

Rare Birds in Belgium in 2014/2015

Report of the Belgian Rare Birds Committee

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and the members of the BRBC



***New species for Belgium: Moustached Warbler* *Acrocephalus melanopogon*. 7 June 2015, Pepingen (VB) (Picture Edwig Vanhassel)**

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Abstract – rare birds in Belgium in 2014/2015

*This report of the Belgian Rare Birds Committee (BRBC), dealing with 2014 and 2015, concerns a total of 302 records of rare birds in Belgium, divided into 81 (sub)species. The vast majority refers to 2014 and 2015; a minority to previous years. 239 records have been accepted into category A, 26 in category E and 37 records have been rejected. One new species, Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, is added to the Belgian list. For another species, Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*, a new first record from December 2012 predates the previous one from 2013.. Remarkably, the vast majority of records that were assessed for this report has not been sent in directly to the BRBC by the observers, but has been collected through the national bird observation databases.*

Introduction

This is the report of the Belgian Rare Birds Committee (hereafter: BRBC), dealing with records of rare bird species and subspecies that were recorded in Belgium in 2014 and 2015. It also contains records of earlier years that have not yet been published before. Some records from 2014 and 2015 are still pending and are not dealt with in this report. These records will be published in our next report.

The BRBC may be the new, recently created rarity committee for Belgium (see more on this below). But assessing records of rare birds and publishing them in a report is by far no novelty in Belgium. The BRBC is the successor of the two national rarity committees that dealt with these tasks before. For the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, this used to be done by the Belgische Avifaunistische Homologatie Commissie (BAHC). For the French speaking part of the country, the Commission d'Homologation (CH) was in charge of this. The first report of the CH dates back to 1964. The BAHC started in 1967. For many years, both committees worked separately and produced their own reports, with a good cooperation between them. This situation was not deemed ideal, and the preparations for a fusion of both committees started in 2013. On January 1st 2015, the BRBC formally kicked off as the new rarity committee for Belgium. From now on, national rarities will be assessed by one single committee and there will be one single annual report. This report will be published in English on our website. Dutch and French versions will be made available in the magazines *Natuur.oriolus* and *Aves*.

The work of a rare birds committee is largely dependent on the activity of birdwatchers. In recent years, the outlook of this activity has changed significantly with the arrival of new online observation databases where observers can easily insert their observations. Not too long ago, even if there were databases, rare birds records were not available online and it could take a long time before the information was spread amongst the birding community. Records were sometimes made public weeks or months afterwards. It was not an easy task for a rare birds committee to gather all the necessary information about rare bird records. There was a great dependency on the willingness of observers to provide this information.

With the new online recording tools a revolution has been in its way. Nowadays, records of rare birds are much more visible now and more details are given about them quickly after their discovery. In Belgium, this revolution started in 2008, with the setting of the national recording database: www.waarnemingen.be / www.observations.be. Eight years later, this online database has become a mainstream tool for observers in Belgium. Indeed if the vast majority of rare birds are reported through this database, we must stress that it is not the only one available. Hence, we strongly encourage every observer of a rare bird, as well as ringers, to either report their observation on www.waarnemingen.be / www.observations.be or to submit their data directly through our website (<http://www.belgianrbc.be>)



Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*. 8 - 16 November 2014, Mortsel, Trektelpost Zigeuner (A). First calendar year (Picture Kris De Rouck)

Recent decisions and developments

The following decisions and developments by the BRBC are worth mentioning:

1. Nine species dropped from the homologation list

Due to our new, higher threshold for what is considered a rare species, no less than nine species were dropped from the homologation list as of January 1, 2015: Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* and Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*. This is quite a big step, as it constitutes by far the largest number of species ever to be dropped at once from the list. The BRBC will still assess records from these species from before January 1st 2015 and welcomes observers to send in such older records. The specificity of this publication dealing with both 2014 and 2015, means that for these species only records of 2014 will be included. The record count for these species will show a blank ('-') for 2015. See Faveyts W. & Vanhove F. (2015) for more details.

2. A new logo

A fresh start calls for a fresh outlook. The BRBC has an all new logo, showing a White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*. It is proudly displayed at the head of this report and will be featured in all our future communications. The logo was adopted after a contest for which we received 10 proposals. The winning artist is Isabelle Pierdomencio ('Isapi'). The BRBC expresses its warm thanks to all participants and congratulates the winner!

3. A new online assessment tool

The online database www.waarnemingen.be / www.observations.be is not only very valuable when it comes to detecting records of rare birds. It has also been turned into a great assessment tool for the BRBC. In close

cooperation with Natuurpunt Studie, Natagora and Stichting Natuurinformatie, a section of the online database has been created which allows records of rare birds to circulate among the members of the BRBC and to be assessed by them close to real time.

What makes a rare bird species?

What bird species are considered to be rare in Belgium so that their records will be assessed by the BRBC? A species is considered to be a national rarity if there has been an average of maximum three accepted records per year over the previous 10 years period, so a maximum of 30 accepted records in total for that period or with no records in at least 3 out of these 10 years. The latter should prevent species reaching Belgium in high numbers only during exceptional influxes (for example Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*) to be treated as candidates for removal from the list. The fairly long period of 10 years should guarantee a stable trend of the rarity status of a species. The same rule applies to rare subspecies. The BRBC will annually review the list of homologation species to check if species still meet the current threshold.

The updated list of homologation species can be checked on our website: <http://www.belgianrbc.be>.



Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*. 14 February 2016, Hermalle-sous-Argenteau (Lg) (Picture Vincent Legrand)

How to submit a rare bird report to the BRBC

As stated before, observers of rare birds in Belgium are advised to report their observations either directly to the BRBC through the online tool available on <http://www.belgianrbc.be>, or through the database www.waarnemingen.be / www.observations.be. It is kindly requested to provide as much information as possible for each record, such as a description and if possible photographs, sketches, sound recording and any other source of information that can allow the members of the committee to assess the record with optimal and objective information. A written description is always of great value even if it accompanies a set of pictures or a sound recording.

The revolution of online reporting of rare birds has forced the BRBC to adjust its methods when it comes to gathering rare bird records. Not too long ago, obtaining records was a matter of observers actively sending in their reports to the rare bird committee. Nowadays, the committee plays an active role in seeking out actively rare bird records on the national records database where the vast majority of rare birds are now expected to occur

The BRBC holds good contacts with the manager of the Belgian Bird Ringing Centre from the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, M. Didier Vangeluwe, This is crucial to get the full picture of all rare birds reported in our country where an active ringing community catches and rings thousands of birds each year, including a fair share of rarities.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, the BRBC wishes to thank the following endorsing institutions: the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Natuurpunt Studie and Aves-Natagora.

