

Rare Birds in Belgium in 2022

Report of the Belgian Rare Birds Committee (BRBC)

Stijn Baeten, Olivier Dupont, Raphaël Lebrun and the members of the BRBC



2nd calendar year Song Sparrow Melospiza melodia. 18/02/2022. Doel, Prosperpolder Zuid (O). (Picture: Raymond De Smet)

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Abstract – Rare Birds in Belgium in 2022

This report by the Belgian Rare Birds Committee (BRBC) concerns a total of 155 records (173 birds) of 66 (sub)species and species pairs which have been reported in Belgium in 2022. Some additional records from previous years have also been included. 115 records have been accepted into category A, 1 into category D, 10 into category E and 41 records have been rejected. In 2022, interesting records were the second record of Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*; third record of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*; fourth record of American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* and White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* and fifth record of King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*. The Belgian list remains at 463 species following the IOC World Bird List taxonomy.

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 2022. It also contains records of earlier years that have not yet been published before. Some records from 2022 are still pending and are not dealt with in this report.

This report will be published in English on our website. Dutch and French versions will be available in the magazines *Natuur.oriolus* and *Aves* respectively.

Recent decisions and developments

Taxonomic reference

From January 1st 2018, the BRBC follows the taxonomic rules of the IOC World Bird List (Gill, Donsker & Rasmussen, 2022). In July 2023 IOC decided to split Tibetan Sand Plover *Charadrius atrifrons* from Siberian Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, hence the sole Belgian record is currently circulating. Details can be found on our website <http://www.belgianrbc.be>.

Removal of two species from the list of assessed species as from January 1, 2023

The BRBC analyzes the list of assessed species every year during its winter meeting. The most regularly occurring species are checked to see whether or not they still meet the threshold to be considered as a national rarity. See below for an explanation of these rules. For our latest analysis in May 2023, the period 2013-2022 was considered. The records of the following two species will not be considered anymore by the BRBC from January 1st 2023 onwards, but data of these species prior to this date are still strongly welcomed.

1. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*: With 31 accepted records between 2013-2022, involving 32 birds, a clear rise in the number of Squacco Heron is evident. 2020 and 2010 were the last years without a single record.
2. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*: 2022 was a record year, smashing the record of 2014, the previous best year, with an additional 7 records! Between 2013-2022 31 records were accepted involving 32 birds. With the common practice of sound-recording at migration counting stations nowadays, a substantial part of late autumn tree pipits are confirmed as Olive-backed Pipits. Of the 36 Belgian records, 19 records involve birds on active migration, of which 17 would have been left unidentified if no sound-recording was made. Twitchable birds remain rare however.

Monitoring rare birds after a species is removed from the BRBC list

The BRBC has recently decided to keep track of sightings for another 10 years once a taxon is removed from the national rarity list. The main aim is to have a better view of the species's long-term trend. This is in particular relevant for taxa whose numbers tend to fluctuate in between years. By conducting another 10 years monitoring, the BRBC avoids some taxa from moving on and off the national rarity list, leading to gaps in the database. 5 years after the start, a first preliminary assessment is made (see also Baeten *et al.* 2021).

In 2015 9 species were removed from the national rarity list; Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* and Pallas Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (Faveyts *et al.* 2016). For the period 2015-2019, White-tailed Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Pallid Harrier (1) passed the threshold value of 30 acceptable records and (2) had acceptable records in all 5 years. Therefore these three raptors were dropped from the monitoring list as from January 1st 2020. For White-tailed Eagle no less than 100 acceptable records

were registered during this timespan, out of a total of 167 records. Records of Pallid Harrier showed a similar trend, with 93 acceptable records, out of a total of 174. With 39 acceptable records (of the 102 records), the numbers for Short-toed Eagle are more modest, but still substantial. Balearic Shearwater (4 acceptable records / 28 records), Pectoral Sandpiper (8 / 9), White-winged Tern (*in progress*), Marsh Sandpiper (20 / 29), Atlantic Puffin (*in progress*) and Pallas Leaf Warbler (24 / 35) all had fewer than 30 acceptable records for 2015-2019 and hence are followed up for another 5 years.

