

The State of Red Listed  
Breeding Birds in Bedfordshire  
2018

G R Goodall. BSc (Hons) MCIEEM (rtd).

*Honorary Research Officer*

*Bedfordshire Bird Club*

*Bedfordshire Natural History Society*

## **Purpose of this document**

This document justifies the inclusion of certain bird species on the county Red List of Breeding Birds, using international, national and county criteria. It is a working document, in that the listed species will be monitored on an annual basis in order to show their state; i.e. the number of records, the number of sites where species were recorded, whether species are declining or increasing. This will be achieved by extracting information from *British Birds*, annual BTO *Breeding Bird Survey* reports and annual *Bedfordshire Bird Reports*.

## **National assessment of extinction risk**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) generates Red List guidelines. In Great Britain, the Species Status programme produced IUCN Red List assessments for 289 bird species; 208 breeding, 81 non-breeding. The emphasis is on extinction risk, determined by species' rarity, range restriction, and the rate of recent decline measured over the last ten years or three generations, whichever is longest. The assessment of extinction threat levels, are defined as follows:

- CR = Critically Endangered.
- EN = Endangered.
- VU = Vulnerable.
- NT = Near Threatened.

## **Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the UK.**

The Avian Population Estimates Panel (APEP) is a collaboration between UK statutory conservation agencies and non-government organisations. The panel collates the best estimates of breeding and non-breeding bird populations. This process is endorsed by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and acknowledges a quality-assured source of population estimates for statutory conservation purposes. Three previous APEP assessments have been published: APEP 1 (1997), APEP 2 (2006) and APEP 3 (2013). APEP 4 (2020) presents the most recent estimates; breeding estimates for the period 2013-17 are presented in this document.

## **Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)**

Bird conservation organisations carried out a fourth review of the status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and The Isle of Man; *Birds of Conservation Concern 4* (Eaton et. al. 2015). Species were assessed against a set of objective criteria to place each species on one of three lists – Green, Amber and Red – indicating an increasing level of conservation concern.

## **Red List criteria for breeding birds**

**IUCN:** Global conservation status; species that are Globally Threatened – Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable, but not Near Threatened.

**HD:** Historical decline in breeding populations; species that have declined severely between 1800 and 1995, and which have not recovered subsequently.

**BDp:** Breeding population decline; severe decline in the UK of >50% over 25 years (BDp1) or the longer term (BDp2).

**BDr:** Breeding range decline; severe decline in UK range of >50% between the breeding bird atlases in 1988-91 and 2007-11 (BDr1), or 1968-71 and 2007-11 (BDr2).

### **Amber List criteria for breeding and non-breeding species**

These criteria are included because several Amber list species are included on the Bedfordshire list; see county criteria and list below.

**HDrec:** Historical decline – recovery; previously Red List species for historical decline. Followed by an increase of at least 100% over 25 years or the longer-term period.

**BDMp:** Breeding population declines; moderate decline (>25% but <50%) over 25 years (BDMp1), or the longer-term (BDMp2).

**BDMr:** Breeding range decline; moderate decline (>25% but <50%) between 1988-91 and 2007-11 (BDMr1), and 1968-71 and 2007-11 (BDMr2).

**BR & WR:** Breeding and non-breeding rarity; species qualified as rare breeders (BR) if the UK breeding population was <300 pairs and as rare non-breeders (WR) if the UK non-breeding population was <900 individuals.

**BL & WL:** Breeding and non-breeding localisation; considered to be localised if more than 50% of the UK population was found at ten or fewer sites in either the breeding (BL) or the non-breeding (WL) season.

**BI & WI:** Breeding and non-breeding international importance; considered to be internationally important if the UK holds at least 20% of the European population in either the breeding (BI) or non-breeding (WI) season.

### **Annex 1 of the Birds Directive**

Species and sub-species, which are:

- in danger of extinction;
- vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat;
- considered to be rare because of small populations or restricted local distribution;
- require particular attention because of the specific nature of their habitats.

Species relevant to Bedfordshire are:

Eurasian Bittern	Honey Buzzard	Red Kite	Marsh Harrier
Spotted Crake	Avocet	Common Tern	European Nightjar
Kingfisher	Peregrine	Woodlark	Dartford Warbler

### **Bedfordshire Red List breeding birds criteria**

The county criteria fall into three categories; in order of priority.

1. Species that are categorised as 'Red' or 'Amber' on the national list and which occur regularly in Bedfordshire.
2. Species that are listed as being of principal importance in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and which occur regularly in Bedfordshire.
3. County rarity for breeding birds is defined as less than 25 pairs and/or less than 38 sites or tetrads.

Table 1. The Bedfordshire Red List of breeding birds.