More acknowledgments go to the photographers who provided us with pictures of rare birds for this report.

Last but definitely not least: we wish to thank all the observers for submitting their records of rare birds in one way or another.

BRBC members

The following persons are member of the BRBC and have assessed all records in this first report, in alphabetical order: Peter Collaerts, Miguel Demeulemeester, Joris Elst, Wouter Faveyts, Tom Goossens, Raphaël Lebrun, Pierre Loly, Thibault Mariage, Laurent Raty and Frédéric Vanhove.

2014 and 2015 in a nutshell

Highlights of 2014 and 2015 can be summarized as:

- The following new species were added to the Belgian list: Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* in 2012 (first in retrospect) and Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* in 2015.
- Second records were accepted for Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, both following shortly after their first record. The fourth record of a Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* The fifth record of a Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* and of a Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* whose last sighting was from 1998.
- The first record of Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* since 1988.
- Record numbers in one year were obtained for Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (2014), Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2015) and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (2015).
- Notable influxes were recorded of Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* (2015), Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (2015), White-headed Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus caudatus* (2015 - the latter still under review).
- High numbers of Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* (2015), Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (2014), Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (2015) and Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (2014 and 2015).
- Two records of Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*.

- Second spring record for Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*.
- 3 more Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* added to the influx in winter 2013-2014.
- A much a debated thrush in Loppem (W) in December 2010 – January 2011 turned out to be a hybrid Black-throated/Red-throated/Dusky/Naumann Thrush *Turdus* complex.
- There were some noticeable E-category record of Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* and Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*.



Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*. **14 May 2014, Mazée (N). Second calender year male (Picture Alain De Broyer)**

Use of the systematic list in this report

Taxonomy and species names

The BRBC follows the taxonomic rules of the AERC TAC (the taxonomic committee of the Association of European Records and Rarities Committees – <http://www.aerc.eu/tac.html>).

Scientific and english bird names follow the AERC TAC WP Bird List, most recently updated in July 2015.

Record information

Every record in this systematic list contains the following information:

- 1) The date(s) of the record.
- 2) The name of the area of the record, if such an area name is specifically known.
- 3) The name of the municipality of the record if known. The smallest municipal unit is used: officially named parts of municipalities will be used where possible. Names of municipalities must be indexed on the most recent municipality map. Names of locations are provided in Dutch when situated in the Flemish Region, in French when situated in the Walloon Region and in Dutch and French when situated in the Brussels Capital Region. Although, this hardly ever occurs anymore in modern times, a record is also acceptable when it is only known to be from a particular Belgian province, without reference of its exact municipal location. In this case, the name of the province is given.
- 4) The number of birds of the record.
- 5) Information about sex, age and/or plumage of bird(s) of the record, when available.
- 6) The name of the person who submitted the record directly to the BRBC. In case of a record that has been retrieved from the www.waarnemingen.be / www.observations.be database, without any extra information provided by the discoverer and/or observer(s), the BRBC is considered to be the reporter. In that case, no observer is mentioned at the end of the record.

Signs and abbreviations

Belgium has 10 provinces. The Brussels Capital Region is treated as a separate 11th unit.

(A)	Antwerpen	(Lx)	Luxembourg
(Br)	Brussels Capital Region	(N)	Namur
(BW)	Brabant Wallon	(O)	Oost-Vlaanderen
(H)	Hainaut	(VB)	Vlaams-Brabant
(L)	Limburg	(W)	West-Vlaanderen
(Lg)	Liège		

Sex, Age & Plumage

m.	male
f.	female
1cy, 2cy, ...	first calendar year, second calendar year, ...
1cy+, 2cy+, ...	first calendar year or older, second calendar year or older, ...
ad.	adult
juv.	juvenile
imm.	immature
br.	breeding plumage
wi.	winter plumage
ec.	eclipse plumage

Cardinal points are marked as N=North, S= South, E= East and W=West

Count

For most species, the bird name is followed by four figures in brackets:

1. Number of individuals from 1800-1949;
2. Number of individuals from 1950-2013;
3. Number of individuals from 2014/2015; for species that have been dropped from the list of homologation species from January 1, 2015 onwards, the figure for 2015 is marked as '-'.

These figures are to be considered correct once published in a report. However, due to the ongoing work of the BRBC, older records may be accepted after our publication. Therefore, it is advisable to use the database on the BRBC website as the prime source of information about the exact account of records for a particular species.

Systematic list

1. Accepted records

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (1, 163, 0/2)

25 January 2015, Wuustwezel (A), 1

21 - 25 February 2015, Stuivekenskerke (W), 1 ad.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (1, 80, 3/2)

28 November 2011 - 15 January 2012, Bredene and Uitkerke (W), 1 1cy

17 February - 24 March 2012, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1 ad.

9 November 2014 - 11 January 2015, Knokke-Heist, Het Zwin - Kleyne Vlakte (W), 1

23 November - 10 December 2014, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1 ad.

16 December 2014 - 6 February 2015, Stuivekenskerke (W), 1 ad.

21 November 2015 - 22 January 2016, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 2

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (0, 20, 1/0)

31 December 2014 - 17 January 2015, Handzame, Handzamebroeken - Kortemark (W), 1 m. ad.

Baikal Teal *Anas Formosa* (1, 3, 1/0)

30 March - 18 April 2014, Woumen, Spaarbekken (W), 1 m. ad.

Yet another record of this eastern Asian duck. After two old records from 1988 and 1962, there have now been three accepted records since 2010.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* (0, 25, 1/2)

13 April 2014, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1 m.

18 January - 22 March 2015, Zonhoven, Wijvenheide - Zuid (L), 1 m.

2 - 6 April 2015, Kleine Netevallei, Viersels Gebroekt (A), 1 m.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (0, 17, 1/1)

10 - 12 September 2014, Rangeerstation Antwerpen-Noord, De Kuifeend (O), 1

10 - 15 June 2015, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1 m. ad.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (0, 28, 1/0)

6 - 24 May 2014, Kuringen, Herkenrode (L), 1 m. ad.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 3, 1/0)

