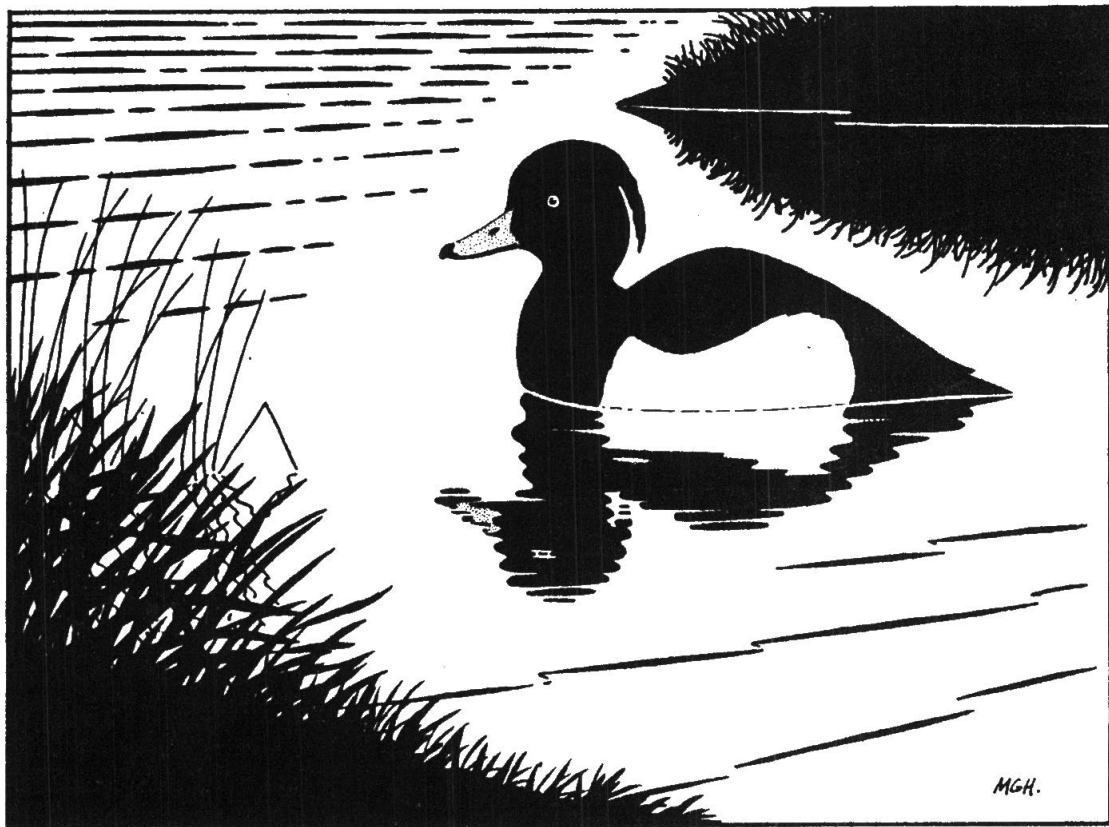


Bill Jordan.

THE BREEDING BIRDS OF
HUNTINGDON AND
PETERBOROUGH, 1979-83



Julian Limentani,
Graham Elliott &
Mike Everett

THE BREEDING BIRDS OF HUNTINGDON AND PETERBOROUGH 1979-1983

Survey organised by J. Limentani.

Compiled and presented by

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Graham Elliott
and
Mike Everett

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CONTENTS

Introduction.	3
The Old County of Huntingdonshire.	7
Summary of results.	11
Species maps.	13
Index of species names.	41

INTRODUCTION

Between 1968 and 1972 over 10,000 birdwatchers participated in fieldwork for the "Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland". This major ornithological survey was organised by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy and all records were collected and mapped using the 10km squares of the Ordnance Survey National Grid. This size of mapping unit proved adequate at the national level but somewhat crude when examining the distribution of birds at the county level.

Inspired by the success of the national project the decision was taken to repeat the survey of the old county of Huntingdonshire with Peterborough during the years 1979-1983. This time, however, the mapping unit chosen was the 2km square formed by the even-numbered lines of the O.S. National Grid, otherwise known as the "tetrad". Including those that overlap the county boundary, Huntingdonshire has 385 tetrads.

The categories used by observers when determining the status of a potential breeding record for the Huntingdonshire survey were those described and used in "The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland". There are three main categories of breeding which can be summarised as follows:-

Possible breeding.

Bird recorded in breeding season in possible nesting habitat.

Probable breeding

Singing male.

Bird apparently holding territory.

Display or agitated behaviour.

Visiting probable nest-site.

Nest building.

Confirmed breeding.

Distraction Display.

Used nest found.

Recently fledged young.

Adult carrying faecal sac.

Adult with food for young

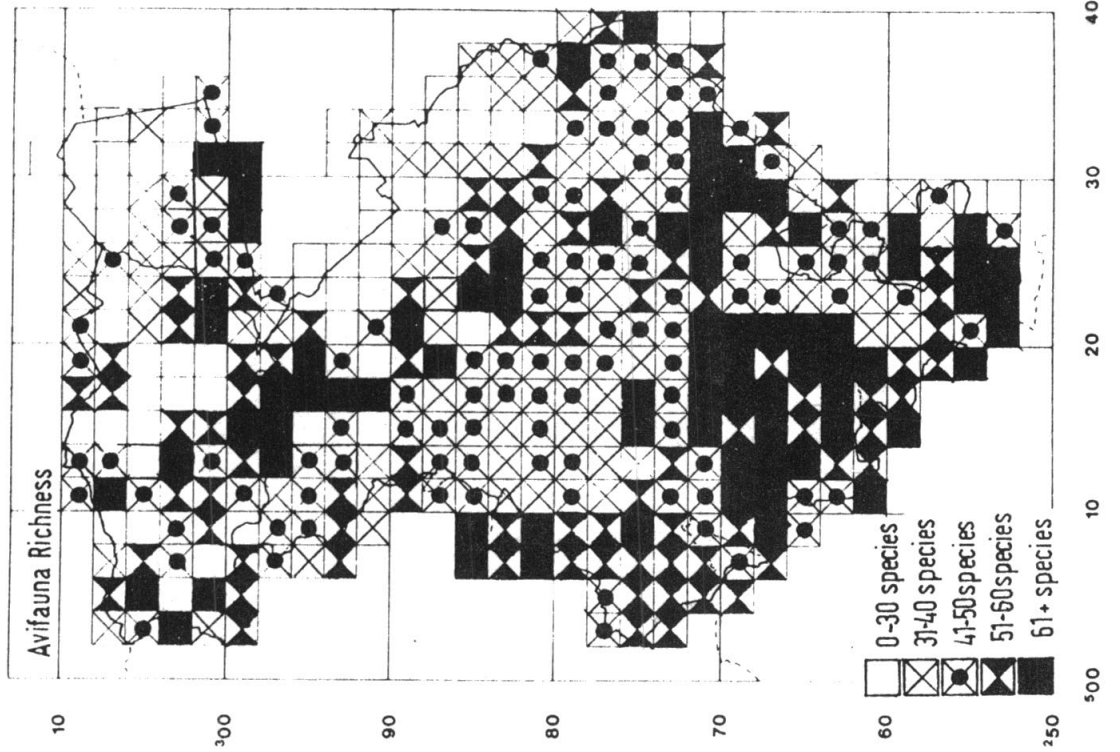
Adult entering/leaving likely nest site.

Nest and eggs/bird sitting tight.

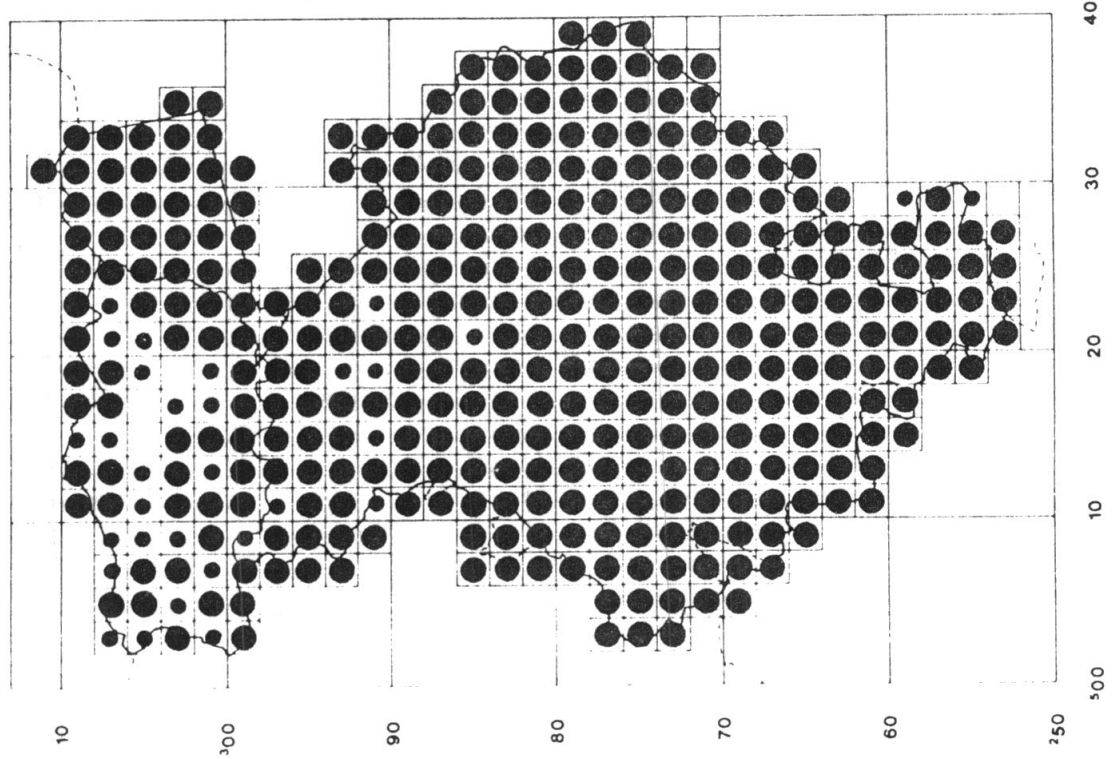
Nest and young or downy young.

Records were collected by observers on recording cards which were submitted to the organiser at the end of each season. Recording cards consisted of a full species list with columns to enable the observer to enter the category of breeding recorded. The data from these cards were transferred onto master cards from which the maps were drawn. New cards were supplied annually along with details of the methods to be used and an update of progress.

The majority of the recording area was well covered, but records for some tetrads in the north of the county were not submitted hence there are no records for tetrads m, s, and w in square TF10, other tetrads in this 10km square and TF00 were poorly covered.



COVERAGE 1979-1983



THE OLD COUNTY OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Huntingdonshire with the Soke of Peterborough constituted the second smallest county in England until 1974 when the reorganisation of county boundaries saw the area absorbed into Cambridgeshire. There are two main areas of development, Peterborough in the Nene Valley in the north and Huntingdon with St Ives and St Neots in the Ouse Valley in the south.

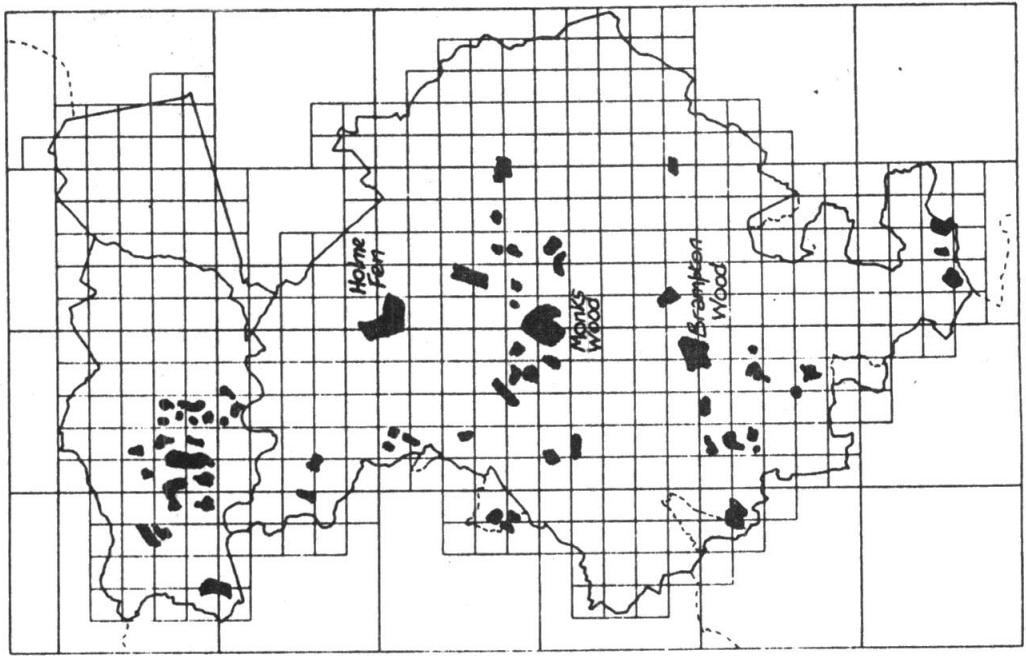
The majority of the County is situated on Oxford Clay, although there is a band of Lower Greensand in the very south. There is little variation in altitude across the area, the highest point being 250 feet (75m) above sea level and the lowest, in the Fens, several feet below sea level.

The rivers Great Ouse and Nene both cross the County from west to east. The Ouse carries water from Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire and the Nene from neighbouring Northamptonshire. The northern border of the old County runs along the course of the river Welland for a short distance. There are large deposits of sand and gravel along all three of these river valleys, varying amounts of which have been extracted, resulting in a series of flooded gravel pits in each. In the Ouse valley a series of water-filled pits exists from Little Paxton past Buckden, Brampton and Godmanchester to St Ives and Earith in the extreme east of the County. In the Nene valley, water-filled pits exist between Wansford and Peterborough, while to the north, in the Welland valley, there are flooded diggings at Maxey.

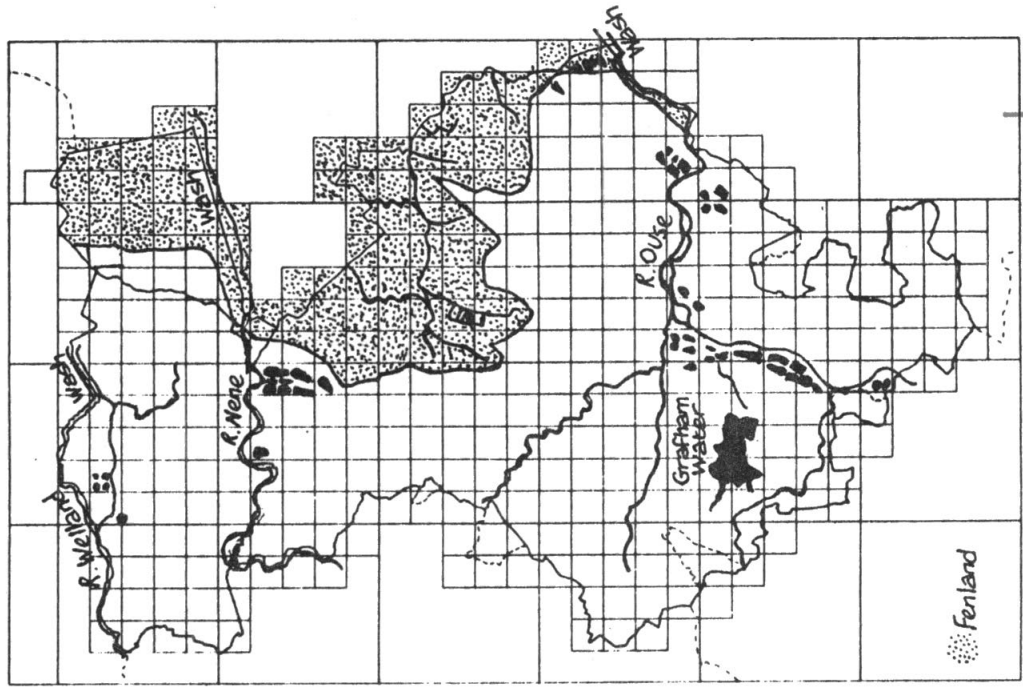
The old County has very little woodland, most of which is located in the north-west and west on the heavier clay soils. The fen carr which once covered much of the lower areas of the old County has long since been destroyed, although there are important remnants at Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen.

In the south of the County is Grafham Water, one of the largest man-made reservoirs in Europe. Although now used extensively for water-based recreational pursuits, the area is of major importance for waterbirds and will undoubtedly continue to be so.

