The Birds of Berkshire

Atlas and Avifauna

A fully revised new edition to be published in 2013 based on fieldwork completed in 2011, price £35

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Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group

The Birds of Berkshire

Atlas and Avifauna

The culmination of the work of over 400 volunteer surveyors from 2007 to 2011 will be the publication of a new county atlas and avifauna: The Birds of Berkshire, a full revision of the 1996 edition, which was based on fieldwork twenty years earlier.

The new Atlas provides a synopsis of the current status of each of about 160 summer and/or winter resident bird species, describes the changes that have occurred over the last twenty vears and discusses their causes. Species accounts are also given for a further 165 non-resident migrant or vagrant species that have occurred in Berkshire. There will be chapters on the history of ornithology in Berkshire, on geography, habitats and climate. To aid bird-watchers less familiar with the county, the Atlas gazetteer section will provide information on nature reserves and other sites of special ornithological interest.

The results show dramatic changes compared to the last Atlas surveys carried out in 1987-9, with some species becoming extinct in Berkshire and many new or expanding breeding species. Changes in land use, in agriculture, the growth of urban areas and gardens and the creation of new nature reserves have had both positive and negative effects on bird populations and we are beginning to see significant climaterelated changes. We are thus creating a chronology of changes in bird diversity and distribution which will provide both intrinsic interest and a scientific basis for conservation in the county.

Each account illustrated with a contemporary line drawing

Composite maps allowing comparison of 1989 data with the results of the 2007-2011 fieldwork

Maps showing summer and winter abundance where applicable

Stonechat Saxicola torquata

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant and scarce The Stonechat is a scarce summer visitor to Berkshire and a passage migrant or winter visitor in larger numbers. It is a passage mugrant or winter visitor in larger numbers. It is typically found breeding on areas of heathland, but also Gorse Ulex europaeus is present, and in young coniterous plantations. On passage and in winter it also occurs at gravel pits, sewage farms and on farmland. Nationally th burstion non-decised winter it also occurs at gravel pits, sewage farms and on farmland. Nationally the burstion non-decised winter it also occurs at gravel pits, sewage farms and on farmland. Nationally the burstion non-decised winter to be a second winter warther fail through the latter buff of the 20th common the plantations. On passage and in winter it also occurs at gravel pits, sewage farms and on farmland. Nationally the breeding population, which is sensitive to hard winter weather, fell through the latter half of the 20th century then were 2 d fail from 1994 - 2007 and a control of composition of future about to Composition of the control of the oppicatly tound orecung on areas or neutilation, our also occurs on commons and wasteland, particularly where occurs on commons and wasteand, particularly where Gorse Ulex europacus is present, and in young coniferous breeding population, which is sensitive to hard winter weather, tell through the latter halt of the 20th century then grew 2-3 fold from 1994 to 2007, with a series of warm winters, falling sharply following snowy winters in 2009-10. During the breeding season terral survey. Stonechats were recorded in 47 Berkshire terrads, with breeding conformed in 16 an increase of 60% compared to the 1087/0 encour. The diereduction denotes a record conduction During the breeding season terrad survey. Stonechats were recorded in 47 Berkshire terrads, with breeding onfirmed in 16, an increase of 60% compared to the 1987/9 survey. The distribution shows a strong correlation with the headland in the courts of the courts. A behavable is can be determine and access of original to be courts. confirmed in 16, an increase of 60% compared to the 1987/9 survey. The distribution shows a strong correlation with the heathland in the south of the county. Although it can hold territory in small areas of suitable habitat Somehars are constitutioned and it is unlikely that many breading to its wave associated in 2000 26 with the heathland in the south of the county. Although it can hold territory in small a reas of suitable habitat. Stonecharts are conspicuous and it is unlikely that many breeding pairs were overlooked: in 2008, 26 Performer were located on the Fase Rocke boothe and 8 sectionize on Greenham Common Subsemment rold Stonechats are conspicuous and it is unlikely that many breeding pairs were overlooked: in 2008, 20 territories on Greenham Common. Subsequent cold utilities were located on the East Berks heaths and 8 territories on Greenham Common. Subsequent cold is utilities the numbers of rereads in which been dimensioned or expression of the numbers of rereads in which been dimensioned or expression.

Green

territories were located on the East Berks heaths and 8 territories on Greenham Common. Subsequent cold winters may have reduced that number, though the numbers of terrads in which breeding was confirmed or recorded as probable each year changed little from 2008 (10) to 2011 (6). The abundance maps show that whereas the breeding Population in 2008/11 was almost exclusively in the abundance maps show that whereas the breeding Population in 2008/11 was almost exclusively in the solution of the county, the winter population was threfold higher, more dispersed and predominantly on the downs in the north of Berkshire. In the winter of 2010/2011 following cold and enouv conditions in the south of the county, the winter population was threefold higher, more dispersed and predominantly on the downs in the north of Berkshire. In the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of the provide the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the snow conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and snowy conditions in the winter of 2010/2011, following cold and 2010/2011, downs in the north of Berkshire. In the winter of 2010/2011, tollowing cold and snowy conditions i. winter of 2009/10, the numbers of retrads in which wintering Stonechat were reported fell by 90%. Monthly summary counts (figure 1) published in annual reports, inevitably biased rowards sites favoured by hird-watchere show a decline in number or the winter properties there are index of third in the Monthly summary counts (figure 1) published in annual reports, inevitably based rowards sites tayoured by bird-watchers, show a decline in numbers as the winter progresses, then an influx of birds in the early order. Numbers are housened of the enumers with northwording dispersel. A second influe occurs by bird-watchers, show a decline in numbers as the winter progresses, then an influx ot birds in the early pring. Numbers are lowest at the end of the summer with post-breeding dispersal. A second influx occurs in current or mitoring birds arise. The entert to which the entire and commence the entertaint of the second se spring. Numbers are lowest at the end of the summer with post-breeding dispersal. A second influx occurs in aurumn as wintering birds arrive. The extent to which the spring and aurumn peaks represent passage birds is not close now is it beyond whether part of the wintering nonvolution error or bread in autumn as wintering birds arrive. The extent to which the spring and autumn peaks rej birds is not clear, nor is it known whether part of the wintering population stays to breed. Breeding numbers had increased through the 20th century, though erratically; between 1946 and 1966, breeding