In 2018 again 6 taxa were removed from the national rarity list and were placed on the monitoring list; Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*, Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (Faveyts *et al.* 2018). During the 5-years follow-up (2018-2022) Little Bunting was acceptably recorded 38 times (out of a total of 56 records) and therefore removed from the monitoring list as from January 1st 2023. Glossy Ibis (*in progress*), Griffon Vulture (*in progress*), Iceland Gull (22 / 35), Siberian Chiffchaff (*in progress*) and Common Rosefinch (25 / 42) are followed up for another 5 years, pending analysis for some of these species (Glossy Ibis, Griffon Vulture and Siberian Chiffchaff).

Furthermore, the following species are on the monitoring list, preceded by the year of entrance on this list: (2019): Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* and Blyth's Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*; (2020): Eurasian Thick-knee *Burhinus oedicephalus*; (2021): Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*; (2022): Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* and (2023) Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* and Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*.

The updated list of assessed species can be checked on the BRBC website: <http://www.belgianrbc.be>

Statutes and composition

Published statutes

The statutes of the BRBC are published on our website <http://www.belgianrbc.be>. For reasons of transparency, we believe that it is important that this document is publicly available. The foremost objective of these statutes is to be a guideline for the BRBC-members during their work in the committee. Apart from that, it is also an important document for anyone interested in the working procedures of the BRBC and for birdwatchers who are interested in rare birds and want to document a sighting. We aim to update the content of this document on a regular basis.

Composition of the BRBC

For the purpose of this report, the team was composed of the same people as last year, with five Dutch-speaking members and five French-speaking members. The following members have assessed all records in this report, in alphabetical order: Jan Baert, Stijn Baeten, Alain De Broyer, Miguel Demeulemeester, Robin Gailly, Kenny Hessel, Raphaël Lebrun, Joost Mertens, Laurent Raty and Frédéric Vanhove.

At the start of 2023 Miguel Demeulemeester and Laurent Raty both ended their second term. We want to thank Miguel and Laurent for their great additional value to the committee and the tremendous amount of work they did. Miguel and Laurent are replaced by Olivier Dupont and Joachim Pintens, both keen birders who bring in some extra skills and knowledge.

What makes a rare bird species?

A species is considered to be a national rarity: (1) if there has been an average of maximum three accepted records per year over the previous 10-year period, so a maximum of 30 accepted records in total for that period; or (2) if a species has not been recorded 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.

How to submit a rare bird report to the BRBC

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 <https://www.waarnemingen.be> / <https://www.observations.be>. It is kindly requested to provide as much information as possible for each record, such as a description and photographs when available, sketches, sound recordings and any other sources 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.

Although many observers responded positively to our targeted questions to document and submit cases, a proportion of the rare species observed in 2022 and earlier are not (yet) submitted. The BRBC is always prepared to assist. Observers can send a draft of their report by e-mail to Stijn Baeten (stijn.baeten@yahoo.com). Your draft will be reviewed and provided with the necessary comments after which the observer can submit a modified version.

Acknowledgements

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More acknowledgements 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.

2022 in a nutshell

Highlights of 2022 can be summarized as:

- 2nd record of Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*
- 3rd record of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*
- 4th record of White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* and American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
- 5th record of King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*
- 6th record of Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
- 9th record of Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
- The best year ever for Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (3 different birds), Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (24 different birds), Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (11 different birds), Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (7 different birds) and Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (5 different birds)

Record information

Every record in this systematic list contains the following information:

- 1) The **date(s)** of the record. Unless mentioned otherwise, the year is 2022.
- 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 if 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 involved
- 5) Information about **sex, age and/or plumage** of bird(s) of the record, when available.
- 6) The name of the person (observer or discoverer) who submitted the record directly to the BRBC. For every ringed bird, the ringing number and the name of the ringer are indicated when this information has been available before publication. In case of a record that has been retrieved from the <https://www.waarnemingen.be> / <https://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 this case, no observer is mentioned for the record.

Signs and abbreviations

Belgium has 10 provinces. The Brussels Capital Region is treated as a distinct 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 three figures in brackets:

1. Number of accepted individuals from 1800-1949;
2. Number of accepted individuals from 1950-2021;
3. Number of accepted individuals from 2022.

