

BIRD NEWS
Vol. 24 No. 3 Autumn 2013

Indoor meeting programme winter 2013/2014

Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser survey

A review of British regional Buzzard research

Mediterranean Gull – BUDAPEST 381.336

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CBC Indoor meeting programme winter 2013/2014

Friday 4th October (AGM): Penrith UR Church 7.30pm

'The RSPB's Bowland Wader Project' - *Gavin Thomas*

Bowland's nationally important populations of breeding Lapwing, Curlew, Redshank and Snipe are declining. However, with the support of the Wader Project, numerous local farmers and landowners are managing land sympathetically for these birds and are helping to maintain and increase their populations.

Friday 15th November: Cockermouth UR Church 7.30pm

'Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks' - *Roy Atkins*

Roy used to be chairman of CBC and is now a renowned tour leader and speaker. It would be good to get a better turn out than usual for this venue so please pass the word around especially if you live near Cockermouth. Free to non-members as well.

Friday 7th February: Penrith UR Church 7.30pm

'The Ring Ouzel' - *Innes Sim*

Innes has worked on Ring Ouzels, in both an amateur and professional capacity since 1998, and completed his PhD on the ecology of the species in Glen Clunie, Aberdeenshire in 2013. He continues to attempt to understand the underlying reasons for the long term decline of this iconic upland species to this day.



Male Ring Ouzel, Innes Sim

Monday 24th February: with Kendal NHS Friend's Meeting House Stramongate 7.30pm

'A year at Leighton Moss' - *David Poole* (photographer and naturalist)

More information in the next newsletter.

Vacancies on Council: Secretary, two vice-chairmen and two members.

According to the terms of the constitution the above posts will become vacant at the AGM though there is a proviso that the current incumbents may remain another year if there are no other suitable candidates. This note is to seek nominations from members to fill these posts. According to the terms of the constitution, nominations should be submitted to the secretary not later than seven days before the AGM (i.e. by 27th September).



Juvenile Red-breasted Mergansers, Derwent Water, Dave Piercy

The survey aims to identify the current distribution and population of wintering Goosanders and Red-breasted Mergansers in Cumbria during the forthcoming winter period. Nationally significant numbers of both species winter in the county and this fieldwork project will update the previous CBC survey undertaken in 1990/91. It has become particularly urgent to assess changes in the status of sawbill ducks in Cumbria at a time when there is mounting pressure on some river systems for licences to control numbers of birds that are perceived to conflict with fishing interests.

During the original survey over 120 volunteers participated in the counts, resulting in a comprehensive coverage of all parts of the county. Since 1990/91 the Wetland Bird Survey has been extended to monitor most of Cumbria's coastline, estuaries and major lakes. However, the majority of rivers, and several smaller lakes known to be frequented by Goosanders especially, receive little attention. All offers of help with surveying sections of rivers and selected still waters will be welcome.

Observers will be asked to conduct three counts during the winter on weekends coinciding with the dates of the Wetland Bird Survey:

Sat/Sun, 9-10th November, 2013

Sat/Sun, 18-19th January, 2014

Sat/Sun, 15-16th March, 2014

However, visits made seven days before or after the recommended weekends will be acceptable.

This is a survey suitable for anyone interested in birds. Goosanders and Red-breasted Mergansers, although usually shy, are conspicuous and most freshwater habitats will be occupied by Goosanders only.

If you would like to be involved please contact one of the eight local organisers listed below. They will coordinate the survey work in the principal drainage basins and supply instructions, recording forms and maps.

Esk & Lyne:

Bob Jones, 130 Greenacres, Wetheral, Carlisle CA4 8LL
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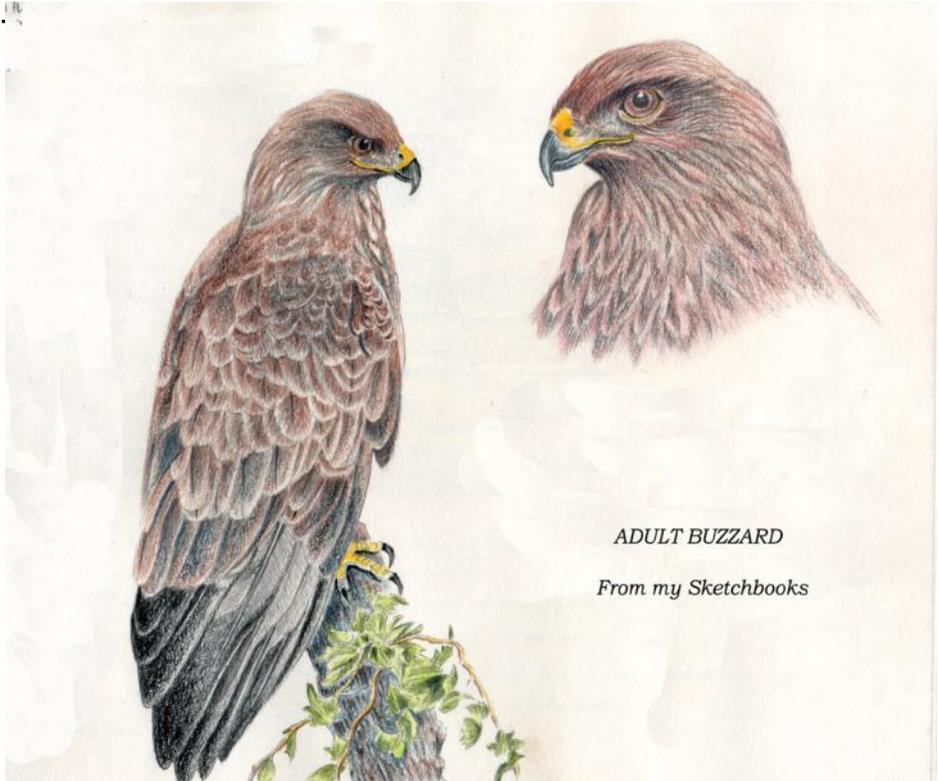
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Malcolm Priestley

