



Rare Breeding Birds in the UK in 2022: report summary table

The 2022 report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel was published in *British Birds* in November 2024 (Eaton *et al.* 2024) and can be obtained by subscription at www.britishbirds.co.uk; a pdf of the report will be available at www.rbbp.org.uk in due course. The report documents 108 species and races of rare native breeding bird which bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2022. In addition, records of 14 rare non-native breeding species are detailed. The tables in this document provide a summary of numbers of these species and races in 2022.

Table 1: UK totals and trends for rare native breeding birds, 2022

.....2022 data.....

Common Name	Breeding population status ¹	Population estimate ²	Estimate source ²	Trend category (25 yr trend unless stated) ³	Trend ³ (%)	Number confirmed breeding pairs	Maximum number breeding pairs	Number sites	Quality of coverage in 2022 ⁴	Notes
Whooper Swan	Very rare	29	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+699	15	25	24	Near-complete	A slight dip in numbers of this increasing species.
Garganey	Rare	122	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	+2	28	123	78	High	An increase on last year, typical of the between-year fluctuations this species shows.
Blue-winged Teal	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A female consorting with Garganey in Cambridgeshire.
Shoveler	Less scarce	1,388	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase (10 yrs)	+37	354	1,348	300	High	Very close to last year's total.
Eurasian Wigeon	Rare	210	RBBP 5-yr mean	No trend available	-	42	182	79	Moderate	Fewer pairs reported than in recent years.
Pintail	Very rare	29	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak decrease	-42	6	29	18	Near-complete	A typical year.
Common Pochard	Scarce	782	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase	+70	389	792	194	High	Another good year for this species which has increased as a breeding species in the UK (England).

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Ring-necked Duck	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	3	3	-	A male in Cornwall, and pairs in Cheshire & Wirral and Highland.
Greater Scaup	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A pair for five days in the Outer Hebrides.
Common Scoter	Rare	45	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak decrease	-33	18	44	8	Near-complete	Typical numbers – in the last 10 years between 33 and 54 breeding pairs have been reported.
Goldeneye	Rare	200	Woodward et al 2020	No trend available	-	40	73	-	Moderate	Monitoring in Scotland much reduced in recent years; numbers reported now far short of true population.
Red-breasted Merganser	Less scarce	1,565	Humphreys et al 2016	No trend available	-	82	202	102	Low	Only about 10% of the population reported annually.
Capercaillie	Rare	542 individuals	Wilkinson et al 2023	Strong decrease (29 yrs)	-75	-	152	43	Low	Maximum count is of lekking males.
Common Quail	Scarce	446	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	-12	4	521	-	High	The population has been unusually stable for the last four years.
Great Bustard	Very rare	15	RBBP 5-yr mean	No trend available	-	12	112	1	Near-complete	Ten birds fledged by 12 nesting females.
Turtle Dove	Less scarce	2,092	Stanbury et al 2023	Strong decrease	-97	32	514	-	Moderate	There was a drop in numbers reported, as to be expected following the effort of a national survey in 2021.
Corncrake	Scarce	891	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase	+61	-	852	-	Near-complete	Another (slight) drop in numbers.
Spotted Crake	Very rare	25	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak decrease	-28	1	22	10	High	A return to more typical numbers following a spike in 2021.
Baillon's Crake	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	3	2	-	A probable pair in Somerset, and at least two males at a site in Yorkshire.
Common Crane	Rare	60	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+1,907	53	75	37	Near-complete	For the first time since 2017, not a new record, but only one fewer pair than 2021.
Slavonian Grebe	Very rare	24	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong decrease	-58	4	20	15	Near-complete	The joint-lowest total reported and by far the lowest productivity with only seven young fledged.
Black-necked Grebe	Rare	58	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	+12	54	69	19	Near-complete	The highest number reported since 2001.
Stone-curlew	Scarce	303	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase	+68	288	314	-	High	It is known that some pairs are uncounted on land from which surveyors are denied access.