	Birds Directive	National Lists (BoCC 2015)	NERC Act (2006)
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>		Red	
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>		Red	Yes
Eurasian Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Annex 1	Amber	Yes
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		Red	Yes
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		Red	
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>		Red	Yes
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>		Red	Yes
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		Red	Yes
Common Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>		Red	Yes
European Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Annex 1	Amber	Yes
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dryobates minor</i>		Red	Yes
Marsh Tit <i>Poecile palustris</i>		Red	Yes
Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	Annex 1	Green	Yes
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>		Red	Yes
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		Red	Yes
Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i>		Red	Yes
Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		Red	Yes
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>		Red	Yes
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		Red	
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>		Red	Yes
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>		Red	Yes
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>		Red	Yes
Common Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		Red	
Duncock <i>Prunella modularis</i>		Amber	Yes
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>		Red	Yes
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		Red	
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>		Red	Yes
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		Red	Yes
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		Amber	Yes
Linnet <i>Linaria cannabina</i>		Red	Yes
Lesser Redpoll <i>Acanthis cabaret</i>		Red	Yes
Corn Bunting <i>Emberiza calandra</i>		Red	Yes
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		Red	Yes
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		Amber	Yes

**Regional data:** BTO Breeding Bird Survey reports for the East of England.

**BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in Bedfordshire:** surveys cover a 1km x 1km square and are randomly chosen by the BTO to ensure that there is no surveyor bias.

**BTO BirdTrack website:** contributors have the option to enter their data on to a species list, which gives a good measure of how frequently individual species are recorded during the year. This enables us to monitor the annual changes in the detectability of some, but not all, species, and are shown as a percentage in the annual Bird Reports.

## Species accounts

### **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

**National status:** extinction risk EN.

Population estimate: 695-720 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -63%. BDp2 -81%. BDr1 -58%. BDr2 -50%. BR 52 pairs.**

Bird Atlas (2007-11) data has shown a range contraction. However, the mean number of pairs in the UK has increased.

**Regional:** BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds. Rare Breeding Bird.

Bird Reports: described as numerous winter visitor that has bred, but less frequently.

2015: recorded from 12 sites in the May-June period. Six broods recorded at the Millennium Country Park and Wetlands Nature Reserve (MCP Wetlands NR); breeding was suspected at Quest Clay Pit CWS.

2016: recorded from 12 sites in the May-June period; although breeding was confirmed at the MCP Wetlands NR only.

2017: two broods recorded at MCP Wetlands NR.

2018: confirmed breeding took place at MCP Wetlands NR (1 pair with young), Quest CIP (fledged young); plus probable breeding at Coronation CIP and Rookery North CIP. Included in 10.1% of BirdTrack lists in 2018.

### **Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 37,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -76%. BDp2 -91%. BDMr2 -40%.**

Declining and thinly distributed due to agricultural intensification. England 10-year trend (2007-2017); -37%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); population trend -54% statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a declining resident.

2015: recorded in 16% of BBS squares and 7% of BirdTrack species lists. Counts greater than 20 from Icknield Way – Galley Hill, Seddington, Barton Hills, Pegsdon Hills, and Biggleswade Common.

2016: recorded in 26% of BBS squares and 4% of BirdTrack species lists. Counts greater than 20 from Galley Hill, Stopsley Common, Beeston and Village Pit. Broom.

2017: recorded in 11% of BBS squares and 3.6% of BirdTrack species lists. Counts greater than 15 from Southill, Warden-Galley Hills.

2018: breeding reported at Cardington Airfield, Stopsley Common, Wootton, Potton, Everton Heath, Blunham, Tetworth Hall, Dunton, Galley Hill, and Upper Caldecote. Recorded in 22% of BBS squares and included on 2.6% of BirdTrack lists.

### **Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 191 males.

Amber List. Criteria: **BR 80 pairs. WR 600 individuals.** Annex 1 Birds Directive. Reedbed enhancement and creation have helped the population to recover.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as scarce winter visitor, more recently, during the breeding season.

2015: for the third consecutive year, 'booming' was heard in Rookery North.

2016: for the fourth consecutive year, 'booming' was heard in Rookery North; also at MCP Wetlands NR and Coronation Pit.

2017: booming males recorded at Rookery North, Coronation Pit, and MCP Wetlands NR.

2018: booming males heard during April and May at Rookery North, and Coronation CIP.

### **Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

**National status:** extinction risk VU (non-breeding).

Population estimate: 96,500 – 97,500 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -57%. BDp2 -63%.**

Agricultural intensification, loss of suitable short-sward grassland and predation have driven the decline. England 10-year trend (2007-2017); -30%

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); population trend -40%.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a declining breeder.

2015: recorded in 21% of BBS squares and 17% of BirdTrack species lists. No text relating to breeding birds; however, birds are known to breed at Gypsy Lane East and Stratton Park Balancing Pond (pers obs).

2016: recorded in 16% of BBS squares and 16% of BirdTrack species lists. No confirmed breeding records; however, birds are known to have bred at Broom Lakes and Gypsy Lane East.

