

## THE POPULATION STATUS OF BIRDS IN THE UK: BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN: 2002–2007

DR. COLIN GALBRAITH  
*Head of Advisory Services/Chief Scientist*  
*The National Centre for Ornithology*  
*Scottish Natural Heritage*

In 1996, the UK's leading non-governmental bird conservation organisations reviewed the status of all bird species in the UK. The findings were published in a leaflet called *Birds of Conservation Concern*, where species were listed according to various criteria related to their population status, size and relative importance. These lists were known as the Red List and the Amber List for species where status was cause for concern, while the remaining species were included in the Green List.

The status of these birds is re-examined every five years. The latest listings have just been published and the new lists launched at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water and the Scottish Wildlife & Countryside Fair in August 2002. A total of 247 species were assessed. Forty-four species are red-listed, 121 species are amber-listed and 86 are green-listed. The Red and Amber lists follow on pages 176-179. The criteria used for assessing the population status are on page 174.

*Dr. Colin Galbraith*, Head of Advisory Services/Chief Scientist, Scottish Natural Heritage, spoke at the launch and comments here on the new list and its production:

### EL ESTADO POBLACIONAL DE AVES EN EL REINO UNIDO: AVES A CONSERVAR 2002-2007

En 1996, las principales organizaciones no gubernamentales de conservación revisaron el estado de todas las especies de aves del Reino Unido. Los resultados fueron publicados en un folleto titulado *Aves a Conservar*, donde las especies se ordenan en función de varios criterios relacionados con su estado poblacional, tamaño poblacional e importancia relativa. Estas listas se conocían como la Lista Roja y Lista Amarilla de especies cuyo estado era causa de preocupación, mientras que las especies restantes se incluían en la Lista Verde. El estado de estas aves es reevaluado cada cinco años. Las últimas listas acaban de ser publicadas y han sido hechas públicas en la Feria de Observadores de Aves Británicas en Rutland Water y en la Feria Escocesa de Vida Silvestre en agosto de 2002. Un total de 247 especies fueron evaluadas. Cuarenta y cuatro especies están en la Lista Roja, 121 en la Amarilla y 86 en la Verde. Las listas Roja y Amarilla aparecen en las páginas 176-179 de este informe. Los criterios utilizados para evaluar el estado poblacional aparecen en la página 174.

El Dr. Colin Galbraith, Jefe de los Servicios de Asesoramiento/Jefe Científico, Scottish Natural Heritage, habló en la presentación y aporta estos comentarios sobre las nuevas listas y su elaboración:

"This has been an important review of the status of bird population in the UK. It is an excellent example of data collected in large part by volunteers from BTO and other organisations, being analysed in an objective way, to provide an overview of what is happening to birds in our countryside. On behalf of the statutory agencies involved, Scottish Natural Heritage, English Nature, Countryside Council for Wales, and the Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland), I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the key role that BTO surveyors have played in data collection, thereby making this analysis possible. Your efforts make the UK uniquely placed in this regard and help ensure that decisions relating to the conservation of species is founded on a robust and defensible data set.

I am delighted that this has been a joint venture between statutory and non-government bodies and I feel that the results of the analysis are likely to be more valuable and influential as a result of this partnership. Hopefully, a similar analysis will now be completed at regular intervals in coming years and set alongside other information to provide a steer on what actions are required, particularly to help species of concern.

The analysis itself has produced some interesting and in some cases, worrying results. Clearly, species on the Red List will require further conservation action. For example, the Capercaillie is still threatened and species such as the Hen Harrier still deliberately persecuted. Concerning also is the appearance on the Red List, of species which, though still common, have declined rapidly in recent years. One fact that the analysis highlights is that the fabric of our countryside, the structure of our woodlands and the juxtaposition of habitats on farmland is still changing and many bird populations are suffering as a result. Surely, this analysis now gives us an agenda to work with farmers, landowners and managers to redress some of these recent changes, while ensuring that agriculture goes forward on a sustainable basis.