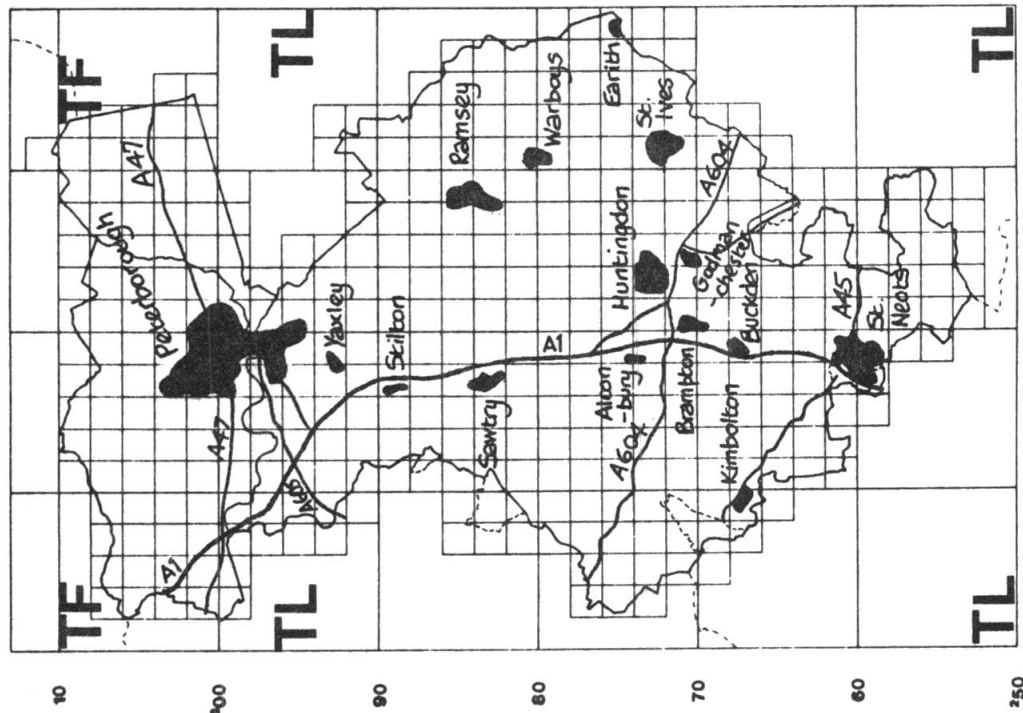
WOODLANDS



RIVERS, GRAVEL/BRICK PITS and RESERVOIRS



TOWNS, VILLAGES AND PRIMARY ROADS



500 400 300 200 100 0 10 20 30 40

RESULTS

Over the five years that the Survey was carried out, all but three tetrads, out of 385, were covered. A grand total of 18,074 records were collected relating to 108 species. A number of confidential records were submitted and these have been omitted from the printed maps and amount to 65 records.

The avifauna richness map reflects many trends which are apparent in many individual species maps. Areas which were particularly rich in species were the river valleys including the gravel pits and the areas with the most extensive woodland, the latter situated in the west and north west of the County.

The Fenland areas in the north east of our area are notable for the distinct lack of species and numbers of individuals. The escarpment at the edge of the Fens can be clearly seen crossing TL 38, TL 28 and TL 29. The distribution maps of species such as blue tit and robin show how the common woodland and garden birds are scarce in Fenland, whereas reed warbler is almost restricted to the Fens and river valleys. The open, often treeless, habitat of the Fenland area is inhospitable to many species.

One species that has changed its distribution within our area since the survey was carried out is the magpie. The map for this species shows the period when it was most restricted in range. It will be interesting to see future maps for this and all other birds located during this survey.

Many of the wildfowl species have only been recorded breeding in the old County for a short period of time, colonisation coinciding with the advent of deep gravel pits and Grafham Water. Shelduck was first recorded breeding in 1966, teal in 1951, gadwall probably in 1952 and garganey in 1953. Some waders have benefited due to gravel pits to the extent that the County has become important for ringed plover and little ringed plover. Other species such as redshank, snipe and lapwing are probably much less common now than they were previously due to land drainage. The draining of the Fens in earlier years must have had a major impact on bird distribution within the area.

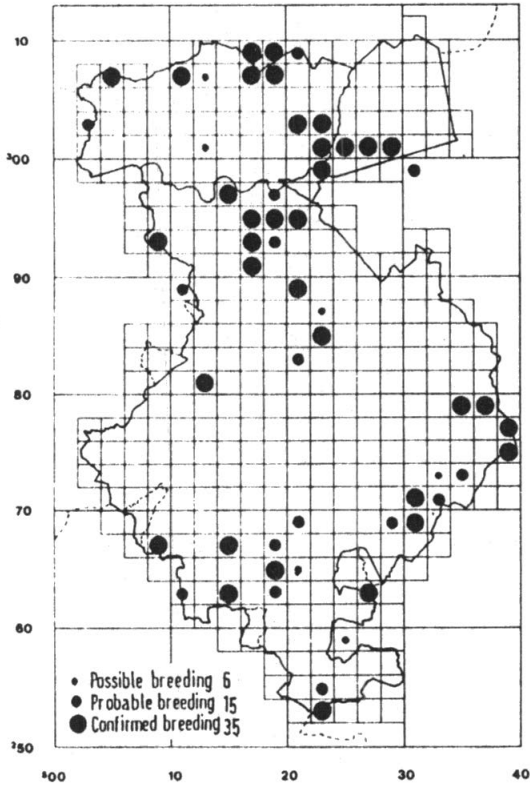
The winter before the Survey started was very hard and reduced the numbers of many resident species drastically, kingfisher, goldcrest and coal tit were particularly affected. During the Survey, winters were relatively mild and by the end of the fieldwork numbers had shown a considerable increase.

The aim of this survey was to provide a baseline showing the distribution of all species breeding within the Old County. The two previous avifaunas of the County, *The Victoria County History* and *The Birds of Huntingdonshire* by C.F. Tebbut, give us some indication of previous distribution. However, the rate of agricultural and other land-use change since their publication has become increasingly rapid and both are now outdated.

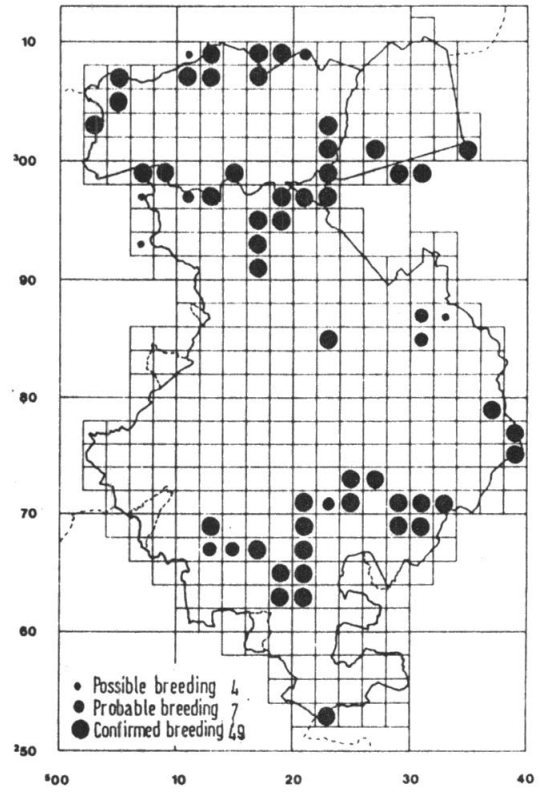
Summaries of bird records for the Old County of Huntingdonshire are published annually by the Huntingdon Flora and Fauna Society and the Cambridge Bird Club.

This publication owes much to all those observers who participated in the survey. Without their effort this publication would not have been possible.

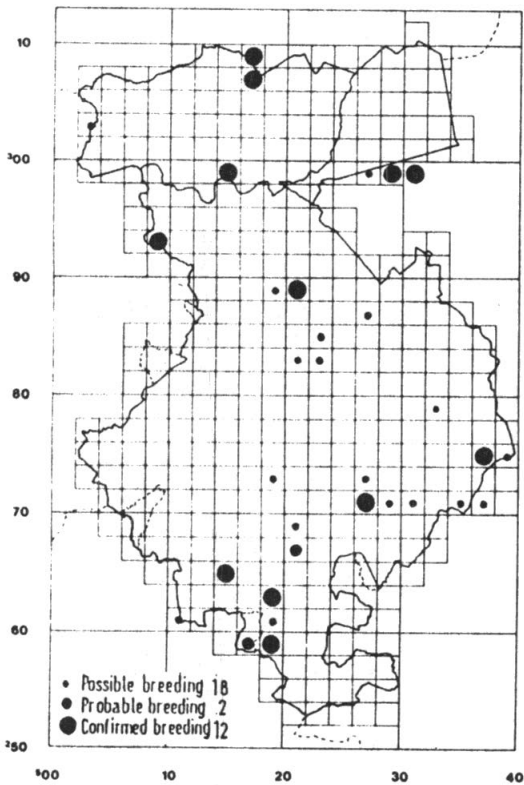
LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*



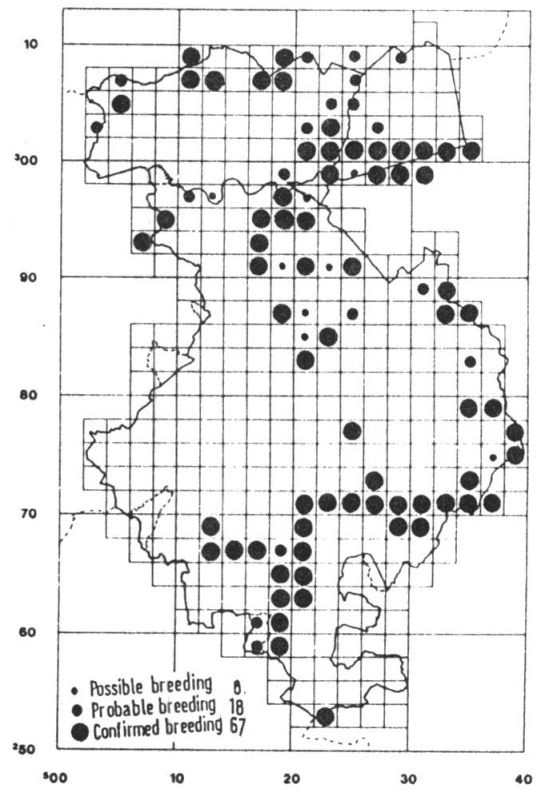
GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*



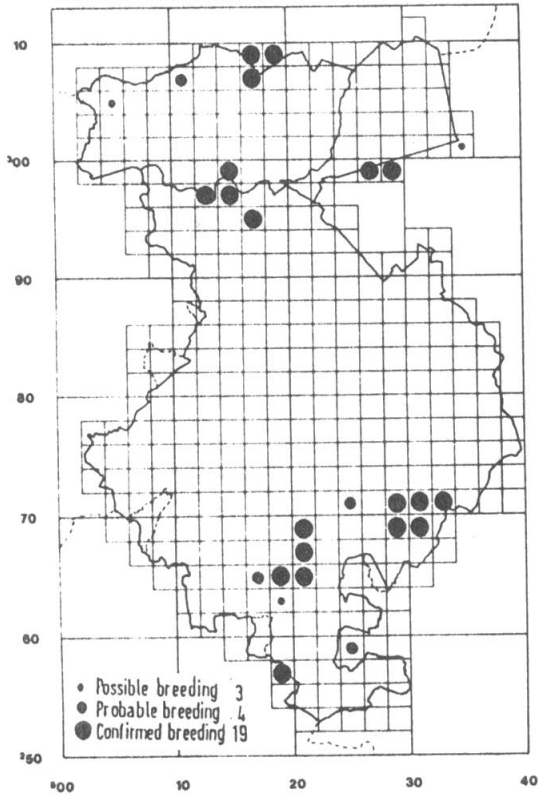
HERON *Ardea cinerea*



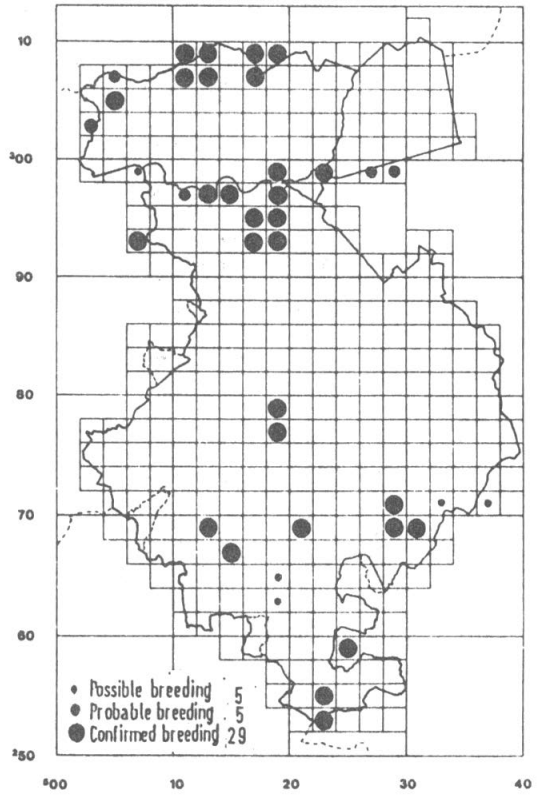
MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*



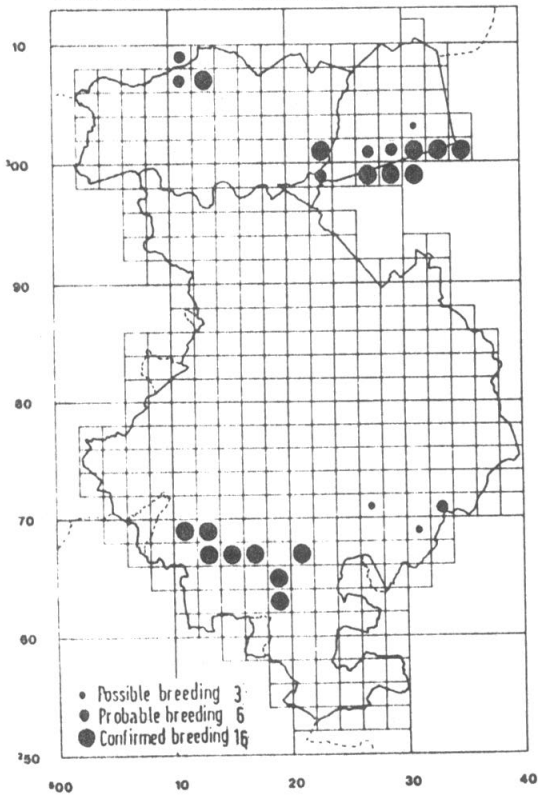
GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*



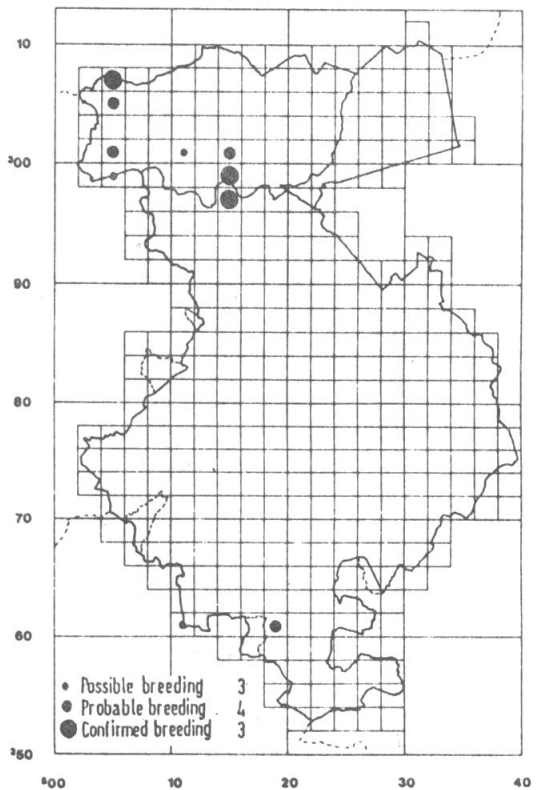
CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*



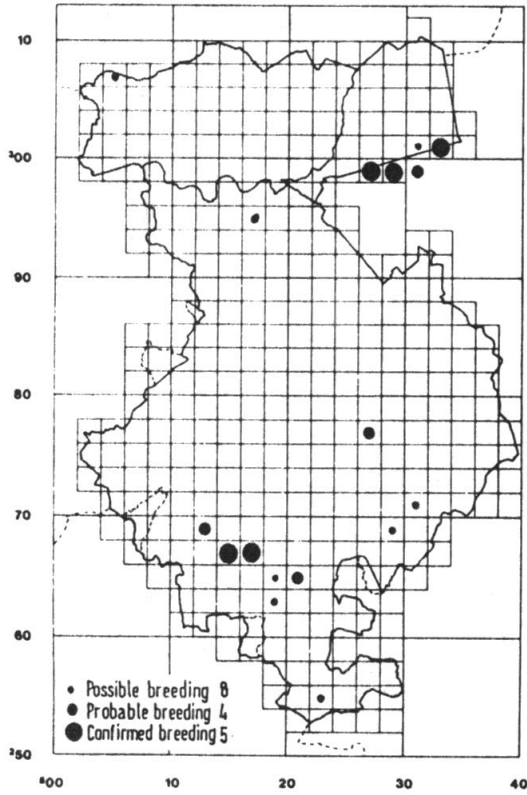
SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*