2017: recorded in 15% of BBS squares and 14% of BirdTrack species lists. Breeding was confirmed at 14 sites and probable breeding at 16 sites. Key breeding areas were the Ivel valley and Marston Vale.

2018: confirmed breeding recorded at 7 sites and probable breeding at 20 other sites. Included in 15.5% of BirdTrack lists.

### **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

**National status:** extinction risk NT.

Population estimate: 5,100 – 5,600 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDMp1 -37%.**

Disturbance at breeding sites can have a major impact.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as an uncommon localised breeder.

2015: breeding pairs reported from Broom-Gypsy Lane East, Stewartby Newt Ponds, Rookery South, and Quest Clay Pit.

2016: breeding was confirmed at Thurleigh Bedford Autodrome (2 pairs), and Broom (3 pairs).

2017: breeding confirmed at Southill, Lodge Farm Lake and Broom. Included on 3% of BirdTrack lists.

2018: breeding confirmed at Broom East CWS and Black Cat GP. Included on 0.8% of BirdTrack lists.

### **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

**National status:** extinction risk EN.

Population estimate: 58,000 – 58,500 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDMp1 -49%. BDp2 -62%. BI 20-30%.**

Agricultural intensification, loss of suitable, wet grassland and predation have driven the decline. England 10-year trend (2007-2017); -5%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a very rare breeder.

2015: known to be present during the breeding season at one site only; Thurleigh – Bedford Autodrome. Breeding has not been positively proven; however, the site is monitored every year and BBC is working with the owners to sustain this fragile group.

2016: display noted during the breeding season at Thurleigh – Bedford Autodrome. A bird was heard calling at a previous breeding site at Eaton Bray.

2017: recorded on 0.2% of BirdTrack lists. No confirmed breeding reported; however, four birds were present at Thurleigh motor racing track during the breeding season.

2018: no confirmed breeding, but three birds, including a pair, were seen at Thurleigh racing track, the traditional breeding site. Breeding may have taken place near Grovebury GP.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

**National status:** extinction risk EN (non-breeding).

Population estimate: 130,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -60%. WI 20-30%.**

Reductions in feeding opportunities at refuse sites, fishing-industry discards, botulism and predation by mammals.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: a few pairs usually breed in most years.

2015: no confirmed breeding.

2016: confirmed breeding at north Luton industrial estates (10-20 pairs) and Bedford town centre (1 pair).

2017: one breeding record of four birds holding territory in Bedford town centre. Recorded on 10% of BirdTrack species lists.

2018: breeding recorded in Bedford town centre; birds present in north Luton but breeding not proven. A mixed pair (Herring gull - Lesser black-backed gull) raised three young.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

**National status:** extinction risk CR.

Population estimate: 3,600 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -92%. BDp2 -96%. BDMr1 -35%. BDr2 -51%.**

Agricultural intensification, a reduced number of clutches laid each season, from 2.9 to 1.6, plus shooting on migration. The breeding population in the EU is estimated to be 2.3-4.1 million pairs and studies indicate that one-fifth (circa 1.5 million individual birds) of the population is killed annually and is probably underestimated (Hirschfeld *et. al.* 2019).

England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -83%. The species is now confined to the east and south-east of England and the population is estimated to be less than 2,000 breeding pairs. Around 85% of pairs occur in just six counties: Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent and Sussex. As a result, the species is classified as a Rare Breeding Bird (British Birds, 2019).

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -94%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a fast declining summer resident.

2015: recorded in 2% of BBS squares and 0.4% of BirdTrack species lists. One confirmed breeding record at Octagon Farm GP; purring reported from 11 sites and display noted at Tempsford Airfield. Records from 22 general areas compared with 41 in 2014 and 35 in 2013.

2016: recorded in 2% of BBS squares and 0.3% of Bird Track species lists. Confirmed breeding at two sites; Brogborough Lake and Knotting Green. Purring males recorded at 11 sites; 'regular' records at 7 sites – Brogborough, Dunton, Knotting Green, Marston Thrift,

MCP Wetlands NR/Stewartby Lake, Octagon Farm and Tempsford Airfield.

2017: recorded in 2% of BBS squares and 0.5% of BirdTrack species lists. Confirmed breeding at Wood End, Marston Moretaine; 'purring' males reported from five sites and recorded at 20 other sites.

2018: one confirmed breeding record from the Marston Thrift area. Purring males recorded at eleven other sites. Included in 0.4% of BirdTrack lists.

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 8,950 – 26,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -60%**. **BDp2 -62%**.

Reduced breeding season food (moths); unknown factors on migration routes and wintering grounds. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -32%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -73%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a declining summer resident.

2015: recorded in 19% of BBS squares and 5% of BirdTrack species lists. Records received from 63 sites, but some records probably refer to the same bird being heard by different observers.

2016: recorded in 16% of BBS squares and 4% of BirdTrack species lists. Two confirmed breeding records; at Knotting and Broom. Records received from 63 sites, but some undoubtedly referred to the same bird.