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 accepted records for a particular species. In a few cases, a different character is given: ' / ' means that the species was not on the homologation list during one or several years; ' - ' means that the species was recorded during that period but that the exact number is still under consideration at the time of writing. The latter happens for species that have a considerable number of older records, mainly before 1950.

Systematic list

1. Accepted, category A

Pale-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota* (0,300,0)
25 January, Knokke-Heist, Zee te Zwin (W), 25 (returning individuals)

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (1,171,3)
7 February, Dilsen, Veurzen (L), 2
1 - 2 March, Geistingen, Houbenhof (L), 1

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* (0,28,1)
14 - 19 May, Mechelen, Zennegat (A), 1 m. 2cy+

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (0,25,1)
17 December - 16 May 2023, Temse/Tielrode/Moerzeke (O), 1 m.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (0,4,1)
28 May - 17 June, Knokke-Heist/Heist (W), 1 m. 2cy

A much debated bird which was picked up and taken into care on the 17th, after which it died. Its corpse was donated to the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. This male lacked the typical knob on the upper mandible which is supposed to be present in second calendar year males by this time of the year. A DNA-sample was taken in order to rule out hybridisation with Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*. A more in depth article about this bird is in preparation.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (0,3,1)
10 November - 12 December, Harchies, Marais d'Harchies (H), 1

The last accepted record dated back to 2004, a bird found at Verrebroek (O) in February, which remained there until March. The Harchies bird was the second for Wallonia, the first one, which was also the first for Belgium, constituted a female from the end of October 1989 until early November at Latour (Lx).

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0,16,25)
23 October, Zeebrugge/Bredene/Nieuwpoort (W), 1
24 October, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1
24 October, De Haan, Duinbossen (W), 3
24 October, Hoboken, Hobokense Polder (A), 1
25 October, Sint-Denijs (W), 1
25 October, Overmere/Waasmunster (O), 1 (Peter Van Wittenberge)
26 October, De Haan, Duinbossen (W), 1 1cy
27 October, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1
27 October, Bredene/Raversijde (W), 1
29 October, Kortrijk (W)/Heurne (O), 1
29 October, Zeebrugge/Blankenberge (W), 4
30 October, De Haan (W), 2
31 October - 1 November, Zeebrugge/Blankenberge/Wenduine/De Haan (W), 6
2 November, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1

A record year, smashing the previous one (2020), with no less than 25 birds. Since 2013 38 birds have been accepted in Belgium. Records of Pallid Swift are clearly on the rise in Belgium, something that is also noted in the Netherlands (Groenendijk & van der Laan 2020). It seems that the arrival of warm sectors of low-pressure systems in late autumn is a good predictor for the arrival of Pallid Swifts in North-Western Europe (Holt *et al.* 2019; Larsson 2018).

Little Crane *Zapornia parva* (4,46,2)

3 May, Harelbeke, De Gavers (W), 1 m. 2cy+

26 July - 8 September, Hollogne-Sur-Geer, Décanteurs (Lg), 1 1cy

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (0,3,1)

1 - 3 May, Schulensbroek, Oosten Strandje (O), 1 2cy

The fourth for Belgium and the first outside of West-Vlaanderen. This bird showed itself nicely for three consecutive days after which it left the area and was refound on the 4th near Utrecht (The Netherlands). Of these four records, 3 constituted second calendar year birds in spring, found between the 26th of April and the 22nd of May.



2nd calendar year American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*. 02/05/2022. Schulensbroek, Oosten Strandje (O). (Picture: Vincent Legrand)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* (3,31,2)

12 May 2022, Kruibeke, Kruibeke Polder (O), 1

17 May 2022, Dilsen-Stokkem (L), 1

A nearly biennial species since 2007 with several years with multiple records. The best year so far was 2007, with 3 accepted records.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (0,47,1)

30 September, Zonhoven, Wijvenheide - Zuid (L), 1

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (0,24,1)

28 - 29 April, Knokke, Het Zwin (W), 1 2cy+

First found in the Dutch part of the Zwin, the bird then flew to the Belgian side. Only the third to be found in April, with both others in 1993, in Gaurain-Ramecroix (H) and in Escanaffles (H).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (0,139,2)
12 June, Knokke, Het Zwin (W), 1 f. ad. br.
18 - 19 August, Wintam, Noordelijk Eiland (A), 1 1cy