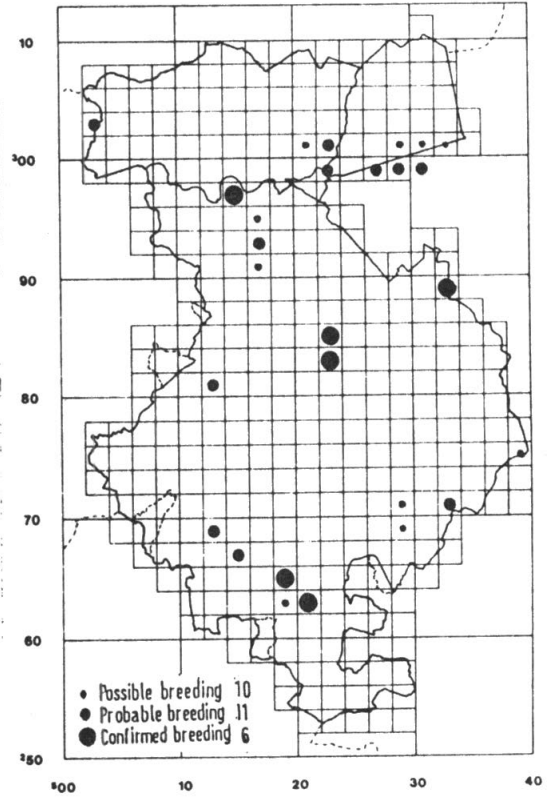
MANDARIN *Aix galericulata*



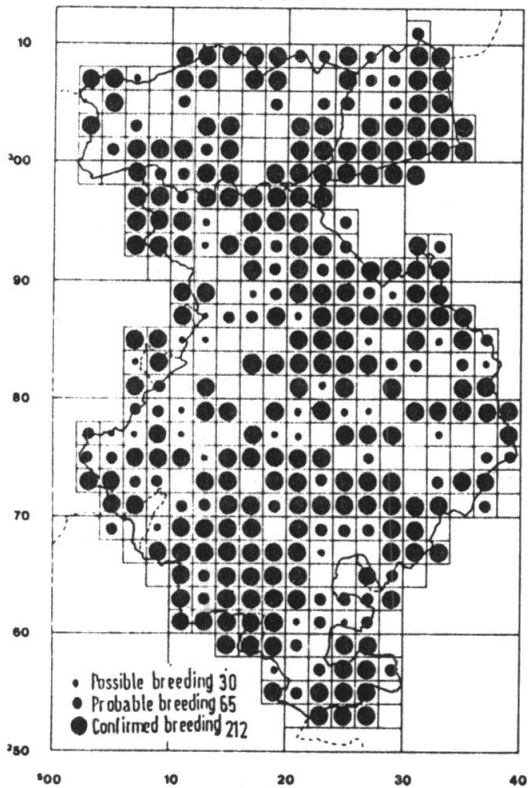
GADWALL *Anas strepera*



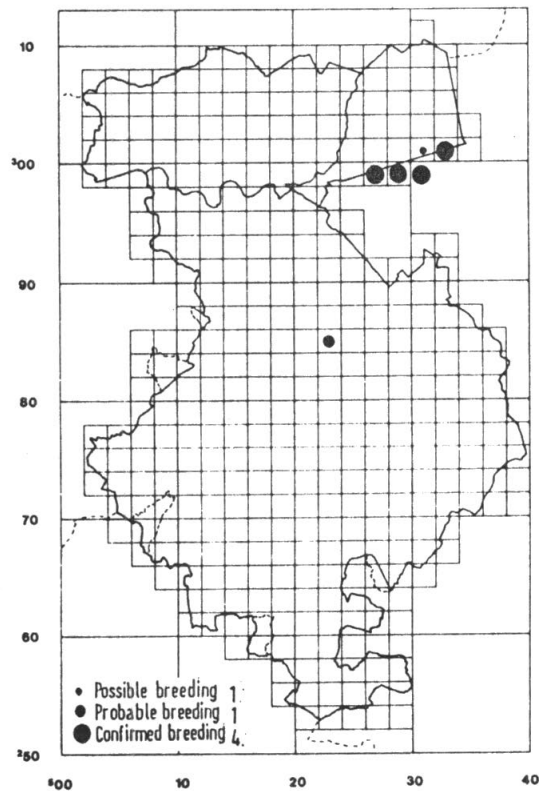
TEAL *Anas crecca*



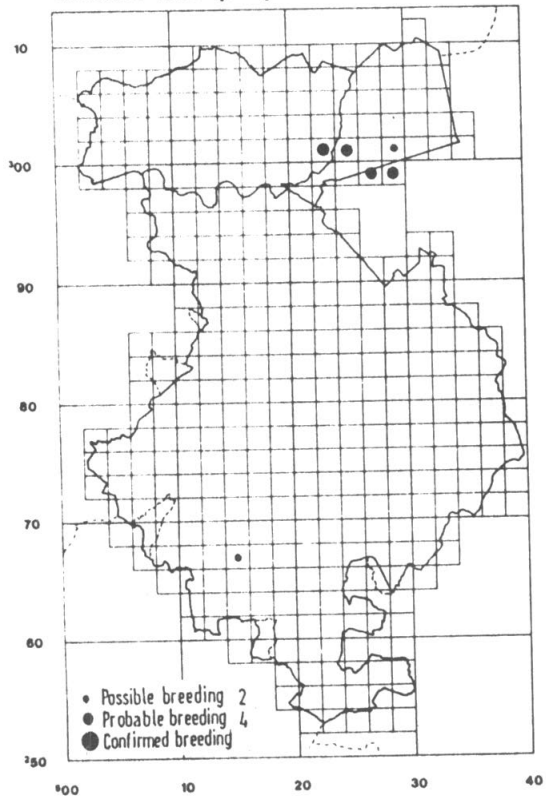
MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*



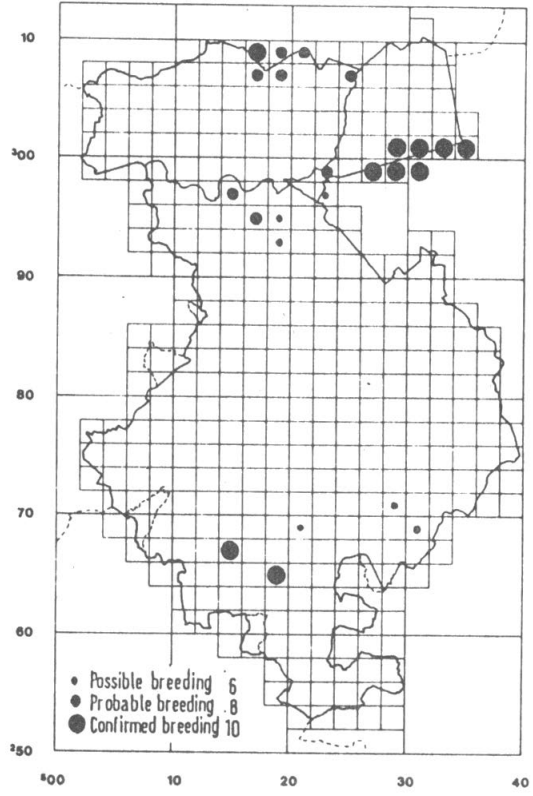
PINTAIL *Anas acuta*



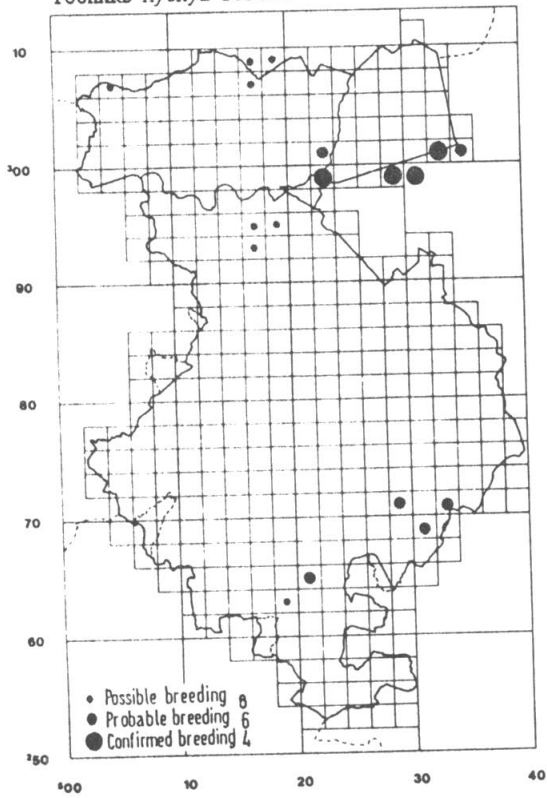
GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*



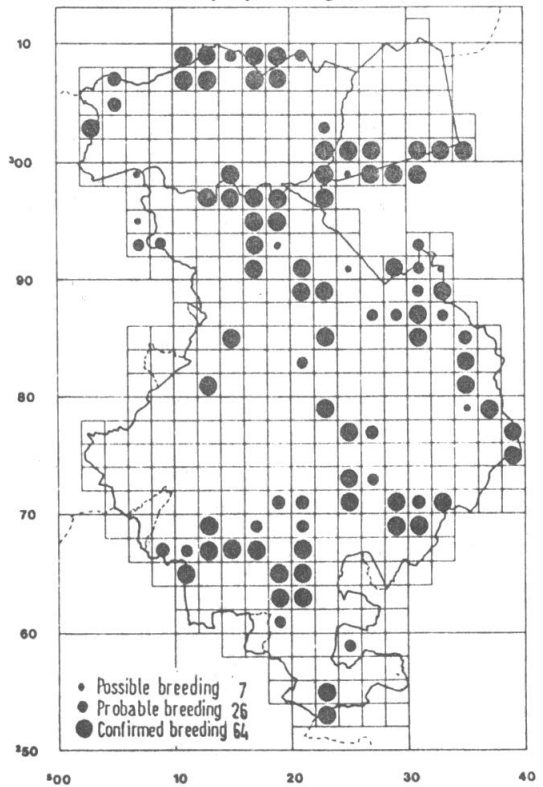
SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*



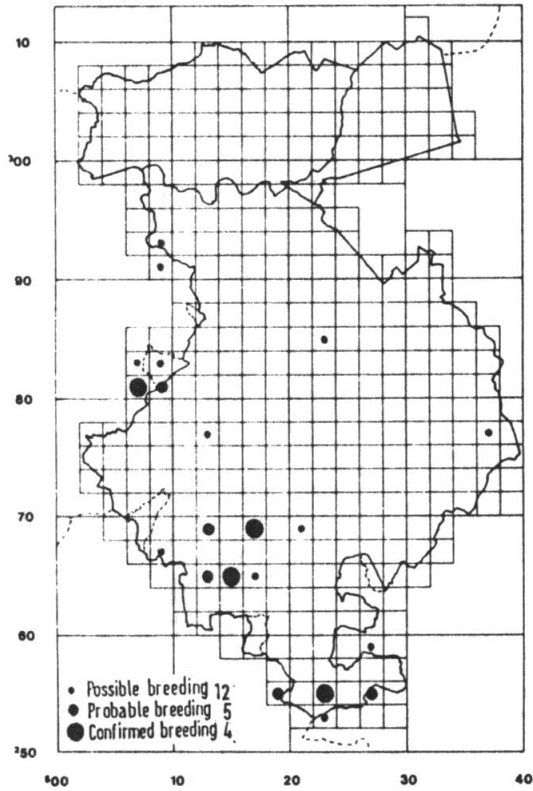
POCHARD *Aythya ferina*



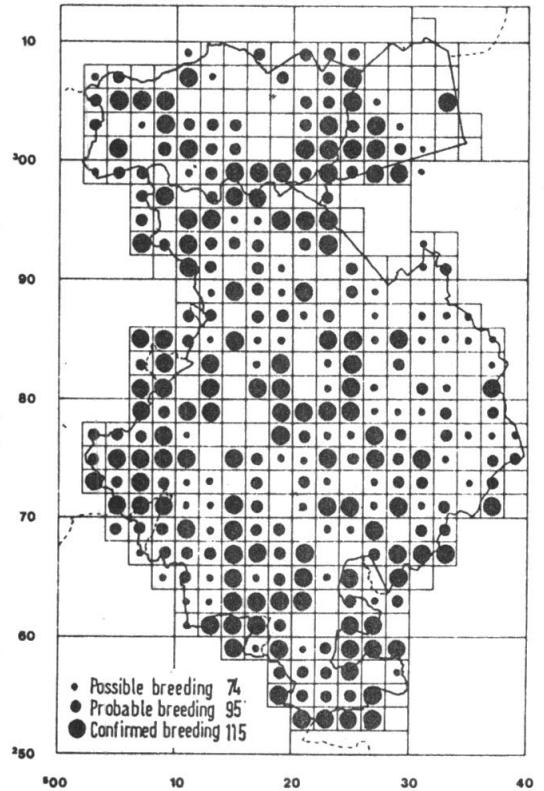
TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*



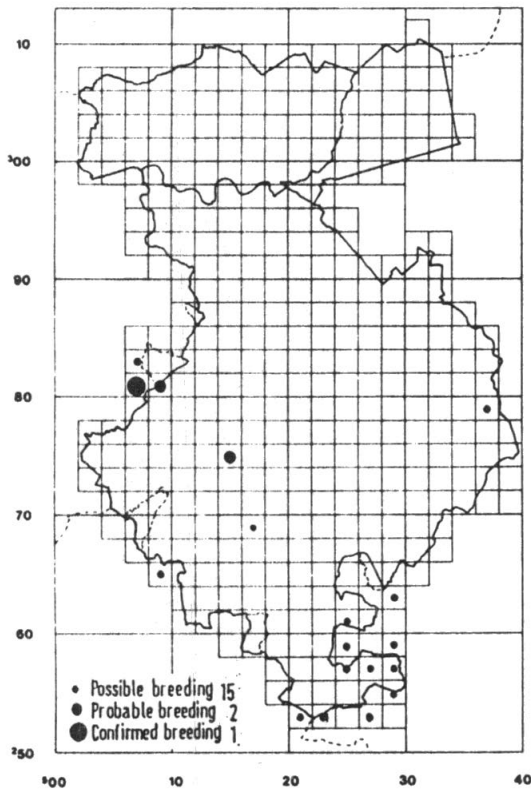
SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*



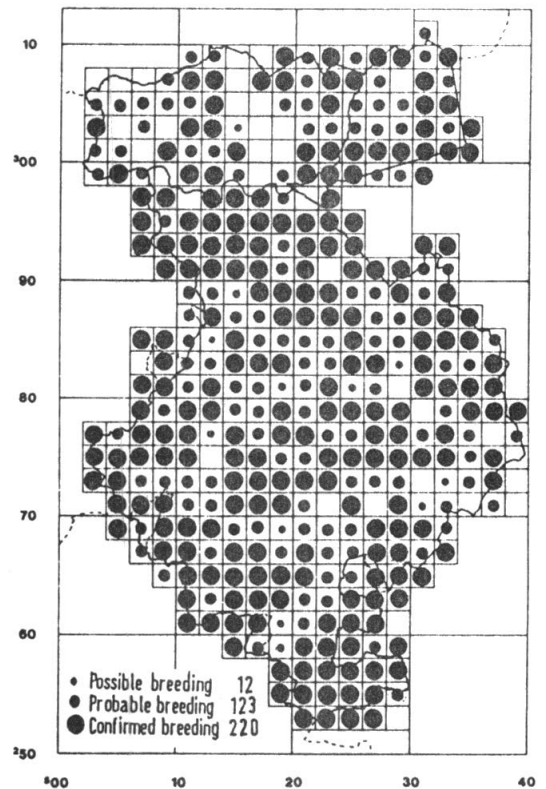
KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*



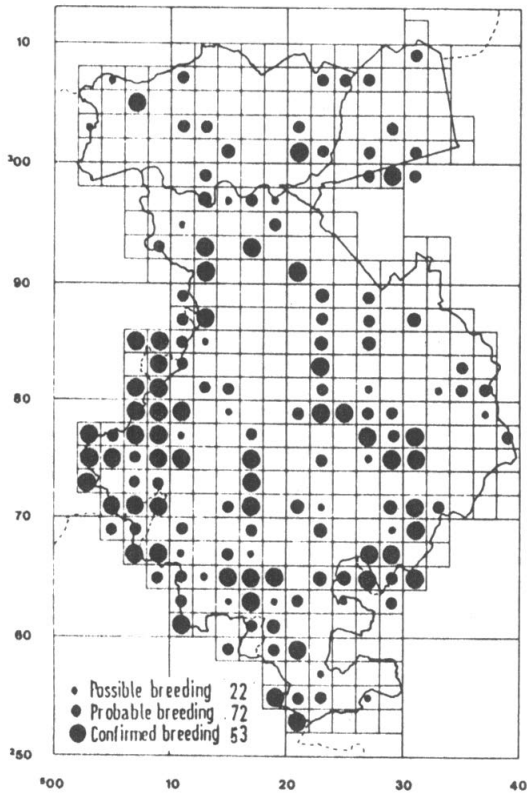
HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*



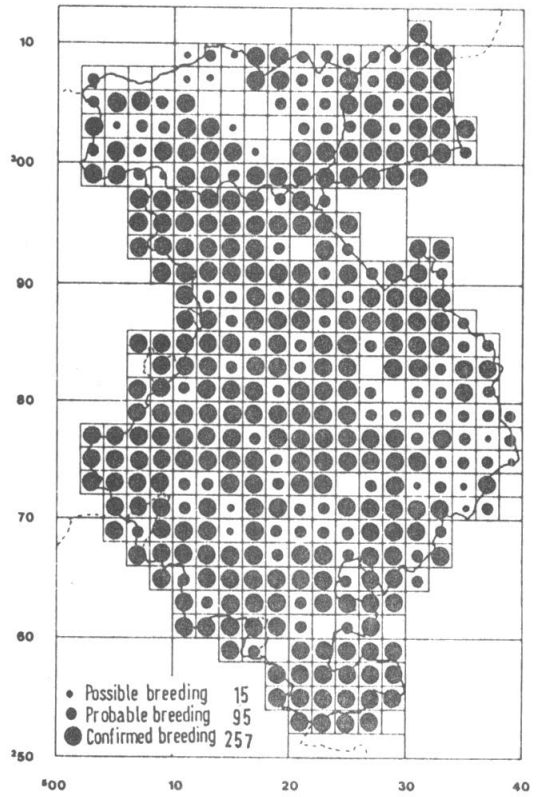
RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*



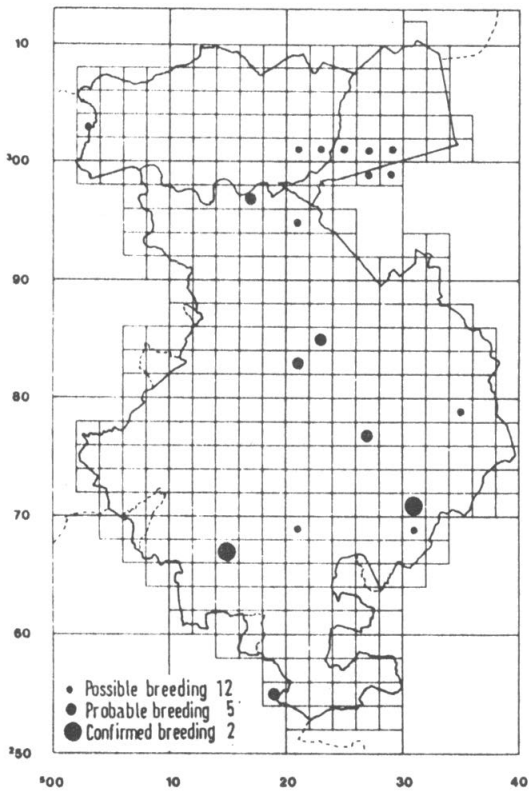
GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*



