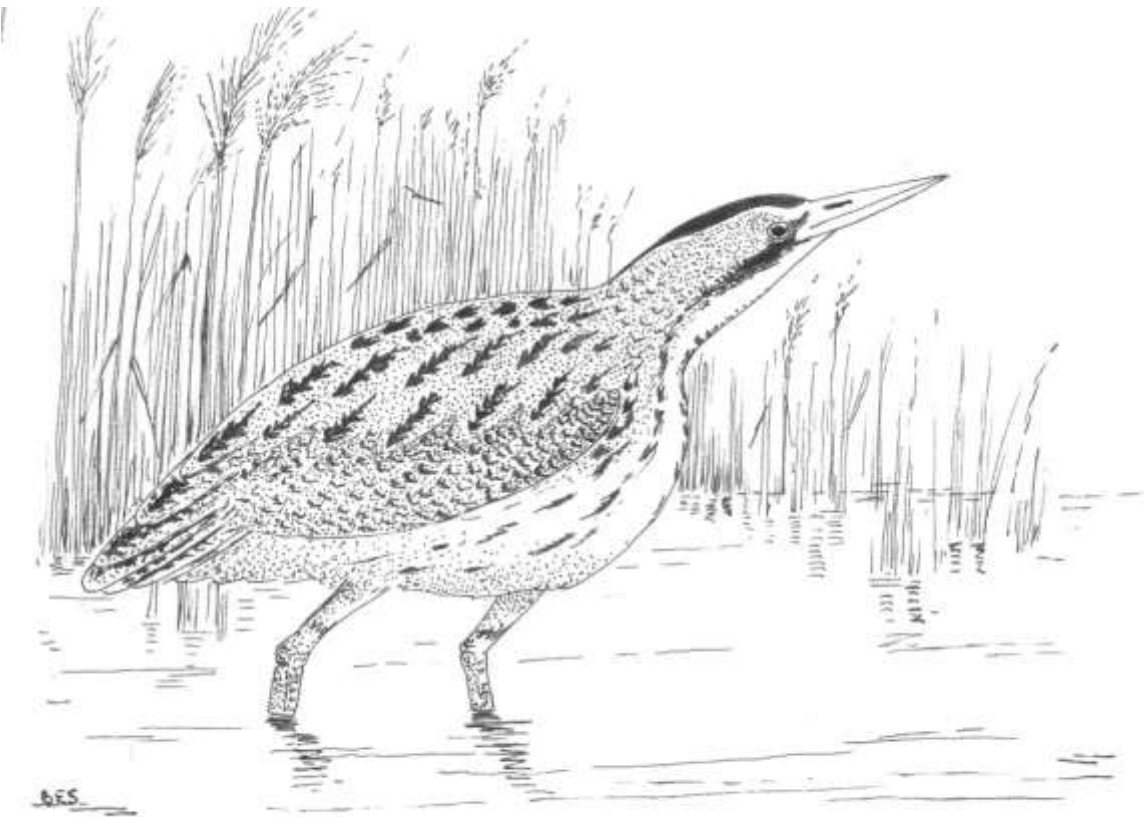
With the end of zinc smelting in Bristol and improving legislation on emissions, it is hoped that a decline of the highlighted metals may be seen. Testing more samples from museum archives would help give a clearer view of past levels of metals, while continuing to assess current metal contamination.

In conclusion, these results support the notion that feathers make useful bioindicators of environmental contamination of metals. Further studies should concentrate on a single bird species rather than a range of species as has been used here. Individually, all species of birds of prey are likely to yield useful information on environmental contamination as long as it is kept constant. This could be used in conjunction with studies on environmental contamination to acquire a better understanding of the health of a population and consequently the health of an ecosystem as a whole.

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BITTERNS BREEDING AT CHEW VALLEY LAKE 1997-2001

K.E. Vinicombe

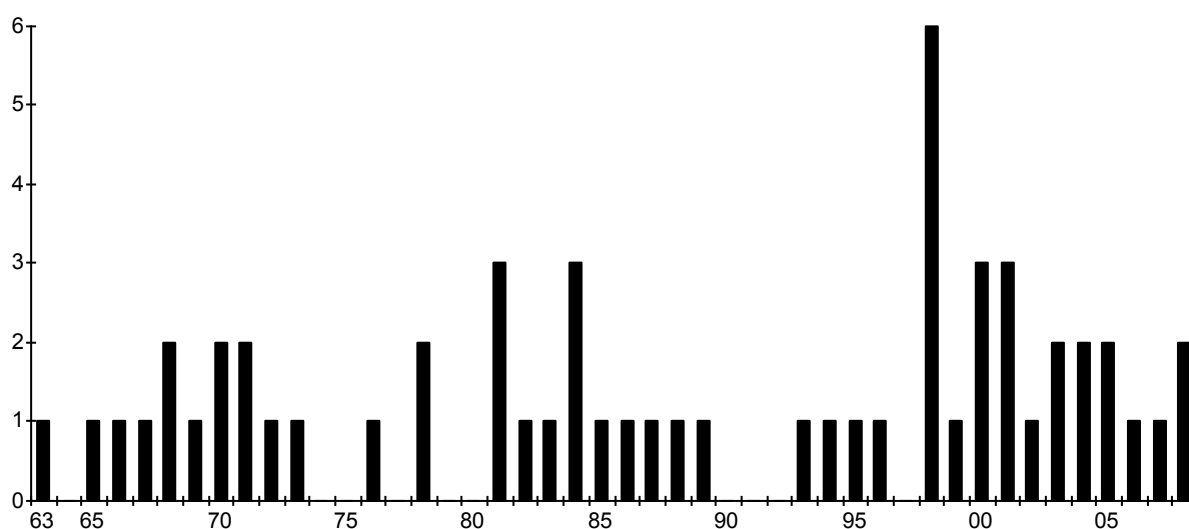
Status at CVL: 1953 to 1996

The first Bittern to be recorded at CVL was discovered by Bernard King on Dec.14th, 1963, remaining until Feb. 13th, 1964. On the face of it, it may seem surprising that it took ten years from the original flooding of the lake in 1953 for the first Bittern to be recorded, but it must be remembered that, back in the early days, there were hardly any reeds. The only significant area was in the south-east corner: what we now call 'The Main Reeds' (they currently cover about 45% of the ten mile shoreline). The next was seen on Sept. 27th, 1965 but the species was then recorded every winter until 1973/74, with two in 1968/69, 1970/71 and 1971/72 (fig 1). It seems likely that late summer and autumn records, such as one that was discovered on Aug. 27th, 1967, related to dispersing juveniles, but most first dates occurred from November to February; it also seems that many turned up in response to cold weather, resulting in a small peak in February and early March. The latest departure date during this period was March 14th. It is also likely that annual runs of records related to the same individuals returning each winter.

The species then became very erratic between 1974/75 and 1980/81, with just two records, involving three birds. There were probably two reasons for this. Firstly, this period was characterised by low late autumn and early winter water levels, which meant that most of the lakeside reeds were left high and dry and were thus unsuitable for Bitterns (the only area of suitable Bittern habitat was on Herriott's Pool, which maintains a fairly constant water level). The other reason may have been that many of the winters during this period were very mild, resulting in few cold weather influxes.

There was then another continuous run from 1981/82 to 1989/90 with single birds each winter, apart from three in 1981/82 and again in 1984/85, one of which was regrettably found dead on March 16th during a cold spell and was taken to the City of Bristol Museum. The latest departure date during this period was March 16th.

There were then three blank winters until the arrival of what was presumably a dispersing juvenile on Aug. 28th, 1993, remaining to at least Feb. 27th, 1994. The arrival of this bird, which was thought to be a male (see below), was to prove significant. It developed a habit of moving in the late afternoon/early evening into the reeds in the north-east corner of Herriott's Pool, where it roosted, often providing good views to assembled birders. It continued to do this for nine winters until 2001/02. In February 1997, booming was recorded at the lake for the first time, followed by successful breeding, and the following is a detailed chronology of those events.



Number of Bitterns recorded at CVL each autumn and winter from 1963/64 – 2008/09

1997

JAN. 4th The returning bird had been first seen on Dec. 27th, 1996 and, on Jan. 4th, 1997 a second Bittern was flushed at the north end of the Main Reeds. It had been feeding in a small ice-free area of water during a cold spell. The original bird from 1993 had been seen immediately beforehand in the Stratford Bay/Herriott's Pool area, so there was no doubt that this was a second individual.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY Both remained and, on Feb. 1st, they were seen together. During this period, the original bird was frequently present in its usual spot in the north-east corner of Herriott's Pool. Then, on Feb. 27th, booming was heard in the Main Reeds, close to Herriott's Bridge. This was the first time that booming had ever been heard at CVL.

MARCH 9th A Bittern was seen at 18.00 circling over the Main Reeds, before landing close to the male, which was still booming.

MARCH 11th The booming male was seen in the Main Reeds, moving its head up and down and flapping its wings, and the second bird was also seen nearby.

MARCH 24th – 31st Booming continued until March 24th, when it became persistent all day (as often as every three minutes); it continued all night into 25th (*per* Cyril Matthews, who was sleeping in the Ringing Station at the time). Booming was again very persistent at dawn on March 30th and 31st but, thereafter, it gave only a subdued 'throaty' boom until April 2nd. It should be remembered that, prior to 1997, no Bittern had ever been seen at CVL later than March 16th.

APRIL 1st At dusk, a Bittern flew out of the Main Reeds close to Herriott's Bridge and circled the reed bed before flying off north towards Sutton Wick. Later, almost certainly a different bird was heard giving a low *bu bu bu* several times from the Main Reeds.

APRIL 2nd At dusk, one appeared high over the Main Reeds and circled around for about five minutes at some height (up to about 30m) with slightly fluttery wingbeats. It occasionally gave a low *kok*. It eventually disappeared towards Sutton Wick.

APRIL 3rd – 14th Disappointingly, none was seen or heard and both were assumed to have left.

APRIL 15th – 17th One, assumed to be the original bird from 1993, was present at dusk, again roosting in the north-east corner of Herriott's Pool.

APRIL 19th Booming was heard again and, at 14.15hrs, one was seen dropping into the 'booming area' in the Main Reeds. What was almost certainly a second bird then flew a short distance to the left.

MAY 16th to JUNE 5th One was seen regularly undertaking feeding flights during the day, flying to and from the booming area in the Main Reeds. It usually flew north to feed, sometimes calling *kwok kwok*, but it sometimes flew across to Stratford Bay in the south-west corner of the lake. On one occasion, Andy Davis noted that its crop looked very full when returning. Feeding bouts were timed at 50 mins, 1 hr 45 mins and 2 hrs 5 mins. It always returned to the same spot in the Main Reeds and it was obviously feeding young. Three visits to the nest were timed at five, ten and 20 minutes. By May 25th, it seems that the young had left the nest as the female was dropping in close to the edge of the reeds. On June 1st it dropped into the reeds about 50 yards to the north of the previous feeding site, so the young were assumed to have moved again. In the meantime, on May 28th, what was assumed to be the male was again seen roosting in its usual spot on Herriott's Pool.

JUNE 9th At 19.30, Andy Davis saw a Bittern fly from a large willow to the east of the main channel in front of Herriott's Bridge. It flew about 70m before dropping into the reeds, but it then flew again for another 30m before dropping in a second time. It was thought likely that it was a juvenile, mainly because it looked short-tailed and showed loosely textured tail feathering, both characteristics of a juvenile (Cramp 1977). After this date the Bitterns mysteriously vanished and were not seen again.

SEPT. 9th I met Ken Smith and David Weaver, who were engaged in research on Bitterns for the RSPB, and I took them to the area where I considered the nest to be. By this time, the water level had dropped considerably so that the nest site had dried out. Ken and David soon found the nest (see photograph opposite page 129). It was surprisingly small, about 25 cms across and about 15 cms deep, but it was very solid and compacted, constructed of short reed stems about four inches in length. A few 'tunnels' led off from it into the reeds.

1998

Surprisingly, there were no Bittern sightings at all during the winter of 1997-98 and it was not until March 28th that booming was again heard, four weeks later than in 1997. It continued until May 15th, but there was no evidence of the presence of a second individual. The boom was recorded by the RSPB, who apparently confirmed that it was the same individual as in 1997.

1999

The next record was of a single on Jan. 9th, 1999 which continued to be seen until March 7th, when two were seen. Booming recommenced on Feb. 20th in the usual area. Then, on March 13th, there was a remarkable observation of at least five, probably six Bitterns, twice as many as the lake's previous maximum. During the late afternoon, one was seen in flight along the east shore but then, in the late evening, the male was booming, another was seen at the same time sitting in the reeds and, also at the same time, another three circled around over the Main Reeds before apparently flying off to the north-east (Richard Andrews and Richard Mielcarek). Whether this five included the earlier bird from the east shore is not known, but it is thought likely that six birds were involved in total. Booming continued until April 3rd and, on six occasions from March 13th to 29th, the female was seen display flighting over the Main Reeds. On both March 17th and 26th, for example, it circled around in late evening, often rising very high and becoming quite distant, but eventually dropping close to the booming male. On both occasions, it called several times: often a low croak but also a loud gull-like *caw*. On March 29th, it put on a particularly memorable display against the full moon. Disappointingly, despite this auspicious start, no Bitterns were recorded after April 3rd. The next was one on Sept. 2nd, followed by another sighting on Oct. 29th. There was then a long gap until Dec. 27th when what was assumed to be the 1993 male reappeared in its usual roosting spot.

2000

It was seen on and off until Feb. 13th when booming again commenced in the Main Reeds, continuing until April 8th. Significantly, there was then a brief resumption on May 4th - 5th. Then, from July 2nd to 15th, the female was seen undertaking feeding flights to and from the nesting area in the Main Reeds. On July 8th, it was seen making three feeding flights between 09.00 and 15.00, dropping into the same area as the 1997 nest; however, this activity was not as regular nor as persistent as it had been in 1997, perhaps suggesting that it had fewer young.

What I think may have happened in 2000 was that the female again nested in April but the nest failed because of rising water levels and/or some appalling spring weather. It seems likely that it then re-nested in May, accounting for the resumption in the male's booming on May 4th - 5th. Assuming a 25-26 day incubation period (Cramp 1977), this would account for the feeding flights in early July, nearly two months later than in 1997. There was then an unconfirmed report of one on July 31st, followed by definite sightings of a single bird on Aug. 5th and 16th, the last before Oct. 3rd - 10th, when a single was again recorded.