With 29 accepted records in the last 10 years this species is on the verge of moving off the rarity list.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (0,12,1)
2 - 9 May, Stalhille, Weiden Jagersput (W), 1 2cy+

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0,27,0)
17 December - 11 March 2023, Cerfontaine (N)/Houdeng-Goegnies (H)/Puurs (AN), 1 m. 3cy+ (returning individual)
CORRIGENDUM
27 December - 13 March 2022, Rumst (A), 1 f. ad. (returning individual) should be
27 December - 13 March 2022, Rumst (A), 1 m. ad. (returning individual) (*contra* Baeten *et al.* 2022).

After a first, albeit short visit in 2012, Kajzerka wintered in Belgium for the second consecutive winter. Being satellite-tracked since 4 December 2021, his whereabouts could be easily followed. He remained until the 6th of January near La Louvière (H) and was rediscovered on the 10th, at Rumst (A), close to the area where he spent most of his time last winter.



Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*. 12/03/2022. Rumst (A). (Picture: Gerald Driessens)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (19,163,4)
23 April, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 2
17 August - 13 September, Kieldrecht, Oude Arenbergpolder (O), 1 ad. + 1 1cy

20 records, involving 32 birds, have been accepted since 2013. Most Gull-billed Terns seen in Belgium supposedly trace back to the small breeding population situated in the Elbe estuary (Germany). The first calendar year that stayed at Kieldrecht was ringed as a nestling at Neufelderkoog (Germany).

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (5,105,5)

17 September, Nieuwpoort (W), 1 1cy+

26 September, Mariakerke (W), 1

27 September, Mariakerke (W), 1

13 November, Noordzee (W), 1

14 December, Noordzee (W), 1

2022 proved to be a very good year for European Storm Petrel in Belgium with no less than 5 different records. All Belgian records are thought to belong to the *pelagicus* subspecies, which breeds on the European Atlantic coast. The European (and thus global) population is estimated at about 500.000 breeding pairs, the majority nesting on the Faroes, Iceland, Britain and Ireland. However, given the species ecology, and their preference for remote and often-to-humans-inaccessible breeding locations, population estimates and - evolution should be treated with high uncertainty. The mediterranean subspecies *melitensis* is estimated to only number about 13.000 - 17.000 breeding pairs (Keller *et al.* 2020).



European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. 13/11/2022. Noordzee (W). (Picture: Stijn Baeten)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (4,65,3)

11 - 13 June, Gent, Zeehaven (O), 1 ad. br.

13 June, Gent, Bourgoyen (O), 1 ad.

16 June, Lokeren, Molsbroek (O), 1 ad. br.

With 31 accepted records between 2013-2022, involving 32 birds, Squacco Heron was taken off the rarity list per 1 January 2023.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina* (3,8,1)

5 June, Wuustwezel, De Maatjes / Wezelse Heide (A), 1 (Peter Symens)

Lesser Spotted Eagle / Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina* / *Clanga clanga* (0,2,1)
23 March, Ransart (H), 1

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (1,8,3)
9 March, Brugge (W), 1 3cy
25 March, Warisoulx (N), 1 2cy
1 October, Hollain (H), 1 ad. (Vincent Dufour)

With 3 sightings, 2022 constitutes the best year ever for the species in Belgium. While still critical, with fewer than 50 pairs in 2021, the situation of the French population of Bonelli's Eagle has slowly been improving since the turn of the century. Power line insulation in its core area has led to an increase in survival rates for all age classes, but electrocution remains a major cause of mortality for dispersing juveniles outside of the species action plan area (Besnard *et al.* 2022, Ponchon *et al.* 2022).



2nd calendar year Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*. 25/03/2022. Warisoulx (N). (Picture: Damien Gailly)

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (0,2,1)
18 August, Zeebrugge, Achterhaven (W), 1 1cy

A flyby first calendar year Lesser Kestrel, nicely photographed, was seen by two lucky observers. Although identification of all plumages but adult males remains challenging, this bird ticked the following boxes: 1) very long p10, nearly equalling p9; 2) pale cheek patch very obvious, bean shaped and well demarcated; 3) greater coverts strongly marked blackish, sharply contrasting with the faintly barred secondary and primary base; 4) wedge-shaped tail with long, protruding t1 and very short t6.