A review of British regional Buzzard research



Colin Whittle

It is very easy to forget that, whilst we here in Cumbria have always enjoyed the Buzzard's soaring flight, "riding his high dream...mewing near the sun", there was a time around the turn of the twentieth century when it was very rare throughout Britain except in those western extremities which included the Lake District.

Known from fossil remains to have long been a British resident, since the fifteenth century it was subject to constant and ruthless persecution by game preservation interests, and the earliest mentions are those Parish Records detailing the numbers of birds slain in return for a penny or two. The history of its recovery and associated published research is fascinating, reflecting developments in ornithological research methodology as ecological specialisation and computer-aided statistical technology have advanced. The archives of *British Birds* and *Bird Study* between them contain most of the important research, except for more recent years when regional bird reports and journals such as *Ibis* and the *Journal of Applied Ecology, Naturalist*, etc have become repositories for such research material.

A review of British regional Buzzard research

Only material relevant to British Buzzards is considered here. The intention is more to demonstrate the various directions Buzzard research has taken than précis the articles themselves. In what follows full references are cited at the end. Amateur/unfunded work is indicated*. Because of the potential for confusion arising from pursuing a strictly chronological publishing sequence the main text is regionally based. Table 1 below shows the time scale over which research publications appeared, indicating by + the numbers of such publications per region/decade.

Decade	Cumbria	National	Devon	New Forest	West York-shire	Scotland	Wales	Dorset & Somerset	West Midlands	Suffolk
1920's	+									
1930's	+									
1940's										
1950's			++							
1960's		+	+	++		++				
1970's				+	+	++	+++			
1980's	+	+				+	++	+		
1990's			+			+++	++	+	++	
2000's		+				+		+++		+
2010's								+		

Table 1. Showing Buzzard research /publication periods in different regions of Britain

The regional accounts below follow the chronology shown in the table. It should be borne in mind that journal publication dates are not necessarily exactly contemporary with the originating research/study/survey dates - for example, it was not until 1988 that the results of the 1983 national survey were published in *Bird Study*.

Cumbria

County-based general bird/wildlife books by enthusiasts like Stokoe (1962), Hutcheson (1985) or Macpherson (1892) in respect of 'Lakeland' contain only the briefest of notes, the latter lamenting in respect of the Buzzard that "although it long held its own in many of the wilder valleys of Lakeland, at the present moment a few pairs rear their young every year among their mountain solitudes." From 1920-28 *British Birds* ran an annual series of articles entitled 'Field Notes from Cumberland', becoming 'Field Notes from Lakeland' by R.H. Brown, an enthusiast whose varied observations in respect of the Buzzards in his area foreshadow much the later nation-wide more scientifically based research projects reviewed here. Brown (1930) concludes his series with 'The Food of Certain Birds of Prey' in which he collates the relevant material from his previous offerings. It shows for the



Young at five weeks, Colin Whittle

Lakeland Buzzard a typically rodent/lagomorph based diet, but did include four Red Grouse! These were followed by Blezzard (1933) 'On the Buzzard' published in the *Transactions of the Carlisle Natural History*, providing a very generalised survey of persecution, nesting habits, notes relating to observed nests, egg to fledging, and mostly relevant to the northern fells, the Eden Valley and Pennines. During the persecution-enforced recession of the Buzzard ever westwards throughout Britain, the Lake District was regarded as one of its traditional strongholds, but other than short notes and Blezzard's 1933 article Cumbria presented a great 50-year silence in the face of other Britain-wide studies. This was remedied – to some extent – by Geoffrey Fryer's 1985 excellent contribution to the literature. This is an account of observations made over several years mainly in the South Lakes and is particularly interesting in respect of nest-marking by crag-nesters. It also discusses other aspects of breeding biology, including the use made of passerine nestlings as prey, particularly the Meadow Pipit, *Anthus pratensis*.