2001

The first record in 2001 was of one on Jan. 19th, with three seen in freezing conditions the following evening. Booming was again heard in the Main Reeds from Feb. 17th to May 11th, but there was no other evidence of breeding activity that year. One was seen again on Aug. 26th, remaining into December, with two present on Nov. 3rd and three on Dec. 15th. Three were still present on Jan. 5th, 2002, two until March 1st and one until 16th.

2002-2008

There has been no further booming since 2001 and, until 2008, the species had reverted to its former status as a winter visitor, with one or two recorded every winter with most records in December - February. It is likely the records in June and August 2008 were of young birds dispersing, perhaps from the Somerset Levels.

Discussion

Although historically common in the fens of East Anglia, by 1886 the Bittern was extinct in Britain. It re-colonised in 1911, peaking at around 80 booming males in the 1950s but thereafter declining to a nadir in 1997, when there were just 11-12 booming males and 15 nests, the species being polygynous (Ogilvie *et al.* 2000). As a consequence of a major initiative in reedbed conservation and habitat creation, numbers recovered to a minimum of 76 booming males in 2008. In that year, the species bred at Ham Wall (two booming males) a significant event that the RSPB publicised as the first breeding record in Somerset for 50 years, inexplicably ignoring events at CVL in 1997 and 2000!

Against this historical background, it is interesting that Bitterns bred at CVL in 1997, the very year that the species reached its most recent low point as a British breeding bird. Could it have been that the CVL birds were refugees from breeding sites in the east of the country that could, at that time, no longer support breeding Bitterns? Given that the 1993

bird had made no attempt to breed there before, this may well have been the case. It is also interesting that the breeding attempts ended in 2001, at precisely the time when numbers started to recover in the core range. On the other hand, the end of the breeding attempts may simply have been due to the death of the returning male, which, by 2001, was probably eight years of age.

There is another factor that undoubtedly influenced breeding at this time. Being a drinking water reservoir, there has traditionally been a significant draw-down of water from about May-June onwards, usually reaching a low point in early winter, before replenishment by the winter rains; maximum levels are then usually reached again in late spring. This fluctuating water level does not suit Bitterns, particularly in late summer and autumn, when the extensive reeds that now encircle much of the lake dry out. This situation changed in the mid-1990s, after which water levels remained relatively high in most years. The reasons for this varied. In some years it was due to abnormally high summer rainfall, in others it was a consequence of repair work being undertaken on one of the outflow pipes; in others, pumping was suspended as a consequence of the pumps becoming clogged by algae or by sediment that had eroded from the lakeside banks. High water levels had a negative impact on the numbers of many species, particularly autumn waders, dabbling ducks and terns, but it benefited others, such as Tufted Duck and Water Rails, the latter wintering in large numbers (50+) in the wetter reedbeds. It also benefited Bitterns, which were able to take advantage of the more stable environment. However, even with this change, there can be little doubt that minor fluctuations in water level, combined with inclement spring weather, still affected the species, as indicated by the breeding events in 2000.

It is of course disappointing that Bitterns did not gain a permanent toehold at CVL but, in hindsight, this is perhaps not surprising, given the environmental problems outlined above. However, the successful breeding there must be regarded as a significant event at a time when the species had reached a critical turning point in its recent history as a British breeding bird.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to John Aldridge, Andy Davis and Richard Mielcarek who kindly helped me obtain records additional to my own and those published in the *Avon Bird Report*. Special thanks must also go to Bristol Water who, at considerable expense, undertook a great deal of habitat improvement at the south end of the lake to benefit Bitterns, including the creation of ditches and bunds in the reed beds and the excavation of new pools. Chris Klee in particular was extremely supportive of these developments and was instrumental in seeing them through to fruition.

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BLACK-NECKED GREBES BREEDING AT CHEW VALLEY LAKE in 1998

K.E. Vinicombe

The Black-necked Grebe is essentially a spring and autumn passage migrant at CVL. Spring migrants occur mainly in late March and April, usually adults in summer plumage, and autumn migrants occur mainly from early August to November, most records relating to juveniles (fig 1). It is virtually annual, having missed only five years since 1959 (fig 2).

Temporal distribution

It has, however, occurred in every month although winter records are rare. In fact December records are best regarded as involving late autumn migrants, whereas February records, such as three on Feb. 22nd, 1992, involve early spring migrants. January records are especially rare and it was not until 2003 that the first real wintering bird was recorded, on Jan. 11th, Feb. 19th and March 2nd; it is thought likely that this was a bird that wintered at Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, where it returned in between times. Similarly, more wintering birds in 2006 - two on Jan. 1st and single birds on Jan. 21st and Feb. 11th - almost certainly came from nearby BG where, exceptionally, up to five wintered. Two more were seen in 2008 from Jan. 28th to 30th and again on Feb. 13th; these too were thought to have come from Cheddar Reservoir. The reason for its rarity in winter relates to the fact that, unlike most other grebes, Black-necked is essentially an insectivorous species that may find it difficult to survive in this country on fresh water in winter. This is particularly true at CVL, which becomes particularly hostile to grebes in late winter; this is due not only to the colder weather but also because rapidly rising water levels reduce food density. Also, the water at this time of year is often very turbid, a result of a heavy silt load from the surrounding farmland, and this makes prey more difficult to detect. Both Cheddar and BG have much clearer water and more stable mid-winter water levels.

It is also rare in summer. May-June records probably involve late spring migrants, and later some failed breeders, while July records involve mainly early dispersing post-breeding adults and early moving juveniles, the earliest date for which was one on July 26th, 1967.

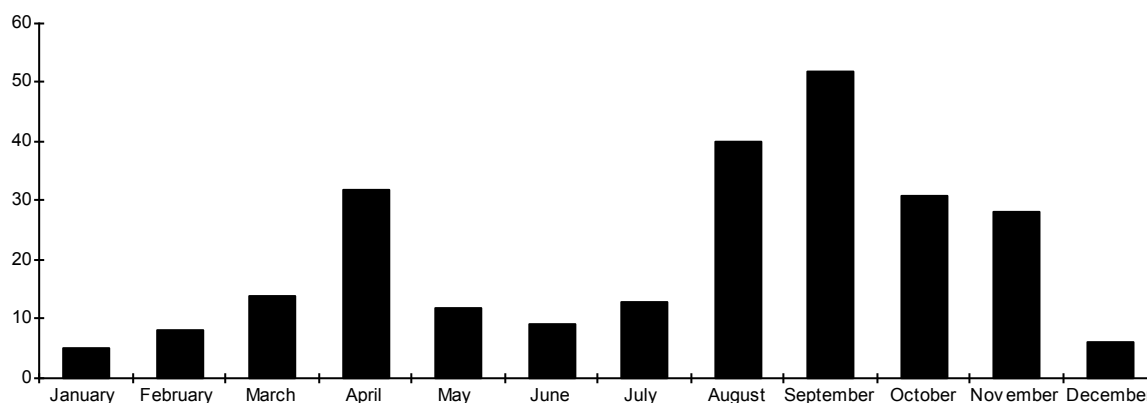


Fig 1 - monthly distribution of Black-necked Grebes at CVL 1953-2008

Annual totals

The first CVL record was discovered by Ray Poulding on Aug. 14th, 1955. The next was particularly interesting as it involved one in summer plumage from March 29th to May 12th, 1959, followed by two moulting adults on June 24th and again on July 12th. The species was then almost annual until 1996, with up to four recorded annually (fig 2).

1997-1998 and the breeding record

In 1997, there was an exceptional passage of eight individuals between Aug. 7th and Dec. 14th, involving one adult and seven juveniles. This high total was thought to have been due to very high numbers of Lesser Water Boatmen *Carixa* sp in the lake. The reasons for this population explosion are unknown, but a succession of years with high water levels (see page 146) probably had an influence, as perhaps did the introduction of Pike *Esox lucius*, probably in the winter of 1993-94. Some of these grew rapidly to as much as 40 lbs in weight. The ecological changes brought about by the pike are not known, but it is likely that they suppressed populations of Perch *Perca fluviatilis* and Roach *Rutilus rutilus*, this in

turn allowing populations of invertebrates to flourish. A contemporaneous increase from 1997 onwards in autumn and winter counts of Tufted Ducks would appear to support this theory.

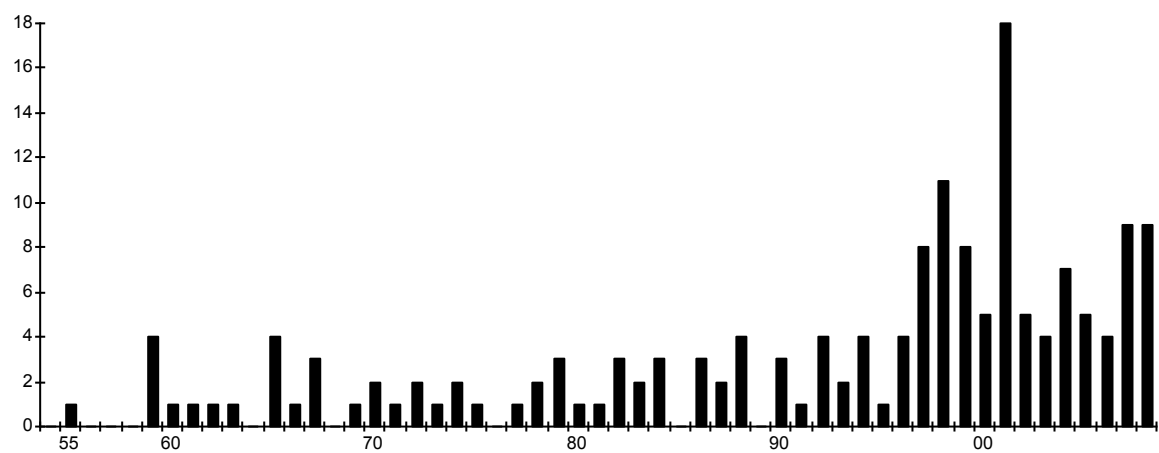


Fig 2 - annual totals of Black-necked Grebes at CVL, 1953 – 2008

In 1998, a summer plumaged Black-necked Grebe was discovered on April 3rd, being joined by a second the following day, and two more on 24th, when two pairs were seen displaying from Stratford Hide. On 25th one was heard giving a *poo-heet* call. Up to three - thought to have been a pair plus a male - were then seen regularly until May 14th, when two pairs were again recorded. A single pair remained into June and, on 12th, Roy Curber and Nigel Milbourne saw them close to Stratford Hide with two tiny young sitting on the female's back. I saw the family the following day, very close to the hide but, on 14th, Andy Davis could locate only one chick, which was being fed by its parents in the reeds. I saw one of the adults carrying food on 16th but, disappointingly, there was no subsequent sign of any young. A single adult was seen again from June 15th to 23rd and the pair again on 30th, but that was the last time they were seen. There were no further records until a migrant juvenile appeared from Aug. 16th to 23rd, followed by two juveniles from Sept. 16th to 19th and what was probably an adult from Oct. 3rd to Nov. 3rd, with two on 2nd. It must be concluded, therefore, that the two young unfortunately did not survive.

1999-2008

It seems likely that the breeding birds returned in 1999, with eight recorded that year, including up to two pairs from March 11th to May 9th, with a pair seen again on June 8th. However, there was no evidence of breeding either in that year or subsequently. From 2000 onwards their occurrence patterns reverted to normal, although 2001 was a bumper year with a record 18 recorded, including four in summer plumage on April 24th and a flock of six, probably juveniles, on Aug. 19th that was seen in the centre of the lake after a heavy rain storm. There is no doubt that the species is increasing at the lake as evidenced by the following table.

1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
0.7	1.3	1.5	1.9	4.6	7.3
Average annual totals of Black-necked Grebes at CVL in each decade from the 1950s to the 2000s					

Discussion

The Black-necked Grebe is a bird of warm continental climates and, as a consequence, it is a very rare breeder in Britain. It prefers shallow, eutrophic pools and it is commonest from central Europe eastwards, with over 70% of the European population occurring in Ukraine and southern Russia. It first bred in Britain in 1904 following a north-westerly range expansion that is thought to have been provoked by desiccation in the Caspian region, a result of climate change. This culminated in the discovery of a remarkable colony of 300 pairs at Lough Funshinagh, Co. Roscommon, Ireland, in 1932 (Martin & Smith 2007). It is interesting to note that this upturn coincided with the only previous breeding in the Bristol area, a pair at Orchardleigh Lake, near Frome, Somerset, in 1932, with birds also present there in 1931 and 1933 (Palmer and Ballance 1968). In Britain, however, the population never appeared to exceed 15-20 pairs and, by 1973, this was confined to southern Scotland. Thereafter it began to slowly spread, coinciding with a dramatic increase in the Netherlands. By 1989, it had increased to a record 34 breeding pairs. This improvement continued into the 1990s, when breeding occurred in south-west England in Gloucestershire and Hampshire, as well as at CVL (Martin & Smith 2007). In 1998, the CVL breeding year, Black-necked Grebes were reported at 15 sites with 50 confirmed pairs, the highest total

ever recorded. Since then, there has been a levelling off, with 38-48 confirmed pairs from 1999-2005. By 2006, the Scottish breeding population had disappeared, leading to a reduction in the British total to 34 confirmed breeding pairs, concentrated into a few main sites in northern and central England (Holling *et al.* 2007 and 2009).

Thus, as with the 1932 Orchardleigh Lake record, the breeding at CVL occurred against a background of high - indeed record - breeding numbers in Britain. Interestingly, this is the opposite of what happened with the Bitterns there in 1997 and 2000, which bred at a time when the British breeding population had reached a low point (Vinicombe 2009).

It is disappointing that the young grebes did not survive, the reasons for which are not immediately apparent. To shed light on this failure, I analysed data that I collected at CVL from 1971-2008 on breeding Little Grebes. The average number of Little Grebe broods produced each year rose from 12.8 in the 1970s, to 14.9 in the 1980s and to 18.1 in the 1990s, but dropped spectacularly to only 7.1 so far in the 2000s. The higher total in the 1990s was almost certainly due to the more stable water levels that prevailed during the latter half of that decade (see page 146) combined with the increase in Lesser Water Boatmen and maybe other invertebrates. However, although 1997 had been an excellent breeding year with 27 broods, the total of 16 broods in 1998 was only slightly above the 1971-2008 average of 13.4. In addition, the average brood size for 1998 was 1.50, which is only just below the 1971-2008 average of 1.66. There is, therefore, very little that can be concluded from this comparison to suggest why the Black-necked Grebes failed to raise their young. The simple answer may be that the young were predated, perhaps by pike. It is worth emphasising that, because of annual variations in water levels, ecological conditions and the prevailing weather, breeding grebes expose themselves to a 'boom and bust' regime that is characterised by wildly fluctuating success rates.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to John Aldridge, Andy Davis and Richard Mielcarek for obtaining additional data and to Bob Handford at Bristol Water and to Rupert Higgins for their helpful comments on the lake's ecology.