2017: recorded in 15% of BBS squares and 4.4% of BirdTrack species lists. One confirmed breeding record from Stratford Road, Sandy; records received from 72 sites, but some undoubtedly referred to the same bird.

2018: no confirmed breeding; one pair observed displaying at Fenlake Meadows. Most reports were of calling males and there were eight reports of 'bubbling' females (usually a sign of copulation having taken place).

**European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 3,700 – 5,500 males.

Amber List. Criteria: **BDMr2 -45%**. Annex 1 Birds Directive.

Dedicated surveys show the number of churring males increasing from 2,100 in 1981, to 3,400 in 1992, to 4,600 in 2004.

**Regional:** species not covered by the BBS; the Brecks and the Norfolk–Suffolk heathlands remain a stronghold.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds. County figures from national surveys found 7 churring males in 1982 and 4 churring males in 1992. Churring heard at Aspley Heath in 2003 and 2004.

Bird Reports: described as a scarce summer migrant.

2012: churring heard at The Lodge RSPB for 3 days in June.

2013: a single record from Bedford STW in June.

2014: no records.

2015: two records from Brogborough in May and Felmersham in July.

2016: no acceptable records.

2017: six records, all in the area bounded by The Lodge RSPB, Sandy Heath, Potton and Carthagen golf course. Probably refer to the same male; however, two birds were seen at Warren Lodge, Deepdale on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

2018: one was at The Lodge RSPB on 8<sup>th</sup> May; then a pair was observed in courtship and display. The first nesting attempt was unsuccessful, but two young were hatched at a second nest; although it is thought they were predated. This is the first confirmed breeding since 1989.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dryobates minor*

**National status:** extinction risk EN.

Population estimate: 600 – 1,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -81%**. **BDp2 -81%**. **BDMr1 -29%**. **BDMr2 -37%**

Increased competition from Great Spotted Woodpeckers, predation and declining woodland quality; food availability resulting in chick starvation also a major problem. Estimated population: 1,000 – 2,000 birds.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a very scarce, declining resident.

2015: recorded in 0.4% of BirdTrack species lists; 49 records from 11 locations; pairs seen at three sites, but no signs of definite breeding.

2016: recorded in 0.3% of BirdTrack species lists. 31 records from 6 sites; The Lodge RSPB Sandy, Stockgrove CP, Eversholt Lake, Center Parcs Ampthill, King's Wood Heath & Reach, and Wigmore Valley CP.

2017: recorded on 0.1% of Bird Track species lists. Just 12 records from eight sites; drumming heard at King's Wood, Heath & Reach. Other records for Haynes, The Lodge RSPB, Chicksands, Pegnut Wood, Ampthill Park, Eversholt, and Sheerhatch Wood.

2018: breeding display (drumming, singing) was observed at Myers Farm, Potton; The Lodge RSPB; Reddings Wood, Ampthill; and Eversholt Lake near Woburn. The last confirmed breeding was in 2013.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 28,500 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -72%**. **BDMp1 -43%**.

A decline in woodland management, causing shading of the shrub-layer and structure of the under-storey may be a factor. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -24%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a local and declining resident.

2015: recorded in just 1% of BirdTrack species lists. Reported from 42 sites; two records of pairs holding territory and one records of fledged young.

2016: recorded in 0.7% of BirdTrack species lists. No confirmed breeding, but probable breeding reported at 4 sites on the Greensand Ridge; records from 32 sites.

2017: recorded in 0.9% of BirdTrack species lists. No confirmed breeding, but two territories were recorded in Warden Great Wood.

2018: recorded at 39 sites with all records being of one to three birds. Singing males heard at Old Warden and Cooper's Hill, but breeding not confirmed.

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 1,850 -2,750 pairs.

Green List. Annex 1 Birds Directive.

The Brecks and Hampshire heathlands are key areas; 88% increase in the national population between the 1997 and 2006 national surveys.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a scarce migrant and very rare breeder.

1996: a pair raised three young at New Wavendon Heath.

1997-2003: singing males present at New Wavendon Heath.  
2015: a bird was singing over the new heath at The Lodge, RSPB, in March.  
2016: three reports of singing birds, all from The Lodge, RSPB, Sandy.  
2017: four records, all in the east of the county; The Lodge RSPB, Myers Farm, Potton, and The Pinnacle, Sandy where four birds flew over.  
2018: no breeding records.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 1,500,000 – 1,550,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -62%**. **BDMp1 -32%**.

Agricultural intensification, in particular, the switch from spring to autumn sown cereals. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -9%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -28%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a widespread resident.

2015: recorded in 93% of BBS squares and 29% of BirdTrack species lists.

2016: recorded in 95% of BBS squares and 25% of BirdTrack species lists.

2017: recorded in 93% of BBS squares and 25% of BirdTrack species lists.