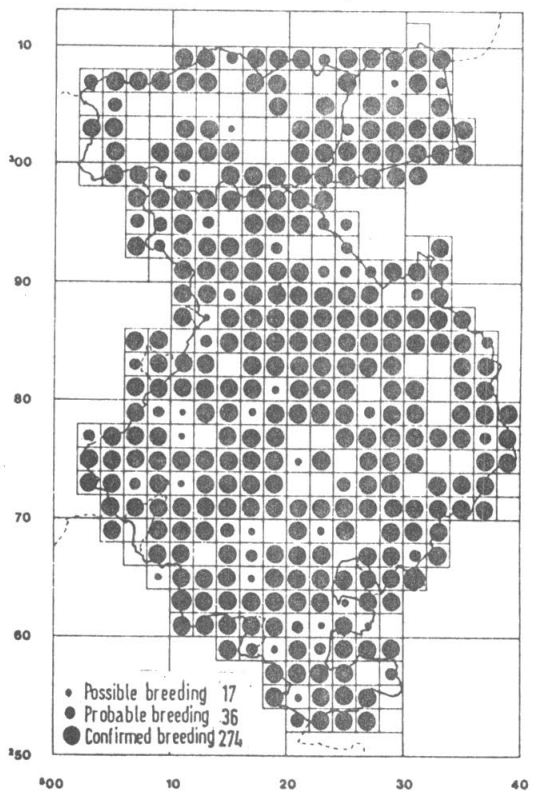
PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

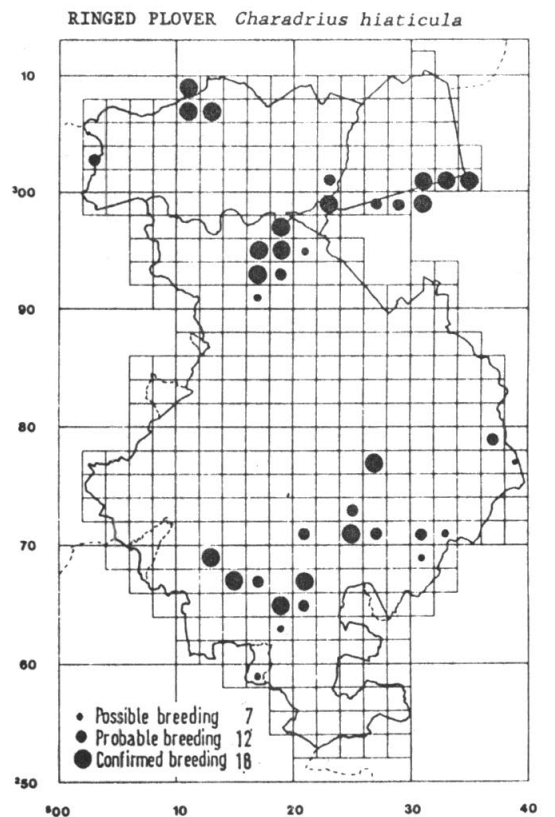
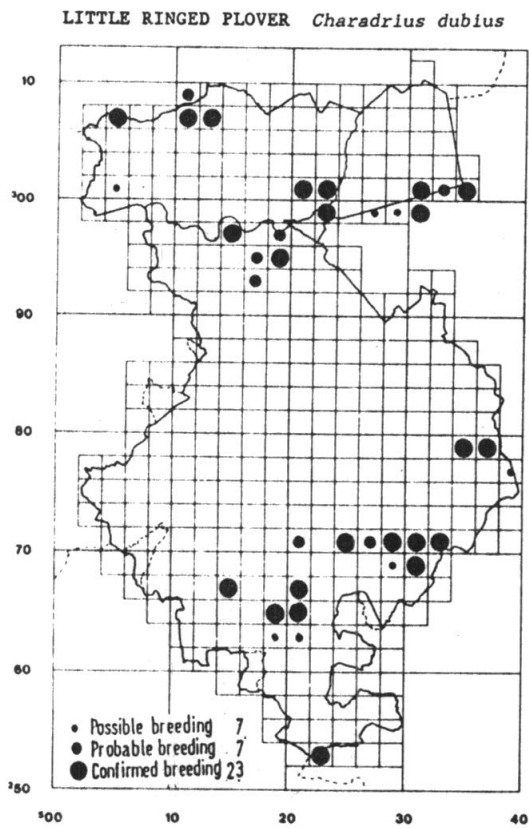
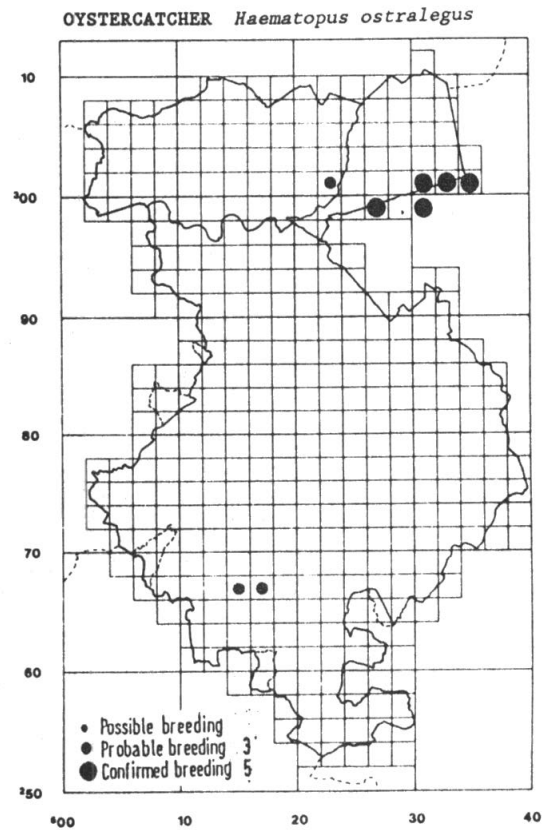
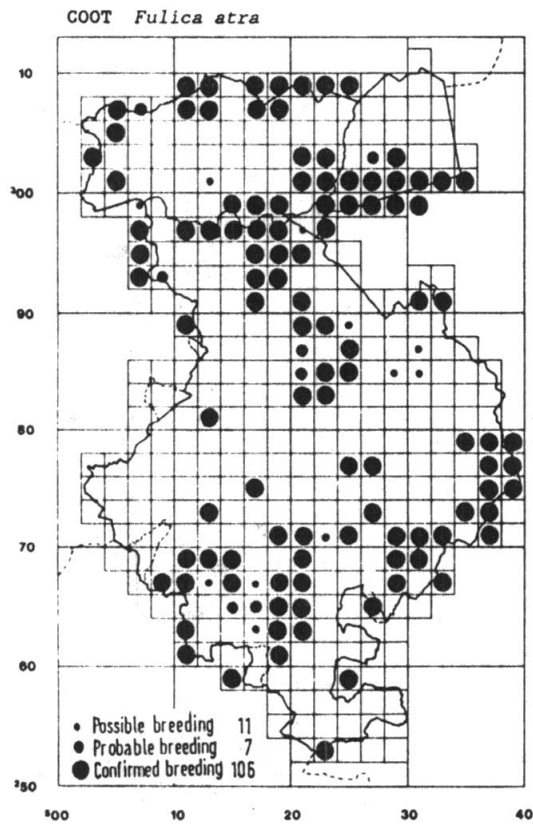


WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

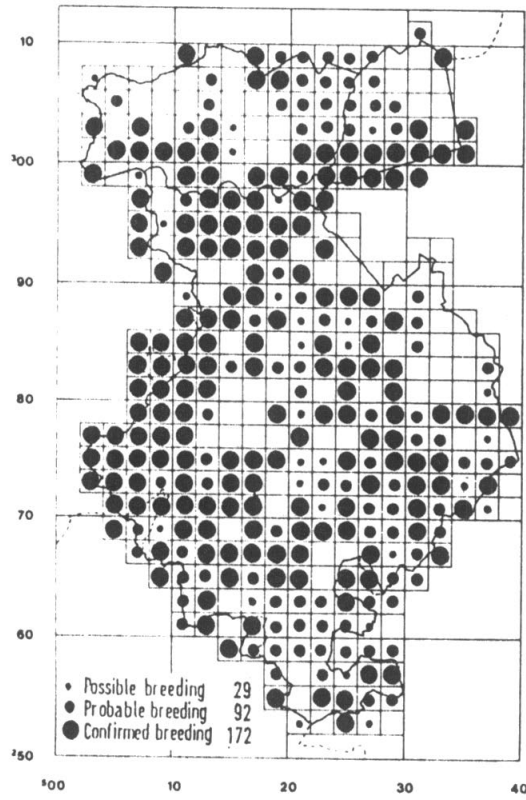


MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

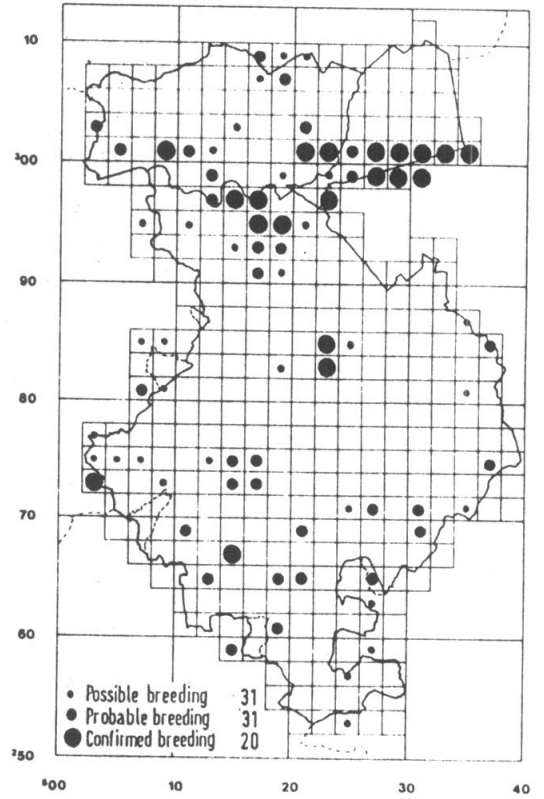




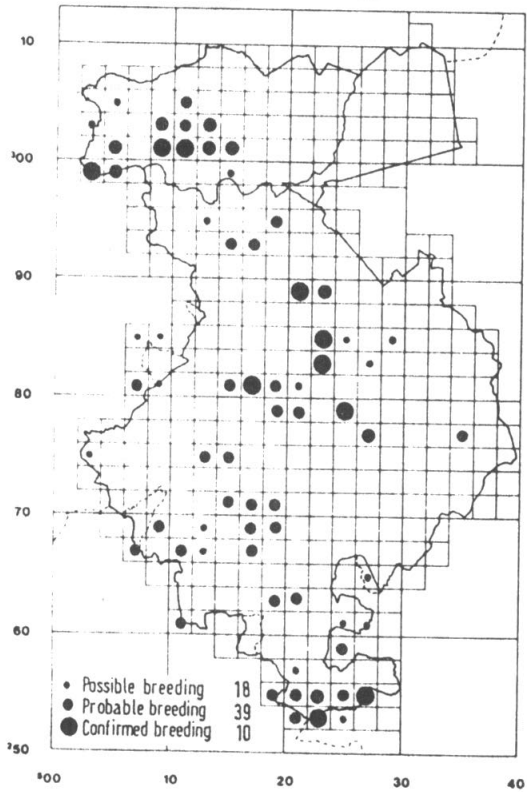
LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*



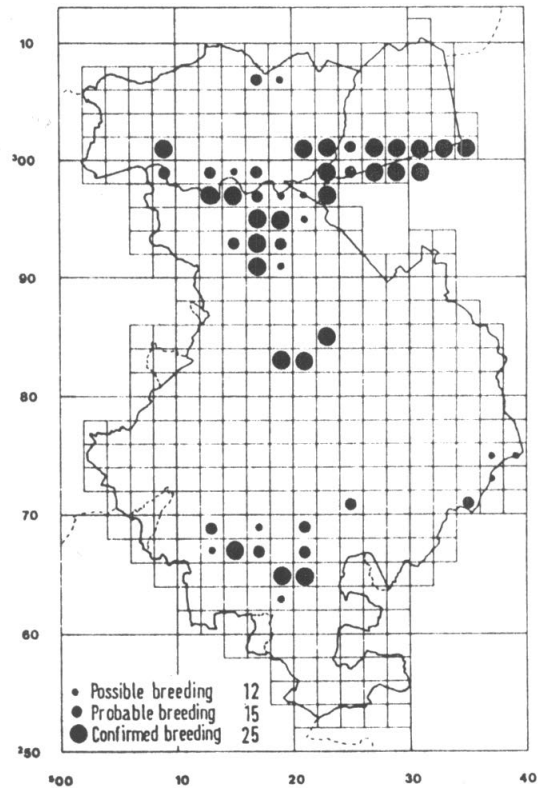
SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*



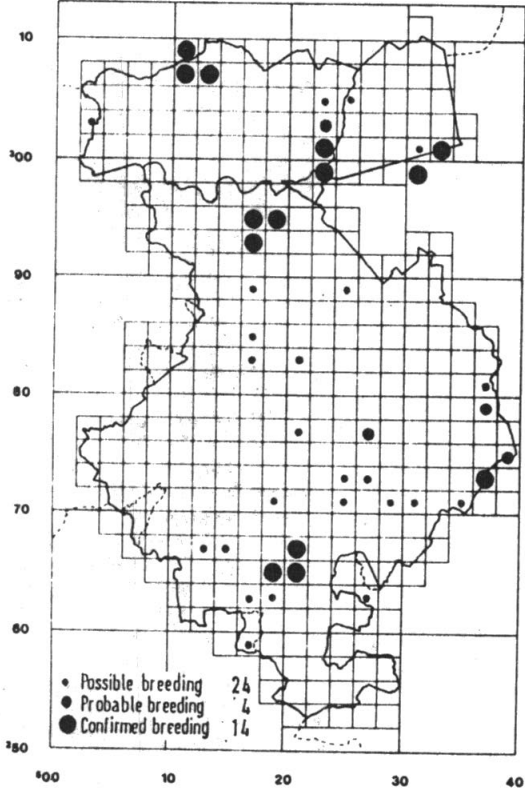
WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*



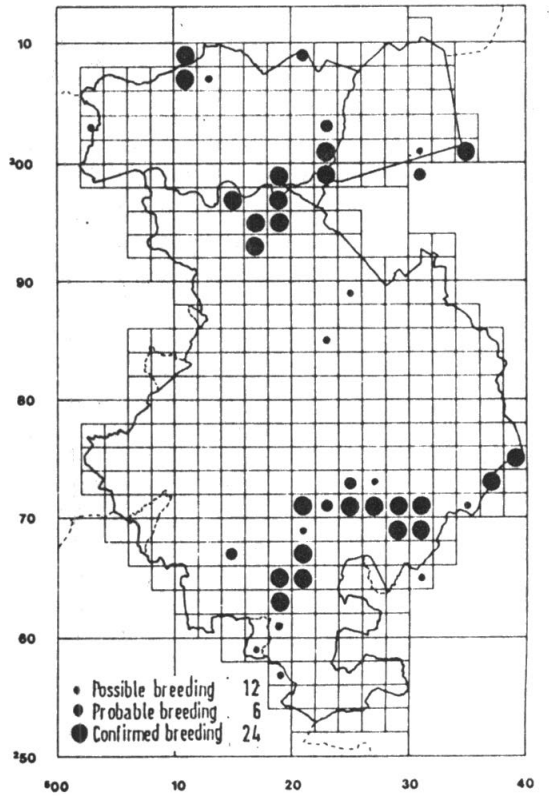
REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*



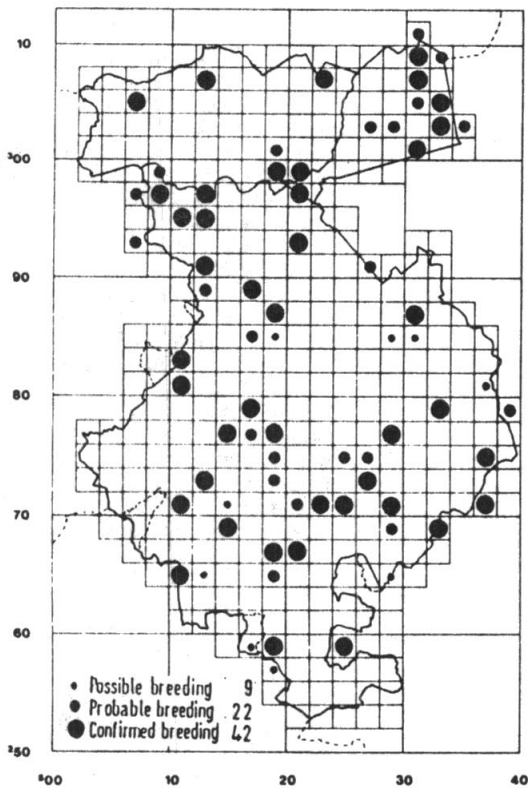
BLACK HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*