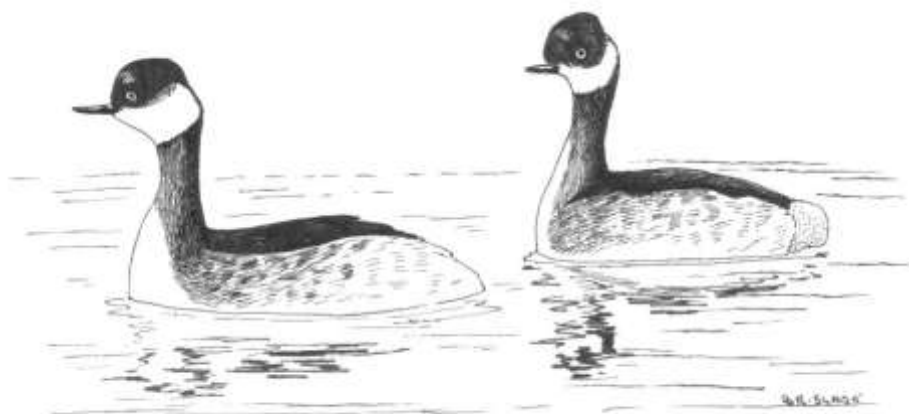
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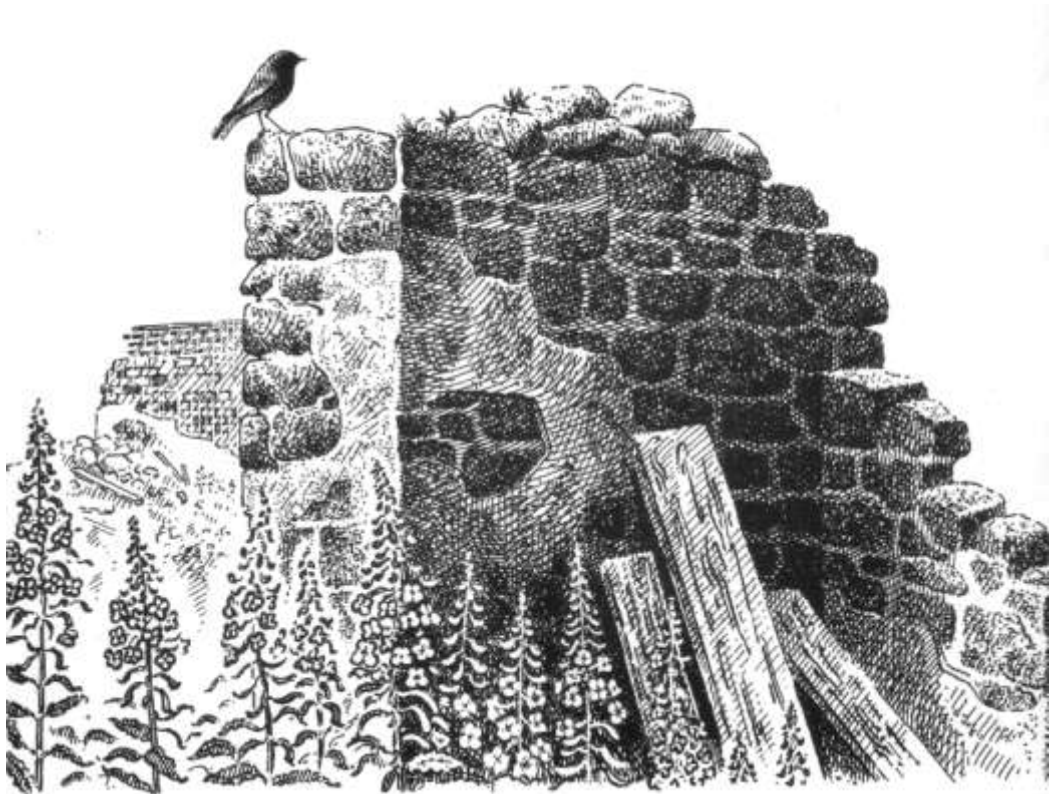
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Appendix - Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes

For the sake of completeness, it is also worth mentioning that both Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes have also shown signs of breeding activity at the lake. In 1986, a summer plumaged Slavonian Grebe that arrived on April 18th was joined by a second from 23rd, both remaining until May 3rd when full display was seen in Stratford Bay; one then remained until May 6th. In 2000, a summer plumaged Slavonian Grebe remained there from June 11th to Oct. 14th.

A Red-necked Grebe also summered in 1992, being seen from April 17th to Aug. 25th, when it moved to Blagdon Lake where it was seen nest building with a juvenile in November! At one point during its stay at CVL, it appeared to have attached itself to a Great Crested Grebe.



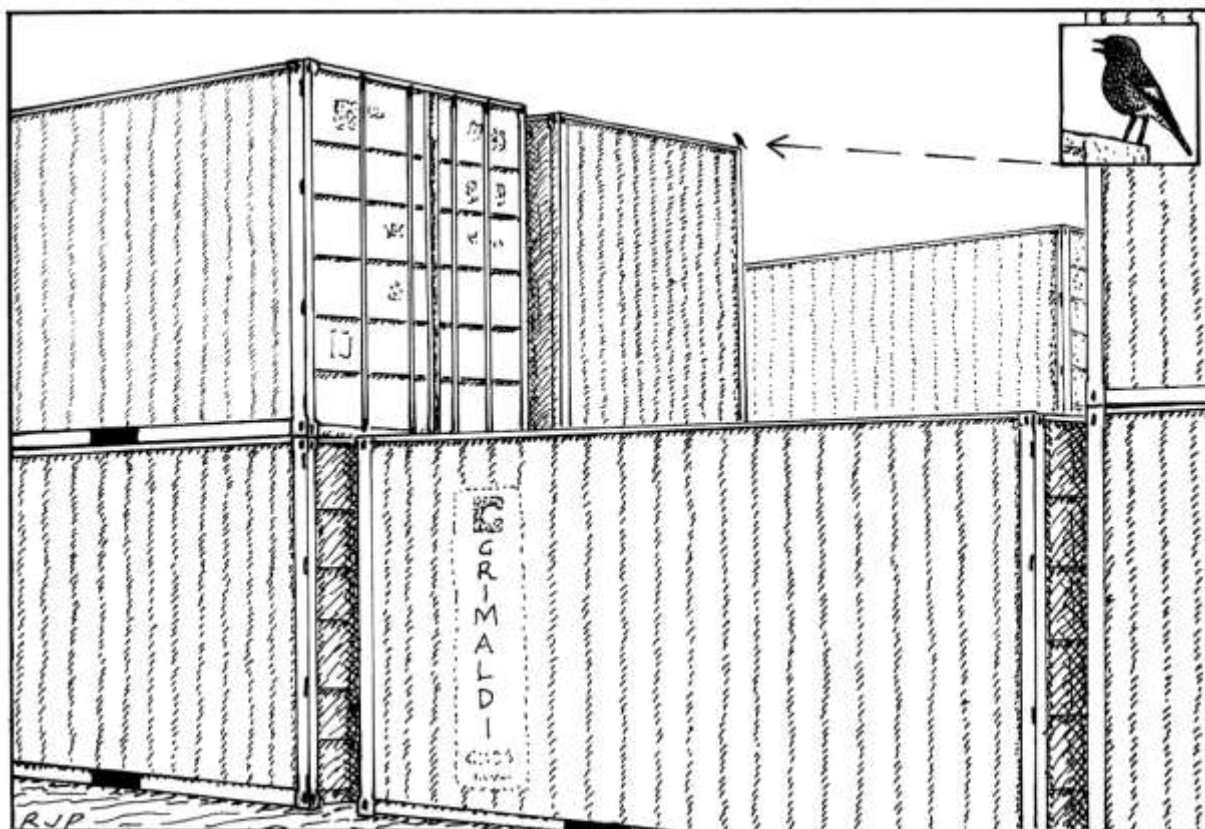


BLACK REDSTART BREEDING AT ROYAL PORTBURY DOCK

L.F. Roberts

Introduction

This article describes a breeding attempt in 2008 of Black Redstart at the Royal Portbury Dock (RPD), the second in successive years at the site. Black Redstart is one of the UK's rarest breeding birds. To set the context, I begin by reviewing the breeding status of the species nationally, regionally and locally. I conclude with some comments about the breeding ecology of Black Redstarts, including factors influencing the selection of breeding sites such as RPD.



National status

Black Redstart was first recorded nesting in Britain at Durham in 1845 and Sussex in 1909. The species became a regular British breeding bird in the 1920s, occupying natural cliff sites in Cornwall and Sussex, and industrial sites in London. Colonisation of Britain at that time was part of a broader European trend involving long-term range expansion to the north and north-west. Black Redstart was first reported to have bred in London in 1926, at the vacated Wembley Exhibition site (Holloway, 1996). The upsurge in numbers during and following the Second World War at bomb sites in London is well known and documented. The most common nesting sites are on power stations, factories and derelict buildings (Marchant et al., 1990).

In 2000, the breeding population was described as 'gradually increasing', although the centre of population had shifted to areas in the Midlands (Mead, 2000). However, recent evidence from the Rare Birds Breeding Panel (RBBP) suggests that expansion of the breeding population may have been checked. The 2003/04 report refers to a 'long-term decline in breeding Black Redstarts during the last 20 years' (Holling et al., 2007). In the latest (2006) report, they are reported at 24 sites in the breeding season in the UK, with up to 29 pairs breeding (but only minimal data was received from Greater London, which in 2005 accounted for twelve pairs at twelve sites) (Holling et al., 2009).

Local and regional status

Davis (1948) referred to Black Redstart as a "Winter-visitor in very small numbers. Formerly recorded only at intervals, but observations over the last ten years show that it now occurs annually. Most records from coastal areas ... Not reported as remaining to nest, but single males were present, and singing, in the heart of the City, June, 1945, and July, 1947". There is another intriguing reference to adult male Black Redstarts singing at Long Ashton in April, 1951 (Palmer & Balance, 1968). So there is ample evidence that the species was present in the Bristol area in the immediate post war period.

Breeding within central Bristol has long been suspected, but never proved. The following more recent records are from the Avon Bird Report (AOG, 1977 to 2007): 1977 - Clifton, in December; 1979 - City Docks, in winter; 1986 - song heard at three sites in central Bristol, May and June; 1988 - bird found dead at Bristol Central Bus Station, Oct. 27th; 1993/4 - a male in Walter Street, Bedminster, from Dec. 2nd to March 18th when sub-song heard; 1997 - irregular sightings of a male in Somerset Street, between Feb. 1st and March 8th; 1998 - Somerset Street (Raphael Court), April 9th to 11th; 2001 - a singing male at Temple Quay, May 4th to 30th; 2003 - Pools Wharf, Jan. 31st; 2004 - a male singing at King Street on Oct. 9th and also one observed central Bristol Nov. 11th; 2005 - male singing central Bristol, May 18th.

Black Redstart in Avon is currently described as a "Scarce/uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare in summer. may have bred in 1986 and 1994." (AOG, 2007). This pretty much sums up the status of Black Redstart across the whole of the SW on England where breeding attempts are very infrequent. Scrutiny of the annual reports of the RBBP from 2000 to the latest published report (2006) confirms breeding only in Hampshire, with potential sites in Avon, Dorset and the Isle of Wight. Prior to this, there were breeding records for Cornwall (1940s), Devon (1940s and 50s), Somerset (Hinkley Point, 1996) and Wiltshire (five confirmed breeding records, but none since 1979).

Within the Avon area, sightings are most common in the winter period, particularly along the coast. Sightings occur inland too, but less often, particularly (and surprisingly perhaps) in gardens. Since the early 1990s, however, RPD is the only site where Black Redstarts have been seen with any regularity, albeit infrequently. Until recently, the only breeding record in Avon dates back to 1994, when a female was observed carrying food into a building at Oldbury Power Station on May 22nd.

Breeding at the Royal Portbury Dock

The Royal Portbury Dock was built between 1972 and 1977. An early description of the site is provided by Dorgan & Youdale (1982). It is evident from early records that Black Redstart quickly adopted the area as an 'occasional visitor in autumn and winter' (Upton, 1984).

The following observations of Black Redstart at RPD are extracted from the Avon Bird Report (1977 to 2006), unless stated otherwise. The records for the period 1978 to 1983 are taken from Upton (1984) and those flagged as 'Landmark' refers to records held by The Landmark Practice, Bristol. Excluding recent breeding attempts, sightings are as follows: October, 1978; December, 1982; January and March, 1983; October and December (two dates), 1991; July (female), December (up to three birds on four dates), 1992; January to March (up to three birds), 1993; March and November, 1995 (Landmark); December, 1986; December, 2001; May (two dates), August (several dates) and September, 2007. There are some noticeable gaps in these records. These are likely to be the result of under recording at a large site with very restricted access. The general pattern is one of regular but infrequent (not annual) occurrence since construction of RPD. Records are mainly in winter.

Records at Avonmouth Docks are scant, although in many ways the site is more suitable and the lack of records is surely due to lack of access and reporting. Until relatively recently, the only Avonmouth records were for March 1955, autumn 1975 and winter 1980. In 2000, there was a sighting on one of the piers (Landmark record). And in 2004, a male and two (possibly three) first-year or female birds were regularly seen together during November. Could these have been a family party? And could a pair have bred locally?

Finally, to the pair of Black Redstarts breeding at RPD in 2008. This pair was closely monitored, following an unsuccessful breeding attempt in 2007.

- The first sighting was on April 16th, when a bird was observed by Steve Hale carrying nesting material into a container stack about 100 metres into the dock working area. Material was gathered from the strand line of a small beach nearby and adjoining scrub. The bird doing most of the building appeared to be a drab, washed-out male, probably a sub-adult (second-year). Collection of nest material continued until April 30th, after which no birds were seen until May 14th, this gap almost certainly being the incubation period.