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Black-winged Stilt	Colonising breeder	3	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase (10 yrs)	+250%	2	3	3	Near-complete	Black-winged Stilts have now bred for nine years in a row; eight young fledged (in two broods) in 2021.
Avocet	Less scarce	2,221	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+236	2,225	2,225	127	Near-complete	The breeding population of Avocets has remained above 2,000 pairs since 2016.
Little Ringed Plover	Scarce	670	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable (20 yrs)	+19	443	689	-	Moderate	
Dotterel	Scarce	423	Hayhow et al 2015	Strong decrease (24 yrs)	-57	5	27	-	Low	A low return.
Whimbrel	Scarce	378	Skene & Perkins 2023	No trend available	-	50	66	9	Low	A return to lower numbers following a national survey in 2021.
Black-tailed Godwit	Rare	56	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase	+45	53	53	6	Near-complete	A drop in numbers. As usual, both <i>limosa</i> and <i>islandica</i> races bred.
Ruff	Very rare	10	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong decrease	-65	0	15+	9	Moderate	Records included a notable concentration of birds in Cambridgeshire.
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	An individual holding territory in Shetland.
Temminck's Stint	Former breeder	-	-	-	-	0	3	2	-	Two pairs returned to the site occupied in 2021.
Purple Sandpiper	Very rare	1	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong decrease	-55	1	1	1	Near-complete	A pair was recorded with three chicks at the traditional site in north Scotland.
Red-necked Phalarope	Rare	118	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+259	22	121	47	Near-complete	Another high total albeit down on 2021's record.
Green Sandpiper	Very rare	5	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase (20 yrs)	+108	0	6	6	Near-complete	The second-highest total we have reported.
Marsh Sandpiper	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A displaying male at the same site in Cumbria as in 2021.
Wood Sandpiper	Rare	51	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+443	5	61	34	Near-complete	A new record total.
Greenshank	Less scarce	1,080	Hancock et al 1997	No trend available	-	16	140	-	Low	As usual, massively underreported.
Mediterranean Gull	Less scarce	2,150	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+5,618	2,561	2,610	46	High	A new record total.

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Ring-billed Gull	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	The returning adult in a Common Gull colony in Perth & Kinross for the 13 th year.
Little Tern	Less scarce	1,387	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable (20 yrs)	-14	1,398	1,398	46	Near-complete	Productivity, at 1.12 chicks per pair, was the highest we have reported
Roseate Tern	Rare	139	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase	+66	159	159	5	Near-complete	Another increase in the population, but there was high mortality at the main colony due to HPAI.
American Black Tern	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A summering female in Northumberland for the third year in succession.
Arctic Skua	Scarce	727	Burnell et al 2023	Strong decrease (18 yrs)	-66	-	135	-	Moderate	Poor coverage, but the new results from the Seabirds Count census confirm the ongoing steep decline.
Long-tailed Skua	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A bird returned to its territory in Shetland for the third year in a row, but died of HPAI.
Red-throated Diver	Less scarce	1,255	Dillon et al 2009	Weak increase (12 yrs)	+38	144	204	-	Low	Only a small proportion of the population is monitored annually.
Black-throated Diver	Rare	217	Eaton et al 2007	Stable (12 yrs)	+16	21	56	-	Low	Only a small proportion of the population is monitored annually.
Great Northern Diver	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A mixed pairing with a Black-throated Diver in Highland, there was no indication of a breeding attempt.
Black-browed Albatross	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A bird spent the summer in a Gannet colony in Yorkshire.
White Stork	Reintroduced breeder	-	-	-	-	12	15	2	-	Pairs from the reintroduction project bred at two sites.
Glossy Ibis	Colonising breeder	-	-	-	-	1	3	3	-	A pair raised one chick at the site in Cambridgeshire they were present at in 2021 – the first confirmed breeding attempt in the UK.
Eurasian Spoonbill	Rare	51	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase (10 yrs)	+852	69	73	9	Near-complete	Matched the record total from 2021, with 122 young fledged.
Eurasian Bittern	Rare	248	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+1,412	71	263	133	Near-complete	A slight dip in numbers.
Little Bittern	Very rare	3	RBBP 5-yr mean	No trend available but has increased	++	0	1	1	Near-complete	One male at the usual site in Somerset.
Cattle Egret	Rare	41	-	No trend available but increasing	++	62	68	15	High	