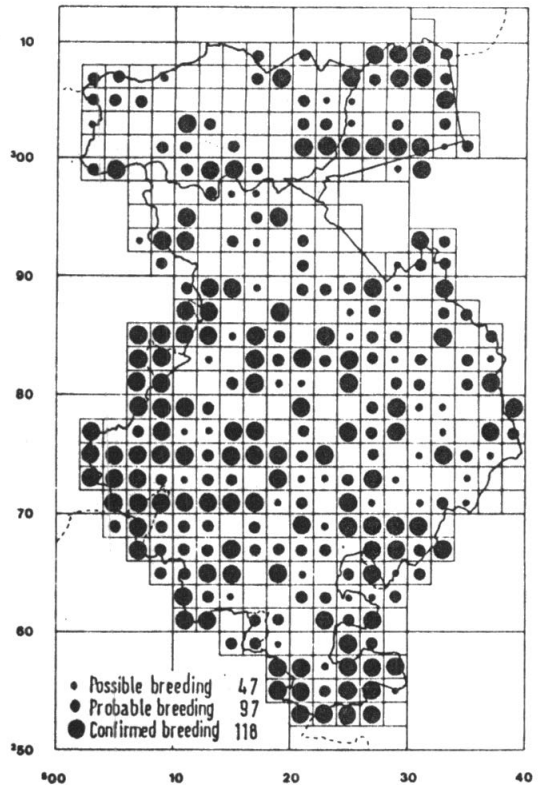
COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*



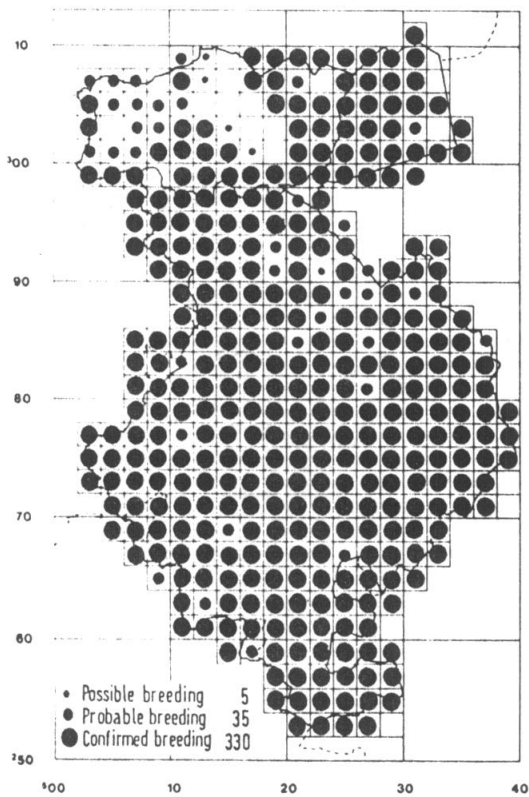
FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*



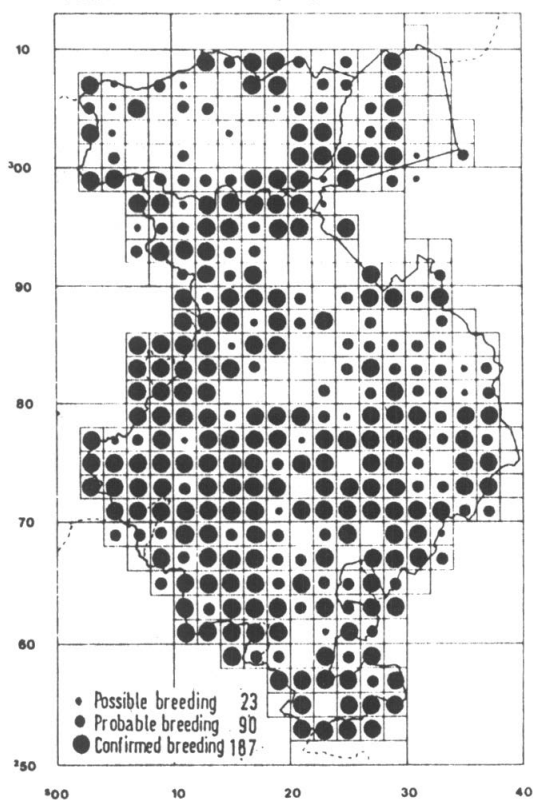
STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*



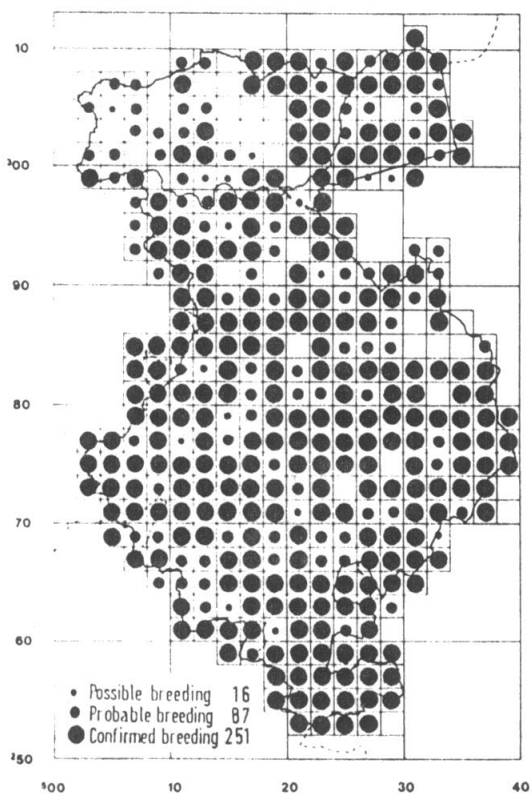
WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*



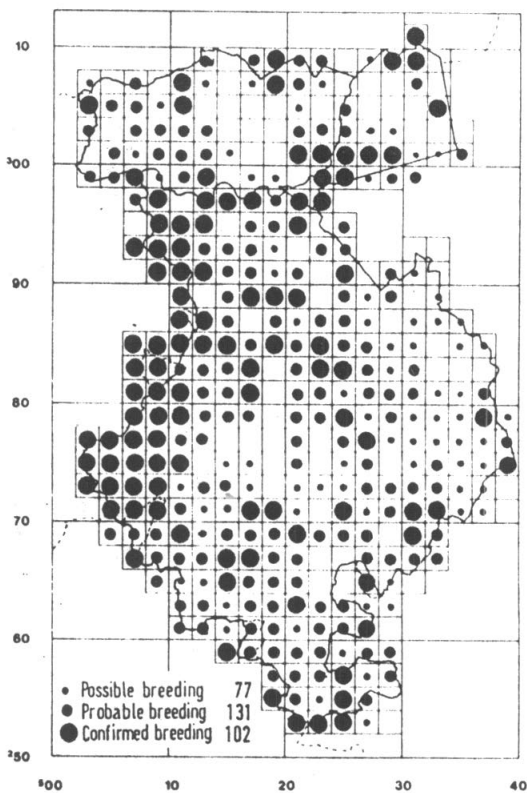
COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*



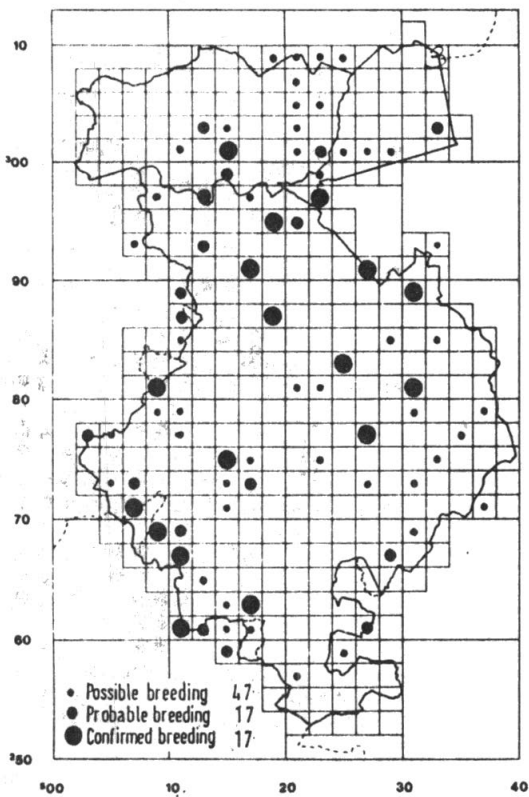
TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*



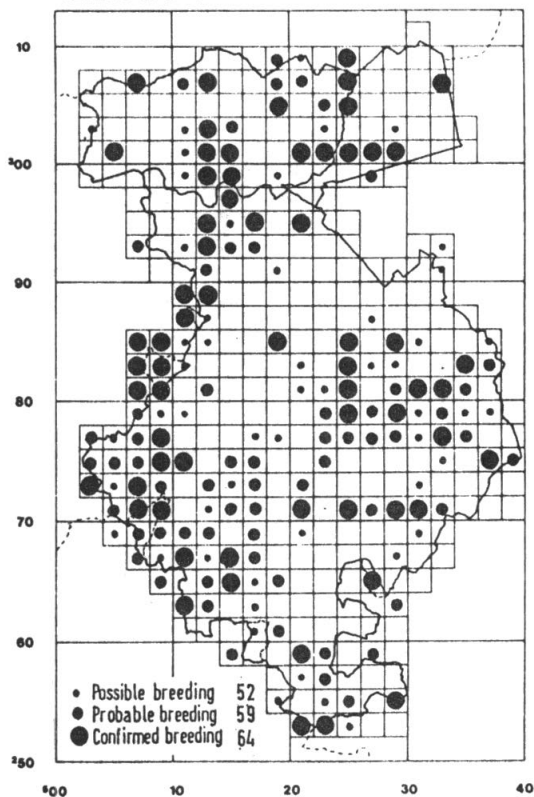
CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*



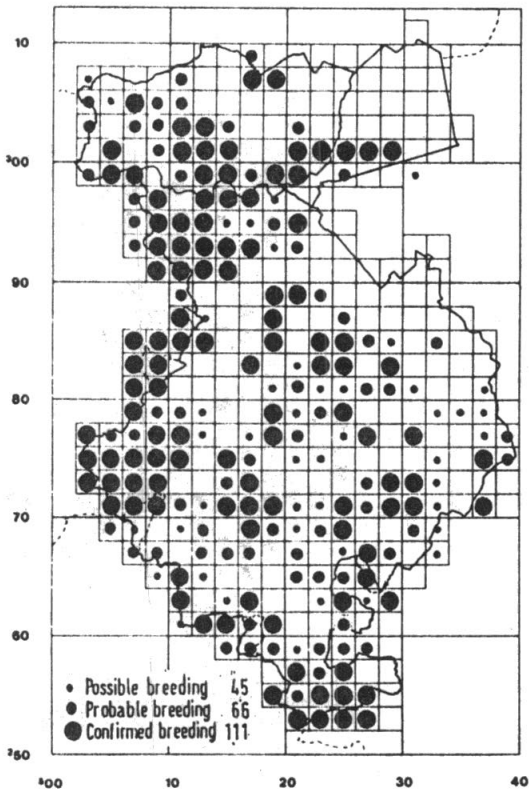
BARN OWL *Tyto alba*



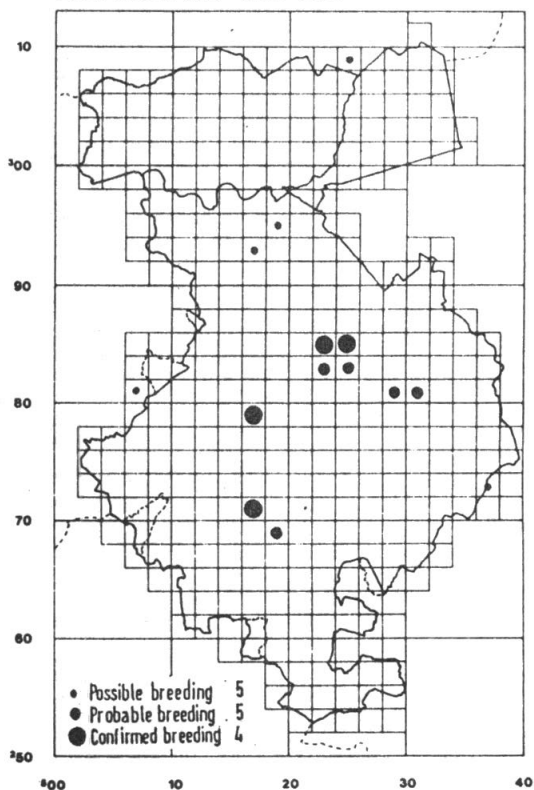
LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*



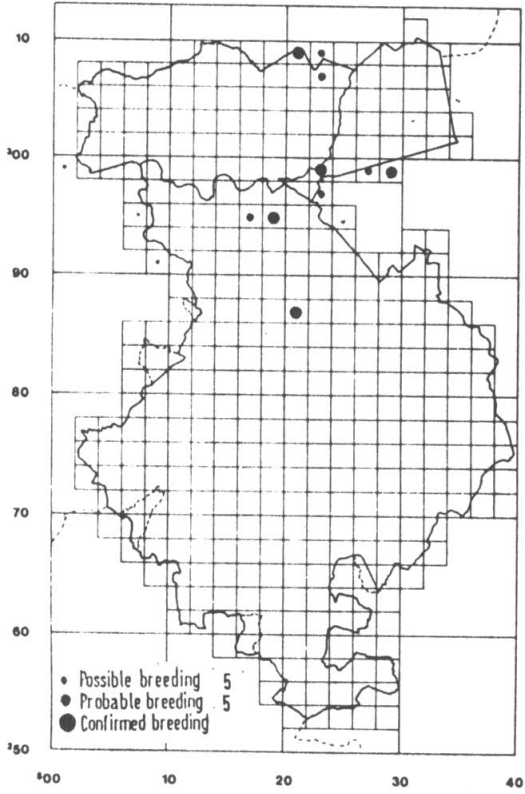
TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*



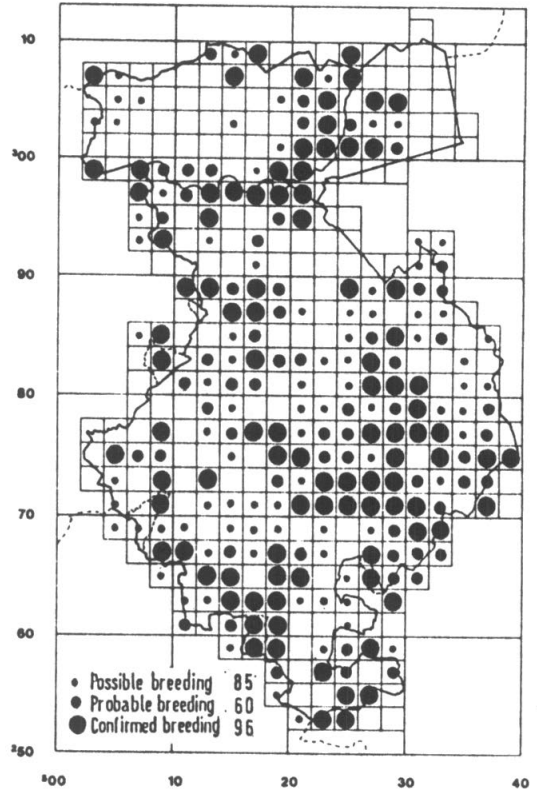
LONG EARED OWL *Asio otus*



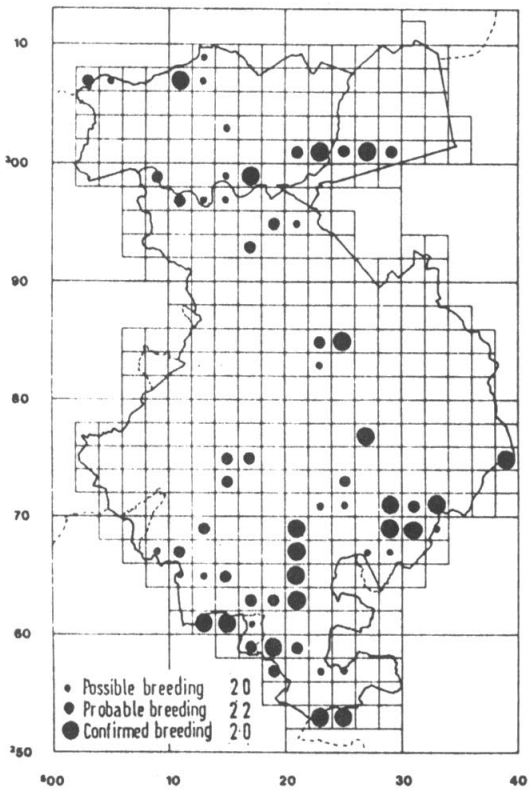
SHORT EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*



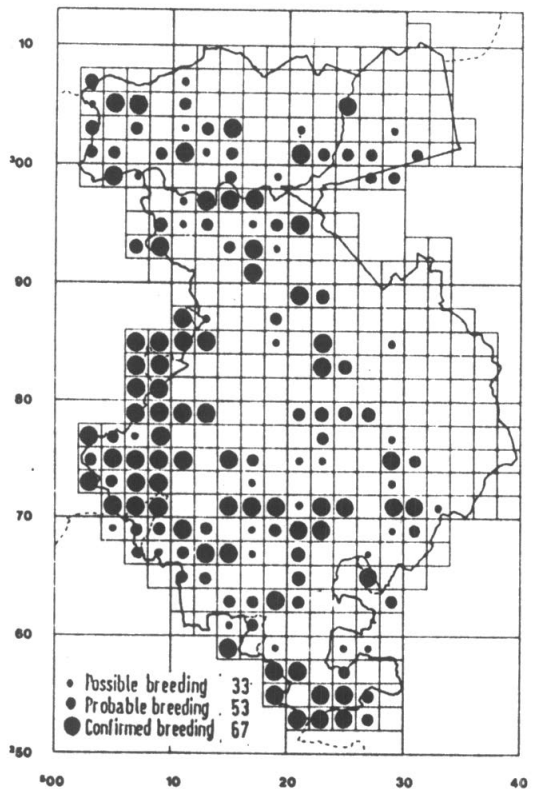
SWIFT *Apus apus*



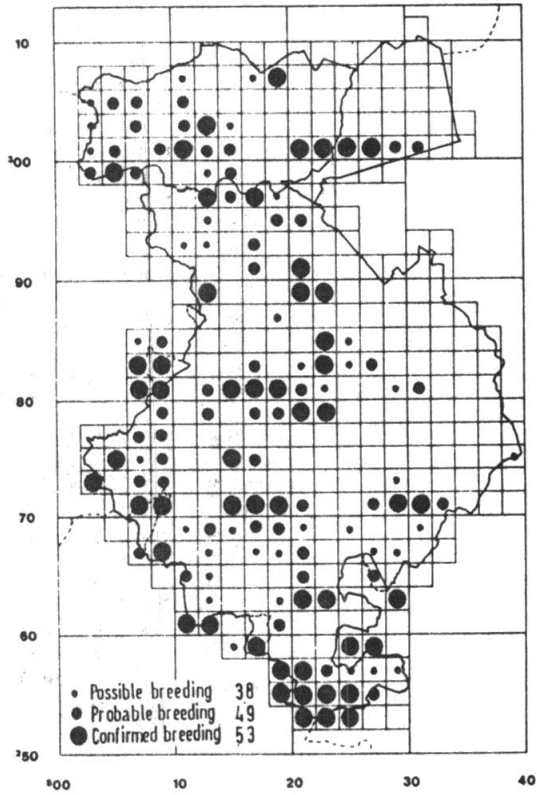
KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*