National Surveys

With the exception of the Fryer (1985) all the Cumbria related articles belong to the pre-National Survey period and it is now necessary to consider the one significant event which acted as a catalyst for all ensuing research. The years 1952-1955 saw the epidemic spread of myxomatosis from the Continent to Britain, decimating our Rabbit population which in many areas was totally exterminated. Having been generally accepted that the Rabbit was the staple diet of the Buzzard, the BTO accordingly launched an investigation in 1954, coordinated by N.W. Moore (Nature Conservancy). Its

findings were published in *British Birds* by Moore (1957) as the seminal article 'The Past and Present Status of the Buzzard in the UK (a Report to the BTO)'. This clearly showed how during the nineteenth century the Buzzard population had been at its lowest ever ebb, having retreated from a nationwide distribution to safer and wilder outposts in the west of Britain because of a demonstrated negative relationship with shooting/game-keeping interests.

Finally he was able to demonstrate the adaptability of the Buzzard to a wide variety of prey, compensating for the lack of Rabbits. These findings promptly triggered more detailed ecological research into the relationship between Buzzard breeding success and food resources, notably in Devon. (Interestingly, it took some time before myxomatosis achieved epidemic proportions in parts of the Lakes. In the Duddon Valley, for example, where I had worked with the Forestry Commission, it did not become rife until 1972. Stokoe in 1972 (*pers.comm*) then estimated the National Park Buzzard population at c. 260–280 pairs. A later suggested figure of 3,500 pairs in Cumbria (*The Breeding Birds of Cumbria, 1997-2001*) may be seen by some as a possible over-estimate.

The 1963 national survey (Prestit, 1965) suggested that because of toxic chemicals and increased game preservation Buzzard distribution did not differ much from the situation described and anticipated by Moore (1957), but North Westmorland was one area in which a decline was noted. The 1983 National Survey (Taylor *et al*, 1988) indicated an almost complete recovery from the slump of the 1950's with some infilling, some increases in range, but with no pioneering movement eastwards in England.

Devon

The first work was undertaken in Devon by that most dedicated and seemingly tireless of all our Buzzard ecologists, Dr. Peter Dare, producing research papers from Devon and Wales for nearly fifty years!

1957 (Dare, P.J.). 'The post-myxomatosis diet of the Buzzard, Dartmoor' is a response to the fierce controversy raging between gamekeepers, mainly, with those farmers and a large body of concerned naturalists who were determined to keep the Buzzard on the protected list. Dare's article summarises the very varied diet of the Dartmoor Buzzard, establishing small mammals as the staple diet with Rabbits, inevitably, forming only a small proportion of its diet. It also lists a wide variety of avian prey, with reptiles, amphibian and invertebrates as supplementary and important when in season (eg frogs), with even the humble earthworm taken in large quantities at times. By and large the local farming communities' attitude to the Buzzard was positive, regarding it as an ally in the battle against rodents and rabbits particularly.

A review of British regional Buzzard research

1961 (Dare, P.J). Ph.D. thesis (unpublished) at Exeter University - 'Ecological observations on a breeding population of the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, with particular reference to the diet and feeding habits.' Although unpublished, Brown (1976) describes this work as "essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the population dynamics of Buzzards or, indeed, any bird of prey. It is so much more thorough than any other published British work that it must be consulted."

1998 (Dare, PJ). A Publication in *Devon Birds* of a celebratory and comprehensive issue updating the work begun on Dartmoor in 1957. Part 1 Discusses the study area, hunting methods and diet as applied to both adults and nestlings. Part 2 is concerned with the breeding behaviour and success of 17 pairs of Buzzards over 33 km² of hill farming terrain. It describes pre-breeding territorial and courtship behaviour, nest sites and the breeding sequence through to fledging and dispersal of young, mostly before the end of October and compares pre and post-myxomatosis effects on breeding success rates. Part 3 discusses changes in population figures and breeding density, which rose from 1pair/3-4km² in early '60's following myxomatosis to 1pair/2km² by 1990. It concludes that breeding density performance matches the very successful Buzzard populations inhabiting similar upland areas in mid-Wales.

[Co-existent with this work was the research into the effects of organochlorine pesticides on some British raptors – the Peregrine is the classic case. The Buzzard, however, was not so disastrously affected as those raptors depending more on granivorous species in their diet. Brown (1976) comments that any decline in Buzzard numbers was restricted to those areas which had access to sheep contaminated by dieldrin. He also comments that of 13 territories regularly occupied up to 1960 in Cumberland only 10 were occupied in 1963 and of these only 7 had eggs.]

New Forest

1967 Saw the publication of Colin Tubbs' 1961-1966 project on the New Forest Buzzard population, to establish its size and breeding success in relation to food – the beginnings of more specialised approaches. This was a unique, relict population within an area of high game preservation, but which, because of its status as Crown Land was subject to relatively little persecution during the critical periods of the Buzzard's distributional history. Inevitably prey taken reflects the nature of the woodland habitat - young corvids and pigeons at the top of the 'regular' food table, with Rabbit and Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* at the bottom.