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Purple Heron	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	One bird at the same site in Kent as 2021.
Great White Egret	Rare	39	RBBP 5-yr mean	No trend available but increasing	++	62	68	13	Near-complete	Another record total.
Little Egret	Less scarce	1,496	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase (20 yrs)	+1,751	1,532	1,603	185	High	The highest total reported since colonisation in 1996.
Osprey	Rare	261	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+162	263	321	-	High	The highest number reported by the RBBP.
Honey-buzzard	Rare	130-150	Clements et al. 2022	Strong increase (20 yrs)	+85	41	103	-	High	Numbers reported remain high, even after the national survey has finished.
Golden Eagle	Scarce	508	Hayhow et al 2017	Stable (33 yrs)	+16	143	282	-	High	There was some evidence of an adverse impact from HPAI.
Eurasian Goshawk	Scarce	954	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+241	740	1,252	-	Moderate	Once again, a new record total for Goshawk after a 24% between-year increase.
Marsh Harrier	Scarce	448	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+221	404	488	-	High	Another raptor reaching a new record total.
Hen Harrier	Scarce	691	Kelly et al (in press)	Stable	+21	357	502	-	High	The much-depleted English population increased again, to 49 confirmed breeding pairs.
Montagu's Harrier	Very rare	3	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong decrease	-67	0	2	1	Near-complete	A displaying male failed to attract a mate, and a young male was also present
White-tailed Eagle	Rare	136	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+1,140	122	150	-	High	An identical total as 2021, with evidence for lower productivity due to HPAI.
Long-eared Owl	Less scarce	1,800+	Woodward et al 2020	No trend available	-	221	307	-	Low	
Short-eared Owl	Scarce	620+	Woodward et al 2020	No trend available	-	89	216	-	Low	
Snowy Owl	Former breeder	-	-	-	-	0	3	2	-	Three individuals.
Hoopoe	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	3	3	-	A singing male in Hampshire, for the second year, and a two singing males in Cornwall.
European Bee-eater	Colonising breeder	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	-	Two pairs bred in Norfolk, fledging two young each.

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Wryneck	Former breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A typical year with just one singing male in Scotland.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Less scarce	1,000+	Woodward et al 2020	No trend available	-	27	523	-	Moderate	Higher than usual numbers due to a survey in Hampshire.
Merlin	Less scarce	1,160	Ewing et al 2011	Weak increase	+94	248	358	-	Moderate	
Hobby	Less scarce	2,050	Woodward et al 2020	Weak increase	+41	281	753	-	Moderate	Numbers have fallen over the last decade.
Peregrine	Less scarce	1,701	Wilson et al 2018	Stable (22 yrs)	+5	857	1,222	-	High	The most widespread species covered by the RBBP.
Red-backed Shrike	Very rare	4	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	-17	0	1	1	High	A poor year, with a single male in Suffolk.
Golden Oriole	Former breeder	-	-	-	-	0	2	2	-	
Red-billed Chough	Scarce	381	Hayhow et al 2018	Stable (32 yrs)	-1	373	406	-	High	The English population continues to increase, with 55 pairs in Cornwall.
Crested Tit	Less scarce	1,000-2,000	Forrester et al 2007	No trend available	-	4	38	-	Low	Low reporting in the third year after the return of this species to the RBBP list.
Bearded Tit	Scarce	687	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong increase	+121	-	847	92	High	A high total, aided by reporting from the important population in Perth & Kinross.
Woodlark	Less scarce	3,064	Conway et al 2009	No trend available	-	-	1,259	-	Moderate	The highest total reported since the last national survey in 2006.
Dusky Warbler	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A singing male in Norfolk.
Iberian Chiffchaff	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	A male bred with a female Common Chiffchaff in Greater London, fledging at least three chicks.
Great Reed Warbler	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	2	2	-	Singing males in Norfolk and Yorkshire.
Blyth's Reed Warbler	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A singing male in Herefordshire.
Marsh Warbler	Very rare	16	RBBP 5-yr mean	Strong decrease	-59	0	3	3	High	The lowest number we have ever reported.

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Icterine Warbler	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A singing male in Northeast Scotland.
Savi's Warbler	Very rare	10	RBBP 5-yr mean	Weak increase	+72	0	6	6	Near-complete	A drop in numbers from recent years.
Dartford Warbler	Less scarce	3,214	Wotton et al 2009	Stable	+38	-	2,286	-	Moderate	The highest total reported since the last national survey in 2006.
Fair Isle Wren	Rare	39	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	+16	-	37	-	Near-complete	A substantial drop from the 48 territories in 2021.
St Kilda Wren	Rare	230	Forrester et al 2007	no trend available	-	-	10	1	Near-complete	8-10 territories reported from a small area.
Redwing	Very rare	24	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	+3	2	25	24	High	A typical year.
Bluethroat	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	0	2	2	-	A male White-spotted Bluethroat in Gloucestershire and a male Red-spotted Bluethroat in Moray & Nairn.
Black Redstart	Rare	82	RBBP 5-yr mean	Stable	-1	45	101	75	High	The highest total since 1988.
Blue-headed Wagtail	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	1	3	3	-	Included a pure pair which bred on Shetland.
White Wagtail	Very rare	49	RBBP 5-yr mean	no trend available	-	47	47	-	High	Two mixed pairs with Pied Wagtails in the UK, plus an estimated 45 pairs on the Channel Isles.
Hawfinch	Less scarce	500+	Clements 2013	no trend available	-	19	160	-	Moderate	
Common Rosefinch	Occasional breeder	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	The first UK breeding since 2001, on Fair Isle.
Common Redpoll	Very rare	28	RBBP 5-yr mean	no trend available but increasing	++	17	22	12	Moderate	A typical return.
European Serin	Former breeder	-	-	-	-	0	2	1	-	Two pairs were present together in Cornwall fro a fee days in March.
Snow Bunting	Rare	79	Hayhow et al 2018	no trend available	-	4	46	-	Moderate	
Cirl Bunting	Less scarce	1,079	Jeffer et al 2018	strong increase (27 yrs)	+814	65	571	-	Moderate	An increase in coverage, largely due to the new Cirl Bunting Monitoring Programme.

