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# Conservation Progress Report

*This contribution is the twelfth in an annual series (beginning in 1989 - Newsletter No.42) reporting on aspects of conservation affecting Hampshire's birds].*

This year's report confines attention to developments concerning the New Forest and progress with Hampshire's Biodiversity Action Plan and HOS's involvement therein.

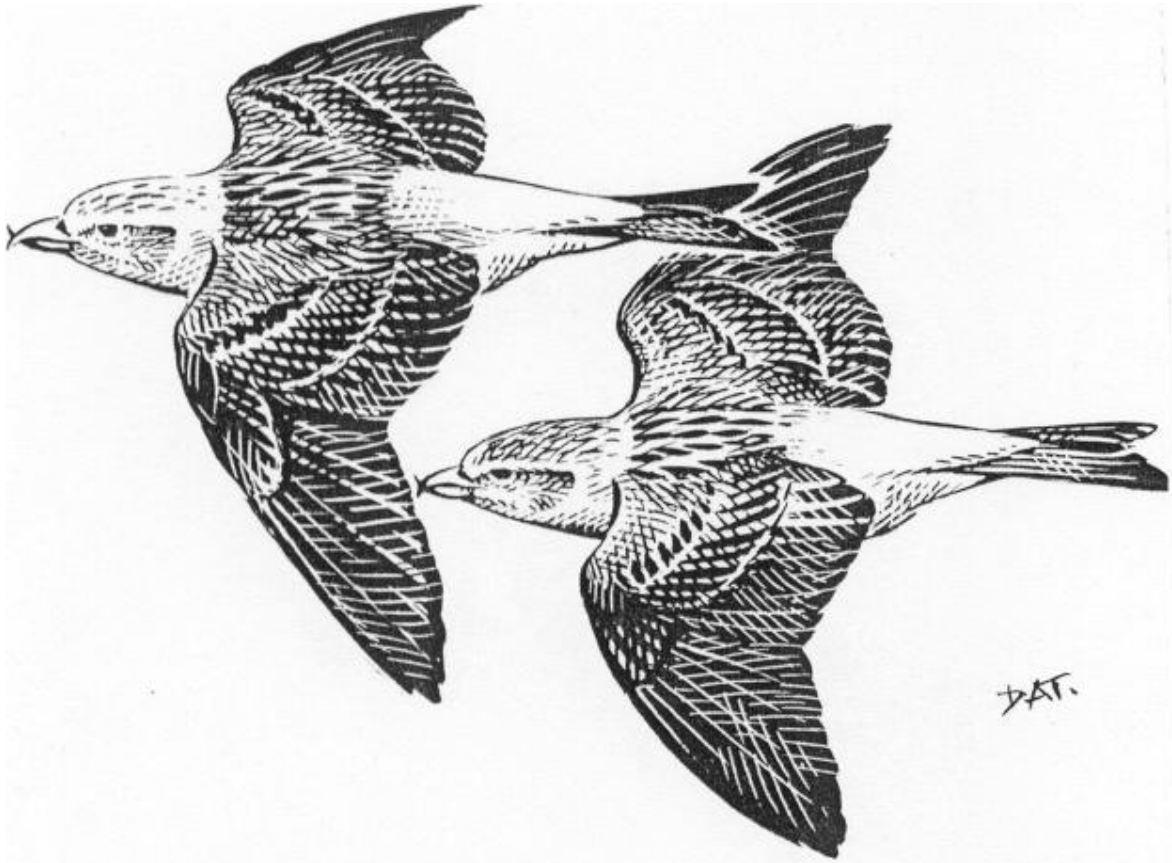
## *New Forest*

Following the announcement last September of the Government's intention to designate the New Forest as a National Park, we now have a timetable from the Countryside Agency, who have the statutory responsibility to bring the designation to fruition. Their initial work is to propose a boundary – likely to be at least as extensive as the Heritage Area – and an appropriate administrative structure. The new National Park will be progressed within the existing legislation for National Parks, but is expected to retain the Verderers' Court and other relevant existing legislation (New Forest Acts and Forestry

Acts), and reflect the Forest's special needs. Among the latter the Forestry Commission's role will continue and commoning will be supported. The proposed timetable anticipates a draft proposal identifying the boundary this Summer, with public consultation in the Autumn, formal consultation with local authorities on the revised boundary in Spring 2001 and submission of the designation order to the Secretary of State in Autumn 2001. A similar schedule will be followed with regard to the proposed administrative structure.