Young at three weeks, watching adult overhead, Colin Whittle

1972 Questioning the breeding success of his New Forest population (average clutch size 1.8 in 33 clutches in a study area of 112.5 square miles) Tubbs produced an analysis of BTO nest record cards between 1961 and 1970 in respect of clutch size to fledged young ratio and reached two important conclusions - a) that the records suggested an overall breeding success cline from south to north Britain and b) the impossibility of ascribing the poor performance of his population to either organochlorine pesticides or the myxomatosis episode of 1952-54.

West Yorkshire

1971 Both Dare particularly, and Tubbs could also be seen as pioneers in the field of what might be called serial studies in respect of the Buzzard. Long term field work had also been in progress since 1937 in the Sedburgh area at the foot of the Howgill Fells, summarised and analysed by Michael Holdsworth (1971). Twenty-five years of Buzzard breeding observations had been kept by Sedburgh School, to which Holdsworth added another six years of his own field work and data. He supported Tubbs' contention that the New Forest Buzzards' mainly avian diet failed to make good a deficiency of small mammalian prey with a consequent clutch size adjustment, and found a ready adaptability in his post-myxomatosis Buzzards to a diet of small mammals, particularly the Field Vole *Microtus agrestis*. Holdsworth went on to show an interesting correlation between Buzzard and Kestrel in that the breeding performance of both was closely linked to fluctuations in the Vole population.



Adult 'mewing' in flight, Colin Whittle

[The decline in breeding success following myxomatosis, noted by Moore, Dare and Holdsworth was inevitable when one considers the energy-economics of hunting young Rabbits at c500gm as against Field Voles at c50gm. This subsequent, post-recovery readiness to live successfully on a diet of predominantly small rodents might suggest more a return to a historically traditional diet than a successful adaptation, a view endorsed by Tubbs (*pers.comm.*1972) The Rabbit is not an indigenous species - the first introduction attempt by the Romans in the first century AD lasted no longer than their leaving in the fifth century. The permanent introduction of the Rabbit did not take place until the Norman invasions of the 11th century.]

The foundations and criteria of carefully presented field research thus firmly laid, and on the evidence of important changes taking place in respect of population and distribution, the next thirty years saw the publication of a succession of research papers relating not only to widely different areas all over Britain, but also serially within those study areas.

Scotland

Between 1971 and 1986 Douglas Weir & Nick Picozzi published four papers based on their work in Speyside, NE Scotland, 1964-1972 as follows:

1971 A breeding biology study in an area from which the Buzzard had been lost as a breeding species during the persecution mania of the 19th century, but starting to recolonise in the late 1940's. (Did not contain any detailed prey/diet analysis.)

1975 Discusses aspects of Buzzard social behaviour by means of a text and line-illustrated guide to the various modes of Buzzard 'body language' both on the ground and in the air. Use of captive birds placed in open spaces to stimulate wild-bird response [However, for a much more convincing, up-to-date, comprehensive, and better illustrated extension of the above work (in Somerset), with an excellent photographic appendix key to identifying age classes in the Buzzard see Prytherch (2009) - essential reading for all field workers!].

1976 Examines dispersal and mortality of Buzzards in the area. [see also Mead (1973)] Shocking disclosure that a total of 224 Buzzards were destroyed in one year by gamekeepers on 4 estates, with poisoning practices on 12 out of 15 estates. Colin Tubbs (1972 *pers.comm.*) estimated a 60% - 80% first year mortality, the major culprit being persecution by game shooting interests.

1983 A more statistically technical account of nest dispersion/spacing, describing modes of territory mapping and establishment as a means of understanding population control in respect of breeding success and prey availability.

Following Weir & Picozzi, studies in widely differing habitats and landscape types, covering much of the rest of Scotland were undertaken as follows:

1993 Central Highlands. A 1988/89 exercise in applying statistical method and data to computer - aided technology in respect of mapping territories, with a discussion on how habitat influences territory size, populations and distribution.

1995 NE Scotland. The results of a 12-year population study of two contrasting areas in which land-type and land-use differences determined whether Lagomorph or Vole/small bird dominated Buzzard diet. A Buzzard/Tawny Owl correlation was found in which success for both species depended on a four year abundance cycle in Voles.

1995 South Scotland. A study of the relationship between diet and breeding density with a discussion on measuring the abundance of prey available with any statistical degree of accuracy, taking Vole and Lagomorph as primary data sources. Breeding density was found to be more affected by the availability of Lagomorphs than other factors.



Young at four and ten days with failed egg and rabbit prey in nest, Colin Whittle

1997 Argyll. Data from a number of sites throughout mid Argyll were collected and compared statistically with nesting success rate data from eleven study areas throughout Britain testing Tubbs' (1972) theory of breeding success rates south to north due to a latitudinal gradient. The study concluded that habitat and prey availability are more important as determinants.