2018: singing and display reported from 162 tetrads and 233 1km squares. Recorded in 93% of BBS squares and 23.6% of BirdTrack lists.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 6,000 – 7,050 males.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -66%**. **BDMr1 -37%**. **BDMr2 -34%**.

The species is now largely confined to Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wales, parts of the Pennines and Lake District, central and west Scotland.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a scarce passage migrant.

1995: last confirmed breeding at Cooper's Hill.

1996, 1997 and 1999: breeding suspected, but not proven.

2015: two records of migrants in late April.

2016: no accepted records.

2017: recorded in 0.1% of BirdTrack species lists. Three individual records from The Lodge, RSPB, Cooper's Hill, and Tottenhoe Knolls.

2018: two records of migrant birds; no confirmed breeding.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 9,750 – 12,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -68%**. **BDp2 -93%**.

Reasons for the decline are thought to be a lack of suitable habitat due to succession, degradation and loss. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -20%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a local, regular summer visitor, but declining.

2015: 14 records of single birds.

2016: recorded from 16 sites. Peak counts recorded at Langford (4), Knotting Green (3), and Sandy Smith NR (3).

2017: recorded in 0.5% of BirdTrack species lists. Singing males recorded at Aspley Heath, Broom, MCP Wetlands NR, Willington, Rookery North, Langford, Flitwick Manor Park, Fenlake Meadows, Chicksands, and The Lodge RSPB. Peak counts were: Langford (3), Knotting Green (3), and Chicksands (3).

2018: recorded at 8 sites during April and 3 sites during May and June, indicating possible, but not confirming, breeding. Recorded in 0.1% of BirdTrack lists.

### **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 1,450,000 – 1,950,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -70%**. **BDp2 -83%**.

A decrease in the survival of young birds may be the cause of the decline. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -35%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -51%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a widespread resident, but declining.

2015: recorded in 85% of gardens in the Winter Garden Bird Feeding Survey and 97% of gardens in the summer survey.

2016: recorded in 58% of county BBS squares, the lowest since BBS started in 1994, and 51% of BirdTrack species lists.

2017: recorded in 65% of county BBS squares and 51% of BirdTrack species lists. The long-term trend for Bedfordshire is -49%, which is statistically significant.

2018: recorded in 50% of BBS squares. The long-term trend for Bedfordshire is -50% , which is significant. Included in 45.3% of BirdTrack lists.

### **Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 1,200,000 – 1,300,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -59%**.

Agricultural intensification and the survival of young birds may be the cause of the decline. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +3%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); +4%.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a common resident.

2015: recorded in 86% of BBS squares and 40% of BirdTrack species lists.

2016: recorded in 93% of county BBS squares, the highest since BBS started in 1994, and 39% of BirdTrack species lists.

2017: recorded in 80% of BBS squares and 39% of BirdTrack species lists. The long-term trend for Bedfordshire is +16%.

2018: recorded in 89% of BBS squares and 30.4% of BirdTrack species lists. The long-term trend for Bedfordshire is -11%.

### **Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 150,000 – 165,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -62%**. **BDMp1 -45%**.

Cause of decline unclear, but may be driven by reduced annual survival. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -23%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -54%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a widespread resident, but declining.

2015: recorded in 33% of BBS squares and 20% of BirdTrack species lists.

2016: recorded in 26% of county BBS squares, the lowest since BBS started in 1994, and

17% of BirdTrack species lists.

2017: recorded in 30% of BBS squares and 18% of BirdTrack species lists.

2018: recorded in 26% of BBS squares and 13.5% of BirdTrack species lists.

### **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 38,500 – 41,500 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -80%. BDp2 -88%.**

Nest predation and reduced survival of first-year birds in the UK, combined with habitat changes on the wintering grounds, plus trapping on migration, are all influencing factors. England 10-year trend (1995-2017); -40%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as declining summer migrant.

2002: a species-specific survey recorded 94 pairs at over 80 sites.

2015: recorded in 5% of BBS squares and 1% of BirdTrack species lists. Breeding behaviour reported from 27 sites, but there are likely to be other unknown pairs in the county.

2016: recorded in 2% of BBS squares and 0.9% of BirdTrack species lists. Breeding behaviour recorded at 18 sites.

2017: no records from BBS squares, but recorded in 1.3% of BirdTrack species lists. Breeding suspected at 26 sites.

2018: the only confirmed breeding was at Tetworth Hall, Redding's Wood and Wrest Park. Singing birds recorded at six other sites. Recorded in just 0.9% of BirdTrack lists.

### **Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 5,100 – 6,000 males.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -60%. BDp2 -85%.**

Decline attributed to habitat loss and reduced quality as a result of deer browsing and a lack of coppice woodland management; also, habitat degradation in West African wintering grounds. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -27%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a scarce and declining summer visitor.

2012: a species-specific survey recorded 22 singing males.