27 - 31 December 2014, Cerfontaine, Plate-Taille (H), 1 m. 1 cy

The fourth record and the first for Wallonia. It can be no coincidence that this bird was found on the largest lake in Belgium, the dammed lake of Plate-Taille, an excellent location for diving waterfowl that regularly attracts scoters and loons. All birds in Belgium so far have been males.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (0, 28, 1/0)

11 September 2013, De Panne, Telpost Witte Berg (W), 1

5 November 2014, Nieuwpoort (W), 1

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* (0, 67, 1/-)

11 September 2013, Mariakerke (W), 1

11 September 2013, De Panne (W), 1

9 September 2014, Noordzee (W), 1

This is the last time that this species will appear in a Belgian rarity report. From January 1st 2015, Balearic Shearwater is no longer considered. Two more accepted records for 2013 lift the total for that year to four. Only one record for 2014, the last homologation year, is a low profile goodbye. The species is regular in considerable numbers along the northern French coast and fair numbers are annually seen along the Dutch coast. A regular occurrence in Belgian waters is to be expected. The species is probably under detected due to limited seawatching efforts, especially during the summer months.

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (5, 82, 1/3)

8 December 2014, Middelkerke (W), 1

6 September 2015, Oostende (W), 1

22 November 2015, De Panne (W), 1

29 November 2015, Noordzee (W), 1

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (4, 39, 2/1)

9 - 29 June 2014, Kruikebeke, Kruikebeke Polder (O), 1 ad. br.

7 - 29 July 2014, Harchies, Marais (H), 1 ad. wi.

31 May - 3 June 2015, Lummen, Schulensbroek (L), 1 ad. br.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (72, 57, 20/4)

1 January-21 December 2014, marais d'Harchies, Bernissart (H), 1 still on this site since 5th October 2013, joined by a second individual from 16th February-23rd August, then by a third ex. from 4th May-11th July. At the end of March and into the second half of April, two of these birds showed courtship and breeding behavior (carrying potential nesting material, mating attempts) on various dates, but no serious breeding attempt was detected (report BRBC)

5 January 2014, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1

10 - 13 January 2014, Wichelen, Bergenmeersen (O), 1

18 January - 1 July 2014, Gent, Bourgoyen (O), 1 imm.

8 February - 23 April 2014, Kinrooi, Stramprooierbroek (L), 1

18 May - 8 July 2014, Gent, Bourgoyen (O), 1 ad. br.

2 June - 6 July 2014, Bocholt, Smeetshof (L), 1

16 - 26 June 2014, Wintam, Noordelijk Eiland (A), 1

27 July 2014, Bree, De Luysen-Mariahof (L), 1

21 August 2014, Veurne, De Moeren (W), 1

3 September 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Rotem - Bichterweerd (L), 1

10 - 19 September 2014, Varsenare, Kwetshage (W), 2

31 October - 3 November 2014, Wintam, Noordelijk Eiland (A), 1

16 November 2014 - 5 April 2015, Ploegsteert, Briqueteries (H), 1

23 November 2014, Mechelen, Mechels Broek (A), 1

24 November 2014 - 7 February 2015, Zeebrugge, Achterhaven (W), 1

21 December 2014 - 5 April 2015, Ploegsteert, Briqueteries (H), 1

24 August 2015, Achterhaven, Weiden Hoge Noen (W), 1

5 - 10 September 2015, Kieldrecht, Drijdyck (O), 1

19 September 2015, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1

1 - 8 November 2015, Wervik, De Balokken (W), 1

With 16 records of 17 birds, 2014 sets a new high for the number of accepted records in one year. It comes only one year after the previous record in 2013, a clear testimony of the rising fortunes of this species in northwestern Europe. It is even conceivable that this species could become a national breeding bird. The behaviour of two of the Harchies birds in Spring 2014 has proved this. Despite record number of accepted records, the number of birds involved per record is low. Record years when it comes to the number of birds

involved are still 1903 and 1932, when groups of 30 and 25 birds showed up. With increasing numbers it is getting difficult to keep track of all the records, as the birds can move around between sites. It's likely that the trend will continue, which would mean that Glossy Ibis will probably soon disappear from the list of homologation species.



Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*. **16 September 2014, Bazel (O)** (Picture Johan Buckens)

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (0, 13, 1/3)

15 - 16 September 2014, Bazel, Bazelse Kooi (O), 1 ad.

8 May 2015, Thommen, Etang (Lg), 1 (report Raphaël Thunus)

20 August 2015, Harsin (Lx), 1

10 - 11 November 2015, Doel, Prosperpolder Zuid (O), 1 ad.

After the first record in 1992, all records of this small southern raptor have been since 2005. With records from 8 out of 10 Belgian provinces, Black-winged Kite can clearly show up anywhere. Typically, birds never stay around for long, just for 1-2 days.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (31, 142, 7/-)

16 March 2014, Sint-Amands (A), 1

29 March 2014, Awenne (Lx), 1

30 March 2014, Sourbrodt, Plateau des Hautes-Fagnes (Lg), 1

2 May 2014, Bree, De Luysen-Mariahof - Grote Luysvijver (L), 1

21 June 2014, Kalmthout, Grenspark De Zoom/Kalmthoutse Heide (A), 1 imm.

27 August 2014, Kalmthout, Grenspark De Zoom/Kalmthoutse Heide (A), 1 imm.

11 September 2014, Gent, Bourgoyen (O), 1

2014 was the last homologation year for White-tailed Eagle. Seven accepted records are well above the rare species threshold, confirming that this is no longer a truly rare bird. Hopefully, the continuing increase in northern Europe will make this a regular species. Despite the increase, there are still no areas in Belgium where White-tailed Eagle is a regular annual (wintering) visitor.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* (3, 305, 7/62)

19 May 2014, Jette (RB), 1 (report Thibaud Vandaudenard)
 31 May - 3 June 2014, Wuustwezel (A), 1
 8 June 2014, Alken (L), 6
 1 June 2015, Rillaar (VB), 2
 1 June 2015, Tienen, Bezinkingsputten (VB), 1
 7 June 2015, Willebroek (A), 5
 13 June 2015, Kruikebeke (O), 5
 27 June 2015, Geel, Zammelsbroek (A), 47
 21 July 2015, Mechelen, Mechels Broek (A), 2
 Griffon Vultures are annual visitors in Belgium since 2001, with no accepted records only for 2004 and 2005 since then. 2015 was the second best year, after 2007 (enormous influx of 212 birds). The photographically documented flock of 47 birds at Geel on 27 June is remarkable.