[At this juncture mention must be made of the New Naturalist volume *British Birds of Prey* (1976) by Leslie Brown, a man of immense experience and co-author with Dean Amadon of the splendid two-volume *Birds of Prey of the World* (1968). For detailed summaries and comparative discussion of research work published so far on all our British raptors, his Buzzard chapter provides an invaluable reference source if the original papers are unavailable. Tubbs' monograph, *The Buzzard*, (1974) is also highly recommended, not only for its very readable analytical description of the New Forest population, but also for its more general presentation of the Buzzard to a wider British public. There is also the delightful narrative/photographic study by Frank Wenzel, *The Buzzard* (1958) in a translation from the Danish.]

Wales

1982 (Newton *et al*). Discusses the relationship between Ravens and Buzzards to upland sheepwalk and farming with its associated forestry plantations in mid-Wales. A high availability of sheep carrion (c.5 adult carcasses and c.45 lamb carcasses per km² annually, but variable from year to year). Main Buzzard diet consisted mostly of carrion and small mammals/birds and invertebrates.

Buzzards bred over the entire area with territories as follows: 41/100km² in farmland; 24/100km² in upland sheepwalk/afforested areas and 29/100km² overall giving the highest (then) recorded densities in Britain. Unlike the Raven population, Buzzard productivity was not seen to be correlated to availability of sheep carrion.

1989 (Dare). Essentially to be seen as a preliminary to the following papers (1990 and 1995, and a later paper of 2009). Examines two contrasting study areas – 96 breeding territories within the mountain/valley system of Snowdonia (37% crag sites; 60% trees) and 62 in the Conwy valley (95% trees) between 1977 and 1985. Looks at breeding data and diet – mainly small mammals and birds; Rabbit still scarce in N Wales with sheep carrion becoming more important for nests at higher altitudes.

1990 (Dare and Barry). A study of nest dispersion/spacing as indicators of territorial behaviour by which populations are spread at optimum evenness through a suitable habitat. Use of computer-aided statistical methodology applied to field data in respect of a) finding nests and b) measuring nearest nest to nest distances. Woodland cover found to be important in montane areas of Snowdonia, with ecotone areas providing maximum prey yield. Human interference negligible. Territorial behaviour seen as prime cause of regular nest spacing.

1995 Dare takes the two previous studies forward by emphasising breeding performance in relation to size and habitat composition of territories, grouped into eight types from montane sheepwalk (400-750m) to lowland pastures below 150m with other categories for varied hill farm and moorland types.

Low breeding productivity compared with Mid Wales despite large territories, diverse habitats, secure nest sites and freedom from human interference, more likely to be due to impoverished soil, high rainfall and insufficient food resources. More recent productivity increases in parts of Snowdonia are attributed to greater availability of sheep carrion at higher altitudes following higher sheep-stocking levels.

2009 (Roberts & Jones). An ongoing study of 49 territories since 1978 in NE Wales in a low lying area of mainly farmland and improved pasture with a moorland edge, with a Buzzard population risen from five in 1988 to 49 in 2008. A predominantly statistical study of spacing and breeding production with success due to availability of food over mixed habitat types and decreasing persecution - neither factor is discussed here.

2009 (Driver & Dare). Reporting on a 1998-2007 survey over 926km² in central Snowdonia – a formidable census area consisting of mountain, sheepwalk, woodlands and farm encompassed by the settlements of Conwy, Llanrwst, Llan Ffestiniog, Porthmadoc and Bangor. The survey located a total of 244 occupied Buzzard territories, an increase of 102% over the 2003/4 population and coincident with large increases of sheep stocking densities and consequent carcass availability during the peak Buzzard breeding/lambing season. Carrion was, therefore, a major food source, not only over winter but also to feed broods. Game preservation was absent throughout the area.

Dorset & Somerset

1989 (Prytherch). An account, with distribution maps, of Buzzards, Kestrels and Sparrowhawks in the then county of Avon based on a series of annual surveys during the breeding seasons 1980 to 1984.

1995 (Walls *et al*). Challenges the traditional notion of Buzzard territoriality. A Dorset-based radio-tagging research project into first-year movement and dispersal showing that 72% of dispersing birds returned to their natal area the following season.

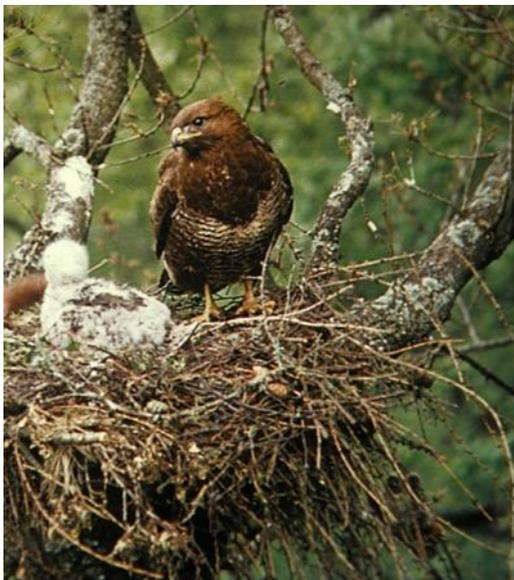
2001 (Kenwood *et al*). A radio-tagging study of the relationship between predation on released Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* and, with regard to Buzzards, the optimum placing of release pens in relation to cover for the Pheasants and observation/perching places for Buzzards.