2015: 13 singing birds reported from 12 sites; no records of proven breeding.

2016: a pair bred successfully (two juveniles) at Brogborough Lake. Single birds recorded at Stewartby Lake, Willington GP, Coronation Pit, Sandy, and six at Knotting Green.

2017: no records from BBS squares, but recorded in 0.2% of BirdTrack species lists. A probable maximum of 11 individuals reported from 7 sites.

2018: one positive breeding record of a bird carrying nesting material at Stewartby Lake. A total of 14 singing birds located at nine sites, including 8 birds at five sites in the Marston Vale area.

### **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 4,650,000 – 5,750,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -66%. BDMp1 -32%.**

Lower first-year survival rates and a lack of winter food caused by agricultural intensification have driven the decline in rural areas. In urban areas, reduced productivity as a result of a

lack of breeding sites, less invertebrate food and air pollution. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; 3%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -26%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a once abundant resident, now declining and very local.

2015: recorded in 67% of BBS squares and 30% of BirdTrack species lists. Four records of winter flocks in excess of 100 birds and ten counts of >20 birds.

2016: recorded in 53% of BBS squares and 28% of BirdTrack species lists. Of 1,258 records, only 16% were of ten or more birds.

2017: recorded in 63% of BBS squares and 28.5% of BirdTrack species lists. A breeding colony of 30 pairs in houses along Rookery Road, Wyboston was notable. Highest winter counts were from Southill (109), Potton (43) and Blows Downs (40).

2018: recorded in 59% of BBS squares and 27.5% of BirdTrack species lists.

### **Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

**National status:** extinction risk VU.

Population estimate: 225,000 – 245,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -90%**.

Agricultural intensification and a lack of winter food are the main causes of the decline. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +30%, which is statistically significant.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a once common resident that has decline dramatically.

2008: a pair visited a probable nest site in Louse Acre Wood.

2015: winter records only, from Upper Caldecote, Wilden, Potton, Turvey and Old Warden.

2016: recorded from 5 sites, and six flew south over The Pinnacle, Sandy on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. No breeding records.

2017: no records from BBS squares and recorded in just 0.1% of BirdTrack species lists; seven records of 11 individuals.

2018: no records from BBS squares or BirdTrack species lists; three records from three sites in March, October-November and December.

### **Duncock** *Prunella modularis*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 2,350,000 – 2,500,000 territories.

Amber List. Criteria: **BDMp2 -31%**.

Despite a decline in woodland, possibly as a result of deer browsing, the species remains very common in urban gardens and parks. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +1%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); +24%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a very common resident.

2015: recorded in 84% of BBS squares and 65% of BirdTrack species lists.

2016: recorded in 88% of BBS squares and 62% of BirdTrack species lists.

2017: recorded in 88% of BBS squares and 61% of BirdTrack species lists.

2018: recorded in 89% of BBS squares and 49.8% of BirdTrack species lists.

### **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

**National status:** extinction risk NT.

Population estimate: 19,500 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -63%. BDp2 -70%**.

Decline linked with the loss of damp pasture through land drainage, a loss of invertebrate food associated with livestock, and the conversion of grassland to arable crops. England 10-

year (2007-2017) trend; +13%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -39%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a regular passage migrant and localised breeder.

2015: recorded in 28% of BBS squares and 4% of BirdTrack species lists.

2016: recorded in 33% of county BBS squares and 5% of BirdTrack species lists.

2017: recorded in 24% of BBS squares and 5% of BirdTrack species lists.

2018: confirmed breeding took place at four sites and probable breeding at six sites.

Recorded in 17% of BBS squares and 3% of BirdTrack species lists.

### **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

**National status:** extinction risk NT.

Population estimate: 33,500 – 37,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -57%. BDMp1 -33%.**

The effects of cold winters and reduced productivity – smaller clutch and brood sizes – are causing the decline. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -16%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2017); insufficient data, therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a resident and localised breeder.

2015: recorded in 2 BBS squares and 8% of BirdTrack species lists. Six breeding records; a total of 435 reports from 80 sites.

2016: no records from BBS squares, but recorded on 9% of BirdTrack species lists. Eleven confirmed breeding records; a total of 544 records from over 100 sites.

2017: recorded in 9 BBS squares and 7% of BirdTrack species lists. Confirmed breeding at Great Barford, R. Lea at Luton, Henlow Grange, R. Ivel at Biggleswade, Radwell, Priory CP, Poppy Hill STW and Grovebury SP.

### **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 66,000 – 145,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -64%. BDp2 -70%. BDMr2 -29%.**

Declines may be related to woodland plantations maturing, resulting in the loss of open ground. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -27%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible. Nest failures have increased in Thetford Forest as a result of predation.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a scarce passage migrant; probably no longer breeds.

2009: a displaying (singing) bird was at Conquest Wood from mid-June to the end of July.

2008-11 Atlas: probable breeding recorded in 6 tetrads.