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (4, 86, 5/-)

18 - 19 April 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Rotem - Bichterweerd (L), 1
 13 July 2014, Dion (N), 1
 13 July - 1 September 2014, Wichelen, Kalkense Meersen (O), 1
 3 August 2014, Jette, Bois du Laerbeek (RB), 1
 28 September 2014, Retie, Schoonbroek (A), 1 juv.

Five accepted records for its last year as a homologation species is actually a fairly mediocre appearance for Short-toed Snake Eagle according to modern standards. April records are early for this species in Belgium. Most records are of immature birds showing up in late Spring or Summer.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (13, 71, 11/-)

7 April 2014, Kalkense Meersen, Molenmeers (O), 1 m. ad.
 12 April 2014, Arquennes (H), 1 m. ad. (report Roland de Schaetzen)
 13 April 2014, Gruitrode (L), 1 m. ad.
 17 April 2014, Zeebrugge, Achterhaven - Rietveld Pelikaan (W), 1
 21 April 2014, Lier/Anderstad, Beneden Netevallei (A), 1 m. 2cy
 26 April 2014, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1 f. ad.
 2 - 11 September 2014, Sombreffe (N), 1 m. 2cy
 4 September 2014, Laar (VB), 1 f. 2cy (report BRBC)
 5 September 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Rotem - Bichterweerd (L), 1 1cy
 5 September 2014, Vechmaal (L), 1 m. ad.
 7 September 2014, Mellet (H), 1 m. ad.

A total of 11 accepted records makes it clear that Pallid Harrier is rightfully deleted from the list of homologation species for the time being. With a regular passing of birds in both spring and autumn, this species has obviously become a very scarce passage migrant instead of a rarity. The high number of males among the accepted records probably indicates that females and young are overlooked passing undetected as an assumed Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* or Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (0, 2, 0/0)

1 December 2012, Hodister (Lx), 1

The first record of Long-legged Buzzard for Belgium was only accepted in 2013. It turns out that this was actually the second one. A buzzard first reported as a Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* on 1 December in the southeast of the has been reidentified as the first Long-legged Buzzard thanks to a single photograph. Both records have been along the eastern border, a clear indication of where these birds come from and an incentive to pay close attention to the (many) Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in that part of the country.

Greater/Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga/pomarina* (0, 0, 0/1)

26 October 2015, Bocholt (L), 1

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* (9, 3, 0/1)

17 May 2015, Vierves-sur-Viroin (N), 1 imm.

A fly-over immature Golden Eagle, photographically documented, constituted the first record since 1988! Nine of the thirteen accepted records are from before 1950. This reflects that this species used to be more common and much more widely distributed in Europe at the time, also occurring in lowland areas. Golden Eagles are

slowly increasing in some parts of western Europe, like France (Clouet & Couloumy 2015) and Denmark (webref. 1), but the picture is not bright everywhere, as in Germany where the population is struggling (Gedeon *et al.* 2014).

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* (0, 17, 1/0)
22 April 2014, Galmaarden (VB), 1

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (0, 1, 1/0)
14 May 2014, Mazée (N), 1 m. 2cy
Only one year after the first record, here comes the second record of the species for the country.

Little Crane *Porzana parva* (4, 39, 1/0)
31 March 2014, Lorcé (Lg), 1 m. ad.

Baillon's Crane *Porzana pusilla* (4, 26, 0/2)
2 June 2015, Zonhoven, Wijvenheide - Zuid (L), 1 m.
15 August 2015, Mechelen, Mechels Broek (A), 1 ad. trapped
The first records since 2007. This species has proven to be a regular breeding bird in the Netherlands in recent years, with up to 38 territories in the bumper year 2012 and around 20 territories in both 2013 and 2014 (Boele *et al.* 2016). In 2012, there was also a record number of 6-11 singing Baillon's Cranes in Great Britain (Ausden *et al.* 2013). It is likely that this secretive species is being overlooked (and overheard) in Belgium.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedichnemus* (9, 68, 4/2)
15 April 2003, Eghezée-Longchamps, Décanteurs (N), 1 (report Raphaël Lebrun)
17 April 2014, Bredene, Spanjaardduinen (W), 1
29 April 2014, Vellereille-Le-Sec (H), 1
9 May 2014, Eben-Emael (Lg), 1
15 July 2014, Oostende, Havengebied (W), 1 trapped
20 May 2015, Harmignies (H), 1
8 June 2015, Buvingen (L), 1
Together with an old record from 2003, this reports adds no less than seven accepted Eurasian Stone-curlews to the Belgian list. Records of this species are clearly on the increase. This reflects a population increase in Great Britain in the past decades (Holling *et al.* 2015), a large and stable French population breeding quite close to the Belgian border and with local increases in the north (Barnagaud & Caupenne 2015) and a return as a breeding bird in Germany since 2011 (König & Stübling 2015).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (1, 3, 1/0)
29 November - 03 December 2014, Overijse, Terlanenveld (VB), 1 1cy
The fifth Black-winged Pratincole for Belgium was a confiding first calendar year in late Autumn. The bird was obviously not very healthy and did not leave Belgium: it was caught by a predator on the last day of its stay.



Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*. 29 November - 3 December 2014, Overijse, Terlanenveld (VB), First calendar year (Picture Vincent Legrand)

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (0 82, 4/-)

18 - 19 May 2014, Berlare, Scheldebroeken (O), 1 ad. br.
 21 - 23 May 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Bichterweerd (L), 1 ad. br.
 28 September - 7 October 2014, Woumen, IJzerbroeken (W), 1 juv.
 5 - 7 October 2014, Zeebrugge, Achterhaven - Hoge Noen (W), 1 juv.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (4, 27, 1/0)

18 - 19 May 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Bichterweerd (L), 1 ad. br.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (0, 35, 0/7)

22 April 2015, Kieldrecht, Putten West (O), 1
 25 April 2015, Drongen, Assels Zuid (O), 1
 26 April 2015, Koningshooikt (A), 1
 14 - 15 May 2015, Doel, Prosperpolder Noord (O), 1
 26 - 27 May 2015, Zwijndrecht, Broedvlakte (A), 1
 29 May - 2 June 2015, Tienen, Het Aardgat (VB), 1
 14 June 2015, Heurne, Dal (O), 1
 After a blank year in 2014, a Spring influx of seven birds in 2015 came as a surprise.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (0, 19, 1/2)

4 - 7 August 2014, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W), 1
 28 May 2015, Kessenich, Dal van de Grensmaas - Kleizone (L), 1 ad.
 25 - 29 July 2015, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W), 1



Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*. **8 - 10 May 2015, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W)** (Picture Filip De Ruwe)

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (0, 4, 0/1)

8 - 10 May 2015, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W), 1

Only the fifth record for Lesser Yellowlegs and the first since 1998 was a very welcome one for many birders. The big rarity of this species in Belgium is in sharp contrast with the annual occurrence in most neighbouring countries like the Netherlands, Great Britain and France. The comparison with the Netherlands, for example, is very striking. At the time of the first Belgian record in 1983, our northern neighbour had only two accepted records. Things have moved ahead since, with 40 records up to 2015, and an amazing total of no less than nine birds in 2014 and 2015 (webref. 2)!