2008 (Walls *et al*). A continuation of work first presented in Walls *et al* (1995), following movements of radio-tagged Buzzards in early life, up to four years of age.

2009 (Prytherch). A highly detailed, very finely illustrated study of Buzzard social interaction and territoriality. Part of an ongoing study of the life histories and breeding performance of a population in a study area of 75 km² near Bristol rising from 13 pairs (1 pair/5.7 km²) in 1982 to 97 pairs in 2008 – a very high density of 3 pairs/4 km².

2013 (Prytherch) A breeding biology study of a population (described in Prytherch 2009, above) achieving saturation density, from 1 pair/5.8km² in 1982 to 1 pair/0.75km² (= 105 pairs/75km²) in 2012, an increase of 700%.

The effects of such a density on breeding production in relation to both individual pairs and the population as a whole are discussed, as is the suggestion that the many incoming birds (from other high density populations) were related to already existing pairs (see Walls *et al*, 1995, above).



Adult with c. three week old young, Colin Whittle

Argues that the population ‘surge’ began in the late ‘70’s with decreased persecution, and that, with Buzzards having a potential 20+ year breeding span, such densities may well become widespread, depending on the continuation of an enlightened attitude towards raptors in general and the Buzzard in particular.

West Midlands

2000 (Sim *et al*). Examines the observed population increase during the period 1983-96 after a period of very high persecution levels in the Shropshire/Welsh borders. Soaring surveys saw increased numbers of birds from Shropshire down through Hereford and Worcester to Gloucester. Post-1950 increases in brood size were attributed to increases in the Rabbit population, whilst human persecution was 75% lower 1990-95 than 1975-89.

2001 (Sim *et al*). A highly statistical approach to establishing estimates of density and breeding success within 4 x 10km squares between Knighton (Powys) and Stourbridge (Worcs), finding a (then) record of 81 territorial pairs in 100 km² with a close correlation between fledging success and rabbit abundance – 56.1% of diet. (This is an area I know well. From 1972-75 I was involved in a study which then supported 19 territory owning Buzzards in 25km².with Rabbit at 27.4% of diet.)

Suffolk

Currently, as the Buzzard rapidly expands its range eastwards, the work goes on. In 2006 breeding Buzzards returned to an area of north-east Suffolk, (Dare, 2008) where their increasing success both in terms of population and productivity are the subject of new, ongoing research (Dare, *pers com*). After an absence of more than 100 years their return to East Anglian arable landscapes, with their history of intensive game-rearing on an almost industrial scale, puts these pioneering Buzzards on the 'front line' of topicality. Spring movements of Buzzards along the Suffolk coast have also been studied (*Suffolk Birds*, 56: 27-38).

Other Research

In contrast to work published conventionally in the appropriate printed media, other ongoing, highly technical work, based on radio-tracking of individual Buzzards, is becoming available on-line – eg “The prevalence of non-breeders in raptor populations – evidence from rings, radio-tags and transect surveys” in *Oikos* (Online), 2003, 19:2, 271-279.

Conclusion

Why is the Buzzard so assiduously studied in so many areas as this review has demonstrated? It is a very observable, charismatic bird in flight, easy to follow, almost offering itself up for research whether in a long-inhabited area or, because of its history, its appearance in new areas.

Table1 shows that some regions have been particularly responsive to such research challenges and opportunities – some long-established, others those being recolonised post-myxomatosis or post-persecution. Despite Cumbria being one of its traditional western refuges and strongholds however, there has been only one serious research article published in the major journals during the last 80 years. Why?

The argument that it's a bird we've all grown up with and tend to take for granted is rendered invalid by continuing work in Wales and the West Country where much the same could be said. The Driver and Dare (2009) survey of the Snowdonia hill and valley systems probably relates more to Cumbria than does any other work. A similar well-chosen 900km² would certainly include samples of the main Land Classification Types (over 70% of our Cumbrian population is from two Land Types alone! *Atlas*, 2002) and would provide a representative population on which to base more in-depth studies of the kinds reviewed above, thus giving Cumbria, valued as a traditional site, proper representation in the field of modern Buzzard ecology. Such work on one of our most interesting, observable and charismatic breeding birds would, I am sure, be most warmly welcomed by all concerned.

Acknowledgements

Particularly to Dr. Peter Dare whose generosity in giving me access to his personal archive with permission to photocopy is much appreciated and for his time, expertise, encouragement and constructive comments. To Robin Prytherch for making available a copy of an early article from *Bristol Ornithology*. To Julia & George Harris, Paul Stubbs and David Jenks of Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society for making items from *Devon Birds* available to me. To Alan Williams of the Welsh Ornithological Society for sending me a past issue of *Welsh Birds*, now renamed *Birds in Wales*. To Steve Hewitt of Tullie House Museum in Carlisle, for providing an article from the *Transactions of The Carlisle Natural History Society*. To Dave Shackleton for time spent on necessary editorial assistance and continued encouragement.