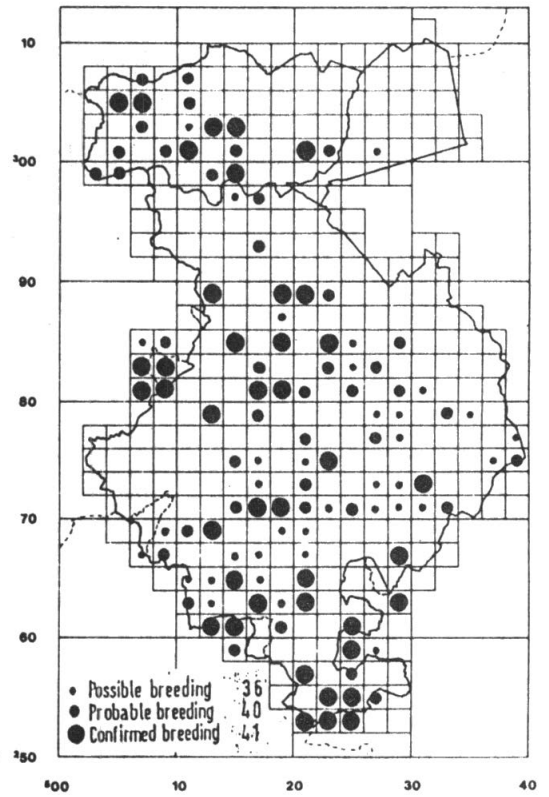
GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*



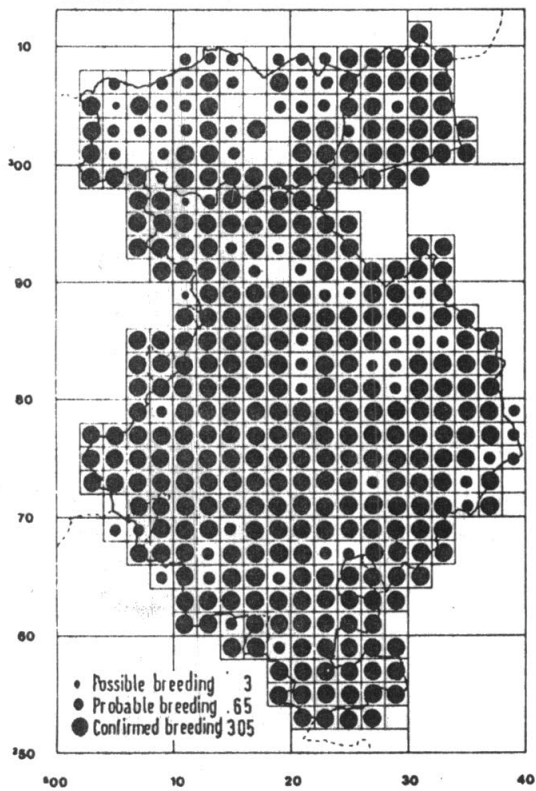
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*



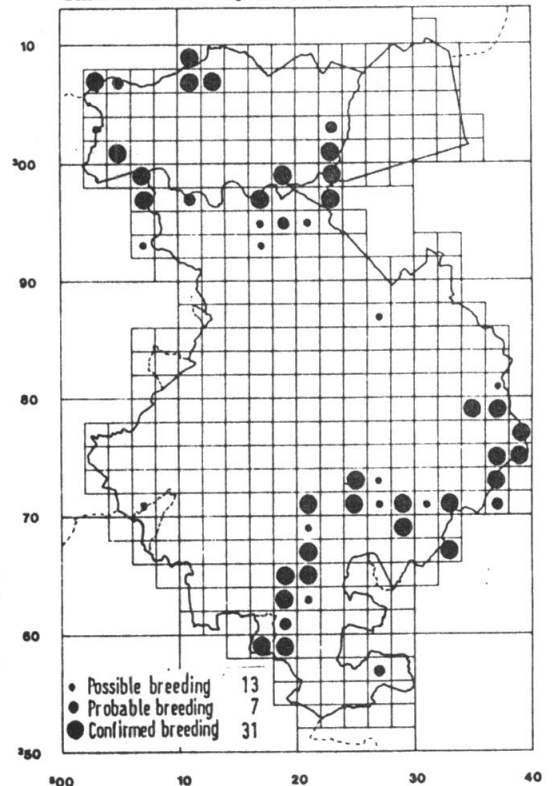
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*



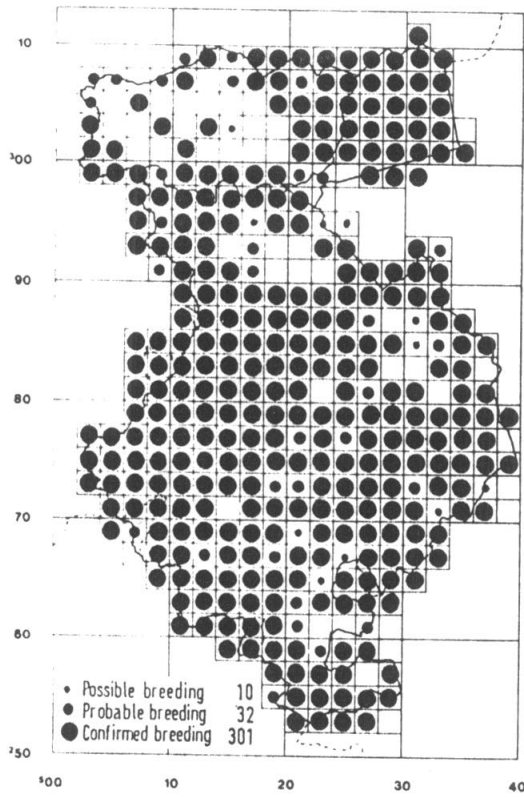
SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*



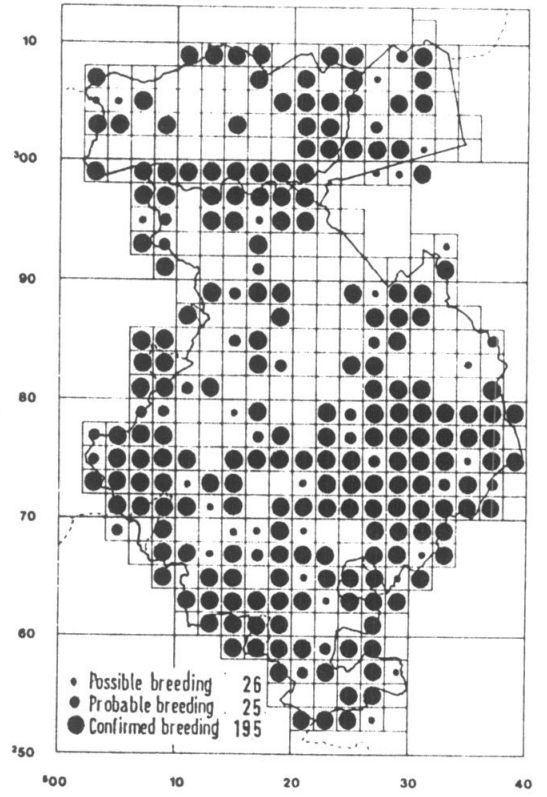
SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*



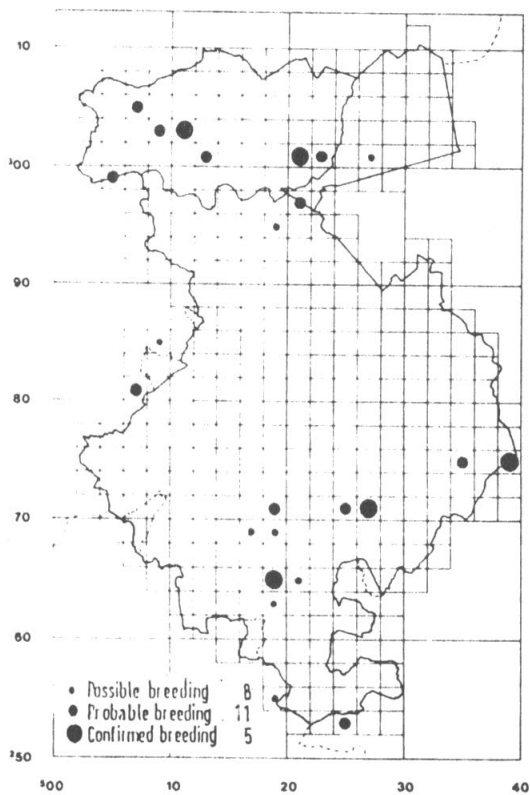
SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*



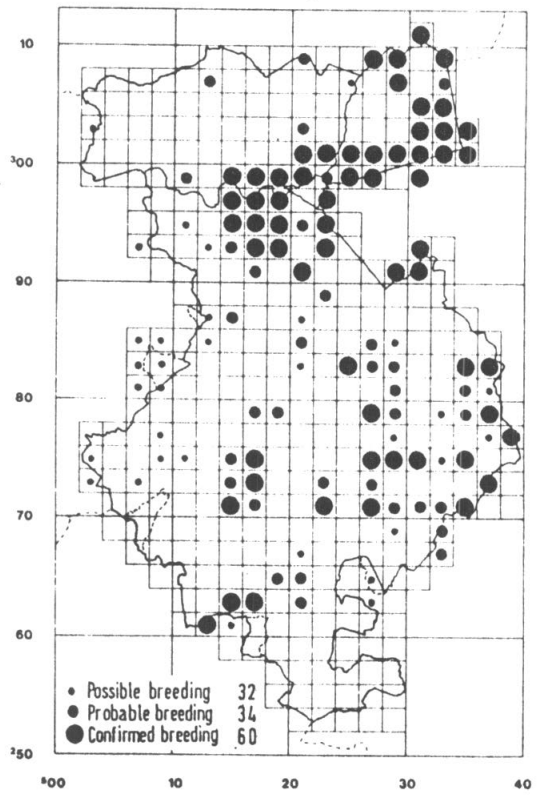
HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*



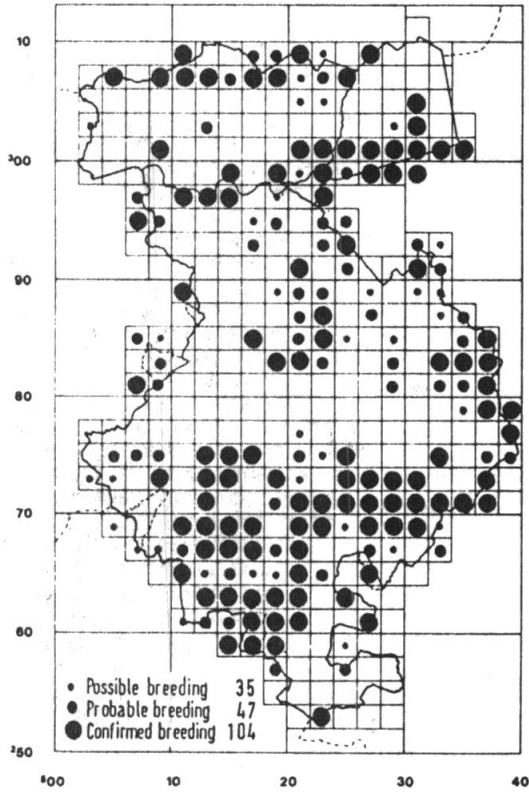
TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*



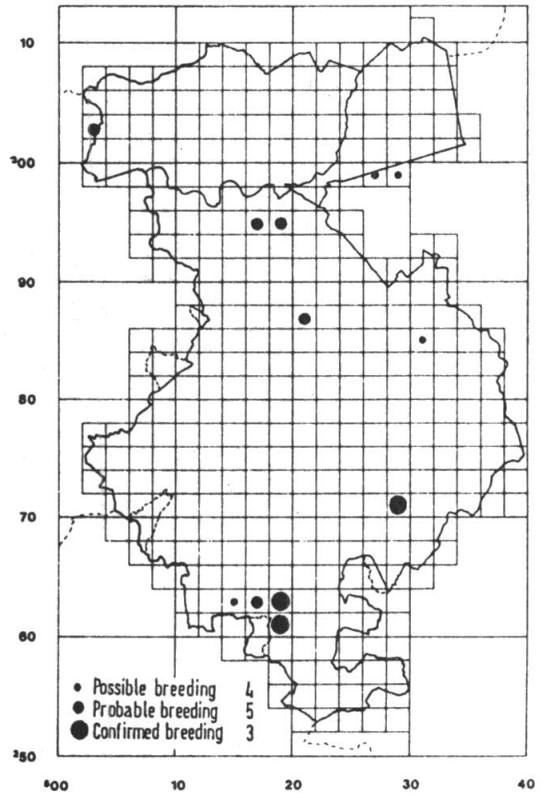
MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*



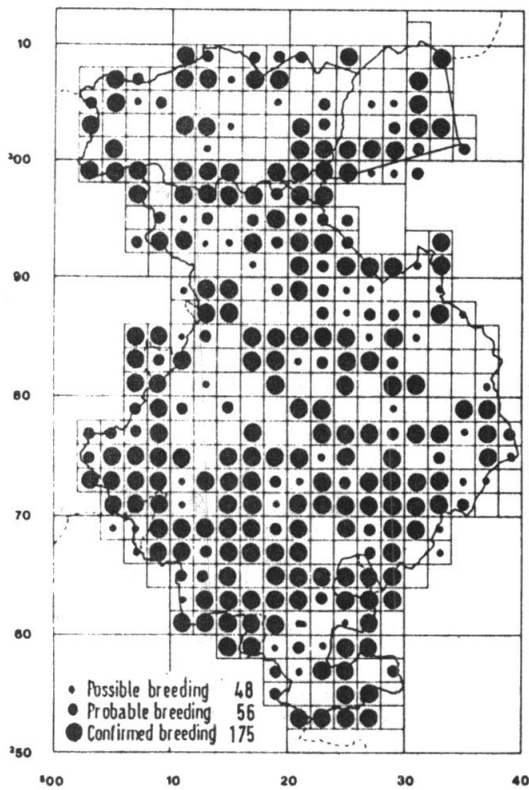
YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*



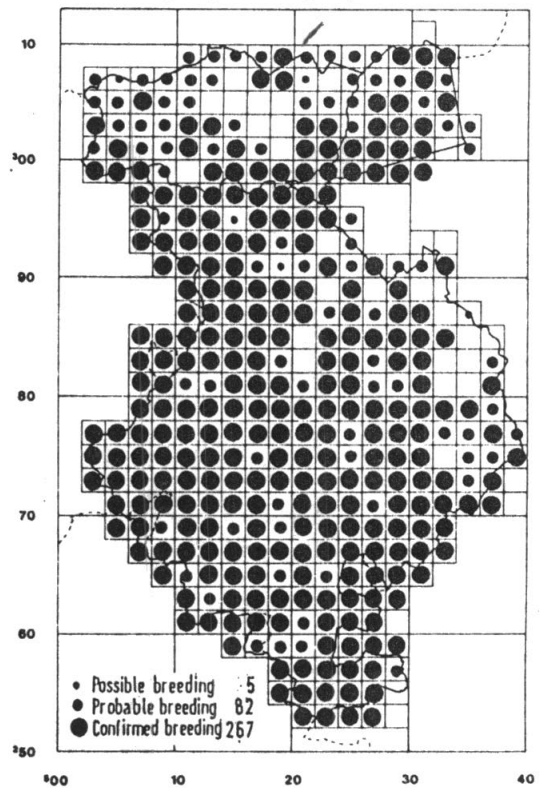
GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*



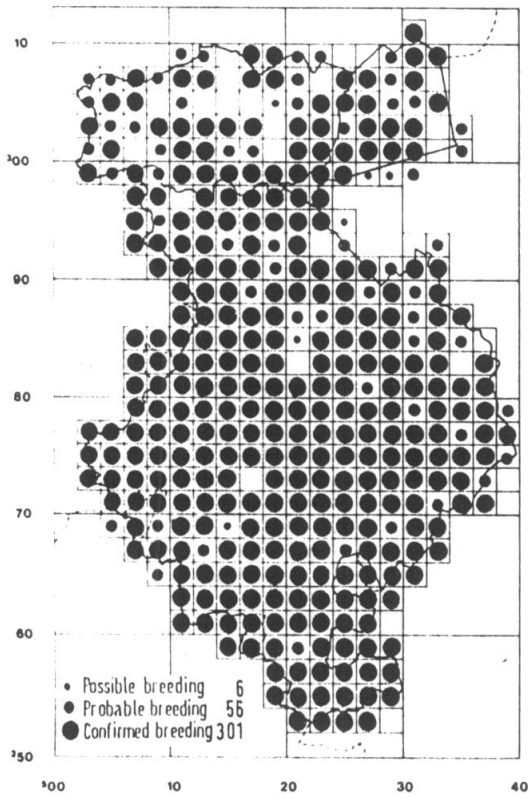
PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*