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (4, 217, 4/-)

19 - 23 April 2014, Gaurain-Ramecroix, Décanteur (H), 1 ad. br.

19 April 2014, Mechelen, Mechels Broek (A), 1 ad. br.

8 - 12 May 2014, Sint-Truiden, Bernissem (L), 1 ad. br.

30 May 2014, Gent, Bourgoyen (O), 1

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (0, 112, 5/4)

26 - 27 May 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Bichterweerd (L), 1 ad. br.

22 - 23 August 2014, Torhout (W), 1 juv.

2 - 8 September 2014, Zeebrugge, Achterhaven - Hoge Noen (W), 1 juv.

5 - 7 September 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Bichterweerd (L), 2 juv.

23 August 2015, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W), 1 1cy

24 August 2015, Lier, Anderstad (A), 1 1cy

25 - 28 August 2015, Lokeren, Molsbroek (O), 1 1cy

1 October 2015, Berlare, Scheldebroecken (O), 1 1cy

Two fairly good years for Red-necked Phalarope, with a typical prominence of Autumn records in August and September. Autumn records make up 71% of the Belgian records of this species, with September as the best month and August as the second best.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0, 25, 0/1)

7 - 8 February 2015, Cerfontaine, Plate-Taille (H), 1 ad. wi.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* (2, 58, 4/7)

21 - 22 January 2008, Kessenich (L), 1

1 January - 24 February 2014, Slijpe (W), 1 2cy

3 - 31 January 2014, Oostende, Havengebied (W), 1 2cy

26 March 2014, Harelbeke, De Gavers (W), 1 1cy

21 April 2014, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1

2 - 12 January 2015, Lier, Beneden Netevallei (A), 1 2cy

2 February 2015, Nimy, Grand Large (H), 1 1cy

5 February - 2 May 2015, Bruxelles, Canal (RB), 1 1cy

11 - 22 February 2015, Herstal (Lg), 1 2cy

22 March 2015, Nieuwpoort, Spaarbekken (W), 1 ad.

8 April 2015, Bazel (O), 1 2cy

28 December 2015 - 21 February 2016, Bruxelles, Canal (RB), 1 1cy

Of the two species of large white-winged Arctic gulls that occur in Belgium, Iceland Gull is perceived as more rare than Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. This is reflected by the fact that Iceland Gull is a homologation species and Glaucous Gull is not. This perception is not supported by recent figures. Records of Iceland Gull are increasing, with no less than 43 (63% of the Belgian total) accepted birds since the turn of the century. Records of Glaucous Gull are not increasing, although a detailed analysis would need some work as records of this non-homologation species are not systematically kept. A brief analysis of records of Glaucous Gull in the national observations database (www.waarnemingen.be / www.observations.be) for the past five years (2011-2015), shows that this species had more records than Iceland Gull in only one year (2011). In three out of five years, there were more (accepted) records of Iceland Gull; the remaining year was a draw. There were on average 3 Glaucous Gulls per year in 2011-2015 (range: 2-4), compared to 4.8 Iceland Gull per year (range 1-10). It is best to give it some more time before a reassessment, but just based on the numbers from 2011-2015, Glaucous Gull would be a more likely candidate for the list of homologation species than Iceland Gull.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* (19, 128, 0/3)

26 April 2015, Doel, Paardenschor (O), 1

14 July 2015, Oostende, Oosterstaketsel (W), 1 ad. br.

23 August 2015, Stuivekenskerke, Viconia Kleiputten (W), 2

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (6, 574, 3/-)

16 May 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Bichterweerd (L), 1 ad. br.

23 July 2014, Hoeke, Sint-Donaaspolder (W), 1 2cy

3 September 2014, Dilsen-Stokkem, Rotem - Bichterweerd (L), 1 juv.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* (1, 14, 0/0)

10 December 2011, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1 ad. wi.

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* (6, 101, 1/0)

3 April 2014, Noordzee (W), 1

With merely one accepted record, Atlantic Puffin appears to defy the decision by the BRBC to drop it from the list of homologation species from 1 January 2015. This species is difficult to observe in Belgium, however, as it occurs mostly during winter when the birds are out at sea. The Belgian territorial waters are probably within the regular wintering range of the species, albeit in fluctuating numbers, as shown from regular seabirds monitoring during adverse weather and after oil spills.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 8, 1/0)

4 November 2005, Adinkerke (W), 1

4 November 2014, Sijsele-Hekhoek (W), 1

An old record from 2005 could be accepted based on pictures that had been too easily dismissed as a Common Swift *Apus apus*.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (2, 36, 0/0)

11 April 2009, Adinkerke (W), 1
23 March 2010, Kontich (A), 1

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (0, 48, 1/0)
27 April 2014, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (0, 6, 1/0)
23 - 28 October 2014, Kieldrecht, Puttenplas (O), 1 1cy

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (0, 7, 4/2)
19 October 2014, Mortsel, Trektelpost Zigeuner (A), 1
30 October 2014, Heist, Strand Oostdam (W), 1
31 October - 1 November 2014, Heist, Strand Oostdam (O), 1
5 November 2014, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1
5 October 2015, Kooigem, Geitenberg (W), 1
17 - 18 October 2015, Heist, Bosje (W), 1

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (0, 13, 0/1)
4 May 2015, Kruibeke, Kortbroek (O), 1 m. 2cy

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (0, 6, 0/1)
13 November 2015, Drongen (O), 1 m. 1cy trapped

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (0, 1, 1/0)
8 - 16 November 2014, Mortsel, Trektelpost Zigeuner (A), 1 1cy
The second Pied Wheatear came fairly soon after the first record that brought this species to the Belgian list in 2011. This one was also at an inland location.