C. Whittle

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Mediterranean Gull – BUDAPEST 381.336



Black-headed Gull with Mediterranean Gull, Workington 28 July 2013, Steve Dutton

On July 28th 2013, I was paying a visit to the Workington breakwater, following a period of very warm weather and variable winds. There were about 15 gulls in the car park. They alighted when I drove in and I was immediately attracted to one that I thought was a Mediterranean Gull. Fortunately the gulls settled again and it was clear that it was a Mediterranean Gull. Furthermore it was not the well known Med Gull, standing on one good leg that can often be observed at this location. This gull was standing on both legs, although it walked with a slight limp!

The gull was ringed and a number of photographs were taken. “PEST .336” could be seen on the ring from the pictures that I had taken.

Another interested birdwatcher thought this could be indicative of “BUDAPEST” and verified the full ring identification a few days later as BUDAPEST 381.336.

Subsequently I submitted the details to the BTO and Hungarian Bird Ringing Centre.

Although the bird had lost its colour ring the latter confirmed that it was a first ringed as a nestling in Hungary in 2003. They also forwarded me the full recovery details and these are summarised in the table below.

Date	Location
04-06-2003 first ringed	Fejer, Hungary
12-07-2005	Boulogne area, France
03 and 07-07-2006	Boulogne area, France
22-12-2006	Cork Harbour, Ireland
18 and 21-02-2007	Newport, Pembrokeshire, Wales
18-02-2008	Cork Harbour, Ireland
04-07-2008	Oostburg, Netherlands
Various 08-11-2008 to 12-01-2009	Cork Harbour, Ireland
Various 16-10-2009 to 22-01-2010	Cork Harbour, Ireland
Various 11-10-2010 to 13-02-2011	Cork Harbour, Ireland
Various 27-10-2011 to 20-01-2012	Cork Harbour, Ireland
Various 28-07-2013 to?	Workington Harbour

It remains to be seen how long “BUDAPEST” remains in the area or moves on, perhaps back to Cork? My latest sighting to date at this location was 14th August 2013. Further records of sightings would be welcome.

*Steve Dutton,
with thanks to Robin Sellers.*



*Mediterranean Gull, Workington
28 July 2013, Steve Dutton*

Recent reports

The period covered is June to August 2013. Some of these records are unauthenticated and may require review by the Club Records Panel or British Birds Rarities Committee. Species order and nomenclature follow that used in *Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria*.

Wildfowl

An unseasonable **Whooper Swan** was at Old Sandsfield in August. A drake **Garganey** graced Ulpha Meadows on 6th June. Single **Mandarins** were on Whinfell Tarn and Windermere in August. **Common Scoters** at coastal sites included a maximum of 290 at Walney while inland there were five drakes at Wast Water in June, six birds at Killington Reservoir in July then a drake at Bassenthwaite, a female at Killington and three birds at Castle Carrock in August. A female **Ruddy Duck** at Hodbarrow on 6th July was a rare sighting post-cull. Other wildfowl counts in the period included 600 **Teal** at Wedholme Flow.

Quail to grebes

Quail were limited to a single calling at Holme Dub in June. A few **Red-throated Divers** were noted throughout the period. **Manx Shearwaters** totals included 367 at Walney and 50 at Nethertown. **Storm Petrels** appeared in June though, as has been the case in the last year or two, they were neither particularly numerous nor predictable, being limited to a maximum of five at Selker and just a single at Walney; none was reported from the usually favoured Workington. **Gannets** peaked at 120 at Walney in August. **Shag** sightings consisted of singles at Walney, Silecroft, Selker and, more unusually, roosting at Hodbarrow.

Little Egrets were present throughout the period and included site maxima of 37 on the Kent Estuary, eight at Walney, five on the Inner Solway, two on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass and one on the Esk at Longtown. A **Spoonbill** was a brief visitor to the Kent Estuary at Sandside on 12th June. Up to six **Sacred Ibis** of unknown origin frequented several sites in Furness in late July before congregating on the beach at Haverigg in late August. A juvenile **Black-necked Grebe** was found at Fisher Tarn near Kendal on 25th July.

Raptors to waders

Away from the vicinity of Grizedale Forest, **Red Kites** were seen at Mockerkin Tarn and Tindale Tarn. There were occasional sightings of **Marsh Harrier** around the Kent Estuary and the Inner Solway throughout the period followed by one that lingered at Walney in late August. The Bassenthwaite **Osprey** pair fledged two young. Elsewhere, wanderers or passage birds visited Cavendish Dock, Haverigg, Fisher Tarn near Kendal, Tindale Tarn, and the Esk at Longtown. The first **Merlin** reappeared at Walney on 25th July.