## *Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Hampshire*

I tried to provide some background to Hampshire's BAP in last Spring's Newsletter (No 82), noting the publication of Vol 1 of the County BAP in late 1998. Since then there have been a number of developments: Vol 2 of the County BAP, concerned with the first tranche of Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs), should appear shortly. Many species, including many of the birds, will

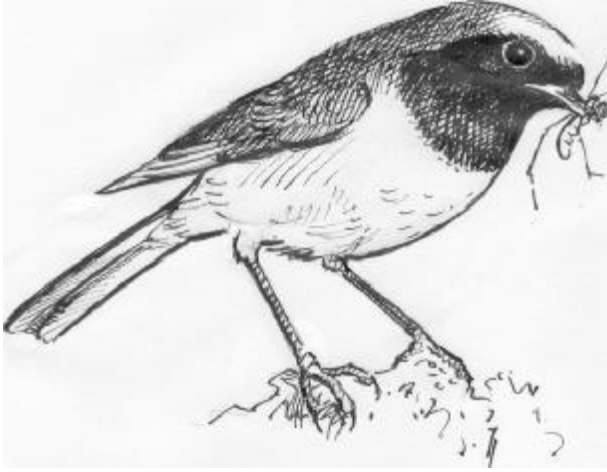


Crossbills by *David Thelwell*

not have separate, self-standing SAPs, but will be treated in Appendices to the most appropriate HAP(s). Most of the highest priority species have national SAPs in any case. The latter can be found in UK Biodiversity Action Plans (English Nature publications) in 1998 and December 1999.

An assessment of the state of the UK's birds, up to and including 1999, appears in "The state of the UK's Birds 1999" published by the BTO/RSPB earlier this year, the first of a new annual

series. One particular table in this document lists population trends for 77 species of widespread and common birds between 1970 and 1999. 19 have declined by more than 50% since 1970, including 4 farmland species – Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Grey Partridge and Turtle Dove – which have declined by more than 75%. In this table the Song Thrush, the subject of this year's joint HOS/Hampshire Wildlife Trust breeding season survey, is listed as having declined by 55%. [Don't forget to complete your



Redstart by *Sue Morrison*

Song Thrush Record Form(s)!]  
By contrast, at the other end of the scale, Collared Doves have increased by nearly 800%, and it is gratifying to see that two widely distributed raptors, Sparrow Hawk (162%) and Buzzard (224%) have shown significant and welcome increases.

Last year's suggestion that HOS should be sub-contracted to make a major contribution to Action Plans for birds has resulted in HOS becoming the lead technical partner for birds in the County BAP process. Sites Register Survey data will be incorporated. Further offers of help with the Sites Register Survey will be welcomed by John Wood.

The progress report on HOS's future strategy for Survey and Monitoring – which was

distributed at the AGM on 1 April 2000 – is printed on the preceding pages. This indicates the intention to focus effort primarily towards those species on the County BAP list, without compromising our ability to continue to contribute to national surveys or to investigate other species which show signs of significant population change in the county.

As always, thanks for help during the past year go to many people, but especially those in the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, in the RSPB's South-East England Office, Robin Saunders (back, after Roger Harris left the County) for keeping an eye on developments along the NW Solent shore and Jess Pain for input concerning the Avon Valley. Background information comes from a much wider range of sources, including the County Council ecologists, Environment Agency and English Nature staff. Any resulting errors or confusion are mine.

*Norman Pratt*