preeding numbers had increased mough the 2011 century of was confirmed in only four years, with never more than was confirmed in only four years, with never more than three pairs involved. By the time of the 1987/9 terrad three pairs involved, by the time of the 170/17 section survey, breeding was confirmed in 10 retrads though survey, orecaming was communed in 10 retrates, mongar the highest number of pairs recorded breeding in any the nighest number of pairs recorded breeding in any one year had been 14 in 1976, 12 of which were on the one year nau veen 14 in 1570, 16 01 winen were on uie heaths in the east of the county. A survey of the east nearns in uie east or me county. A survey or me east Berkshire heaths during the 1993 breeding season Derksnire nearns auring the 1772 orecums season located 15-16 pairs of Stonechats, of which 13-14 pairs located 15-10 pairs of 5tonecriats, or which 15-14 pairs bred raising 35-38 young. A similar survey in 2007 located up to 26 pairs in the same area. Away from the tocarea up to 20 parts in the same area. Away from the heathlands, there were two pairs in small areas of scrub heatmands, there were two pairs in small areas of scrub on the Gillette Way Industrial Estate in Reading in on the Guietre Way industrial Estate in resaming in 1986, one of which was seen carrying food during May.



In some years, winter influxes are quite marked. In 1976/7, there were at least 20 birds in west Berkshire, including eight at Brimston Ground Dire 20 in mid Backshire and course at Wavelauer Ground Dire in der In some years, winter influxes are quite marked. In 19/6//, there were at least 20 birds in west Berkshire, including eight at Brimpton Gravel Pits, 20 in mid-Berkshire and seven at Wraysbury Gravel Pits in the area to Contamine and early Ormbur 1080 these more or laser 15 or seven eigen industries in constant or provider at

including eight at Brimpton Gravel Pits, 20 in mid-Berkshire and seven at Wraysbury Gravel Pits in the east. In September and early October 1989, there were at least 15 at seven sites, including six together at easthered Courd Die There was then a second influx in Neuromber 1980 of a further six reveals birds and east. In September and early October 1989, there were at least 15 at seven sites, including six together at Smallmead Gravel Pit. There was then a second influx in November 1989 of a further six to eight birds and more of these automa arrivals approach to remain requirer with some 13 birds burier research in tenant Smallmead Gravel Pir. There was then a second influx in November 1989 of a further six to eight birds and many of these aurumn arrivals appeared to remain to winter, with some 13 birds being present in January and February Bez 2006-8, the treat numbers of birds wintering shown in annual reneare had eigen to onmany of these aunumn arrivals appeared to remain to winter, with some 13 birds being present in January and February. By 2006-8, the peak numbers of birds wintering shown in annual reports had risen to 90-100 Birds disease from their winter coarters after February and an increasing number are then recovered and February. By 2006-8, the peak numbers of birds wintering shown in annual reports had risen to 90-100. Birds disperse from their winter quarters after February and an increasing number are then reported

100. Ditus usperse nom men w from traditional breeding areas. Ringing evidence is so far limited to the recovery Ringing evidence is so tar limited to the recovery at Finchamstead in March 1992 of a bird ringed in

Strathclyde in August 1991. The Historical Atlas indicates that the Stonechat ine Historical Arias indicates that the Stonechar was uncommon in Berkshire in the 19th century, was uncommon in berksnire in the 19th century, although Noble (1906) states that it was resident in autougn 1 woor (1 200) states that it was resident in many parts of the county. In contrast to the current nany parts of the county. In contrast to are current partern, it was then less common in winter than in pattern, it was user ass common a more records summer. There were breeding or summering records summer, there were occurring or summering record in the 1930s and 1940s from Crookham Commor in the 1930s and 1940s ironi crooknam commun, Bradfield, Burghfield, Twyford, Wellington College, Bradheid, Burghneid, Iwytord, Weinngron Conege Pinkneys Green, Eron and Slough Trading Estate.

Many species illustrated with colour photographs

The Birds of Berkshire will be a book of approximately 450 pages in a large colour format. As well as the maps, it will be illustrated with line drawings of each species and photographs of key species and the different habitats found across the county.



The Atlas project was supported by the Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC) and the NDOC (Newbury District Ornithological Club).

Charts showing patterns of occurrence



Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group

The Birds of Berkshire order form

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