Black-throated/Red-throated/Dusky/Naumann Thrush *Turdus eunomus/naumanni/atrogularis/ruficollis*
(0,1,0/0)

5 December 2010 - 17 January 2011, Loppem (W), 1, trapped
It took the BRBC a long time to decide what to do with this bird that was regarded widely as a Black-throated Thrush. We opted to accept it as a hybrid bird from the complex of the four species mentioned above. The bird does not look right for a pure Black-throated Thrush, as proven by the DNA-analysis of a feather sample showing that at some point in its history there was hybridization. Apart from that, we decided to accept it as a hybrid instead of rejecting it all together, because it still is a Siberian vagrant and an interesting record in a western European context.



Black-throated/Red-throated/Dusky/Naumann Thrush *Turdus eunomus/naumanni/atrogularis/ruficollis*. 5
December 2010 - 17 January 2011, Loppem (W) (Picture Filip De Ruwe)

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 27, 1/1)
 25 June - 1 July 2014, Neerpelt, Het Hageven (L), 1
 30 May - 1 July 2015, Balen, Scheps (A), 1 m. ad.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (0,0,0/1)
 7 June 2015, Pepingen (VB), 1 trapped (Edwig Vanhassel)
 The first Moustached Warbler for Belgium, trapped and ringed at an unexpected inland location in late Spring, was a record that came somewhat unexpected. What was even more unexpected is that the bird was already wearing a ring! It had been ringed as a first calendar year on 24 October 2014 in the Aude department in Mediterranean France. Moustached Warbler has a patchy distribution stretching from southern Europe to Central Asia. Contrary to other similar species, there are very few records of vagrancy in Europe outside its known haunts. A comparatively small population and the fact that it is not a long distance migrant are probably responsible for this (BirdLife International 2004, Kennerley & Pearson 2010).



Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*. **12 August 2015, Lissewege (W)** (Picture Johan Buckens)

Paddyfield Warbler - *Acrocephalus agricola* (0, 34, 0/5)

7 August 2015, Pepingen (VB), 1 f. ad. trapped (Edwig Van Hassel)

12 August 2015, Lissewege, Eendekooi (W), 1 ad. trapped

22 August 2015, Tienen, Bezinkingsputten (VB), 1 1cy trapped

23 August 2015, Woumen, De Blankaart (W), 1 1cy trapped

8 September 2015, Antwerpen, Rangeerstation Antwerpen-Noord - De Kuifeend (A), 1 ad. trapped (Ludo Roothaert)

A blank year in 2014 was followed by a record year in 2015! Typically, all were birds trapped by ringers. Only four Belgian records have been of birds observed in the field.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (0, 18, 1/3)

24 August 2014, Houthulst (W), 1 ad. trapped

29 September 2015, Hamme, Sint-Anna (O), 1 trapped

4 October 2015, Lommel, Kristallijn/Maatheide (L), 1 1cy trapped

16 - 17 October 2015, Zwijndrecht, Defensieve dijk (O), 1

Blyth's Reed Warbler keeps on performing well. The first record was only in 1988 and before 2003 there were only three records (four birds). A bird found in the field at an inland location on 16-17 October 2015 was a great find by a top crew of young birders; it constituted the first field observation of Blyth's Reed Warbler for Belgium, all other having been of birds trapped by ringers. The slowly continuing westward expansion should soon result in the first record of a singing bird in Spring. In 2014 there were no less than six singing birds in the Netherlands (webref. 3), there was a record influx in Germany with 24 birds in May – July (most of them singing birds; there were only 29 accepted birds until 2013) and highest ever recorded counts of breeding numbers in Finland and Sweden (Wegst 2016). The first singing bird for Belgium is eagerly awaited. Observers should start getting familiar with its typical song!

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* (0, 9, 0/2)

24 - 28 October 2015, Mortsel, Trektelpost Zigeuner (A), 1
7 - 11 December 2015, Kruikebe, Kortbroek (O), 1

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (0, 20, 0/2)

30 April - 01 May 2015, Doel, Schor Oude Doel (O), 1 m.
1 July 2015 - 2 July 2015, Zeebrugge, Westdam (W), 1 m.
Both records refers to the western group but the AERC-TAC still considers it as part of the Subalpine Warbler complex, Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia subalpina* from the Balearic islands, Corsica, Sardinia and North-West Italy being the only taxon to be separated so far (Crochet *et al.* 2015).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (0, 13, 2/0)

22 - 23 June 2014, Tenneville (Lx), 1
5 - 6 September 2014, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1
Just one year after the first ever Spring record of Greenish Warbler for Belgium (Waimes (Lg), 1 – 17 June 2013), there was already a second Spring record. Greenish Warbler used to be a very rare early Autumn vagrant, but singing Spring birds, even setting up territories, should clearly also be on the radar.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (0, 8, 0/1)

8 September 2015, Sint-Amands (A), 1 trapped (André Pauwels)

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (1, 125, 3/-)

22 February - 2 March 2014, Auderghem (RB), 1 (Dupont Olivier)
14 October 2014, Gullegem, Provinciedomein (W), 1
18 October 2014, Blankenberge, Nieuwe Verkaveling (W), 1

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 10, 1/0)

20 - 31 March 2014, Adinkerke (W), 1

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (0, 25, 1/1)

31 October 2014, Rangeerstation Antwerpen-Noord, De Kuifeend (A), 1 1cy trapped
24 October 2015, Bruxelles, Hof Ter Musschen (Br), 1 trapped (Philippe Gailly)

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (0, 44, 0/2)

2 - 3 November 2013, Eine - Snippenweide, Snippenweide (O), 1
28 November 2015, Hermalle-sous-Argenteau (Lg), 1
20 December 2015 - 4 January 2016, Sint-Niklaas (O), 1

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 7, 2/0)

3 April - 1 May 2014, Gullegem, Provinciedomein (W), 1 m.
25 April - 05 May 2014, Knokke-Heist, Villawijk Ter Linden (W), 1

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (0, 101, 2/0)

28 September 2013, Zeebrugge, Vandammesluis (W), 1 1cy
1 October 2013, Heist, De Sashul (W), 1
21 October 2013, Nieuwpoort, Ideeëntuin (W), 1
24 - 25 September 2014, Zeebrugge, Bosje Marinebasis (W), 1 1cy
19 - 23 October 2014, Heist, De Sashul (W), 1 1cy

White-headed Long-tailed Bush Tit *Aegithalos caudatus caudatus*

A considerable influx reached Belgium at the end of 2015. The BRBC is still looking into this influx. The result of this will be published in a later report.



Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*. **30 December 2014 - 7 april 2015, Dinant (N)** (Picture Kris De Rouck)

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* (2, 8, 1/1)

30 December 2014 - 07 April 2015, Dinant (N), 1

7 February - 8 March 2015, Sprimont (Lg), 1

Dedicated searches for Wallcreepers since 2013 have resulted in no less than three records! All were in the southeast of Belgium, where much more suitable habitat is available. It can be imagined that this species is under detected in this part of the country with a low observer density. Perhaps it is even a regular and annual wintering bird in very low numbers. A thorough article on the recent occurrence of Wallcreepers in southern Belgium was published by Gailly & Mathelart (2015).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (1, 11, 1/0)

19 May 2014, Tienen, Tiens Broek (VB), 1

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (-, 159, 2/1)

1 June 2014, Vieuxville (Lg), 1 m.

7 September 2014, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1 juv.

10 May 2015, Marchin (Lg), 1 adult trapped (Michel Ledoux)

The BRBC database contains no good overview of the situation before 1950, but the species would not have been considered a homology species at that time. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the Woodchat Shrike was still a regular but localized breeding species in parts of eastern Belgium. The species had then already declined from a more common status in the 19th century. Breeding ceased in the early 1980's, with sporadic breeding in the nineties and most recently in 2007 (Desmet 1987, Jacob 2010).

Hooded Crow *Corvus corone cornix* (-, since 2011: 8, 0/3)

5 April 2015, De Haan/Wenduine, Strand (W), 1

9 April 2015, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1

21 October - 16 November 2015, Knokke-Heist, Strand Zwinbosjes (W), 1

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (17, 45, 0/2)

5 October 2015, Heist, Haag van Heist (W), 1 juv.

4 - 13 November 2015, Sint-Denijs (W), 1 juv.

Two records is a good year for this species that remains surprisingly rare in Belgium, compared to its status in neighboring countries like the Netherlands and Great-Britain.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (0, 171, 3/0)

5 - 27 January 2014, Wachtebeke, Bossen - Heidebos Wachtebeke (O), 3

Three more birds are added to the important influx of the winter 2013-2014, bringing the total to 81 birds.



Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. **7 June 2015, Zwinbosjes, Knokke (W)** (Picture Johan Buckens)

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (0, 58, 8/11)

26 May - 17 June 2014, Battenbroekbos (A), 2 m. 2cy

3 - 7 June 2014, Warnant (N), 1 m. ad.

4 June 2014, Petegem, Langemeersen (O), 1

7 - 12 June 2014, Knokke-Heist, Zwinbosjes (W), 1 m.

7 June 2014, Ath (H), 1 m. 2cy

22 June 2014, Dion (N), 1 m. 2cy

28 August 2014, Rangeerstation Antwerpen-Noord, De Kuifeend (A), 1 1cy trapped

31 May - 9 June 2015, Antwerpen, Blokkersdijk (A), 1 m. 2cy

3 - 7 June 2015, Kallo, Groot Rietveld (A), 1 m. ad.

4 - 13 June 2015, Oostduinkerke (W), 3

5 June 2015, De Haan (W), 2 m. 2cy trapped

6 - 17 June 2015, Kruikeke/Bazel, Kruikeekse en Bazelse Kreek (O), 1 m. 2cy

7 - 14 June 2015, Knokke-Heist, Zwinbosjes (W), 1 m. 2cy

16 August 2015, Heestert, Pontstraat (W), 1 juv. trapped (Christoph Wintein)

5 September 2015, Doel, Doelpolder (O), 1

After a good run of records in the period 1991-1997, the Common Rosefinch became more rare again in Belgium. From about 2011, the pace of records has clearly picked up again. The 37 birds that have been

accepted this decade constitute almost half of the number of accepted birds, although some work needs to be done on these recent records in order to check for double counts (birds seen at several locations and birds returning in consecutive years). The records of 2014 and 2015 add considerably to this total. The species has attempted to breed and may have bred in recent years, e.g. in 2011 and 2012 (Faveyts et al. 2014), but such cases are, unfortunately, often not well documented or such information does not reach the rarities committee. In the last decade of 20th century, the species was also reported to breed along the coast, with allegedly even up to five territories and two cases of breeding in 1993 (Vermeersch 2004), but there was no sufficient documentation about this, so none of those records are accepted. Observers should be aware that territorial and breeding behaviour of this species should be well documented. It is thus strongly advised to report this and add sufficient details to an observation.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (6, 57, 4/8)

27 September 2014, Tienen, Bezinkingsputten (VB), 1
19 October 2014, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1
19 October 2014, Brecht, Groot Schietveld (A), 1 ad. trapped
5 November 2014, Heusden - Zolder, Terril Lindeman (L), 1
28 September 2015, Tienen, Bezinkingsputten (VB), 1
13 October 2015, Lommel, Kristallijn/Maatheide (L), 1 1cy trapped
20 October 2015, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven (W), 1
27 October 2015, Wintam, Noordelijk Eiland (A), 1
29 October 2015, Tienen, Bezinkingsputten (VB), 1
13 December 2015 - 1 February 2016, Heuvelland, Kemmelberg - Monteberg noord (W), 1
6 December 2015-21 March 2016, Hermalle-sous-Argenteau (Lg), up to 2

With a combined total of 12 accepted records, 2014 and 2015 were very successful years for Little Bunting. The record of 7 birds from 2005 was broken in 2015. This species is clearly on the rise since the first record in 1966. The number of accepted birds per decade has been growing ever since, reaching 20 birds in the first decade of this century. The number in the current decade already stands at 17 birds, so it is conceivable that the increase will be sustained.