1st calendar year Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*. 18/08/2022. Zeebrugge, Achterhaven (W). (Picture: Filip De Ruwe)

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (/ ,179,5)

18 May, Buissonville (N), 1 m

20 May, Uitkerke, Weiden (W), 1 f. 2cy+

3 July, Kalmthout (A), 1 f.

16 - 26 July, Termes (Lx), 1 m. ad.

19 - 28 August, Hour (N), 1 f. 2cy+

ADDENDUM

21 May 2019, Oudenburg (W), 1 f. ad. (Erwin Van Bosch)

With 5 accepted records, 2022 constitutes one of the best years for Woodchat Shrike since 1950, equalling 1977, 2004 and 2021, and beaten by only one extra record in 1981. Between 2013 and 2022, 27 records have been accepted. The last blank year dates back to 2011.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0,2,1)

20 April, Antwerpen (A), 1

A peculiar case since the bird was found dead on a ship in the harbor of Antwerp. However a strict interpretation of the rules the BRBC follows led to the assignment to category A.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* (/ ,2011-2021: 30,5)

9 January - 28 February, Polleur (Lg), 1 2cy+

4 - 27 April, Zeebrugge/Oostduinkerke/Knokke-Heist (W), 1 2cy+

4 - 5 May, Doel, Doelpolder Noord (O), 1

17 September - 14 November, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1 1cy+

26 December - 28 February 2023, Court-Saint-Etienne (BW), 1

ADDENDUM

5 April 2020, Lier, Anderstad (A), 1 (Steven Van den Bussche)

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* (0,8,1)

12 November, Genk, De Maten (L), 1

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0,15,5)

18 January - 20 February, Aartselaar (A), 1 2cy+

28 October, Zeebrugge, Strand Westdam (W), 1

21 November - 7 February 2023, Gent, Sint-Amandsberg (O), 1

25 - 26 November, Bredene (W), 1

11 December - 6 January 2023, Blankenberge, Nieuwe Verkaveling (W), 1

The best year ever for this species in Belgium. 2003 and 2016, both with 2 records, were the only years with more than one accepted record. In the Netherlands the species is not on the rarity list anymore since 2018 (Gelling *et al.* 2018). There, the rise in accepted records was hypothesized to result from increased observers awareness and not from an actual increase in vagrant birds numbers (van der Spek & CDNA 2018).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (0,34,7)

4 October, Maubray (H), 1 1cy trapped

5 October, Heestert (W), 1 1cy trapped

6 October, Assenede, 500 Gemeten (O), 1 trapped (Walter De Smet)

9 October, Attenrode/Glabbeek (VB), 1 trapped

13 October, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1 1cy

23 - 25 October, Lanaken (L), 1 1cy trapped

27 October, Frasnes-lez-Buissenal (H), 1 1cy trapped

A record year, smashing the record held by 1989, 1997, 1999 and 2005 by 4 extra records. Of the 41 records, 24 involved birds trapped by ringers. Remarkably, before 2002 only 6 birds were ringed (out of a total of 18 records). Subsequently, no less than 18 birds were trapped (out of a total of 23 records). Field sightings became much scarcer the last decades and a twitchable bird accessible to the greater audience has not shown up since 2009, tormenting the new generation of twitchers.