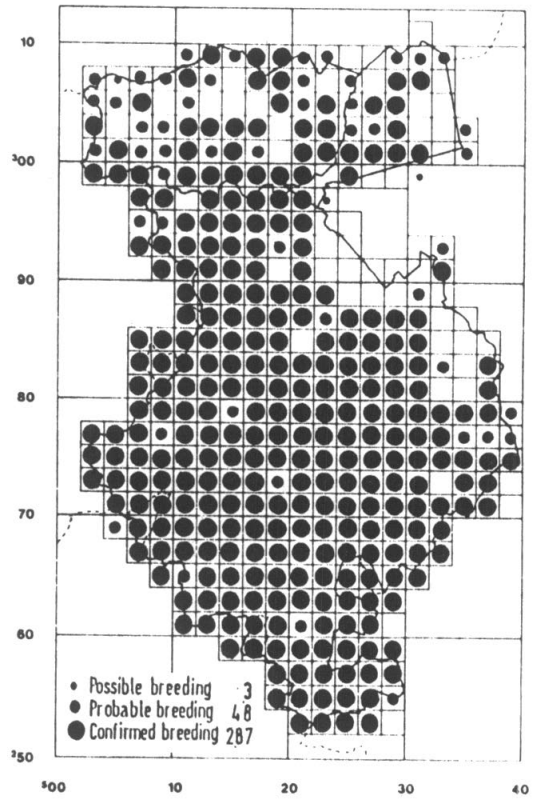
WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*



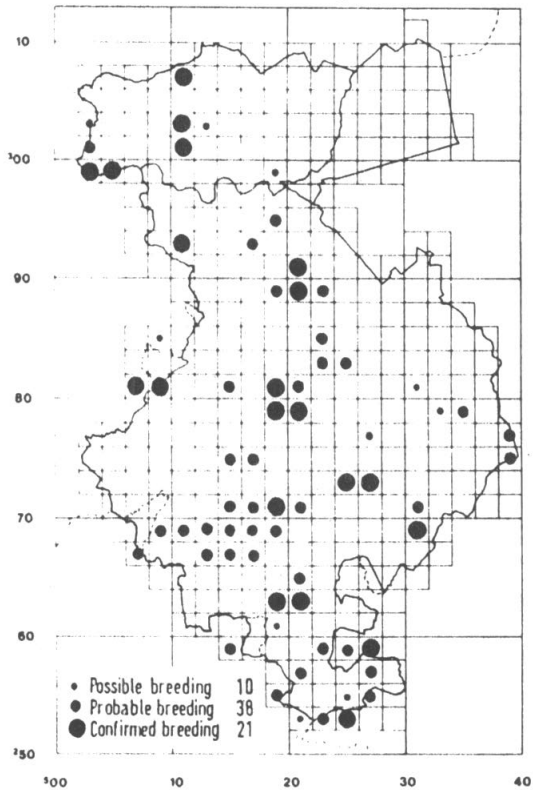
DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*



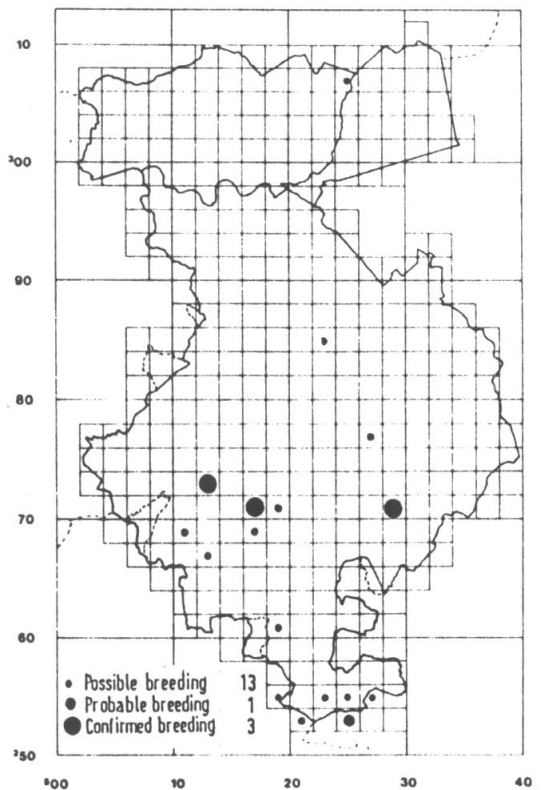
ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*



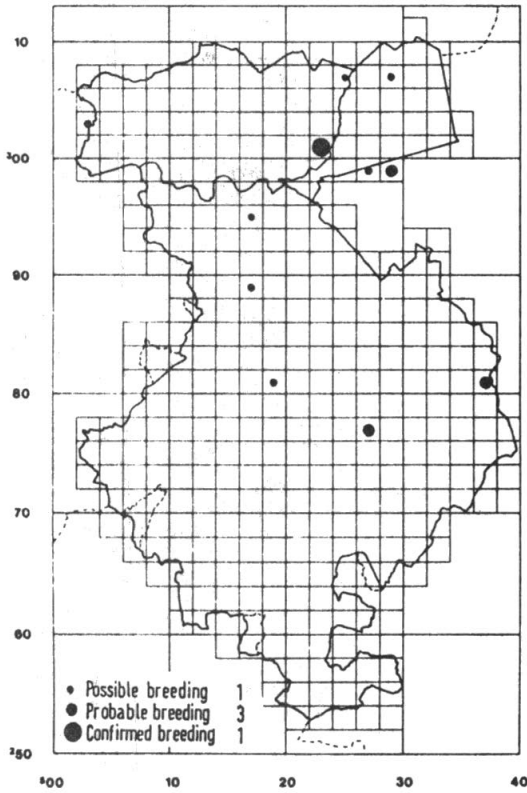
NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*



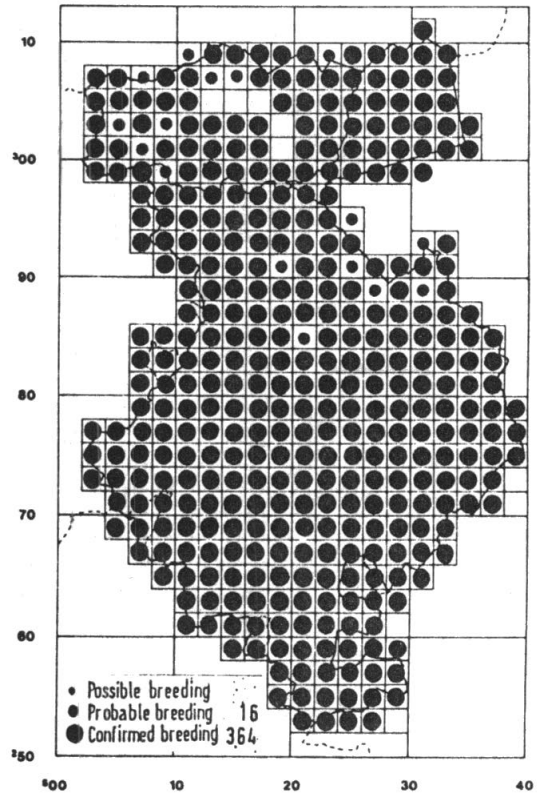
REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*



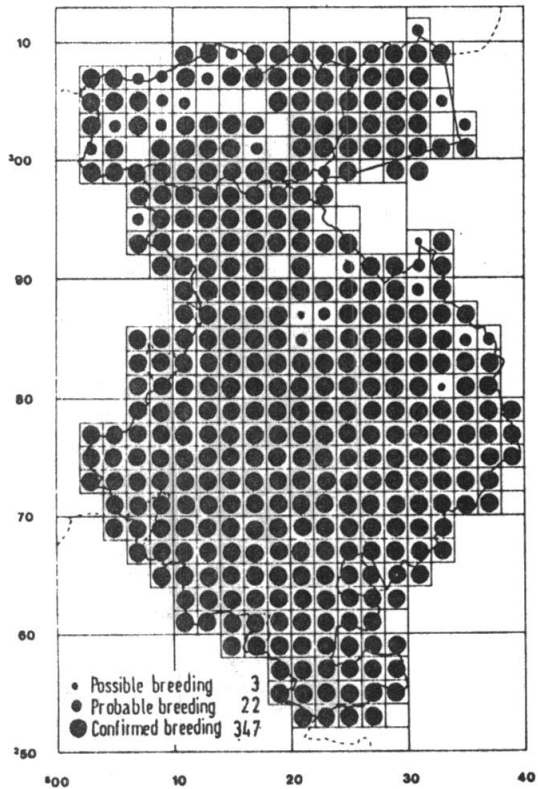
WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*



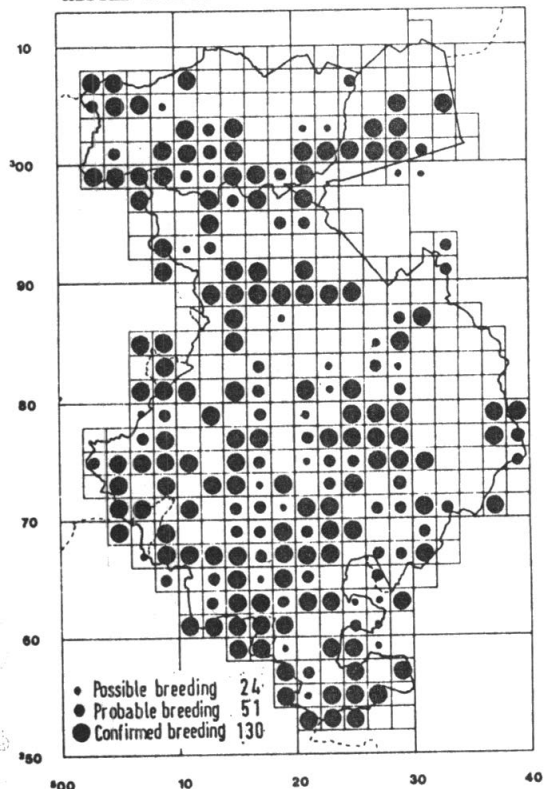
BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*



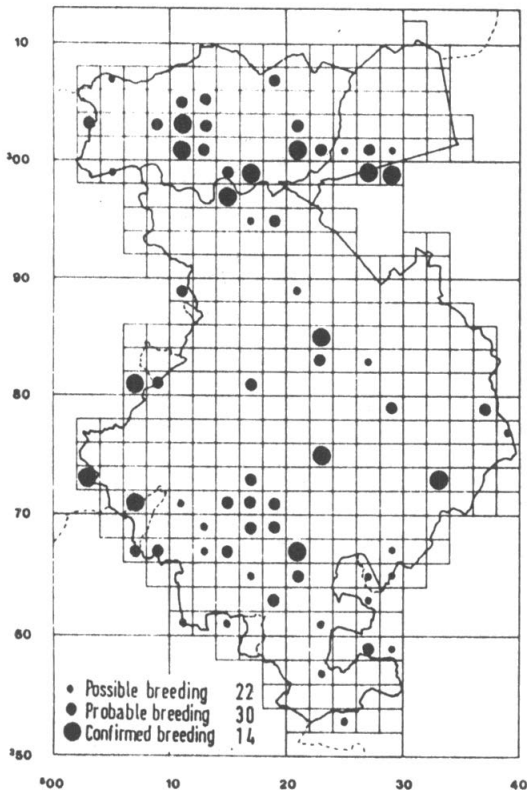
SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*



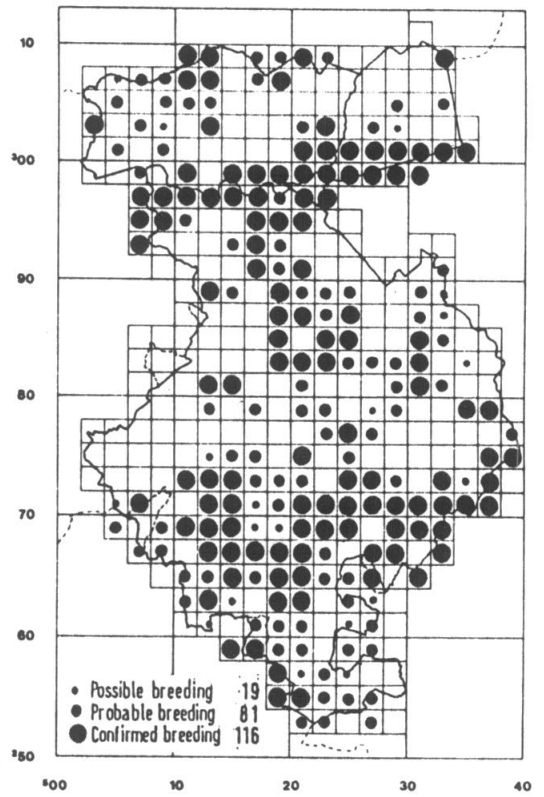
MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*



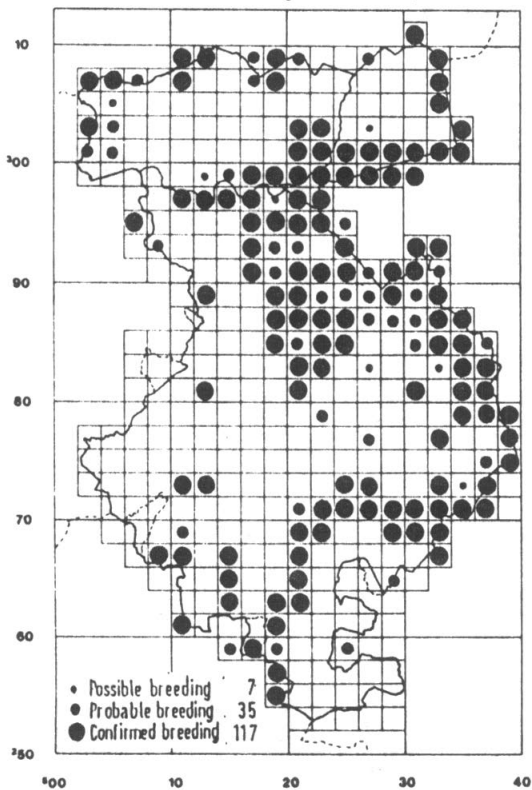
GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*



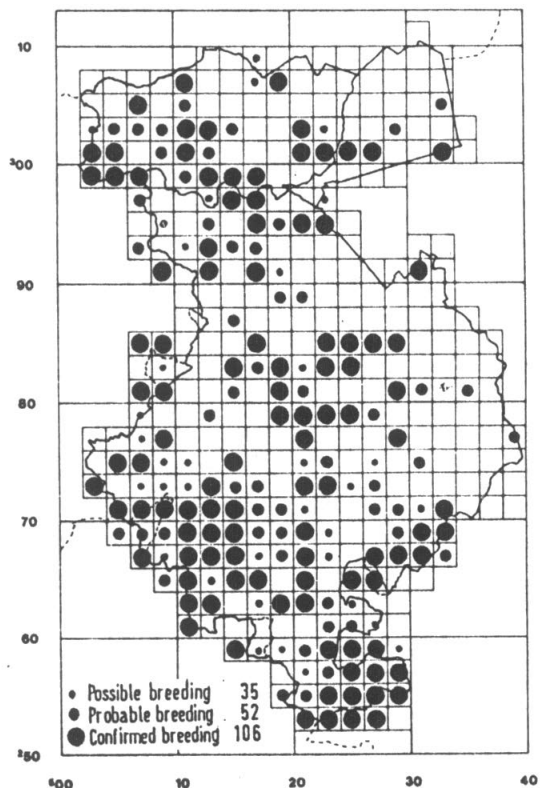
SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*



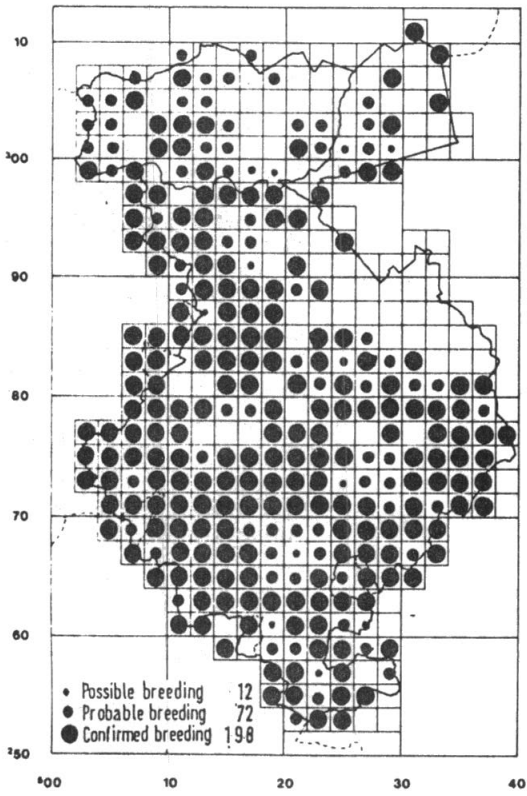
REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*