- Following the initial discovery of the approximate nesting area, protection measures were put into place by The Bristol Port Company. This entailed the cordoning off and 'grounding' of approximately 50 containers, most of which, fortunately, were empty and not immediately required. At the same time, a Schedule 1 Licence, to permit close inspection and monitoring of the nest site was obtained from Natural England.
- From May 16th, both adult birds were regularly observed in feeding forays between the beach nearby and the nest site. Food items carried to the nest included small, pale-coloured caterpillars. Insect food was also gathered from the ground, beneath and between rows of imported cars parked within a gravel compound a short distance from the breeding site.
- On May 24th, the nest was inspected, having been located in a corner casting of a container, between six and seven metres above the ground. The nest contained two chicks, but these appeared to be in a weakened state. Two other chicks were found dead on the ground beneath the nest.
- The nest site was visited again on May 28th, without inspecting the nest contents. This visit followed 48 hours of continuously cold and wet weather. There was no sign of any adult activity at this time and a third chick was found dead on the ground below the nest.
- In the days following, no adult activity was seen. I concluded that the fourth chick had succumbed and that the adults had deserted the nest. The weather in the preceding days had been exceptionally bad, which would have inhibited food searches and feeding by the adults, as well as making it very difficult for the chicks to keep warm.
- Despite hopes that a second brood would be attempted, no further breeding activity was noted. Chris Stone found a washed-out male on the shoreline about 400 metres away from the breeding site on June 7th, which may well have been the breeding male. He found another (possibly the same) on the Portbury beach on July 11th. But these were isolated sightings and I never saw anything to suggest a second breeding attempt.

Breeding ecology

Black Redstart was originally a montane species. It successfully extended its range after adapting to the use of nesting sites on buildings and other man-made structures. Complex industrial sites are now preferentially selected. Recent research of favoured nesting sites in the UK shows that this species appears to require sites with vertical features. These correlate to the gorges and cliff faces forming its natural habitat in continental Europe. These structures also provide high singing posts. Conversely, extensive areas of open brownfield land are not favoured (Frith & Gedge, 2000).

The container blocks at RPD (and no doubt at other ports) provide the high, vertical faces that Black Redstarts find attractive for nesting. However, good feeding habitat is also required for successful nesting. Studies in the UK have shown that areas of sparse 'wasteland' vegetation and stony ground are necessary for feeding (Frith & Gedge, 2000). And this is where RPD seems to tick the right boxes for Black Redstart. The extensive gravel substrate laid down for car parking adequately meets this requirement and evidently provides the microhabitat that supports food in the form of midges, spiders and other small invertebrates.

Concluding comments

Black Redstart is not the most fashionable species of conservation concern in the UK and is not regarded highly by urban planners. This is partly due to its habit of occupying sites earmarked for regeneration (Frith & Gedge, 2000). The case is not helped by the fact that it is not threatened within the main part of its natural range, where it is in fact quite common, breeding readily in rural gardens. There seems to be no clear opinion about climate change and whether Black Redstarts in the UK will increase in numbers. It is likely that further expansion and consolidation of the breeding population will be limited by lack of nesting sites in close proximity to good feeding habitat. There have been recent successes, for example at Canary Wharf (London) and elsewhere, providing green roof habitat close to suitable breeding structures. There is every possibility that such a strategy could work in central Bristol too. In the meantime, it is hoped that RPD (and Avonmouth) will provide further opportunities for this extremely alluring species to maintain its foothold as a rare breeding species in the UK.

Acknowledgements

In closing, I would like to thank The Bristol Port Company for their assistance and co-operation and also to the container terminal personnel for acting as involuntary wardens!

See overleaf for references

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EASTERN SUB-SPECIES OF JACKDAW IN THE AVON AREA

A.H. DAVIS

On Jan.14th, 2008, I was watching gulls at Somerdale, Keynsham when I noticed a Jackdaw some 150m away that showed distinctive pale neck patches. It was with about 100 other Jackdaws feeding on the flooded fields, none of which showed such a noticeable feature. I took a few record photographs before leaving the site for lunch. I was aware of the influx of birds showing pale half collars into Shetland in November 2007 so after looking at photos of these birds and studying several other web sites, I felt fairly confident that the Somerdale individual could be an "Eastern" Jackdaw. I therefore posted a note on the local yahoo group "Bristol Wildlife" and I also told several local observers about it. R. Mielcarek visited Somerdale on the 15th and not only did he see the bird at close range but he obtained a series of instructive photographs (see one opposite page 97). R. Laughton, N. R. Milbourne and M. J. Wilmott also saw it over the next few days, and it was last seen on Jan. 22nd by RM who also saw another very similar individual on this date.

The most distinctive field character was the silvery-grey half collar that stretched, on each side of the breast up to the edge of the nape (that is it did not meet either at the front or at the back). This field mark was constantly noted in front and side views and in varying light conditions. RMi stated in his description that many of the Jackdaws present showed, on brief views, what appeared to be a silvery line on the "shoulder" but on longer views, this was just a reflection of the light off the shiny feathers. He also said it was important to study the bird as it moved about to be sure that the silvery line was actually present and not just an illusion. Both AHD and RMi noted that the nape and ear-coverts were a paler grey than on the other Jackdaws present thus highlighting the contrasting dark crown. The under-parts and the mantle were slightly paler than those on other birds but they were still described as blackish. The mantle therefore showed a slight contrast with the darker wings.

The individual described above was associating with another which showed equally pale nape and ear-coverts but not the pale half-collar. They seemed to be a pair so perhaps this bird came from the same continental source, as some "Eastern" Jackdaws do not show a pale collar (Offereins [2003]). This second bird has not been accepted by the Avon Records Committee as the members decided that a decently defined pale collar must be a prerequisite for acceptance of an "Eastern" Jackdaw in our area.

AHD and RMi located an "Eastern" Jackdaw on Feb. 23rd beside the River Chew between Keynsham and Chewton Keynsham. Again, it was easily located in a flock of Jackdaws by the narrow silvery line on each shoulder, stretching from the breast to the nape. It was seen again in this area by R. Palmer on March 3rd. The pale collar of this individual was identical to that on the Somerdale bird seen in January, and so it was assumed to be the same bird.

On Nov. 26th beside the River Avon near Keynsham, AHD watched a bird that looked exactly the same as the Somerdale one described above. As with that individual it was associating with a bird which lacked pale neck patches. Were these birds the returning pair seen early in 2008?

On Jan. 25th, R Laughton saw an "Eastern" Jackdaw at George Lane, Marshfield. He stated in his notes that this bird stood out like a sore thumb amongst the residents. The most striking feature was the contrast between the body and the head. The nape and neck were a pale, almost white, colour which contrasted with the black mantle and body. This gave the impression of a white-collared Jackdaw. The ear-coverts were also a pale grey colour. Presumably this was the same bird that was noted by M. Hayes at Down Track, Marshfield on Feb. 10th and March 1st. He wrote in his description that: it was the distinctive white collar that first attracted him to this bird in the flock of 300 Jackdaws at a distance of 200m. This feature was obvious at all angles. As he checked through the flock he could not see this feature on any other Jackdaw. A record photograph was obtained and shows the described features.

Following up a report of an "Eastern" Jackdaw on the Parkland at CVL during the late afternoon on Feb. 3rd, RMi located presumably the same individual on Feb. 6th resting in the trees behind the Blue Bowl Public House (ST 557579) and again the next day in the field opposite to Bickfield Lane (ST 554584) just to the south of Heron's Green. He saw it for a third time on March 18th, this time in a sheep field at the bottom of Stratford Lane. K.E.Vinicombe noted it again at this spot on the 29th. In his description, RMi noted that the nape and ear-coverts were paler than the other Jackdaws present (thus highlighting the contrasting black crown) and it also showed a clear pale silver line from nape to breast on each side. On two of these dates, he was some distance away from the bird, even so the distinctive pale half collar could clearly be seen.

Identification of Eastern sub-species of Jackdaw

A paper written by Rudy Offereins in DUTCH BIRDING Vol.25, No.4, 2003, which is also available on line at: <http://www.xs4all.nl/~calidris/monedula.htm>, is the most comprehensive written so far on this subject. What follows is largely based on that paper.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* is represented in Europe by three different sub-species, *spermologus*, *monedula* and *soemmerringii*. Harrop(2000) and Offereins(2003) referred to *spermologus* as Common Jackdaw, *monedula* as Nordic Jackdaw and *soemmerringii* as Russian Jackdaw. Nordic Jackdaw is the direct translation of the name for this sub-species in the Netherlands.

C. monedula. spermologus Common Jackdaw -- the sub-species we are familiar with in the UK. It is largely sedentary, remaining in the vicinity of breeding areas throughout the year. It also occurs in Western and Central Europe. The adult in winter shows no pale collar or spot on the lower neck and it has a darker nape, ear-coverts and under-parts than the nominate *monedula*. Adults have a complete post-breeding moult from mid May to mid October (this applies to all sub-species), which means that adult birds in winter are in fresh plumage. By March this plumage becomes worn, which can result in a paler collar and darker under-parts (Cramp and Perrins, 1994). In both sub-species, the collar may be absent in the breeding season (Cramp and Perrins, 1994).

C. monedula. monedula Nordic Jackdaw which breeds in S E Norway, S Sweden, and N and E Denmark. Compared with the above sub-species, *monedula* has a paler nape and ear-coverts. The most striking character however, is the highly variable pale patch on the lower neck and the silvery half collar. The neck patch is variable in both size and tinge. The latter varies from a vague greyish spot on the lower neck to one that is almost pure white. It continues as a broad silvery and often more diffuse collar, sometimes extending to the nape. The collar can appear almost white in bright sunlight but never as sharply defined as in *C. m. soemmerringii*. Individuals of the sub-species *monedula* often show pale feather fringes to the mantle feathers and under-parts and vague dark mottling to the belly and flanks. This mottling to the under-parts and mantle is not obvious in every individual and some may be as dark-bodied as *spermologus*.

C. monedula. soemmerringii Russian Jackdaw which breeds from N E Europe through to N and C Asia. It is distinguished by its paler nape and neck side, and the collar is clearly white and sharply defined over its full length forming a whole with the neck patch. Birds from the western parts of its range show plumbeous-grey under-parts and mantle while those from the east tend to have almost black underparts.

Discussion

The *monedula* sub-species of Jackdaw (Nordic Jackdaw) is regarded as a regular but seemingly under-recorded winter migrant to Britain (e.g. RIACT sub-committee report in British Birds Vol.99, Dec. 2006, p. 640) There are no accepted British records of the sub-species *soemmerringii* (Russian Jackdaw). The influx of *monedula* Jackdaws to the Northern Isles and subsequently to various English counties in the winter of 2007/08 was a marked one, although might partly have been a function of increased observer awareness.

The three European sub-species of Jackdaw intergrade over rather broad zones. That between *spermologus* and *monedula* covers a broad area from Denmark and the western borders of Germany to Switzerland. That between *monedula* and *soemmerringii* has been studied by Volpio (1969) and highly variable birds are to be found in a zone at least 270km wide in N E Scandinavia.

The "Eastern" Jackdaws seen in the Avon area in 2008 stood out well amongst the local Common Jackdaws but were not as striking as *soemmerringii*. Their pale half collars fit *monedula* and, although they did not show strikingly pale under-parts and mantles, one bird was noted as paler bodied than the local Jackdaws. It is also possible that our birds came from the intergrade zone between *monedula* and *spermologus* where individuals can show some characters of *monedula*. Some of the birds seen in Shetland in November 2007 were very similar to ours (pale half collars but somewhat darkish under-parts and mantles). Rudy Offereins in the Nature in Shetland website (<http://www.nature-shetland.co.uk/>) for November 2007 commented that he considered these birds to be *monedula* so it can reasonably be inferred that the Avon birds can also be assigned to this sub-species. These are the first records of this sub-species in our area. Further scrutiny of winter Jackdaw flocks might reveal this to be a more regular visitor.

Acknowledgements

I thank John Martin and Richard Mielcarek for commenting on an early draft.

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2007 NESTING SURVEY OF ST5877, [SOUTHMEAD/HENLEAZE]

R.L. Bland and J. Tully

Objective. Urban bird population density is difficult to establish by standard methods, such as the Common Birds Census [CBC] or the Breeding Bird Survey [BBS] because the best habitat, back gardens, are very difficult to survey. We have tried to make estimates in the past based on "bird-friendly" gardens [Bland *et al.*], which probably have a higher density than normal gardens. So we wanted to test the assumptions, and to discover how accurate BBS surveys in urban areas are likely to be.

Method. We used four complementary approaches. First, hand delivery of a survey form to every property seeking information on species that were nesting in their house or garden, including nest boxes. Second, standard BBS surveys done by two different people. Third, House Sparrow and Starling nesting surveys of all houses done from the public roads. Fourthly, a CBC type survey of a woodland/scrub amenity area and a quarry lake and its immediate surrounds.

Habitat of ST5877. ST5877 is a square kilometre in the northern suburbs of Bristol about 5km north of the city centre. The area includes part of Southmead Hospital and its surrounds [approx 9ha]. This was subtracted from the square and replaced by a similar area but of different habitat to the west of the square. This enabled us to include complete roads and extend the amenity area within 100m of the western edge of ST5877. The total area was 100ha.

The habitat type is as below :-

Houses and gardens**	55.6ha
Amenity woodland, grassland and stream*	9.0ha
Schools and surroundings	3.6ha
Small industry, police and fire stations	3.8ha
Quarry, lake and surroundings*	3.2ha
Flats and surroundings	4.0ha
Allotments	1.5ha
Other habitats, mainly roads and verges	19.3ha

** Covered by the nesting survey questionnaire.

* Covered by separate CBC survey

The housing was mainly built in the period 1930-60, with some infill after 1960 and a few earlier terraces of 1880-1900. There were 1705 houses, 133 detached, 1162 semi-detached and 410 terraces. [NB The end of terraces were counted as semi-detached]. A total of 280 properties returned the survey forms, and the mean property areas of those houses were 540, 331 and 169 sq m respectively for detached, semi-detached and terraces. These values were extracted from a 1:1250 map.

About 20% were built as council housing and 80% private housing, although many council houses have been purchased by the tenants and probably over 90% are now owner-occupied.

Results

The house to house nesting survey – the distribution and returns

Questionnaires were hand-delivered to 1705 houses in mid April for return at the end of May. Only 12.3% of these were returned. To improve the information we decided to hand-deliver a second round of questionnaires on June 15th to 194 properties that had not returned the first. These were in three blocks so that we could get a more concentrated return. One block was a good House Sparrow and Starling area, the second a relatively inaccessible area with large gardens and the third had two cul-de-sacs within the area. Both the latter areas were average House Sparrow areas.

The 194 second questionnaires contained a letter asking for a return as their area was important to us and the reply postcard was stamped, as we had funding remaining from our BTO and Bristol Naturalists' grants. This letter produced a 36.6% return. It would seem that the return could be greatly increased by providing a stamp and also asking for an immediate return.

This strategy increased the overall return to 16.4%.