1st calendar year Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*. 13/10/2022. Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W). (Picture: Hans Matheve)

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0,24,1)

18 May - 23 June, Nassogne (Lx), 1 m. 3cy+ (returning individual)

8 June - 10 July, Braine-le-Comte, Bois de la Houssière (H), 1 m. 2cy+ (Julien Hainaut)

Descent recordings of at least the song and preferably also the Eurasian Siskin-like call are of great importance, given the occurrence of some odd singing Common Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* each year. Song should be 'classic Iberian', consisting of a three-phase song. If only a two-phase song is displayed, a recording of the call is required. For a more in depth analysis, Collinson & Melling (2008) is a must read, as is Velasco (2020). The bird residing at Nassogne returned for the third consecutive year, being first noted in 2020.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (0,21,1)

3 September, Zeebrugge, Visserskruis (W), 1 1cy

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (0,45,1)

15 September, Sint-Laureins (O), 1 1cy trapped

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (0,42,0)

ADDENDUM

8 September 2008, Bellem (O), 1 trapped

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata* (0,17,2)

3 September, Vorselaar (A), 1 1cy trapped

25 - 29 October, Zeebrugge, Centrum (W), 1 1cy

The cooperative bird at Zeebrugge constituted the latest record ever for our country.



1st calendar year Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*. 29/10/2022. Zeebrugge, Centrum (W). (Picture: Christophe Verriest)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Helopsaltes certhiola* (0,9,1)

29 September - 2 October, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Oostdam (W), 1 1cy

Yet another field sighting of this highly enigmatic species, the fourth in four years and only a stone's throw apart from the first and the third field sightings. All other records refer to trapped birds.



1st calendar year Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Helopsaltes certhiola*. 02/10/2022. Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Oostdam (W).
(Picture: Julien Hainaut)

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0,36,2)

24 June - 3 July, Berg, Het Torfbroek - Reservaat (VB), 1 m. 2cy+

21 September, Knokke-Heist, Het Zwin (W), 1 1cy trapped

Only the fifth autumn record, the others being in August (2) and September (2).

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Curruca cantillans* (-,-,2)

ADDENDUM

8 - 9 May 2021, Houthulst (W), 1 m. 2cy trapped

10 - 12 May 2021, Heist, De Sashul (W), 1 m.

Eastern/Western Subalpine Warbler *Curruca cantillans* / *Curruca iberiae* (-,-,1)

19 - 21 April, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W), 1 f.



Female Eastern/Western Subalpine Warbler *Curruca cantillans* / *Curruca iberiae*. 19/04/2022. Zeebrugge, Voorhaven - Westdam (W). (Picture: Hans Matheve)

Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata* (0,14,2)

19 October, Seneffe (H), 1 (Julien Hainaut)
17 - 21 December, Suxy (Lx), 1 2cy+

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus* (17,79,0)

ADDENDUM

6 June 2021, Mont-Gauthier, route de Givet (N), 1 m. (Ruddy Cors)

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (0,43,3)

21 May - 6 June, Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1 m. 2cy+
15 August, Vorselaar, Aa-vallei (A), 1 1cy trapped
3 September, Sint-Huibrechts-Hern (L), 1 1cy trapped

A good year for Thrush Nightingale; only in 1990 and in 2003 have more records been accepted (4). The bird singing in Zeebrugge constituted only the third spring record ever for our country, following a singing bird in Kessenich (L) in 2006 and a bird trapped near Pepingen (VB) in 2017.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (0,11,1)

6 November, Waasmunster (O), 1 1cy

The bird unfortunately died after a collision with a window.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (0,115,1)

6 June, Stekene, Stropersbos West (O), 1

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (0,5,1)

1 - 10 November, Sint-Maria-Lierde (O), 1 1cy (Arno Goossens)

The sixth for Belgium and the third to be found inland. Four out of six records have been found in October, this constitutes the first to be found in November.



1st calendar year Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*. 06/11/2022. Sint-Maria-Lierde (O). (Picture: Kris De Rouck)

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (0,8,1)

30 October, Wanne (Lg), 1

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (0,26,11)

29 September, Westende, Sint-Laureinsduinen (W), 1 1cy+

2 October, Zandvliet (A), 2 1cy+

9 October, Zandvliet (A), 1 1cy+

10 - 11 October, Grune (Lx), 2 1cy

13 October, Zandvliet, Groot Buitenschoor (A), 1 1cy+

18 October, Zandvliet, Groot Buitenschoor (A), 1

18 October, De Haan, Duinbossen (W), 1 1cy+

19 October, De Panne, De Westhoek (W), 1 1cy+

23 October, Herentals, Hellekens - Buiten Ring (A), 1

The record from Grune (Lx) is the first to involve more than one bird at the same time. With 31 accepted records between 2013-2022, involving 32 birds, Olive-backed Pipit was taken off the rarity list per 1 January 2023.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (0,263,2)