2. Category E records

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*

26 October 2014, Brecht, Groot Schietveld (A), 1
14 December 2014, Gentbrugge, Meersen (O), 1
10 - 28 January 2015, IJzervallei and Stalhille (W), 4 2 cy (one satellite fitted bird, other with leg rings)
12 April 2015, Geel, Malesbroek (A), 1

The record of four birds at two sites almost 30 km apart IJzervallei and Stalhille from 10 until 28 January 2015 is noteworthy. It consisted of four young (2 cy) birds that had been marked in Sweden. These birds originated from eggs collected in the wild in the Russian Arctic, raised as a chick in captivity and then released into the wild in Sweden when fully grown. Their presence in Belgium was notified thanks to their transmitters, and it took observers quite some time to find the birds in the field. It may seem a little bit odd for such wild behaving birds to be put into category E, but the rule is that birds that have been released into the wild are put in this category, even if the release into the wild has been done for conservation purposes.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

14 February - 02 March 2011, Uitkerke (W), 1 ad.
11 - 13 May 2012, Scholen, Schulensbroek (L), 1
11 - 22 September 2014, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1
5 November 2014, Meetkerke, Lage Moere (W), 1 ad.
24 December 2014, Watervliet, Schare - Noorddijk (O), 1
27 December 2014 - 11 January 2015, Lo-Reninge, IJzervallei (W), 2
31 December 2014 - 3 January 2015, Uitkerke (W), 2
20 March 2015 - 20 January 2016, Schulensbroek, Oosten Strandje (L), 1
10 September 2015, Turnhout, Vennengebied (A), 1
19 - 20 October 2015, Wortel-Kolonie, Zone Noordoost (A), 1
17 December 2015, Eke, De Tweelingsputten (O), 1

The number of category E records outnumbers the accepted records for 2014-2015. This does not mean that all

these records refer to birds that originate from captivity without doubt. Some of the records in the list are of birds for which the lack or presence of leg rings could not be checked by the observers in the field because of the circumstances of the observation (bird too distant, for example). In other cases, observers make no mention of the lack or presence of leg rings. For the latter cases, the BRBC takes a cautious approach by putting them into category E. This probably means that some genuine wild birds get thrown out. Caution is warranted, however, as Red-breasted Geese are popular among bird keepers, and birds escape with some regularity.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

21 - 24 August 2015, Berlare, Scheldebroeken (O), 1

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

18 October 2009, Oudenaarde, Donkvijver (O), 1 f.

20 May 2015, Wavre (BW), 1 female

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

18 February - 22 March 2015, Ruien, Centrale - Rietveld & plassen (O), 1 f.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

11 - 13 September 2015, Virelles, Lac (H), 1

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

3 - 8 March 2014, Kieldrecht, Drijdyck (O), 1

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

28 May 2015, Dave (N), 2

30 May 2015 – Retie (An), 1 1 June 2015, On (Lx), 1

These records packed in such a short time frame refer to the same birds, as proven by some photographic documents. The picture of the bird on 1 June shows that it wears rings on both legs, including a colour ring. The records coincide well with a record of two young Cinereous Vulture in the Lorraine region in France, close to the Belgian border and seen in Dave. These birds were seen perched and their rings could be read. They originated from southern France, Aveyron, Grands Causses, where both chicks have been ringed in the nest. As their parents may have originated from a reintroduction program, and as it is too early to assess if the species can maintain itself without any reintroduction programs, Cinereous Vulture is not yet included on the A-category of the Belgian list. An article about these records is planned to be published in Aves magazine soon by Vandevyvre X.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

28 May 2015, On (Lx), 1 imm.

An immature Steppe Eagle that was well photographed, but that was only seen in flight and could not be checked for the presence of signs indicating a previous stay in captivity. Some weeks before, a bird of similar age escaped from captivity fairly close to the location of the sighting. Although immature Steppe Eagles show a fair bit of individual variation, both birds looked similar in the available photographs. In combination with the extreme rarity of the species in Belgium (only two accepted records), it was deemed safer to put this record into category E, as a provenance from captivity was likely.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*

17 - 30 September 2014, Vellereille-Les-Brayeux (H), 1 ad. br.

21 November 2015, Ambresin (Lg), 1

3. Rejected records

Unless stated otherwise the records in this list are considered to be insufficiently documented to be acceptable.

Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*: 13 January - 8 February 2013, Gent, Kluzendok (O), 1. **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus*: 23 October 2014, Berendrecht (A), 1; 11 November 2014, Aalter, Telpost Bellem-Brug (O), 1; 16 - 18 March 2015, Kieldrecht, Putten West (O), 1. **Red-breasted Goose**

Branta ruficollis: 31 January - 01 February 2012, Kieldrecht, Putten West (O), 2. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana*: 9 April 2012, Zevegem (O), 1 male; 23 December 2014, Diksmuide, De Blankaart (W), 1. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*: 12 June 2015, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1 ad. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*: 13 July 2014, Zemst, Bos van Aa (VB), 1. **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*: 17 June 2015, Lier/Duffel, Beneden Netevallei (A), 1. **Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*: 1 May 2015, Laeken (Br), 2; 1 May 2015, Tollembeek (VB), 2; 18 July 2015, Bossuit (W), 19. **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*: 5 June 2014, Maldegem (O), 1; 7 September 2014, Wetteren (O), 1. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*: 6 September 2014, Doel, Doelpolder (O), 1; 14 September 2014, De Panne, De Westhoek (W), 1; 4 October 2014, Blankenberge (W), 1. **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*: 20 August 2014, Kruikeke, Kruikeke Polder (O), 1; 23 April 2015, Betekom, Vorsdonkbos (VB), 1. **Little Crake** *Porzana parva*: 18 May 2015, Deux-Acres (H), 1 m. **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*: 26 June 2013, Oudenaarde (O), 1. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*: 23 April 2015, Kieldrecht, Putten Weiden (O), 1. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla*: 10 April 2015, Bredene (W), 1 ad. br. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*: 15 October 2015, Doel, Schor van Doel (O), 1. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*: 14 April 2014, Schulensbroek, Kleen Meulen (L), 1. **Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis*: 5 December 2010 - 17 January 2011, Loppem (W), 1 m. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*: 2 October 2015, Heist, Oostdam - Sterneneiland (W), 1. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*: 12 September 2015, Woumen, Spaarbekken (W), 1 2cy; 21 September 2015, Houtem (W), 1. **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus*: 22 April 2014, Lanaken (L), 2; 7 May 2015, Outrelouxhe (Lg), 1. **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*: 1 October 2013, Zeebrugge, Westdam (W), 1; 11 July 2014, Avelgem (W), 1. **Hooded Crow** *Corvus corone cornix*: 28 December 2014, Sterrebeek (O), 1; 27 July 2015, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw (VB), 5. **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*: 30 May 2015, Noiseux (N), 1.

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Website, for forms and all information: <http://www.belgianrbc.be/>

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