

## EURING GENERAL MEETING – AUGUST 2003

### REPORT FROM BTO RINGING SCHEME (BRITAIN & IRELAND)

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#### Organisation

The Ringing Scheme in Britain & Ireland is run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The Ringing Scheme forms part of the BTO's Populations Research Department. Staff primarily involved in the Ringing Scheme are as follows:

*BTO Director* Jeremy Greenwood

*Director of Populations Research* Stephen Baillie

#### RINGING UNIT

*Head of Unit* Jacquie Clark

*Secretary* Jane Wells

#### Recoveries & Licensing Team:

*Leader* Jeremy Blackburn

*Recoveries Officers* Mark Collier

Mark Grantham

#### Data & Sales Team:

*Leader* Bridget Griffin

*Ringing Data Officer* Sue Adams

*Ringing Assistant (part-time)* Brenda Read

*Ringing Sales* Anne Trehwhitt

#### DEMOGRAPHY UNIT

*Senior Population Biologist* Rob Robinson (Ringing Research)

*Research Officer* Dawn Balmer (Organiser of CES & RAS)

#### BTO RINGING SCHEME OPERATIONS

<b>Numbers ringed</b>	Annual (2001)	648,936
	Ever (to end 2001)	30,295,091
<b>Numbers recovered</b>	Annual (2001)	10,692
	Ever (to end 2001)	582,798
<b>Number of ringers</b>	(2001)	1,967 (proportion professional less than 10%)

#### Computerisation

Recoveries of all BTO-ringed birds and all foreign-ringed birds received since 1979 (some species fully computerised) have been computerised.

Ringings for over 4.5 million birds have been received from ringers electronically. Data have been accepted electronically since 1996. For 2002, 88% of ringing data were submitted electronically by ringers. The majority of the electronic data is received via email. Ringers have been supplied with free programs (IPMR and B-RING) to allow input and submission of ringing and recovery data. IPMR is based on Access and will be demonstrated at the conference.

The remaining data coming in on paper will start to be computerised shortly and back data for Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and other species taking the same ring size have also been computerised.

Recaptures and biometrics are now also collected from ringers electronically.

## **Problems**

None

## **Finance**

Ringers pay towards cost of rings, pay for equipment and pay an annual permit fee. Other costs are met from a partnership between BTO and JNCC (Government) and by the BTO. Ring prices are based on current conservation concern of species being ringed. Where all, or most species, that have a particular ring size are of conservation concern the ring price is reduced. If only a few of the species taking a particular ring size are of conservation interest, a refund is given to ringers at the end of the year. Refunds are only given for data submitted electronically.

<b>Annual Report</b>	Published in BTO Ringing Scheme Journal Ringing & Migration.
<b>Ringers' Bulletin</b>	Published three times a year.
<b>CES News</b>	Published annually
<b>RAS Newsletter</b>	Published annually.
<b>Ringer's Manual</b>	New edition (with major revisions and additions) published December 2001.

## **BTO RINGING SCHEME RESEARCH - PROJECTS**

### **CONSTANT EFFORT SITES SCHEME (CES)**

This scheme monitors demographic changes for 25 widespread songbird species. 115 sites were operated in 2002 (with good geographical spread), with extensive flooding disrupting operation in some areas. Adult numbers were down following a poor breeding season in 2001, but productivity was generally good.

### **EURO-CES**

This is a EURING collaborative project, lead by the BTO and CRBPO. We have received the results from a detailed questionnaire from most European schemes and draft European guidelines have been produced and circulated for comment. It is hoped to publish these in the next EURING Newsletter.

### **RAS**

This project was started in 1998 to collect mark-recapture data to monitor adult survival rates for a range of species. Ringers choose their own study area and attempt to ring and retrap (or resight) all the breeding adults in the study area each breeding season. The project concentrates on species not well-monitored by CES or other types of ringing. There are now 100+ studies registered, covering around 40 species. Of these species, 50% are of current conservation concern. The first piece of analytical work using RAS data (including historical data): an analysis of temporal and geographical variation in the survival rates of Pied Flycatchers (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) will be submitted for publication shortly.

### **MIGRATION ATLAS**

*The Migration Atlas: movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland* was published last year and is a fascinating and ground-breaking account of bird movements, presenting from almost 100 years of

ringing and bringing in information from other methods of studying bird movements. A variety of statistical analyses were carried out to inform the species accounts and supporting chapters. The analyses included migratory status of species, which was linked to other characteristics of the species such as nesting behaviour and diet. Other analyses included work on temporal and spatial change in migratory behaviour and differential migration.

### **BREEDING BIRDS IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE: THEIR CONSERVATION STATUS 2001**

This major report on bird population trends is available on the BTO Website (<http://www.bto.org/birdtrends>). It includes abundance and productivity trends from CES as well as information from census schemes and nest recording.

### **BTO RINGING SCHEME RESEARCH – ANALYSES**

The ringing scheme is a key component of the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring programme and major demographic analyses of Starling, House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) have been carried out recently. These have incorporated newly developed methods to look at post-fledging and regional survival rates. All have indicated an important role for juvenile (first year) survival in determining patterns of demographic change. An analysis of Blackbird data is planned for the winter.

Ringling data have also been used to assess the practicality of measuring breeding productivity of high-arctic breeding waders by monitoring the ratio of juvenile to adults in the wintering grounds. Although a number of methodological problems had to be considered, there did seem to be meaningful variation, which merits further work on the usefulness of this technique.

A number of studies are ongoing looking at variation in biometrics, especially weight, of individuals. Work by Jacquie Clark for her masters thesis investigated seasonal changes in the weight of wintering waders, and how birds responded to severe cold weather events. The amount of fat a bird carries, and hence its weight, is subject to a number of influences including starvation and predation risk. Work in collaboration with the University of Oxford is investigating some of the complex trade-offs which affect a bird's weight gain strategy.

Jacquie Clark and Rob Robinson  
19 August 2003