There are, of course, 'good news' stories contained within the results, and of particular note is the increasing populations of species where targeted conservation action has been in place for a number of years. Work on species such as the Red Kite demonstrates what can be achieved when conservation actions are well

targeted. Here, again, volunteers have played a key role in achieving success.

What then of the future use of the analysis? I am sure that the results will help inform work underway in JNCC to take forward a wider assessment of all species populations, and that it will inform the UK's Biodiversity Action Programme. Of course the real strength of the work lies in the fact that it has produced an agreed result from analysis which was undertaken objectively. I am convinced that it will lead to clearer decisions on conservation and to more focused and better action to help conserve birds and the countryside across the UK."

## THE CRITERIA

Seven quantitative criteria were used to assess the population status of each species and place it onto the Red, Amber or Green List. These criteria are listed below. The review excluded species that are not native to the UK and those that occur irregularly as vagrants or scarce migrants.

### GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS

Species assessed as Globally Threatened using IUCN (The World Conservation Union) criteria were placed on the Red List.

### RECENT DECLINE

Species whose breeding or non-breeding population declined, or range contracted, rapidly (by more than 50%) or moderately (by between 25 and 49%) over the last 25 years were placed on the Red and Amber Lists respectively.

### HISTORICAL DECLINE

Species whose populations declined severely between 1800 and 1995 were placed on the Red List, except for those that have recovered substantially (more than doubled) in the last 25 years, which were amber-listed. In earlier assessments, all species showing a serious historical decline were red-listed, but in this assessment the success of recent conservation action has been recognised by moving recovering species to the Amber List.

### EUROPEAN CONSERVATION STATUS

Species whose population status is unfavourable in Europe (but which are not Globally Threatened) were placed on the Amber List.

CHANGES IN SPECIES COMPOSITION BETWEEN THE  
2002–2007 LISTS AND THE ORIGINAL BOCC LIST

INCREASING CONCERN

NEW TO RED LIST

Lesser Sp. Woodpecker  
Ring Ouzel  
Grasshopper Warbler  
Savi's Warbler  
Marsh Tit  
Willow Tit  
Starling  
House Sparrow  
Yellowhammer

NEW TO AMBER LIST  
FROM GREEN LIST

Fulmar  
Cormorant  
Little Egret  
Spoonbill  
Mute Swan  
Red Grouse

Long-tailed Duck  
Spotted Redshank  
Green Sandpiper  
Black-headed Gull  
Kittiwake  
Cuckoo  
House Martin  
Tree Pipit  
Meadow Pipit  
Yellow Wagtail  
Grey Wagtail  
Bluethroat  
Mistle Thrush  
Wood Warbler  
Willow Warbler  
Goldcrest  
Lesser Redpoll

STATUS IMPROVING

FROM RED TO AMBER LIST

Red Kite  
Marsh Harrier  
Osprey  
Merlin  
Dartford Warbler

FROM AMBER LIST TO  
GREEN LIST

Golden Plover  
Greenshank  
Little Gull  
Blackbird  
Cetti's Warbler  
Icterine Warbler  
Crested Tit  
Brambling  
Goldfinch

RARE BREEDERS

Species with a mean of 1–300 pairs breeding annually over the last five years were placed on the Amber List. If a full census was carried out in a single year, the result of this was used instead of a five-year mean.

LOCALISED SPECIES

Species with 50% or more of their breeding or non-breeding population at 10 or fewer sites were placed on the Amber List. This criterion was used because a species whose population is confined to a few sites faces a greater threat from chance events than one whose population is widespread. The sites considered were either Important Bird Areas (identified by a BirdLife

investigation) or Special Protection Areas (designated under the European Union's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds).

INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Species with 20% or more of their European population breeding in the UK were placed on the Amber List, as were non-breeding wildfowl with 20% or more of their northwest European population occurring in the UK and non-breeding waders with 20% or more of their East Atlantic Flyway population occurring in the UK. This criterion is different to the others as it is a measure of the UK's responsibility for each species rather than the extent to which species are threatened

If you would like a copy of *The Population Status of Birds in the UK* leaflet, contact Sandra Sparkes at BTO Thetford HQ.

For a more complete explanation of the new listings, see Gregory R D, Wilkinson N I, Noble D G, Robinson J A, Brown A F, Hughes J, Proctor D A, Gibbons D W and Galbraith C A (2002) *British Birds* 95: 410–450

## RED LIST SPECIES — HIGH CONSERVATION CONCERN

SPECIES	Red-Listing Criteria				Additional Amber-Listing Criteria							
	INUC	HD	BDp	BDr	BDMp	BDM4	SPEC 2 or 3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI
Bittern		*	*	*			*	*		*		
Common Scoter				*	*			*		*		
White-tailed Eagle		*					*	*				
Hen Harrier		*					*					
Black Grouse		*	*			*	*					
Capercaillie			*	*								
Grey Partridge <sup>1</sup>			*				*					
Quail		*					*					
Corncrake	*	*		*					*			
Stone Curlew				*			*	*				
Black-tailed Godwit		*			*		*	*		*		*
Red-necked Phalarope		*						*				
Roseate Tern			*	*			*	*				
Turtle Dove <sup>1</sup>			*				*					
Nightjar				*			*		*			
Wryneck		*	*	*			*	*				
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker			*									
Woodlark				*			*		*			
Skylark <sup>1</sup>			*				*					
Ring Ouzel			*			*						
Song Thrush <sup>1</sup>			*									
Grasshopper Warbler <sup>1</sup>			*			*						
Savi's Warbler			*					*				
Aquatic Warbler	*									*		
Marsh Warbler			*			*		*				
Spotted Flycatcher <sup>1</sup>			*				*					
Marsh Tit <sup>1</sup>			*									
Willow Tit <sup>1</sup>			*									
Red-backed Shrike		*	*	*			*	*				
Starling <sup>1</sup>			*									
House Sparrow <sup>1</sup>			*									
Tree Sparrow <sup>1</sup>			*									
Linnet <sup>1</sup>			*									
Twite		*										
Scottish Crossbill	*											*
Bullfinch <sup>1</sup>			*									
Yellowhammer <sup>1</sup>			*									
Cirl Bunting				*								
Reed Bunting <sup>1</sup>			*									
Corn Bunting <sup>1</sup>		*	*			*						

## RED LIST CRITERIA

IUCN Globally threatened

HD Historical population decline during 1800–1995

BDp Rapid (≥50%) decline in UK breeding population over previous 25 years

BDr Rapid (≥50%) contraction of UK breeding range over 25 years

<sup>1</sup> UK population > 10,000 pairs

AMBER LIST SPECIES — MEDIUM CONSERVATION CONCERN

SPECIES	HDrec	BDMp	BDM4	SPEC 2 or 3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI
Red-throated Diver		*			*				
Black-throated Diver					*	*			
Great Northern Diver									*
Red-necked Grebe						*		*	
Slavonian Grebe		*				*			
Black-necked Grebe						*			
Fulmar							*		
Manx Shearwater					*		*		*
Storm Petrel					*		*		
Leach's Petrel					*		*		*
Gannet					*		*		*
Cormorant						*			*
Shag							*		*
Little Egret						*			
Spoonbill					*	*			
Mute Swan									*
Bewick's Swan				*			*		*
Whooper Swan						*		*	*
Bean Goose								*	
Pink-footed Goose							*		*
White-fronted Goose			E				*		G
Greylag Goose						*	*		*
Barnacle Goose				*			*		*
Brent Goose				*			*		*
Shelduck							*		*
Wigeon							*		*
Gadwall				*		*			*
Teal									*
Pintail				*	*		*		*
Garganey					*	*			
Shoveler									*
Pochard									*
Scaup					*	*		*	
Eider								*	
Long-tailed Duck								*	
Velvet Scoter					*			*	
Goldeneye						*		*	
Honey Buzzard						*			
Red Kite	*								
Marsh Harrier	*					*			
Montagu's Harrier			*			*			
Golden Eagle					*				
Osprey	*				*	*			
Kestrel		*			*				
Merlin	*								
Peregrine					*				
Red Grouse		*							
Water Rail			*						
Spotted Crake						*			
Crane					*	*			
Oystercatcher							*	*	*
Avocet					*		*	*	
Ringed Plover			*						*