Details of 'normal', 'reminders' and 'non-returners'.

Applying our statistics to the whole 1705 sample, we had 209 'normal' returns – that is returns where no reminder was required.

We had a further 71 returns from the 194 reminders. If we had sent out reminders to all 1496 of the properties who did not return the original survey then we would have expected 548 at the same percentage return. We assume the statistics from the 71 returns to apply to these 548. We will call this group the 'reminders'.

The remaining 948 who did not to respond to the original questionnaire or a reminder and these are classed as 'non-returners'. We have no knowledge of the garden nesting for this group.

Quality of the returns

The quality of the answers to the five questions varied. Q1 and 2 on the number of nest boxes and their occupation needed little ornithological knowledge and probably gave accurate results.

Q3 concerned species nesting in or on their buildings and even with advice given in the instructions, the results were disappointing, as they could be checked against JT's survey. 31 properties had Starling nests which were recorded by JT and only 4 questionnaires were returned [13%] and 118 had House Sparrow nests and only 19 were returned [16%]. It would seem that having nests did not stimulate returns above the general rate of 16.6%. Possibly more worrying, only one Starling return was accurate, two were partially so, in that a second nest was missed and the species was mis-identified as Blackbird and the fourth missed the nest altogether. It was no better with the House Sparrow with 3 accurate returns, 4 partially accurate and 12 failed to notice they had Sparrows nesting at all!

Q4 on the species nesting in the garden needed some editing as some just listed the birds which visited their gardens and others claimed unusual species which were checked back with the householder and often had to be discounted eg Nuthatch. It was clear from the results that some nesting such as Blackbirds, Magpies, Crows were obvious and probably accurately recorded. There were no Greenfinch nests recorded from the questionnaire, although from their songs on JT's walks, they bred in the square.

In our opinion the results to Q3 and 4 should be treated with some caution depending on the species. In general, we feel that the inconspicuous nesting species have been underestimated by the questionnaire method.

We feel confident that our breeding estimates for Blue Tit, Great Tit, House Sparrow and Starling are based on robust evidence from the questionnaire and John Tully's survey. We have a lower confidence in the estimates for Blackbird, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Magpie, Robin, Woodpigeon and Wren. Comments are made on other resident species but only broad estimates are made.

Nest boxes

Nest box provision was almost identical between the 'normal' and 'reminders' groups at 0.73 and 0.72 boxes per property. The 'non returners' are unlikely to run bird-friendly gardens and the rate per property is unknown.

Category	NEST BOXES		
	Totals	Nestboxes	Rate/prop
normal	209	153	0.73
reminders	548	393	0.72
non-returners	948	?	?
total	1705	546	

These figures suggest a minimum of 546 boxes in 1705 properties or an overall provision of 0.320 per property. Occupancy figures were 24.5% and this would suggest 134 occupied boxes.

In the sample, 72% of the boxes were occupied by Blue Tits, this would equate to 96 Blue Tits nests in boxes. 86% of the Blue Tits in the sample nested in boxes leading to an estimate of 112 pairs nesting in the housing area or 2.01 nests/ha for the house and garden habitat. Some other habitats in the square would also have nesting Blue Tits.

A similar calculation for Great Tit would give 24 nests in the house and garden habitat.

Overall nesting

The rate of nesting was 0.895 and 0.845 per property for the 'normal' and 'reminder' groups and unknown for the 'non group', the results would be as below :-

	Normal	Reminder	Non-returners
Rate/property	0.895	0.845	unknown
Nests	187	463	unknown

Overall nesting estimate

These figures suggest a minimum of 650 nests in 1705 properties or an overall rate of 0.381. This would equate to 11.7 nests/ha for the house and garden habitat. There would also be breeding in the other habitats in the square.

	Normal	Reminder	Non-returners
Rate/property	0.263	0.211	unknown
Nests	55	116	unknown

Blackbird nesting estimate

These figures suggest a minimum of 171 nests in 1705 properties or an overall rate of 0.100. This would equate to 3.08 nests/ha for the house and garden habitat. There would also be breeding in the other habitats in the square.

Similar calculations for Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Magpie, Robin, Woodpigeon and Wren would give the figures covered in the table below.

	Normal	Reminder	Non-returners
Rate/property	0.115	0.211	unknown
Nests	24	116	unknown

House Sparrow nesting estimate

These figures suggest 140 nests in 1705 properties or an overall rate of 0.082. This would equate to a minimum of 2.52 nests/ha for the house and garden habitat. These figures are a major under-estimate as JT's figures below show. Indeed the majority of houses with House Sparrow nests seen by JT did not return the questionnaire and some multiple nest sites were not accurately recorded by the owners of the property.

JT's survey was done during the period Feb. 20th to May 15th and consisted of 46 hours of fieldwork. The method was to walk all the streets of ST5877 regularly and record the 'addresses' of House Sparrow colonies and Starling nesting activities on the eaves of the fronts and sides of the houses, and where, visible the rear elevation. The position of nests where feeding was recorded, was noted in the latter part of the period. A similar survey was done in 2006.

The survey yielded 270 nests, using the 'double fronts, plus sides' calculation, to allow for the unseen rear of most of the houses. This may be an under-estimate due to two factors. The best feeding habitat is the back garden and if suitable nest sites are available in the rear guttering, these would be preferable. Secondly, the length of eaves and guttering is greater in many houses due to extensions at the rear.

It is important to put the House Sparrow figures for ST5877 into context. The BBS mean values for every square in Bristol for the period 1994-2006 were available and ST5877 House Sparrow figures from these give a ranking of 30 out of 111 with figures 41% above the mean for the whole city. Indeed, one reason why the square was selected was the above average numbers of House Sparrow.

	Normal	Reminder	Non-returners
Rate/property	0.033	0.042	unknown
Nests	7	23	unknown

Starling nesting estimate

These figures suggest 30 nests in 1705 properties or an overall rate of 0.018. This would equate to 0.54 nests/ha for the house and garden habitat. There would also be breeding in the other habitats in the square.

JT's survey yielded 39 nests, plus 3 in the flats. The survey showed that open grassland space was very important to nesting Starlings and feeding flights could be observed emanating from these sites to the nests that were clustered

around the feeding sites. One such site was a primary school playing field and the other, the grassland of the River Trym in the NW corner of the square. The maximum flight paths were about 200m.

Summary of breeding of the target species

Habitat	Houses & gardens	Amenity land	Quarry lake	Total
Blackbird	171	8	5	184
Blue Tit	112	5	3	120
Carriion Crow	3	3	1	7
Collared Dove	11	0	0	11
Great Tit	24	5	3	32
House Sparrow*	270	0	0	270
Magpie	14	2	1	17
Robin	81	8	4	93
Starling*	42	0	0	42
Woodpigeon	46	11	5	62
Wren	17	20	7	44
Total	791	62	29	882

* figures from JT's survey

The amenity woodland and Henleaze Lake figures are based on mini-CBC mapping from eight visits to the woodland and two to the lake.

The figures in the above table are likely to be minimum figures as no allowance has been made for the 'non-returner' category of the questionnaire.

Other breeding species

It is possible to comment on other species breeding in the square in 2007, but with some, their totals are difficult to quantify;

Mallard	About five pairs bred on Henleaze Lake
Sparrowhawk	A pair raised four young in the amenity woodland associated with the River Trym
Moorhen	About three pairs bred on Henleaze Lake
Coot	A single pair tried to breed on Henleaze Lake
Feral Pigeon	There was a breeding colony of about 10 pairs on the limestone cliffs of Henleaze Lake
Stock Dove	A single pair held territory in the woodland and probably bred
Swift	The questionnaire picked up some regular breeding sites in the roofs of the housing in the square – there were probably between 5 and 10 pairs
Grey Wagtail	At least one pair bred on the limestone cliffs of Henleaze Lake
Dunnock	Bred throughout the square but they were difficult to quantify due to their secretive nature and identification problems
Song Thrush	Bred in small numbers in the gardens, the amenity woodland and the lake
Blackcap	About five pairs bred in the amenity woodland
Chiffchaff	One or two pairs bred in the amenity woodland
Long-tailed Tit	One or two pairs bred in the woodland and by the lake
Jay	About four pairs bred in the housing and woodland
Jackdaw	Between five and ten pairs bred in the woodland and housing [in chimneys]
Chaffinch	Bred in the housing areas and woodland, with probably less than 20 pairs
Greenfinch	Bred in the woodland and housing areas but their numbers were difficult to quantify

Other species which may have bred but direct evidence is not available – Tawny Owl, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Pied Wagtail, Mistle Thrush, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Breeding totals and the BBS maximums for the period 2000-2007

Species	BBS pairs	2007 SURVEY pairs	%	Comment
Woodpigeon	26	62	235	we are under estimating
Collared Dove	12	11	89	about right
Wren	49	44	89	about right
Robin	44	93	212	we are under estimating
Blackbird	67	184	273	we are under estimating
Blue Tit	93	120	129	about right
Great Tit	28	32	114	about right
Magpie	7	17	237	we are under estimating
Carrion Crow	16	7	43	we are over estimating
Starling	35	42	121	about right
House Sparrow	251	270	107	about right

The above table for the BBS estimates has been calculated using our standard method that we have used in recent Breeding Bird Survey reports for Bristol, and we have used the maximum figures for the period of 2000-2007 in order to get a sample of 12 surveys.

We then compare the figures against the number of pairs breeding in our 2007 survey. It would seem that for the Collared Dove, Wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Starling and House Sparrow the figures were about right. We seem to be under-estimating for Woodpigeon, Robin, Blackbird and Magpie by a figure of about two. Carrion Crow seems to be over-estimated by a factor of about two, probably due to a large number of non-breeders. These results mean that we should revise our standard methods for estimating the total number of some species for the city.

Comparison of methods

A general questionnaire gives some useful information, like nest box numbers and the associated breeding numbers but validation of the nesting of some species on buildings and in gardens is doubtful. A higher return of 36% is possible provided the questionnaire is delivered in June for an immediate reply and the postcard is postage paid. An earlier delivery of instructions of what to look out for would be needed in April. There is still the problem of identification of species and the definition of nesting on the property.

The alternative would be to do a Common Bird Census over the whole square [Cannon]. This has the advantage of a single skilled observer. However, the time needed to cover the whole area is large for each of the 10 visits recommended, giving a total of probably 8-10 hours. Not all of these hours could be in the early morning on a single day, when song is at its greatest. The other major handicap is the viewing [and listening] of the best habitats, which are the rear gardens. Traffic noise is also a problem near main roads. CBC may be a possible alternative method but in our opinion should be restricted to 500m by 500m, ie $\frac{1}{4}$ sq km and this area should have good access to the rear of the properties and be away from main roads. CBC is appropriate to specialised habitats like the amenity woodland and the quarry, the lake and its surroundings. It also could have been applied to the allotment area had there been sufficient time. Their relatively bleak habitat would lead to few nests in JT's opinion.

The House Sparrow and Starling nesting is best covered by one skilled observer, as the questionnaire return clearly showed that householders did not always notice nesting or in the case of multiple nesting have the skill to record accurately the number of nests. The method gives good estimates for breeding in buildings, the most popular breeding sites, but is less accurate in 'dense shrub and nest box nesting. The method is very time consuming and needs viewing access to the rear of the properties which is not always possible.

Our survey suggests that the BBS gives an effective method of assessing breeding bird estimates for some species but indicates problems in others.

References

- Bland, Greenwood & Tully; Birds breeding in British gardens: an underestimated population? Bird Study 2004, **51**,97-106
 Bland & Tully; Bristol Breeding Bird Report 2007.
 Cannon; Wild birds in urban gardens : Opportunity or constraint 2005. PhD thesis, University of Sheffield

EAGLE OWL IN CLIFTON

E. Drewitt

While there has been an increasing number of reports of Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo* in the wild in the UK, it was still a surprise and delight for people in Bristol to learn that one had taken up residence in a Sycamore tree in Clifton.

There had been a number of reports of Eagle Owls in Avon during 2008 including at Brislington (May), Bishopsworth (late June), Leigh Woods (August), Downend, Frenchay, Failand and Puxton (pers. comm. C. Sperring). Whilst some caution needs to be taken with regards to the identification of these birds, one or two of these sightings, including the Puxton individual seen by a farmer, do appear to be genuine – the latter bird sometimes visited a nearby captive Eagle Owl at Puxton Falconry Centre. Sightings also include an Eagle Owl seen in Clifton and Redland during July/August (BOC Messageboard and pers. comm. M. Leivers). Probably the same individual was photographed on balcony railings of a flat near the Clifton Suspension Bridge on July 4th (M. Carwardine).

Woodland Road

The first signs that a large predator was living off Woodland Road began when commotion from other birds such as Carrion Crows and Magpies was noted around Sept. 10th/11th. On the 15th the calls of an owl were heard during an evening lecture in the Chemistry building near Cantocks Close at about 8.30pm. A large owl was seen on the 16th outside the workshop window of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (B. Maggs). On Oct. 1st I was asked by BOC member G. Cook to check the identity; I visited that morning and confirmed it was an Eagle Owl.

It was a male of the European race *Bubo bubo bubo* and in good condition. It was not exhibiting any behaviour or physical signs of a recently captive bird – at least since its wing moult back in the summer. With its large eyes, huge wingspan and dog-size profile, the Eagle Owl became a true star attracting not only birders but students, University staff and members of the public. University porters and security staff kept close scrutiny on the owl's status and position. For many it was a real treat and gave people an exciting wildlife experience. The owl was popular with the media appearing in the Evening Post, BBC Points West, BBC Radio Bristol (four times), ITV West, and as a feature on BBC Inside Out West.

Daily routines

The owl was seen most days opposite the School of Biological Sciences from October. It was also observed on the University's Will's Memorial Tower, flying over buildings down Park Street (pers. comm. I. Carnew) and calling from the top of Freemantle House in Kingsdown. It continued to use the Sycamore tree for roosting even when it became devoid of leaves. It was observed over the Christmas period and seen at 2pm on Dec. 23rd with a squirrel in its talons (pers. comm. R. Bingham). It was also seen roosting in trees at Royal Fort Gardens during this time.

At dusk the Eagle Owl would stretch its wings and slip out from the tree usually to nearby song posts such as chimneys. Here it would preen and begin calling with its distinctive 'oo-oh' calls echoing across the Tyndalls Park area. As it did this it would lower its body and cock its tail rather like a wren. Frequently it would be heard for an hour or more in the vicinity; other times for a shorter period before going off hunting. As it called, the distinctive white patch under its chin was clearly visible. The owl would be back at its roost before dawn.