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Little Bunting	Potential breeder	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	-	A pair in Norfolk in March and April, the first record for this species in an RBBP report.

In addition to the native species listed above, **Short-toed Treecreeper** (Channel Islands only) and **Parrot Crossbill** (Highland only) were known to have been present in 2022, but no breeding records were submitted.

Table 2: Rare non-native breeding birds in the UK, 2022

Common name	Notes
Bar-headed Goose	A considerable number of individuals reported at a site in Cumbria, but no evidence of breeding in 2022.
Snow Goose	Six birds on Coll, Argyll, as the population there continues to dwindle; there was no breeding in 2022.
Swan Goose	A pair were present in Cumbria; eggs were laid.
Black Swan	Reported from ten counties, with pairs in five, and confirmed breeding in four.
Ruddy Shelduck	A male in Berkshire was the only record received.
Muscovy Duck	Records received from three counties with no confirmed breeding; this species is clearly hugely underreported.
Red-crested Pochard	Reported from 23 sites, with 16-49 pairs, in eight counties.
Reeve's Pheasant	Records from Dorset and Hampshire, including confirmed breeding in Dorset.
Golden Pheasant	Reported from Dorset, Hampshire, Isles of Scilly, Perth & Kinross and Suffolk.
Lady Amherst's Pheasant	Reports from Highland and the Isles of Scilly.
Silver Pheasant	A female on Anglesey.
Indian Peafowl	Records received from four counties only; breeding was confirmed in Hertfordshire and Yorkshire.
Harris's Hawk	A male was resident in Cambridgeshire for a seventh year.
Monk Parakeet	Five pairs at a communal nest in Greater London.

Footnotes:

1. An indication of population status in one of four categories: Very rare (mean of <30 breeding pairs (bp) per annum); Rare (30–300 bp per annum); Scarce (301–1,000 bp per annum); Less scarce (>1,000 bp per annum).
2. Published estimate or RBBP 5-year mean. If a recent estimate from a published national survey is available, this is used and referenced. Otherwise the estimate is based on RBBP data, using the mean maximum population size from the last five years (currently 2018-22, excluding 2020 if data for that year were impacted by lockdown restrictions). If annual RBBP coverage is poor, the best available national population estimate is used. The unit varies, but is most frequently 'breeding pairs' (bp). We

acknowledge that, for some species, estimates based purely on RBBP data may be contrary to other estimates, especially where RBBP coverage is moderate or low (see below).

3. A population trend, where one can be calculated; this is presented as a 25-year trend where possible; if a species has been covered by the RBBP for a shorter period then a 10-year, 15-year or 20-year trend is given as appropriate. Trends are calculated by comparing the 5-year mean in 2022 (for the years 2018–22) with that for 25, 20, 15 or 10 years earlier. If 2020 coverage was impacted by lockdown restrictions that year is omitted from the trend calculation. Trends are categorised into five bands, based on thresholds of rate of change used to classify species trends in the Wild Bird Indicators (e.g. Defra 2023): further details can be found in the RBBP report. Most trends are derived from RBBP data, although in some cases trends from periodic surveys are used if they are more robust, and trends from the BTO/JNCC/RSPB UK Breeding Bird Survey are given for Turtle Dove.
4. The degree of coverage (in 2022), defined as follows: Near-complete (RBBP reports present more or less complete annual totals); High (a good estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, though an unknown (but thought to be small) proportion has not been recorded/reported); Moderate (a less accurate estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, which is nonetheless thought to be a significant proportion of the total population); Low (the volume of the data received is such a small proportion of the total population that RBBP totals are of little value for calculating trends or status reviews; however, maintaining an archive of known sites is useful, and this information can be used in the design of future targeted surveys). Coverage categories (reassessed in this report) are based on comparisons between the 5-year mean and the most reliable population estimate, where possible, taking into account known factors in the monitoring and detectability of the species.