2015: a bird was singing in suitable habitat at Aspley Heath in July, but the site was “destroyed” and there was no further sign of the bird.

2016: four autumn records; none in spring.

2017: a singing male was present at Galley Hill from 18<sup>th</sup> April – 4<sup>th</sup> June, and a second bird (presumed to be a female) was also seen, suggesting possible breeding.

2018: no breeding records; two birds recorded in the spring and four in the autumn.

### **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

**National status:** extinction risk EN.

Population estimate: 500 – 1,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -74%. BDr1 -64%. BDr2 -75%.**

The cause of the decline is currently unknown.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as very rare with occasional winter influxes.

1987: last confirmed breeding; young were successfully raised in Kidney Wood and food-carrying was seen at Luton Hoo.

2015: A male was at Holcote Wood, Cranfield in April.

2016: no records.

2017: a huge national influx started in October and birds were present throughout the winter, resulted in 242 submitted records from 60 sites. Recorded on 1.7% of Bird Track species lists.

2018: winter records as a result of the 2017 national influx; reported at 21 sites with large flocks found at Southill Park (c45) and Woburn Park (94).

### **Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 225,000 – 265,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDMp2 -39%**.

The decline has eased since the 1980s, with an increase since 2000; however, UK numbers are still 39% lower than in 1967. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +30%, which is statistically significant.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -9%.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as widespread, but thinly distributed.

2015: recorded in 33% of county BBS squares and 18% of BirdTrack species lists; 805 reports from over 100 sites.

2016: recorded in 33% of county BBS squares and 13% of BirdTrack species lists; 588 reports from over 100 sites.

2017: recorded in 26% of BBS squares and 14% of Bird Track species lists; 772 submitted records.

2018: recorded in 22% of BBS squares and 6.7% of Bird Track species lists; 457 submitted records.

### **Linnet** *Linaria cannabina*

**National status:** extinction risk EN.

Population estimate: 530,000 – 560,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -60%**.

The loss of wild plants in farmland has resulted in a lower availability of seeds and invertebrates, resulting in lower breeding success. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +28%, which is statistically significant.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -9%.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a locally common resident.

2015: recorded in 65% of county BBS squares and 18% of BirdTrack species lists; 765 reports; 53 flocks of more than 100 birds, three sites had flocks of more than 200 birds. Galley Hill and Stopsley Common had the largest flocks; 550 and 350 respectively.

2016: recorded in 58% of county BBS squares and 16% of BirdTrack species lists; a total of 724 reports with just eight counts of 50 or more, and two sites with >100.

2017: recorded in 65% of BBS squares and 18.6% of BirdTrack species lists; 1,065 records. Post-breeding flocks >100 from 9 sites.

2018: recorded in 54% of BBS squares and 14.3% of BirdTrack species lists; 965 records. Post-breeding flocks >100 birds reported from Henlow Grange, Stopsley Common, Old Rowney Farm, Sandy Heath, Stotfold, Henlow area and Broom South Quarry.

### **Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cabaret*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 220,000 – 260,000 pairs.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -64%. BDp2 -83%.**

Decline most obvious in south and east England. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +33%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (2018); insufficient data; therefore, population analysis not possible.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: probably no longer breeds; winter numbers erratic.

2008-11 Atlas: probable breeding was in 5 tetrads.

2015: no breeding reports during the period May-August. 181 reports from 50 sites; one-third of the reports were of single birds and only 12 reports of flocks of more than 20 birds.

2016: no breeding reports during the period May-August. 300 reports from 58 sites; three sites had winter flocks of more than 40 birds.

2017: no breeding reports during the period May-August. Recorded in 2.5% of BirdTrack species lists; 225 records.

2018: no breeding records; small roving flocks (20-50 birds) reported during winter and autumn months.

### **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra*

**National status:** extinction risk NT.

Population estimate: 9,050 – 13,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp1 -61%. BDp2 -90%.**

A severe population decline due to agricultural intensification; 90% during the period 1970-2010. Major losses in England have fragmented the population into discrete areas; chalk soils from Dorset to Cambridgeshire, the south-east coast from Kent to Suffolk, and the Fens north to Durham. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -2%.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017) -35%, which is statistically significant and the only English region with sufficient BBS data for a population trend to be calculated.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Significant winter flocks (>5% of the total UK population) are recorded in some years; e.g. an estimated 1,000 birds was recorded at Stotfold on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2010, and a similar sized flock was recorded off Stratton Way, Biggleswade on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Other notable winter flocks (100+):

- 100 at Stotfold on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2013.
- 211 at Stotfold on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015.
- 200 at Stotfold on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

Corn Bunting Survey 2014. The June survey recorded 101 singing males in 26 tetrads, which equates to a mean density of 3.885 males per tetrad. Applying this figure to the county BBS Atlas (2007–11) gives the following possible results:

Possible breeding: 25 tetrads. 97 singing males

Probable breeding: 88 tetrads. 342 singing males

Confirmed breeding: 23 tetrads. 89 singing males

Total number of tetrads 136: possible number of singing males 528 (territories).