Diet

Pellets were few and far between – of those found, the remains of Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* were evident (pers. comm. G. Jones). However, the owl was often seen holding prey including Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*, Feral Pigeon, Brown Rat and a bird that fits the description of a Sparrowhawk. It was also noted flying down to catch a pigeon on at least one occasion. Its behaviour suggested it was feeding well.

Status

Eagle Owls are increasing across their range in Europe and more are being recorded in the UK. However, a recent paper in *British Birds* concludes that there is still a lack of evidence to suggest any seen in the UK are wild individuals from mainland Europe. Instead they almost certainly originate from captivity or feral-breeding populations in northern Britain. While the origin of this individual remains a mystery, one thing is sure - it delighted many people and attracted attention to a species that is largely unknown by most in the region and the country.

Reference Melling, T., Dudley, S. and Doherty, P. 2008. The Eagle Owl in Britain. *British Birds*. **101**:478-490

THE BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY (BBS) FOR 2008

**A Survey by Members of the
BRISTOL NATURALISTS SOCIETY
BRISTOL ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB
BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY [AVON REGION]**

R.L. Bland and J. Tully

Introduction

As in previous years this report includes data from the four local authority areas, Bath & North East Somerset [BA], Bristol [BR], North Somerset [NS] and South Gloucestershire [SG] as well as a section of Somerset [SO] which is north of the OS line ST50 and west of the line ST80 – an area is about 350 sq km.

This report has only been possible due to the skill and dedication of many members of the Bristol Ornithological Club, the Bristol Naturalists Society and the British Trust for Ornithology. The survey started in 1994 and most surveyors have covered ten or more breeding seasons.

Method

The method used is that of the British Trust for Ornithology's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The surveyors are birdwatchers who are able to recognise all the common species by sight and song. They walk two km within a square kilometre, early in the morning when bird activity is at its greatest and record all birds seen or heard. Two recording visits are made, one between April 1st and May 15th, and a second at least four weeks later and before the end of June.

Results

The 120 surveyors spent over 480 hours counting 63,225 birds of 112 species to establish the numbers and distribution of breeding bird species of the region. They visited 178 square kilometers, that is 10.6% of the total area. The distribution of the coverage was 36 sq km in BA, 37 in BR, 42 in NS, 40 in SG and 23 in SO. Four new species were noted this year, namely, Mediterranean Gull, Black Tern, Short-eared Owl and Ring Ouzel.

The table below summarises the number of birds seen and the percentage of squares each species was recorded in. The method of this survey does not accurately count the number of breeding pairs but avoids the need to disturb the birds by inspecting nests. If birds are in the area in reasonable numbers during the spring then they are likely to breed.

Species	Number	Dist %	Species	Number	Dist %
Mute Swan	153	15	Yellow Wagtail*	6	2
Canada Goose	97	8	Grey Wagtail	26	7
Shelduck	88	8	Pied Wagtail	159	37
Gadwall	7	1	Wren	3374	99
Mallard	916	51	Dunnock	1014	90
Pochard	3	1	Robin	2592	98
Tufted Duck	86	3	Nightingale	1	
Ruddy Duck	5	1	Redstart	1	
Red-legged Partridge	53	9	Whinchat**	3	1
Grey Partridge	2	1	Stonechat	16	3
Pheasant	632	61	Wheatear**	11	5
Little Grebe	8	3	Ring Ouzel**	1	
Great Crested Grebe	73	2	Blackbird	4972	100
Cormorant	62	19	Fieldfare**	33	
Little Egret**	4	2	Song Thrush	916	89
Grey Heron	137	28	Rock Pipit	3	1
Sparrowhawk	29	13	Mistle Thrush	106	28
Buzzard	214	53	Cetti's Warbler	11	2

Species	Number	Dist %	Species	Number	Dist %
Kestrel	64	26	Sedge Warbler	97	12
Hobby	4	2	Reed Warbler	127	12
Peregrine	9	4	Lesser Whitethroat	60	17
Moorhen	173	24	Whitethroat	334	53
Coot	154	10	Garden Warbler	32	12
Oystercatcher	7	2	Blackcap	746	78
Lapwing	8	2	Chiffchaff	1105	87
Snipe*	1		Willow Warbler	152	27
Whimbrel**	14	3	Goldcrest	184	38
Curlew**	63	3	Spotted Flycatcher	8	3
Redshank*	21	1	Long-tailed Tit	379	53
Common Sandpiper**	3	1	Marsh Tit	9	3
Mediterranean Gull**	1		Coal Tit	97	24
Black-headed Gull**	12	3	Blue Tit	1988	98
Common Gull**	1		Great Tit	1616	96
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1840	62	Nuthatch	54	11
Herring Gull	1314	55	Treecreeper	34	8
Great Black-backed Gull	5	1	Jay	156	42
Black Tern**	2	1	Magpie	1547	89
Feral Pigeon	1236	37	Jackdaw	3922	86
Stock Dove	184	25	Rook	2229	49
Woodpigeon	6416	100	Carrion Crow	3756	100
Collared Dove	981	72	Raven	37	10
Cuckoo	12	4	Starling	3010	74
Barn Owl	2	1	House Sparrow	3417	69
Little Owl	7	3	Tree Sparrow*	5	1
Tawny Owl	3	2	Chaffinch	2272	99
Short-eared Owl**	1		Brambling**	1	
Swift	708	61	Greenfinch	1192	86
Kingfisher	8	3	Goldfinch	1057	79
Green Woodpecker	224	57	Siskin**	1	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	188	44	Linnet	660	36
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*	3	1	Lesser Redpoll**	4	1
Skylark	679	46	Bullfinch	152	34
Sand Martin	17	3	Yellowhammer	367	28
Swallow	1435	73	Reed Bunting	53	8
House Martin	650	38	Corn Bunting	33	4
Tree Pipit	7	1	TOTAL	63225	
Meadow Pipit	61	6	Time [mins]	28883	
			Birds per hour	131	

The above table contains three types of bird – definite breeders with no mark, possible breeders with * and non-breeders with **. The method of survey does not count shy, nocturnal or rare species that are known to nest or possibly nest within the area.

Barnacle Goose [feral], Goldeneye, Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Dipper and Black Redstart need to be added as definite breeders. Possible nesters not recorded in the survey were Quail, Water Rail, Nightjar and Dartford Warbler.

The total of 97 breeding species and 9 possibles is a measure of the biodiversity of breeding bird species in the region during 2008.

The table below shows the 20 most abundant species in 2008 (2007 positions in brackets) with their relative abundance in each of the four local authorities.

	Most abundant	BA	BR	NS	SG
1	Woodpigeon [1]	1	1	1	1
2	Blackbird [2]	3	2	3	3
3	Jackdaw [6]	2	10	8	2
4	Carrion Crow [5]	5	4	6	4
5	House Sparrow [4]	7	5	2	9
6	Wren [7]	4	6	5	6
7	Starling [3]	10	7	4	7
8	Robin [8]	6	11	7	8
9	Chaffinch [9]	8	19	9	10
10	Rook [11]	11	-	12	5
11	Blue Tit [10]	9	12	10	11
12	Lesser Black-backed Gull [13]	-	8	14	-
13	Great Tit [18]	12	15	11	13
14	Magpie [16]	14	9	16	14
15	Swallow [12]	16	-	13	12
16	Herring Gull [17]	-	13	-	-
17	Feral Pigeon [15]	-	3	-	-
18	Greenfinch [14]	-	16	15	17
19	Chiffchaff [-]	13	-	17	16
20	Goldfinch [-]	15	-	18	-

The next table shows the 20 most widespread species in 2008 (2007 percentages in brackets) with their distribution in each of the four local authorities. Any species with over 90% distribution is probably universal.

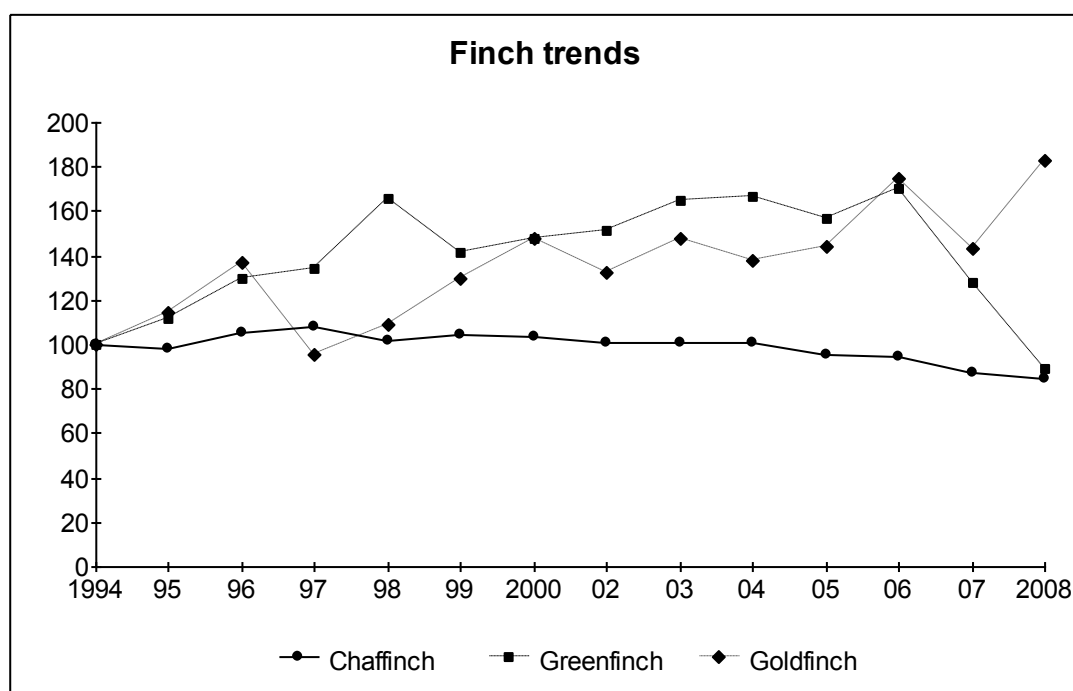
	Most widespread		BA	BR	NS	SG
1=	Blackbird [100%]	100%	100	100	100	100
1=	Carrion Crow [99%]	100%	100	100	100	100
1=	Woodpigeon [100%]	100%	100	100	100	100
4=	Chaffinch [97%]	99%	97	100	98	100
4=	Wren [99%]	99%	100	97	100	98
6=	Blue Tit [99%]	98%	100	100	98	98
6=	Robin [100%]	98%	100	97	95	100
8	Great Tit [97%]	96%	97	97	95	95
9	Dunnock [92%]	90%	89	97	86	88
10=	Magpie [91%]	89%	83	100	90	90
10=	Song Thrush [84%]	89%	97	76	93	85
12	Chiffchaff [83%]	87%	94	70	93	95
13=	Greenfinch [93%]	86%	89	92	90	73
13=	Jackdaw [84%]	86%	92	84	83	85
15	Goldfinch [74%]	79%	86	65	81	73
16	Blackcap [77%]	78%	86	70	83	70
17	Starling [76%]	74%	67	89	62	75
18	Swallow [70%]	73%	86	27	81	83
19	Collared Dove [78%]	72%	78	89	60	65
20	House Sparrow [72%]	69%	64	73	64	70

Percentage changes for last year and since 1998, for the most numerous species

Species	07/08	98/08	Species	07/08	98/08
Mallard	- 4	- 21	Blackcap	- 10	5
Lesser Black-backed Gull	- 5	15	Chiffchaff	11	- 22
Herring Gull	2	116	Blue Tit	- 3	- 17
Feral Pigeon	- 29	- 52	Great Tit	6	17
Woodpigeon	5	31	Magpie	1	- 16
Collared Dove	5	13	Jackdaw	- 4	- 4
Swift	- 24	- 51	Carriion Crow	- 3	- 8
Skylark	- 13	- 18	Starling	- 22	- 65
Wren	2	1	House Sparrow	2	0
Dunnock	- 4	15	Chaffinch	- 4	- 16
Robin	8	17	Greenfinch	- 30	- 47
Blackbird	3	4	Goldfinch	28	66
Song Thrush	19	26			

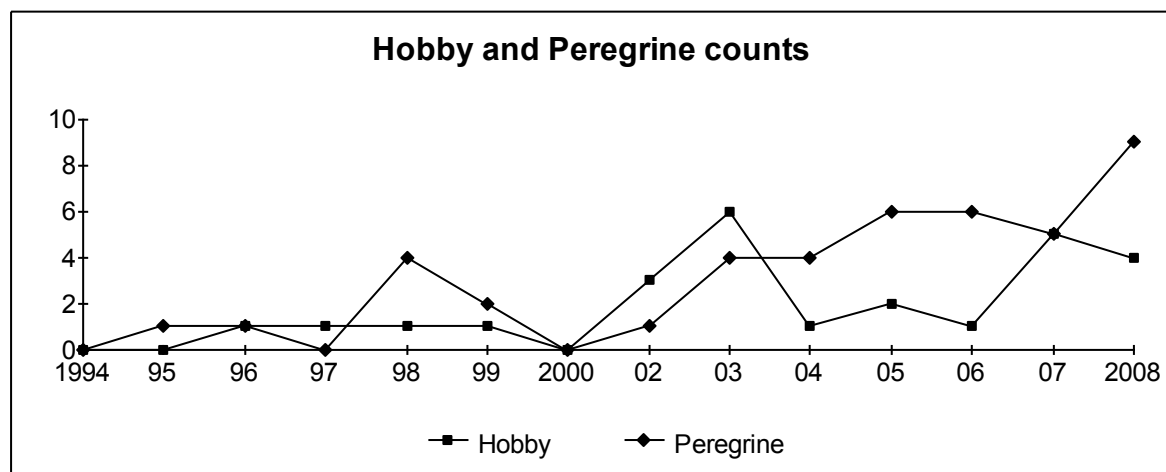
The percentage changes tabulated above are based on 162 squares that were covered in 2007 and 2008 by the same observer. In the last year, twelve of the 25 species increased, 13 decreased. Over the medium term of ten years, twelve species have increased and twelve decreased, and one with no change. Note the large decline during the last decade of Swift, Starling and Greenfinch.

Comments on recent trends, selected species



The Greenfinch continued its drastic decline this year throughout the region, with a drop of 40% in BA, 25% in BR, 30% in NS and 39% in SG, the overall drop being 30%. It is now below the 1994 population level. Chaffinch, which has been almost stable in the past is showing some decline in the last two years. Goldfinch is on a general upward trend with some variation, and is now 83% above its 1994 levels.