## AMBER LIST SPECIES — MEDIUM CONSERVATION CONCERN (Continued)

SPECIES	HDrec	BDMp	BDM4	SPEC 2 or 3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI
Dotterel							*		
Grey Plover							*		*
Lapwing	*								*
Knot				*			*		*
Temminck's Stint						*			
Purple Sandpiper					*				*
Dunlin			*	*		*	*		*
Ruff						*		*	
Snipe		*2							
Woodcock		*2	*		*				
Bar-tailed Godwit				*			*		*
Whimbrel							*	*	
Curlew				*				*	*
Spotted Redshank								*	
Redshank	*2			*					*
Green Sandpiper						*			
Wood Sandpiper					*	*			
Turnstone									*
Great Skua							*		*
Mediterranean Gull						*			
Black-headed Gull		*					*		
Common Gull		*			*		*		
Lesser bl.-backed Gull							*		*
Herring Gull		*2					*		
Kittiwake							*		
Sandwich Tern					*		*		
Arctic Tern		*							
Little Tern		*			*		*		
Guillemot									*
Razorbill							*		*
Black Guillemot					*				
Puffin					*		*		
Stock Dove									*
Cuckoo		*							
Barn Owl			*		*				
Short-eared Owl					*				
Kingfisher					*				
Green Woodpecker					*				
Sand Martin					*				
Swallow					*				
House Martin		*							
Tree Pipit		*2							
Meadow Pipit		*							
Yellow Wagtail		*							
Grey Wagtail		*							
Dunnock		*							
Nightingale			*						
Bluethroat						*			
Black Redstart						*			
Redstart					*				
Stonechat					*				
Fieldfare		*				*			
Redwing						*			

AMBER LIST SPECIES — MEDIUM CONSERVATION CONCERN (Continued)

SPECIES	HDrec	BDMp	BDM4	SPEC 2 or 3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI
Mistle Thrush		*							
Dartford Warbler	*				*		*		
Wood Warbler		*							
Willow Warbler		*							
Goldcrest		*2							
Firecrest						*			
Bearded Tit							*		
Golden Oriole						*			
Chough					*		*		
Serin						*			
Lesser Redpoll		*2							*
Parrot Crossbill						*			
Common Rosefinch						*			
Hawfinch			*						
Snow Bunting						*			

AMBER LIST CRITERIA

HDrec	Historical population decline during 1800–1995, but recovering; population size has more than doubled over last 25 years
BDMp	Moderate (25–49%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years
BDMr	Moderate (25–49%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years
WDMp	Moderate (25–49%) decline in UK non-breeding population over last 25 years
SPEC 2 or 3	Species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern)
BR	Five-year mean of 1–300 breeding pairs in UK
BL	≥50% of UK breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not rare breeders (BR)
WL	≥50% of UK non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites
BI	≥20% of European breeding population in UK
WI	≥20% of NW European (wildfowl), East Atlantic Flyway (waders) or European (others) non-breeding populations in UK

E = European white-fronted goose subspecies only

G = Greenland white-fronted goose subspecies only

1 UK population > 10,000 pairs

2 decline >50% but trend provisional or unrepresentative of the UK