Curlew Sandpipers, Drumburgh, Darren Robson

An exceptional five **Avocets** were on the Kent Estuary at Sandside on 11th June. Away from known or possible breeding sites, single **Little Ringed Plovers** were at Walney on several dates. A **Little Stint** was found on the River Esk at Longtown on 7th June. **Curlew Sandpipers** arrived in August as an extraordinarily early juvenile at Bowness-on-Solway on 1st was followed by seven more at Drumburgh on the more normal date of 25th, then two at Wedholme Flow and a single on the Irt Estuary. **Ruff** were limited to four at Anthorn and singles at Walney and Hodbarrow. **Black-tailed Godwits** included 22 at Walney and 13 inland at Thacka Beck N.R. Penrith in July followed by 22 at Anthorn and another seven inland at Thacka Beck N.R. Penrith in August. **Whimbrel** were widespread in small numbers, by far the highest count being peaks of 27 in July and 17 in August at Walney.

Spotted Redshanks were limited to singles on the Irt Estuary and at Walney. **Greenshank** were, as usual most numerous at Walney where monthly maxima comprised 10 in July and 21 in August. Elsewhere, the best counts consisted of six at both Port Carlisle and Border Marsh. At least one **Wood Sandpiper** frequented Drumburgh Moss from 6th to 8th August while **Green Sandpipers** peaked at four at the same site. Cumbria's fourth **Spotted Sandpiper** was found at Workington harbour on 12th June but failed to linger.

Skuas to auks

Single **Pomarine Skuas**, were off Nethertown on 23rd June and Walney on 4th July. **Arctic Skuas** were more widespread with a total of 26 at Walney and a peak of five off Braystones in August plus ones and twos off several other coastal sites. **Great Skuas** were limited to two off Walney during July and a single there in August. **Kittiwakes** were recorded in unremarkable numbers with no exceptional site maxima. **Little Gulls** comprised a first-summer at Braystones in June and two birds at Port Carlisle on 6th July.

Recent reports

Mediterranean Gulls in June were restricted to a first-summer in the Lyth Valley and perhaps the same individual on the Kent Estuary. Numbers increased in July with at least five different adults on the Furness coast between Bardsea and Rampside, two adults on the Kent Estuary and single adults on the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass and at Lowca and Workington while August produced four at Workington, three, an adult and two juveniles, on the Kent Estuary and two adults at Silloth. Adult **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen on the Kent Estuary at Halforth on 26th June, Wedholme Flow on 6th July, the Esk Estuary near Ravenglass on 10th August and at Watchtree N.R. on 28th August. A juvenile **Black Tern** on the Kent Estuary on 30th to 31st August was the only one in the period. Away from St Bees Head, single **Black Guillemots** were seen at Nethertown on 21st August and, very unusually, off Bowness-on-Solway on 19th August.

Wryneck to buntings

A **Wryneck** at Torver Low Common on 31st August was a good inland find. Southbound migration was in evidence at Walney from early July with hirundines to the fore including daily maxima of 170 **Sand Martins** and 150 **Swallows** plus several **Cuckoos** and totals of six **Yellow Wagtails** and three **Grey Wagtails** while single **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Reed Warbler** and **Blackcap** were amongst a steady trickle of **Willow Warblers**.



Wheatear, Geltsdale, June 2013, Roger Ridley

Migration at Walney was generally slow in August with just a light passage noted, highlights of grounded birds included at least three **Cuckoos**, five **Whinchats**, three **Spotted Flycatchers**, two **Redstarts** and a **Pied Flycatcher** with peaks of 26 **Wheatears** and 14 **Willow Warblers**. **Common Crossbills** included 40 at Cliburn Moss and six at Wetheral Pasture. A highly unseasonable **Snow Bunting** was reported from the summit of Grisedale Pike on 26th June.

As ever, I'm indebted to all the contributors, too numerous to list individually. Feel free to send records by e-mail to ian.kinley@btinternet.com

NB *It is important that observers also submit records to the appropriate Regional Recorder at the end of the year.*

Ian Kinley

Subscriptions, Errata & Grasmere

Subscriptions

The Cumbria Bird Club 2013/2014 subscription becomes due on 1st October. You will receive a subscription form with this mailing unless you pay by banker's order. To prevent unnecessary costs, such as postage for reminder letters, please can you ensure that this is paid as soon as possible. Why not pay at the AGM!

Errata - Many apologies to Allan Hubbard who was the first treasurer of CBC not Richard Wimpres as stated in the Summer 2014 newsletter. Also apologies to Darren Robson whose photo of a Dotterel on page 50 of the Summer 2014 was incorrectly attributed to Roger Ridley.

Grasmere - anyone interested in taking on the Webs counts please contact Dave Shackleton (see inside cover).

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If you have a computer: please send contributions to Dave Piercy as e-mail attachments to daveandkathypiercy@tiscali.co.uk

If you do not have a computer: please send in as clear a format as possible to Dave Piercy,
Derwentwater Youth Hostel, Borrowdale, Keswick CA12 5UR; tel 017687 77246

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