NB - the chart above is based upon indices with a value of 100 in 1994, when BBS started. These indices are different to those used in the species accounts in the Systematic List, which use a value of 100 for 1998.



Hobby and Peregrine have both been increasing locally in recent years and the BBS reflects this in the counts since 1994.

Estimated breeding populations

The table below shows the estimated 2008 breeding populations, in pairs, for the commoner species.

	BA	BR	NS	SG	total
Wren	14000	8400	14000	17500	53900
Robin	10000	5400	12000	13000	40400
Blackbird	9200	6500	10500	14000	40200
House Sparrow	7600	7500	14500	10500	40100
Blue Tit	10000	5000	9500	13500	38000
Great Tit	7500	3800	11000	10000	32300
Dunnock	5000	2800	4200	7000	19000
Woodpigeon	4500	3300	4200	7000	19000
Chaffinch	3500	1000	4000	5000	13500
Starling	1700	1600	3500	4000	10800
Jackdaw	2700	800	1700	4300	9500
Chiffchaff	2800	600	2400	3300	9100
Blackcap	2200	1000	2500	2800	8500
Carrion Crow	1900	1100	1800	3400	8200
Greenfinch	1500	1300	2700	2700	8200
Goldfinch	2600	-	2800	2300	7700
Rook	1600	-	1600	4000	7200
Swallow	1500	-	2500	3200	7200
Song Thrush	1700	600	1900	2200	6400
Linnet	2000	-	800	2000	4800
House Martin	1400	80	1300	1800	4580
Skylark	1200	-	600	2700	4500
Magpie	750	800	800	1300	3650
Collared Dove	800	700	1000	1000	3500
Whitethroat	750	-	450	1200	2400
Yellowhammer	900	-	200	1000	2100
Swift	900	200	400	500	2000
Total					406730

BTO ATLAS REPORT

R.L. Bland

The BTO Atlas Project began in November 2007, and is designed to establish the distribution and density of all species in both the winter and the breeding season throughout the UK and Ireland. It is the fourth BTO Atlas, and in the BTO Avon area (which differs slightly from the area covered by this Report) we are doing the standard tetrad survey in all 400 tetrads following the procedures used in the last Breeding Atlas undertaken between 1989 and 1992. (A tetrad has an area of four square kilometres, there are 25 in each ten-km square). In the 1989-92 survey the fieldwork required two one-hour visits to a tetrad, whereas the current Atlas requires two two-hour visits. As a result elusive species should be found in a greater proportion of tetrads. We also did a tetrad survey in the Winter Atlas of 1981-84, but that asked observers to compile a species list for the tetrad without any time limit. The procedure for the current winter tetrad survey is the same as that for the breeding season one, ie two two-hour visits, and so rare and elusive species are less likely to be recorded than three decades ago.

The current Atlas Project also involves the counting of all birds seen or heard to give a measure of density for common species in both winter and summer. This can be compared with the results of the first Winter Atlas. In that survey there were 3000 hours of timed counts, which enabled us to create an average rate-per-hour for all species. Unfortunately the first breeding Atlas did not require counts, so that whereas it is possible to compare both winter distribution and density over thirty years, we can only compare breeding season distribution over twenty years.

During the first two winters 390 of the 400 tetrads in the region received their two visits, 1417 hours of survey work were completed, and a total of 358244 birds of 136 species were counted at a rate of 253 per hour. The average number of species per tetrad was 35.4. This figure can be compared with other parts of the UK, and over time, as it is a valuable measure of the complexity of our bird populations. The structure of the observed population was simple; only 33 species represented more than 1% of the population, led by Starling, at 16%, followed by Woodpigeon, 9%, Jackdaw, Redwing and Black-headed Gull on 6%, and Blackbird, Fieldfare, Rook and Crow on 4%. Until the national survey is complete it will not be clear how this compares with the national picture.

Nine species showed population declines of more than 50%, headed by Stock Dove (-87%), Lapwing (-83%), Marsh Tit (-77%), followed by Black-headed Gull, Snipe, Feral Pigeon, Mistle Thrush, Rook and Yellowhammer (at -49%). Increases of more than 100% were recorded by Raven, Buzzard, Cormorant, Canada Goose, Pheasant, Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Linnet, Green Woodpecker, Robin, and Great Spotted Woodpecker; see table below. The percentage increase for Raven is enormous due to the fact that this species was hardly seen at all thirty years ago (there were only three sightings of single birds during the whole survey); and so no figure is given in the table.

Distribution is measured by the percentage of the 400 tetrads in which each species was seen, and distribution change by the difference in this figure over the past three decades. A total of 63 species showed a change of less than ten percentage points. Nine species showed percentage distribution falls of more than 25 points, led by Lapwing, Mistle Thrush, Stock Dove, Sparrowhawk, Little Owl, Skylark, Common Gull and Marsh Tit. Gains of more than 25 percentage points were shown by Buzzard, Raven, Long-tailed Tit and Goldfinch.

This summary does not include the large number of roving records which ensure that rare and elusive species are fully recorded at the ten-km square level, and that the breeding status of all species is established as accurately as possible.

	Population Change %	Distribution Change %		Population Change %	Distribution Change %
Stock Dove	-87	-35	Gt Sp Woodpecker	160	13
Lapwing	-83	-44	Robin	165	3
Marsh Tit	-77	-25	Green Woodpecker	170	8
Black-headed Gull	-74	-23	Linnet	212	29
Snipe	-69	-14	Long-tailed Tit	230	29
Feral pigeon	-61	-17	Goldfinch	288	24
Mistle Thrush	-51	-39	Pheasant	328	9
Rook	-51	-19	Canada Goose	400	6
Yellowhammer	-49	-31	Cormorant	680	7
Starling	-44	-6	Buzzard	1720	54
Redwing	-42	-1	Raven	---	29
Skylark	-38	-26			

Significant population and distribution changes 1979-82 to 2007/09

AVON RINGING REPORT, 2008

E. Drewitt

In the British Trust for Ornithology's ninety-ninth year, bird ringing is certainly something to celebrate. While the total number of birds ringed (in Avon) is still declining each year, overall bird ringing is still very popular and new recruits, particularly young people, are on the increase. A total of 6,095 birds representing 68 species were reported ringed in the Avon area in 2008, this compares with 6,569 birds and 69 species in 2007.

Individual bird ringers or ringing groups operate in the Avon area. The number ringed varies depending on the effort involved and the abundance and survival rates in the region. The summer of 2008, like that of 2007, was wet although the majority of the rain came towards the end of the breeding season. The wet, cold summer saw the young of birds such as Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Blue Tits and Great Tits succumb. Many broods of tits died before fledging. Despite this, the total of the latter two ringed was normal. Long-tailed Tits and Chiffchaffs continued to do well though, raising their young before the wet weather set in (BTO News March/April 2009).

With the usual suspects, a variety of less common species were also ringed in 2008, in particular Firecrest and Yellow-browed Warbler. A particular highlight was a male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at CVL – this ringed individual has since been seen (with the ring on its leg) in trees around the lake in 2009.

Lesser Redpolls have also been in abundance with 100 ringed in Failand throughout February to April alongside 262 Siskins. The majority of Siskins were ringed in February and March, slightly later than the peak sightings which were in January. A few Redpolls and Siskins were ringed at Steep Holm and CVL in September.

Steep Holm has been productive for birds, not just for its Firecrest but also four Grasshopper Warblers, one Yellow-browed Warbler and three Spotted Flycatchers. Additionally, 88 Dunnocks were also ringed in 2008 alongside 48 Chiffchaffs and 44 Goldcrests.

A second Yellow-browed Warbler was ringed in the Cam Valley, Cameley. Meanwhile, a Greenland Wheatear was ringed at Dundry on April 11th.

Bramblings, perhaps due to cold weather or reduced winter food in northern Europe, were also in abundance with 34 ringed in Failand and 13 ringed in a garden in Timsbury. The majority, 26, were ringed in March.

Alongside the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at CVL, other highlights included the ringing of 41 Cetti's Warblers, two Marsh Tits, one Firecrest and two House Sparrows. The latter is also a real rarity at CVL and shows that while this species is largely sedentary, some individuals will move further afield probably looking for new sites to colonise or other sources of food. Other highlights were 69 Canada Geese, 549 Swallows (of which only 23 were pulli), one Grey Wagtail, 46 Pied Wagtails, 40 Dunnocks, 857 Reed Warblers (of which 225 were pulli), 89 Sedge Warblers (of which 2 were pulli), 2 Garden Warbler pulli, 232 Chiffchaffs (of which 4 were pulli) and 78 Long-tailed Tits. A total of 77 Pied Wagtails were also ringed at the nearby Blagdon Lake. Despite the largest numbers of singing Sedge (41) and Garden (29) Warblers recorded since 1997 and 1995 respectively, much smaller number were ringed compared to previous years. Perhaps the singing males were frequenting parts of the lake away from the ringing nets.

At Gordano highlights included the ringing of 26 Reed Warblers, three Sedge Warblers, four Grasshopper Warblers, one Lesser Whitethroat, 14 Garden Warblers, 240 Blackcaps, 127 Chiffchaffs, 59 Willow Warblers, one Spotted Flycatcher, one Marsh Tit, 18 Lesser Redpolls and 27 Bullfinches. Also 89 Great Tit and 143 Blue Tit pulli were ringed.

Since the registration of a Peregrine colour-ringing scheme in the Avon region in 2007, a number of young Peregrines have been ringed. In 2008, two chicks were ringed at St Johns Church, Bath with light blue colour rings and black letters AC and AD. Additionally, fledged birds picked up by the RSPCA and subsequently released back at the sites where they came from were also colour-ringed – these included a young bird from the Avon Gorge, ringed AG and another at Filton Airfield, ringed AJ.

The number of roofs available to ring young Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls has been declining as many buildings have been knocked down and rebuilt, particularly in Bristol. The remaining roofs that are accessible and do have gulls nesting may never see hatched chicks – many local authorities in the region have been replacing eggs with false, plastic versions or dipping them in oil which kills the developing embryo inside. Subsequently, the number of gull chicks ringed by P.Rock in the Avon area has been decreasing in recent years, although there was a slight increase in 2008

compared to the previous year. Colour-ringed gulls in the Avon area are the best studied in the world, and the number of recoveries is increasing year on year. While only 4-6% of gulls ringed with metal BTO rings will be recovered, over 70% will be reported back if they are also colour-ringed. If you do spot a colour-ringed bird of any species or find a bird (dead or alive) with a ring on its leg please report the details to the British Trust for Ornithology or via the website www.ring.ac.

During the BTO's one hundredth year in 2009 it will be interesting to see just how ringing data compares with the past few wet and windy seasons.

Species Totals

Table 1 below shows the top 20 species ringed in the Avon area in 2008 (2007 positions shown in brackets), and the percentage change in the ringing total between 2007 and 2008. *Year-to-year changes may partially reflect ringing effort and/or catching conditions.*

Pos.	Species	Total	%	Pos.	Species	Total	%
1 (3)	Reed Warbler	884	20	11 (12)	Robin	159	6
2 (1)	Swallow	847	8	12 (16)	Dunnock	153	96
3 (2)	Great Tit	670	-10	13 (11)	Long-tailed Tit	138	-15
4 (5)	Blue Tit	608	-5	14 (15)	Goldfinch	129	63
5 (7)	Chiffchaff	415	7	15 (36)	Pied Wagtail	124	727
6 (4)	Blackcap	379	-44	16 (34)	Lesser Redpoll	123	583
7 (6)	Greenfinch	289	-39	17 (14)	Blackbird	120	45
8 (40)	Siskin	285	2491	18 (18)	Lesser B-b Gull	114	73
9 (13)	Wren	168	66	19 (10)	Sedge Warbler	97	-43
10 (8)	Chaffinch	168	-22	20 (23)	Starling	81	88

Table 1. Top Twenty Species Ringed

Contributors: R.P. Clevely, Chew Valley Ringing Station (CVRS), E.Drewitt Gordano Valley Ringing Group (GVRG), C. Matthews, B.Medland, D.Nevitt, T.Parsons, L.F.Roberts, P.Rock, C.Sperring, and W.White.

Selected Ringed Birds and Recoveries

The table below shows the latest ringing dates for different warbler species.

Species	Last date ringed in 2008	Site
Cetti's Warbler	Nov. 11th	CVL
Grasshopper Warbler	Sept. 27th	Steep Holm
Sedge Warbler	Sept. 20th	Steep Holm
Reed Warbler	Nov. 16th	CVL
Blackcap	Sept. 26th	Steep Holm
Garden Warbler	Sept. 23rd	Steep Holm
Lesser Whitethroat	Sept. 13th	Steep Holm
Whitethroat	Sept. 18th	Steep Holm
Yellow-browed Warbler	Sept. 26th	Steep Holm
Chiffchaff	Nov. 22nd	CVL
Willow Warbler	Sept. 18th	Steep Holm

Reed Warblers have previously been ringed up to mid-October twenty-three times since 1980 – in this year one was ringed on the 18th October and re-trapped on the 25th October. Many of these later catches have happened throughout the nineties. In 2008, Reed Warblers were caught and ringed in November. This was very late; normally this species is recorded only into October. Juvenile Reed Warblers were caught on the Oct. 18th, Oct. 25th, Nov. 2nd and Nov. 16th. X297077 on Oct. 18th was particularly heavy at 19.2g while X297101 on Nov. 2nd was only 13.9g. Mark Grantham, BTO, provided details of the months in which Reed Warblers have been ringed (see table below) – only 24 have ever been ringed in the UK in November so these two at CVL were important records. The recent mild winters have seen a number of different warbler species overwintering, although in 2008 the cold winter that followed towards the end of the year may have prompted many to move further south to avoid starvation.

Month	Number of Reed Warblers ringed across the UK since 1909
January	7
February	0
March	0
April	828
May	13675
June	27315
July	74687
August	125144
September	39566
October	2160
November	24
December	2

A Reed Warbler ringed at CVL on Aug. 30th 2008 was retrapped at Jersey Bird Observatory, Jersey on Sept. 27th, just under a month later.

Many of the Canada Geese recovered have been found in Devon and Dorset where they travel to after their annual summer moult at CVL. A number were recorded at Slimbridge in 2008, perhaps because the abundance of food and safety from the shotgun!

The Long-tailed Tit ringed on May 10th 2008 at CVL and recovered in Midsomer Norton in the autumn shows that even birds of this largely sedentary species will travel some distance.

Notable Recoveries received from the BTO since the publication of the 2007 Report.

Conventions:

Age: P = pullus (nestling), 1y = juvenile / first year, Ad = adult. Recovery Codes: +F= shot or killed, R= controlled (caught and released), VV=ring number read in field, X = found dead or dying..