10 October - 10 December, Kalmthout, Grenspark Kalmthoutse Heide (A), 2 m.

Citril Finch *Carduelis citrinella* (2,15,0)

ADDENDUM

23 April 2018, Petit-Thier (Lx), 1 f. 2cy+

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (1,26,1)

21 November - 12 December, Assent, Blakenberg (VB), 1 m. 1cy+

A controversial bird which heated the discussions regarding its ID. Some pictures seemed to show a yellowish hue to the base of the primaries, while others pictures didn't. This case clearly showed the importance and relevance of digital photography and, even more importantly, image post-processing. Next to the (seemingly) absence of a yellowish hue to the base of the primaries, this bird showed no other signs indicating a hybrid origin, hence the BRBC decided to accept this male as a pure bird. The extensive hybridisation between Yellowhammer and Pine Bunting poses a major ID challenge, with evidence of this introgression being found even in birds that show no clear hybrid features (Irwin *et al.* 2009). Given this extensive hybridization, it is challenging to put species limits on both species, even based on molecular markers. Moreover, as it is unfeasible to require a DNA sequence for each individual, birds without clear evidence of a hybrid origin will be considered as pure.



Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*. 01/12/2022. Assent, Blakenberg (VB). (Picture: Paul Pugh)

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* (25,35,2)

24 October, Membach (Lg), 1 1cy (Bastien Wuidar)

28 October, Etalle, Etang de l'Illé (Lx), 1

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* (/ ,53,3)

19 April, Doel, Doeldok (O), 1 f. (Kenny Hessel)

12 May, Floreffe (N), 1 m. ad. br.

1 July - 21 August, Anhée (N), 1 m. ad. br.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (3,17,2)

29 March - 3 April, Herselt (A), 1 m. 2cy+ trapped

11 October, Wibrin (Lx), 1 1cy+ trapped (Henri Bihain)

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* (0,1,1)

14 February - 14 March, Doel, Prosperpolder Zuid (O), 1 m. 2cy

A great find made by a birder gathering data for the upcoming bird atlas. This bird was quite literally a borderline case, being discovered only a 100 m away from the Dutch border. During its stay, it frequently crossed the border, making both Dutch and Belgian birders happy.

2. Accepted, category D

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*

15 January - 1 March, Schulensbroek/Kasterlee/Testelt, 1 m.

A much debated bird which was eventually placed in category D. Since there was no overlap in dates for Schulensbroek, Kasterlee and Testelt, the BRBC decided to merge these records and treat it as one bird. The bird was initially found in a mixed flock of Gadwalls *Mareca strepera* and Eurasian Wigeons *Mareca penelope*, but in Kasterlee and Testelt the bird was only seen in the company of Gadwalls. The status of Falcated Duck in Europe differs between countries. In the Netherlands and Great-Britain the species was put on the A-list, while in other countries it is still kept in D or even E (Berlijn 2007; Stoddart & McInerny 2020). Since Falcated Duck is frequently kept in captivity and no definitive proof of a wild bird in Europe has emerged yet, the BRBC decided to remain careful and stored this record in category D.

3. Accepted, category E

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*

10 July - 30 September, Zonhoven, Platwijers - Spoorwegvijver (L), 2

ADDENDUM

4 December 2021, Woumen, De Blankaart (W), 1

Although the bird of Woumen resided at a good spot for wild geese, the legs remained undescribed.

Baikal Teal *Sibirionetta formosa*

24 January - 18 April, Turnhout, Turnhouts Vennengebied (A), 1 m. ad.

10 December, De Panne, Zwarte Hoek (W), 1 m.

ADDENDUM

19 December 2021, Wilslele (VB), 1 m.

The bird from De Panne was accompanied by three Eurasian Wigeons but the absence of rings could not be confirmed, while the bird from Turnhout resided at a suspicious location. The male from Wilslele was ringed with a non-scientific ring on its left leg.

