

UK Biodiversity Action Plan - Call for Records!

In 1992, at the Biodiversity Convention at the Earth Summit in Rio, the UK along with 150 other countries signed a commitment to conserve biodiversity. Subsequently, this Government published a national strategy (*Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan*, 1994) and many individual habitat and species action plans have been published and are now being implemented.

However, in June 2007 a **Species and Habitats Review** was published following further research and up-to-date knowledge about the status of UK biodiversity. The UK List of Priority Species and Habitats now contains 1149 species and 67 habitats; the 1994 List of Priority Species and Habitats was 577 and 49 respectively. In effect, this is generally bad news for wildlife as the report implies that more species and habitats are vulnerable and threatened. Nevertheless, there have been some conservation successes where species have been taken off the list.

Regarding birds, the new list contains 59 species, compared to 27 on the first (1994) list. The ones that are relevant to the BOG recording area are included in the table below.

Scientific Name	Common Name	1994 List	2007 List
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Skylark	✓	✓
<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Tree pipit		✓
<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Nightjar	✓	✓
<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Lesser redpoll		✓
<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Common linnet	✓	✓
<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	Twite		✓
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Cuckoo		✓
<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Hawfinch		✓
<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	Less Spotted woodpecker		✓
<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Yellowhammer		✓
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Reed bunting	✓	✓
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Red Grouse		✓
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring Gull		✓
<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Grasshopper Warbler		✓
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Yellow Wagtail		✓
<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Spotted Flycatcher	✓	✓
<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Curlew		✓
<i>Parus montanus</i>	Willow Tit		✓
<i>Parus palustris</i>	Marsh Tit		✓
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow		✓
<i>Passer montanus</i>	Tree Sparrow	✓	✓
<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Grey Partridge	✓	✓
<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Wood Warbler		✓
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Dunnock		✓
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Bullfinch	✓	✓
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common Starling		✓
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush	✓	✓

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<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Ring Ouzel		✓
Vanellus vanellus	Lapwing		✓
	TOTAL	9	28

Species in **bold** are included on the Bradford Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Generally the 2007 list reflects the status of the species in the BOG recording area. It is not surprising that species such as **Twite**, **House Sparrow**, **Lapwing**, **Yellowhammer** and **Starling** are on the revised list as it is well known that their numbers, nationally, are declining. Twite, Lapwing and Yellowhammer have been selected as Local Biodiversity Action Plan species for the Bradford District. However, concern for **Cuckoo**, **Red Grouse** and **Lesser Redpoll** is more unexpected as these are well recorded, at least in the BOG recording area. Changes in land management practices, habitat loss and predation from grey squirrels and corvids generally account for the declines in most species; climate change (affecting food supplies) may be a significant factor in the future - this may be the reason for **Ring Ouzel** declines (according to BirdLife UK) as warmer weather is drying out ground making it more difficult to get earthworms, for example.

Of species that have appeared on both the 1994 & 2007 lists, **Skylark**, **Reed Bunting** and **Bullfinch** are again well represented in the BOG area. Lapwing, of long-term national concern, again is still relatively common though numbers are well down on previous recorded years. All of these species are showing a continued downward trend.

Species which are showing significant declines BOG-wise are **Yellow Wagtail**, **Marsh/Willow Tit**, **Wood Warbler**, **Herring Gull** and **Ring Ouzel**. You might be surprised that Herring Gull is on the revised list but numbers recorded in the BOG area have been significantly lower recently. Factors such as tighter restrictions and subsequent declines in the fisheries industry, as well as improved management of landfill sites may account for reduced numbers. Tears might not be shed for reduced numbers of this aggressive scavenger, but herring gulls need friends too!

Twite, whose English stronghold is in the South Pennines, is in even more dire straits. Research on the local population estimates that, without significant intervention, it will be extinct in this location (the Scottish population continues to be relatively robust) within 5 years. A South Pennine Twite Group has been established recently to encourage land management and other mechanisms which help the twite to survive.

House Sparrow, nationally, has been a cause for concern for some time. However, in the BOG area, both this species and **Dunnock** appear to be under recorded so it is difficult to establish their true status in the area. Cuckoo declines may be related to the decline in Dunnock, as their main host species.

In view of this disheartening news, you are urged to submit your records, in particular for the species on the above revised list, so that a more accurate picture of the local populations of these species can be made.

The Species and Habitats Review has been submitted to the Government for adoption of the findings, but this decision has yet to be made by all four Ministers of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Submit records to Mark Doveston, BOG Recorder e-mail: mark.doveston@blueyonder.co.uk