Species Ring No	Age Code	Date Ringed Date Rec'd	Place Ringed Place Recovered	Distance (km)	Duration (days)
Reed Warbler R110748	P R	10.06.03 09.06.08	CVL Cleveland Farm, Wiltshire	62	1826
Canada Goose 5190110	VV	01.07.03 25.01.08	CVL Sherborne Park, Dorset	42	3860
Canada Goose 5228542	X	01.07.03 23.03.08	CVL Cullompton, Devon	75	1727
Canada Goose 5243536	R	28.06.05 10.12.08	CVL Slimbridge	50	1261
Reed Warbler T554850	1y R	26.07.05 29.06.08	CVL Waterhay, Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire	61	1069
Canada Goose 5176420	Male X	09.08.05 11.02.08	CVL Black Hill Quarry, Devon	91	4605
Swallow T827304	P X	01.08.06 06.06.08	Broadfield Farm, Nr Redhill ST4964 Severn Tunnel Pumping Station, Sidbrook, Gwent ST5087	25	675

Sedge Warbler R985818	1y R	08.07.07 01.05.08	Sewage Treatment Works, Chalton, Beds CVL	163	298
Reed Warbler J153917	1y R	14.07.07 18.05.08	Trowbridge Sewage Works, Wiltshire CVL	28	309
Kingfisher SB90307	1y male R	28.07.07 10.08.08	CVL Slimbridge, Gloucestershire	50	379
Lesser Redpoll V033486	1y R	31.07.07 10.04.08	Greystoke Forest, Cumbria NY3933 Upper Farm, Failand ST5472	360	254
Blackcap V698162		07.11.07 11.02.08	Walton in Gordano (GVRG) Malaga, Spain	1617	127
Siskin V837101	1y male R	08.02.08 31.03.08	Upper Farm, Failand ST5472 Dunwich, Suffolk TM4770	308	52
Siskin V837175	1y male R	25.02.08 27.03.08	Upper Farm, Failand ST5472 Antwerp, Belgium	532	31
Siskin V837273	1y female R	17.03.08 31.03.08	Upper Farm, Failand ST5472 Nr Romsey, Hampshire SU3922	99	14
Siskin V837210	1y male R	03.03.08 31.03.08	Upper Farm, Failand ST5472 Popes Hill, Gloucestershire SO6814	44	28
Long-tailed Tit BXN307	1y X	11.05.08 11.10.08	CVL Midsomer Norton, Somerset	10	153
Reed Warbler V928248	P R	07.06.08 03.08.08	CVL Pointe d'Offoy Cayeaux sur mer, Somme, France	317	57
Canada Goose 5254350		24.06.08 10.12.08	CVL Slimbridge	50	169
Reed Warbler V929663	1y R	15.08.08 13.09.08	CVL Slapton Ley, Devon	136	29
Reed Warbler V929881	1y R	30.08.08 27.09.08	CVL Jersey Bird Observatory, Jersey	236	28
Chiffchaff BXN072	1y R	02.09.08 06.10.08	CVL St Margaret's Bay, Cliffe, Kent	280	400

Table 2 Recoveries

Systematic List of Birds Ringed in 2008

Species annual ringing totals for the period 2005 to 2008 are given in Table 3 below, together with the average number of birds ringed annually for the period 2005-2007.

Species	2005	2006	2007	2008	3YA
Mute Swan	8	9	6	7	8
Canada Goose	200	174	51	69	142
Mallard	0	0	4	6	1
Sparrowhawk	4	1	3	4	3
Buzzard	0	1	1	0	1
Peregrine	0	0	2	4	1
Kestrel	0	0	10	1	3
Water Rail	0	3	4	4	2
Moorhen	2	1	3	5	2
Coot	3	0	0	0	1
Ringed Plover	5	0	5	0	3
Lapwing	8	3	0	0	4
Snipe	0	0	1	0	0
Lesser Black-backed Gull	219	131	66	114	139
Herring Gull	58	45	16	20	40
Stock Dove	0	2	4	0	2
Wood Pigeon	3	0	0	3	1
Cuckoo	1	0	0	0	0
Barn Owl	19	11	32	17	21
Tawny Owl	8	0	13	0	7
Nightjar	0	3	4	0	2
Swift	0	0	2	0	<1
Kingfisher	16	6	2	10	8
Green Woodpecker	1	1	1	1	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	12	10	13	16	12
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	0	1	0
Skylark	0	0	0	1	0
Sand Martin	153	150	19	35	107
Swallow	403	934	787	847	747
House Martin	20	90	30	39	47
Tree Pipit	1	1	2	0	1
Meadow Pipit	4	17	2	37	8
Grey Wagtail	8	10	0	5	6
Pied Wagtail	13	0	15	124	9
Waxwing	26	0	0	0	9
Wren	128	83	101	168	104
Dunnock	142	49	78	153	90
Robin	159	112	150	159	140
Redstart	3	0	1	0	1
Whinchat	1	0	0	0	0
Stonechat	1	1	3	0	2
Wheatear	2	0	0	3	<1
Blackbird	90	60	83	120	78
Fieldfare	0	1	27	6	9
Song Thrush	3	5	76	54	35
Redwing				10	28
Mistle Thrush	43	26	37	1	0
Cetti's Warbler	33	14	28	41	25
Grasshopper Warbler	17	12	8	8	12

Species	2005	2006	2007	2008	3YA
Sedge Warbler	214	473	171	97	286
Reed Warbler	848	691	734	884	758
Blackcap	1,004	1,192	682	379	959
Garden Warbler	64	88	46	35	66
Lesser Whitethroat	25	24	10	20	20
Whitethroat	30	47	21	27	33
Yellow-browed Warbler	0	0	0	2	0
Wood Warbler	0	0	0	2	0
Chiffchaff	339	331	388	415	353
Willow Warbler	270	299	209	39	259
Goldcrest	46	31	39	74	39
Firecrest	0	2	1	2	1
Spotted Flycatcher	4	0	0	5	1
Pied Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	107	84	162	138	118
Blue Tit	813	593	637	608	701
Great Tit	750	589	748	670	708
Coal Tit	69	39	28	40	45
Marsh Tit	8	1	4	12	4
Nuthatch	12	1	0	8	4
Treecreeper	16	12	15	18	14
Jay	1	5	2	1	3
Magpie	1	2	1	3	1
Jackdaw	6	8	9	6	8
Rook	0	0	3	0	1
Carrion Crow	0	0	2	0	<1
Raven	0	0	4	0	1
Starling	24	19	43	81	29
House Sparrow	37	63	20	5	40
Tree Sparrow	0	0	1	0	0
Chaffinch	152	239	216	168	202
Brambling	2	2	0	47	1
Greenfinch	384	425	472	289	427
Goldfinch	32	27	79	129	46
Siskin	0	37	11	285	16
Linnet	9	0	0	3	3
Lesser Redpoll	19	0	18	123	12
Bullfinch	45	29	44	44	39
Reed Bunting	54	32	61	54	49
TOTAL	7,203	7,656	6,569	6,095	7113
Species	67	60	69	68	78

Table 3. Species Totals 2005 – 2008 and 3 -Year Average (2005-2007)

GAZETTEER

R.L. Bland

All sites mentioned in the Systematic List are given below, in alphabetical order. Each site has a four figure map reference (in the 100-km square ST), showing the one-km square in which it stands and a two letter code showing the Unitary Authority in which it lies: BA stands for Bath and North East Somerset; BR stands for Bristol; NS stands for North Somerset; SG stands for South Gloucestershire. Sites around the edge of Chew Valley Lake have CVL placed after them, and those that are part of Bristol, some outside the Unitary Authority area have Bristol after them. Sites that are abbreviated in the text have the abbreviation placed after them in brackets.

Abbey Wood, Bristol	6178	SG
Abbots Leigh	5373	NS
Acton Turville	8080	SG
Alveston	6388	SG
Anchor Head	3062	NS
Ashton Hill Plantation	5270	NS
Aust Warth	5689	SG
Avon Gorge	5673	BR
Avonmouth Docks	5178	BR
Avonmouth Sewage Works (ASW)	5379	BR
Awkley	5985	SG
Axe Estuary	3159	NS
Backwell	4868	NS
Backwell Lake	4769	NS
Banwell	4059	NS
Barrow Gurney Res. (BG)	5368	NS
Bath University	7764	BA
Bathampton Meadows	7766	BA
Batheaston	7867	BA
Battery Point	4677	NS
Bedminster	5871	BR
Berwick Wood	5580	SG
Birnbeck Island	3062	NS
Bishop Sutton	5859	BA
Bishopston, Bristol	5875	BR
Blagdon Lake (BL)	5159	BA
Blaise Woods	5678	BR
Blake's Pools Reserve	3666	NS
Bleadon	3456	NS
Bodkin Hazel Wood	7884	SG
Brandon Hill, Bristol	5772	BR
Brentry	5879	BR
Brislington, Bristol	6270	BR
Brockley Combe	4866	NS
Burledge Hill Reserve	5858	BA
Burnett	6665	BA
Cameley	6157	BA
Channel View Farm	3867	NS
Charlcombe	7567	BA
Charlton Field	6366	BA
Charmy Down	7670	SG
Chew Magna Res.	5663	BA
Chew Stoke	5661	NS
Chew Valley Lake (CVL)	5760	BA
Chewton Keynsham	6665	BA
Chipping Sodbury	7282	SG
Chittening Warth	5382	SG

Churchill	4459	NS
Clapton Moor Reserve	4573	NS
Cleeve Wood Reserve	4666	NS
Clevedon	4071	NS
Clevedon Court Farm	4271	NS
Clevedon-Yeo (CI-Y)	3868	NS
Coalpit Heath	6780	SG
Cold Ashton	7572	SG
Compton Dando	6464	BA
Congresbury Moor	4363	NS
Cribbs Causeway	5780	SG
Cromhall	6990	SG
Denny Island, CVL	5760	BA
Dolebury Warren Reserve	4659	NS
Dowlais Farm	3969	NS
Downend, Bristol	6577	BR
Doynton	7274	SG
Dundry	5566	NS
Durdham Down, Bristol	5674	BR
Dyers Common	5583	SG
Dyrham Park	7475	SG
Easter Compton	5782	SG
Eastville Park, Bristol	6175	BR
Eastwood Farm, Bristol	6371	BR
Elberton	6088	SG
Emerson's Green	6776	SG
Filton, Bristol	6079	SG
Flax Bourton	5069	NS
Folly Farm Reserve	6060	BA
Frenchay, Bristol	6377	BR
Golden Valley	6870	SG
Gordano Valley	4473	NS
Ham Green Lake	5375	NS
Hanham Woods	6470	SG
Heath Farm	6370	BR
Heneage Court	6893	SG
Hengrove Park, Bristol	6069	BR
Hinton Blewitt	5956	BA
Hoar Gout	5380	BR
Hortham Brook	6283	SG
Hortham Wood	6284	SG
Horwood Farm	7387	SG
Hotwells, Bristol	5772	BR
Hunstrete Lake	6462	BA
Inglestone Common	7688	SG
Kelston Roundhill	7167	BA
Kenn	4169	NS

Kenn Moor	4368	NS
Kenn Moor Gate	4467	NS
Keynsham	6568	BA
Kingsgate Park, Yate	7181	SG
Kingston Seymour	4066	BA
Kington Down	7977	SG
Ladye Bay	4072	NS
Lansdown	7268	BA
Latteridge	6684	SG
Lawrence Weston Reserve	5478	BR
Leap Valley, Downend	6577	BR
Leigh Woods	5573	NS
Littleton Pits Reserve	5991	SG
Littleton Warth	5890	SG
Litton Resrs.	5855	BA
Locking	3659	NS
Lords Wood	6363	BA
Lower Knowle Farm	5884	SG
Lower Littleton	5563	NS
Lower Woods	7487	SG
Lyegrove Fm	7781	SG
Marksbury Plain	6661	BA
Marshfield	7873	SG
Midford	7660	BA
Moorgrove Wood	5578	SG
New Cut	5772	BR
New Passage	5486	SG
Newton Park	6964	BA
North Stoke	7069	BA
Northwick Warth	5587	SG
Oldbury Power Station (OPS)	6094	SG
Olveston	6087	SG
Paradise Bottom	5574	NS
Patchway	6182	SG
Pensford	6263	BA
Pill	5276	NS
Pilning	5585	SG
Portbury Wharf (PW)	4877	NS
Portishead	4676	NS
Prior Park, Bath	7663	BA
Priors Wood	4974	NS
Pucklechurch	7076	SG
Puxton Moor Reserve	4063	NS
Queen Charlton	6367	BA
Redland, Bristol	5875	BR
Redwick	5585	SG
Ringswell Valley	7973	SG
Royal Portbury Dock (RPD)	5077	NS
Royal Victoria Park	7465	BA
Rushmead Farm	7875	SG
Sand Point	3165	NS
Sandford	4259	NS

Sea Mills, Bristol	5576	BR
Severn Beach	5384	SG
Sevenside	5383	SG
Shirehampton	5376	BR
Shortwood	6776	SG
Sidcot	4257	NS
Somerdale, Keynsham	6569	BA
Spaniorum Hill	5681	SG
St Annes	6272	BR
St. Catherine's Valley	7770	BA
Stanton Wick	6161	BA
Steep Holm	2360	NS
Stony Littleton	7356	BA
Stowey	5959	BA
Thornbury	6490	SG
Tickenham Moor	4471	NS
Timsbury	6658	BA
Tormarton	7778	SG
Tortworth	7093	SG
Troopers Hill, Bristol	6273	BR
Tyntesfield	5170	NS
Ubley	5358	NS
Uphill Grange	3258	NS
Wain's Hill	3970	NS
Walton Common Reserve	4273	NS
Walton Moor	4372	NS
Walton-in-Gordano	4273	NS
Warleigh	7964	BA
West Harptree	5656	BA
Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol	5777	BR
Westerleigh	7080	SG
Weston Moor Reserve	4473	NS
Weston STW	3157	NS
Weston-super-Mare	3261	NS
Whitchurch	6167	BR
Wick	7072	SG
Wick Warth	3566	NS
Widcombe Common	5757	BA
Windmill Hill Failand	5074	NS
Winford	5465	NS
Woollard	6364	BA
Worle	3562	NS
Wroughton	4762	NS
Wroughton Warren	4765	NS
Yate	7182	SG
Yatton	4365	NS
Yeo Bank Fm	3866	NS
Yeo Estuary	3666	NS
Yeo River	3766	NS