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*

11 - 12 May, Mechelen, De Potpolder/Mechels Broek (A), 1 m. 2cy+

ADDENDUM

27 March 2021 - 23 May 2022, Snellegem (W), 3

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

22 July, Wibrin (Lx), 1

An intriguing case of a singing Oriental Turtle Dove in the Ardennes in the middle of the summer. However, since the species is often encountered in captivity and the right leg could not be checked for the presence of a ring, the bird was accepted in category E.

Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*

21 May, Blankenberge/Zeebrugge, De Fonteintjes (W), 1
25 - 26 May, Omal (Lg) and Manhay (Lx), 1 imm.
20 October, Lubbeek (VB), 1 (returning individual)
ADDENDUM
8 - 9 October 2021, Brecht - Mechelen (A), 1 f. 2cy (returning individual)

4. Rejected

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

3 December, Uitkerkse polders (O), 1
16 December - 22 January 2023, Wachtebeke, Provinciaal Domein (O), 1

The bird residing in Wachtebeke, a much-twitched bird, was associating with a small group of Greylag Geese *Anser anser*. The bird however did not show the full set of criteria and was not accompanied by other Taiga Bean Goose candidates. Moreover, some of the accompanying Greylags had a blackish nail to the bill, yellow-orange legs, amongst other criteria at least hinting at a hybrid origin between Greylag Goose and Bean Goose.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

3 April, Stalhille, Weiden (W), 1 adult

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*

3 January, Ranst (A), 1 m.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

15 May, Kattestraat, Oppuurs (A), 1
28 October, Edegem (A), 1

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

23 October, Buggenhout (O), 1
24 October, Vichte (W), 1
24 October, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W), 1
25 October, Antwerpen (A), 2
25 October, Eke (O), 1
28 October, Nieuwpoort, IJzermonding (W), 1
2 November, Houchenée (Lg), 1
3 November, Blankenberge (W), 1

The major influx of Pallid Swifts inevitably resulted in a high amount of rejected records. All these records were not accompanied by qualitative pictures, nor an in depth description, failing to support a positive identification. Considering the ratio of proven Pallid Swifts versus proven Common Swifts *Apus apus* during this influx, it is however highly likely that a big majority of the rejected records refer to Pallid Swifts as well.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*

28 May, Tournay (Lx), 1 juv.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

ADDENDUM
17 July 2020, Zeebrugge, Achterhaven - Weiden Hoge Noen (W), 1

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

3 - 4 June, Zeebrugge, Voorhaven (W), 1 ad. br.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

26 December, Houtave, Polders Klein Middelhof (W), 1 ad. wi.

Picture does not rule out a Common Gull *Larus canus*.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

5 August, Oostduinkerke, Ter Yde (W), 1

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

15 July, Zandvliet, Groot Buitenschoor (A), 1

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina*

14 June, Antwerpen, De Kuifeend (A), 1

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

3 August, Hoeilaart (VB), 1

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

27 April, Waulsort (N), 1

24 August, De Panne, Westhoek (W), 1

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*

3 April, Biernimont (H), 1 m. ad.

Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus*

8 - 9 February, Ninove, Pollare (O), 1

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*

11 June, Durbuy (Lx), 1

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

ADDENDUM

3 November 2021, Kieldrecht, Nieuwe Arenbergpolder (O), 1

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

29 April, Smetlede, Oud Smetlede (O), 1 m.

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*

9 December, Zuienkerke (W), 1 ad. wi.

Picture does not rule out an aberrant Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Icelandic Redwing *Turdus iliacus coburni*

9 November, Ertvelde-Rieme - Stoepe (O), 1

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*

27 April, Falmignoul (N), 1 m. ad.

Ashy-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*

30 September, Bree (L), 1

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

22 October, De Haan (W), 1

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

- 4 October, Haasrode, Zandgroeve (VB), 1
- 11 October, Tessenderlo, Averbode Bos en Heide (L), 1 1cy+
- 1 November, Gent, Centrum (O), 1
- 14 November, De Haan, Zandpanne (W), 1

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

- 2 October, Kalmthout, Zwarte Heuvelen - Trektelpost (A), 1
- 9 October, Kalmthout, Kambusduinen (A), 1
- 9 October, Brecht, Groot Schietveld - Trektelpost (A), 1

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