This compares to an estimated 1,500–3,000 territories (pairs) when the breeding population was considered to be stable (Dazley & Trodd 1994).

Bird Reports: described as once locally common, but declining. Reported in 7% of county BirdTrack lists.

2015: recorded in 16% of BBS squares and 8% of BirdTrack species lists. 382 reports; highest count of 211 at Stotfold in March.

2016: recorded in 19% of BBS squares and 7% of BirdTrack species lists. Recorded at 16 sites with probably no more than 60 singing males.

2017: recorded in 15% of BBS squares and 5.75 of BirdTrack species lists; 387 submitted records. Singing males recorded at 23 sites with concentrations of probable breeding at 5 traditional sites.

2018: recorded in 17% of BBS squares and 4.9% of BirdTrack species lists. Probable breeding took place at 28 sites.

#### **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 685,000 – 700,000 territories.

Red List. Criteria: **BDp2 -54%**. **BDMp1 -49%**.

Densities have reduced throughout Britain; agricultural intensification and a lack of winter food may be the main causes of the decline. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; -13%, which is statistically significant.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); -24%.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a widespread resident.

2015: recorded in 63% of BBS squares and 17% of BirdTrack species lists; 741 records.

2016: recorded in 79% of BSS squares and 13% of BirdTrack species lists; 604 reports from over 100 sites.

2017: recorded in 78% of BBS squares and 13.6% of BirdTrack species lists; 807 records.

2018: recorded in 74% of BBS squares and 11% of BirdTrack species lists.

#### **Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

**National status:** not at risk of extinction.

Population estimate: 255,000 – 275,000 territories.

Amber List. Criteria: **BDMp2 -38%**.

A lack of winter food may have caused earlier declines. England 10-year (2007-2017) trend; +13%, which is statistically significant.

**Regional:** BTO (BBS), East of England (1995-2017); +40%, which is statistically significant.

**County status:** Red List breeding birds.

Bird Reports: described as a fairly common resident.

2015: recorded in 30% of BBS squares and 18% of BirdTrack species lists; 810 reports from over 100 sites.

2016: recorded in 40% of BBS squares and 22% of BirdTrack species lists; over 1,000 reports from 59 locations.

2017: recorded in 35% of BBS squares and 21% of BirdTrack species lists; 1,173 reports from over 100 sites.

2018: recorded in 28% of BBS squares and 16.8% of BirdTrack species lists; 1,166 reports.

## **References**

Balmer, D E, Gillings, S, Caffrey, B J, Swann, R L, Downie, I S, & Fuller, R J. (2013). *Bird Atlas 2007 – 11; the breeding and wintering birds of Britain and Ireland*. BTO Books, Thetford.

Bedfordshire Bird Club. Annual Bird Reports.

British Birds. Volume 112. June 2019. *Changes to the RBBP list*.

British Birds. Volume 113. February 2020. *Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the UK*.

Brown, A. and Grice, P. (2005) *Birds in England*. T & A D Poyser.

BTO Research Reports. *Breeding Bird Survey 2017*. BTO, JNCC, RSPB, Thetford.

Dazley, R A and Trodd, P. (1994) *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Bedfordshire 1988–92* Bedfordshire Natural History Society.

Eaton, M A, Aebisher, N J, Brown, A F, Hearn, R, Lock, L, Musgrove, A J, Noble D G, Stroud, D G, and Gregory, R D. (2015). *Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man*. British Birds 108, pp708-746.

Goodall, G R, Hicks, R K, and Blain, S C (2014). *Bedfordshire Red List of Breeding Birds*. Bedfordshire Bird Club publications. <http://www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk>

Hayhow D B, Ausden M A, Bradbury R B, Burnell D, Copeland A I, Crick H Q P, Eaton M A, Frost T, Grice P V, Hall C, Harris S J, Morecroft M D, Noble D G, Pearce-Higgins J W, Watts O, Williams J . *The state of the UK's birds 2017*. The RSPB, BTO, WWT, DAERA, JNCC, NE and NRW, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Hirschfeld A, Attard G, and Scott L. *Bird hunting in Europe: an analysis of bag figures and the potential impact on the conservation of threatened species*. British Birds. March 2019. Vol. 112.

Stanbury, A, Brown, A, Eaton, M, Aebischer, N, Gillings, S, Hearn, R, Noble, D, Stroud, D, and Gregory, R. *The risk of extinction for birds in Great Britain*. British Birds. September 2017. Vol. 110.

UKBAP (2010). <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/NewPriorityList.aspx>. 14 April 2010.

Wilson J D, Evans A D, and Grice P V. (2009). *Bird Conservation and Agriculture*. Cambridge University Press.

[www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/).