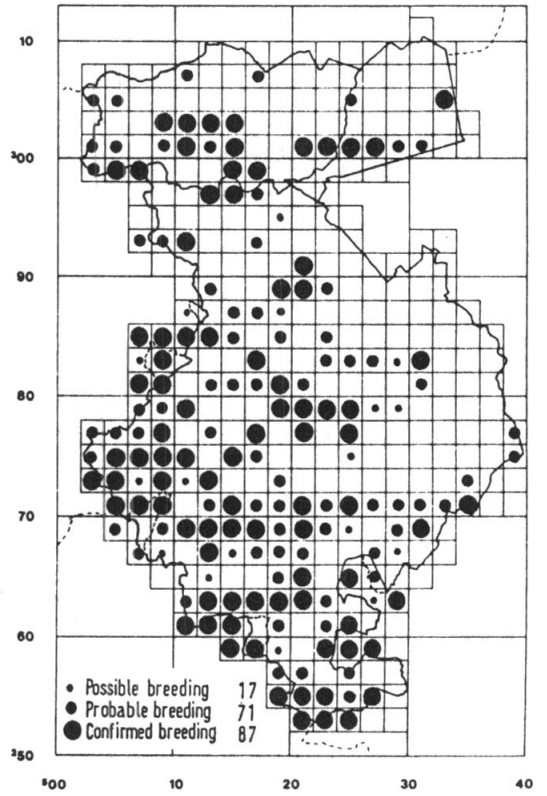
LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia carruca*



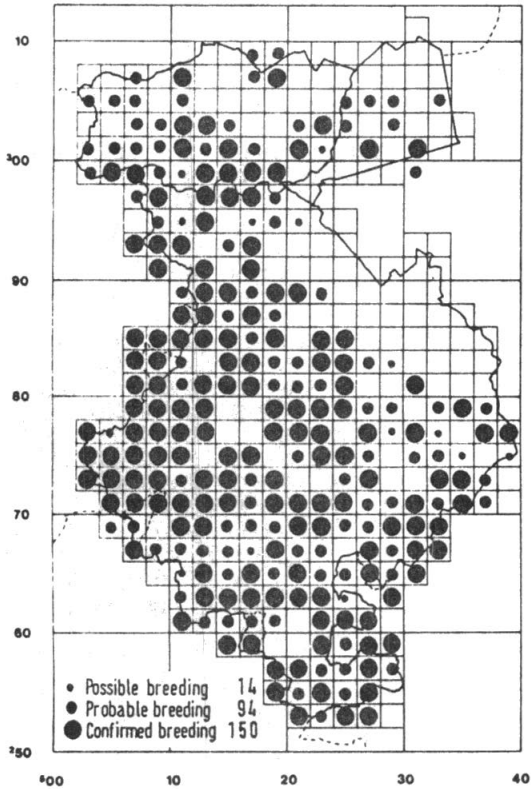
WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*



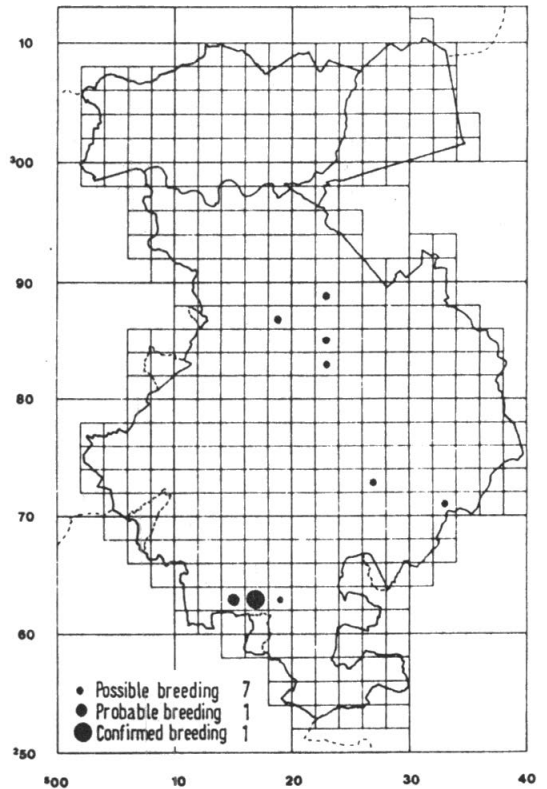
GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*



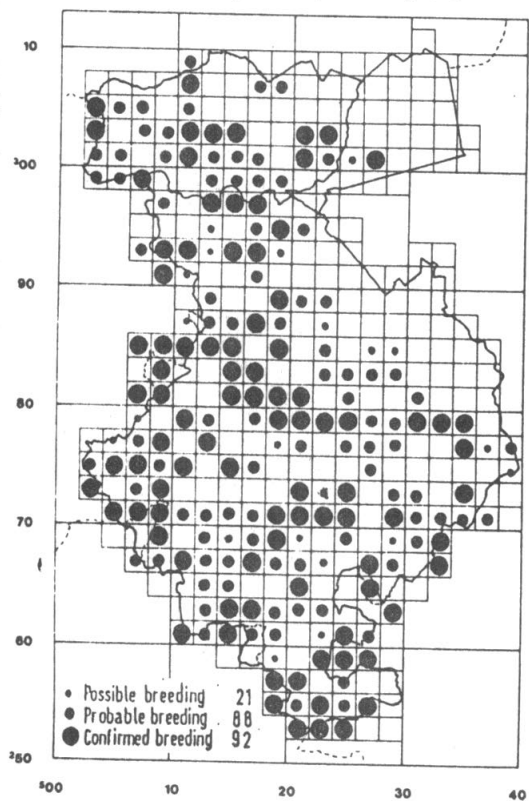
BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*



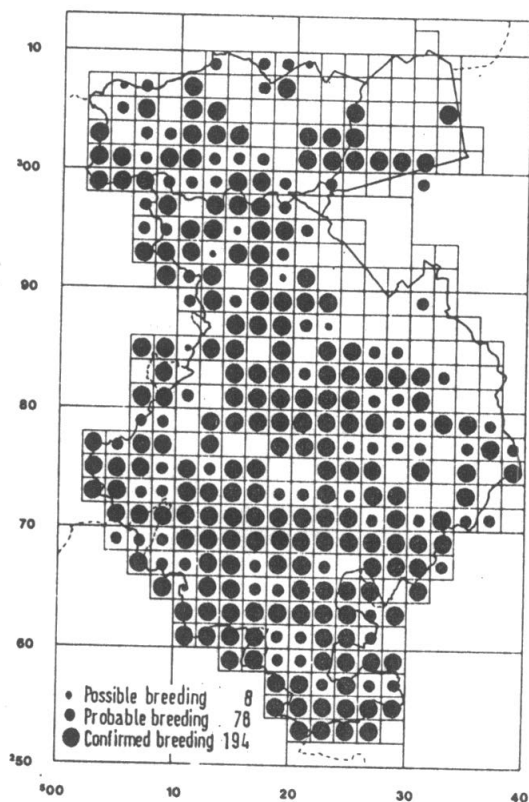
WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*



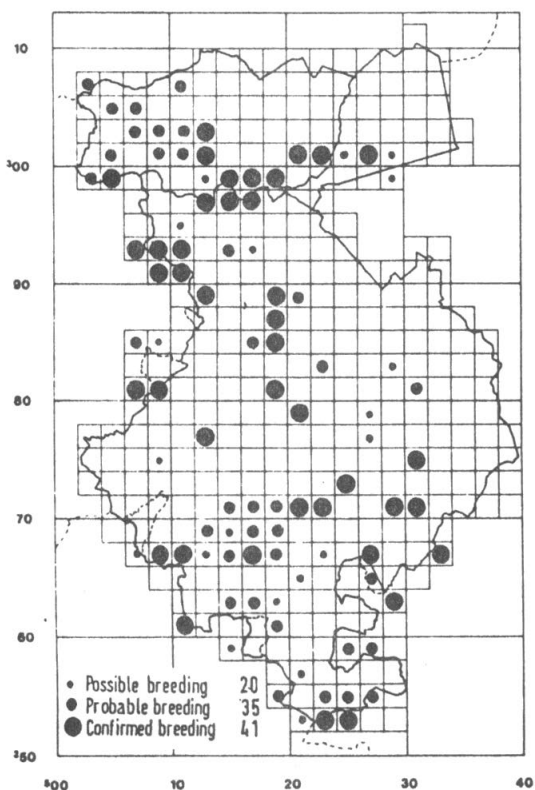
CHIFF CHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*



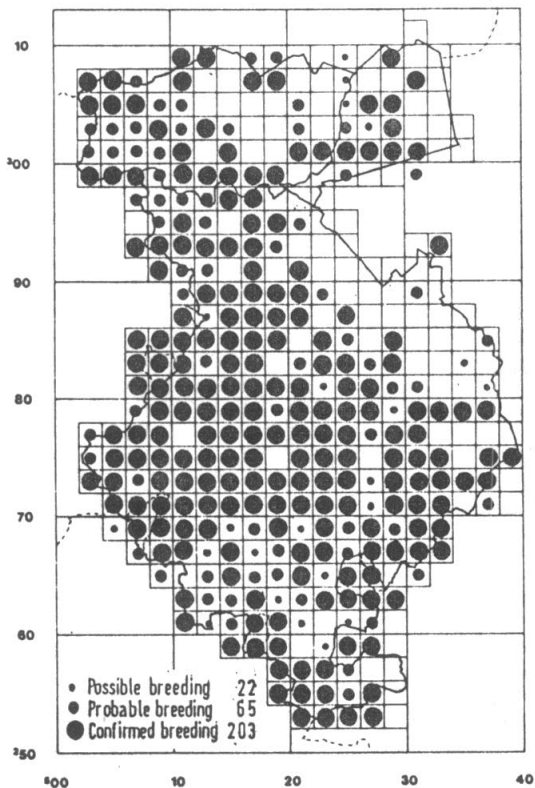
WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*



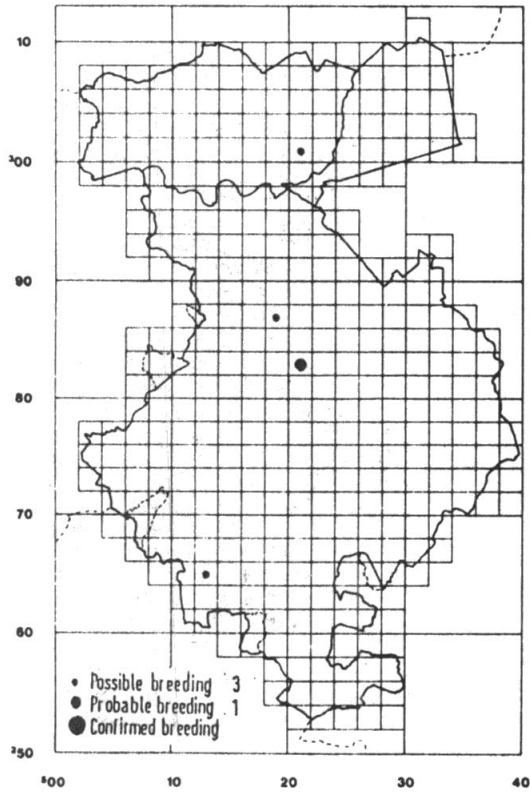
GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*



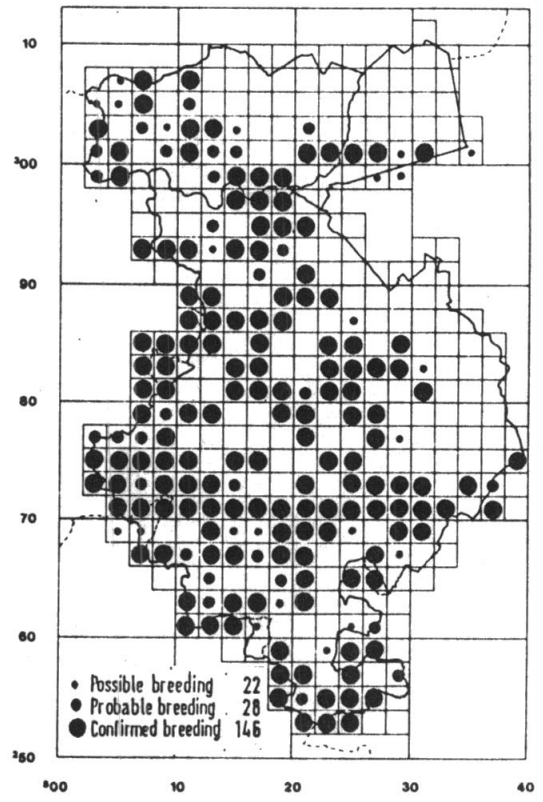
SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*



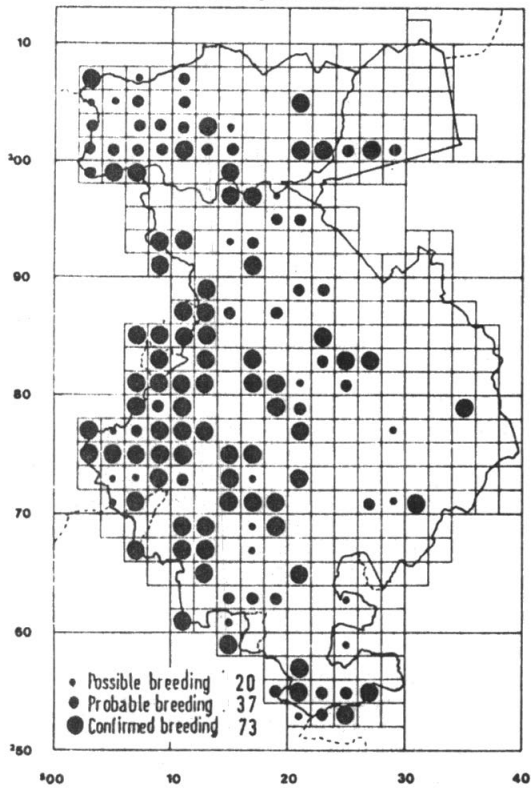
PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*



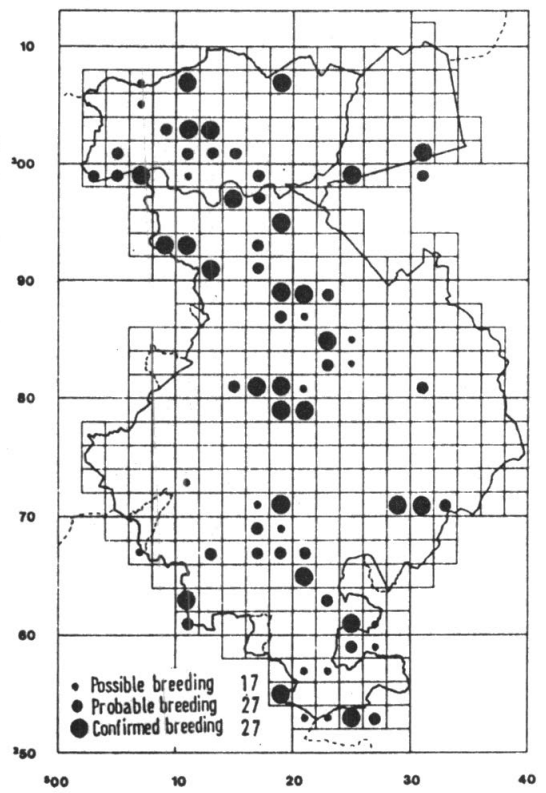
LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

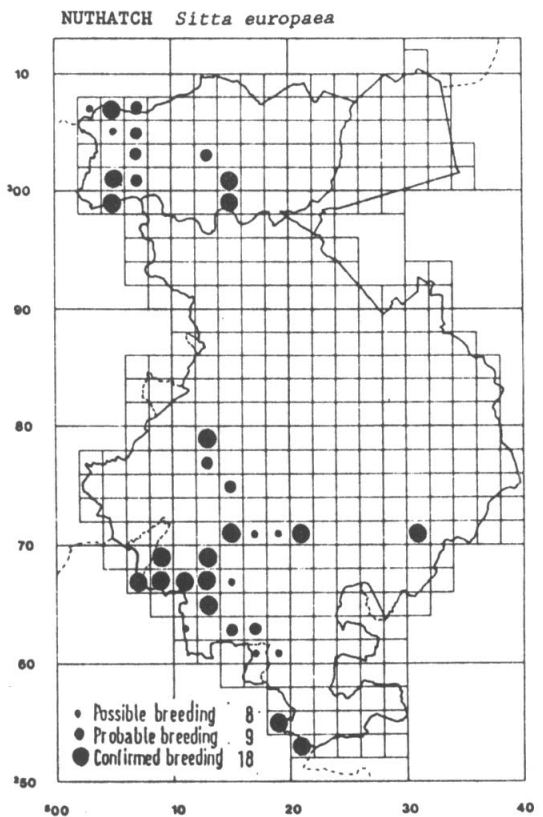
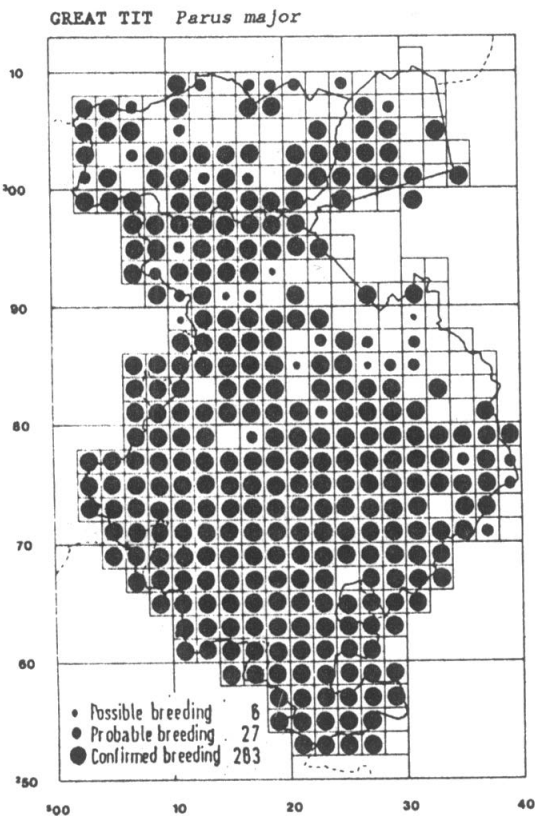
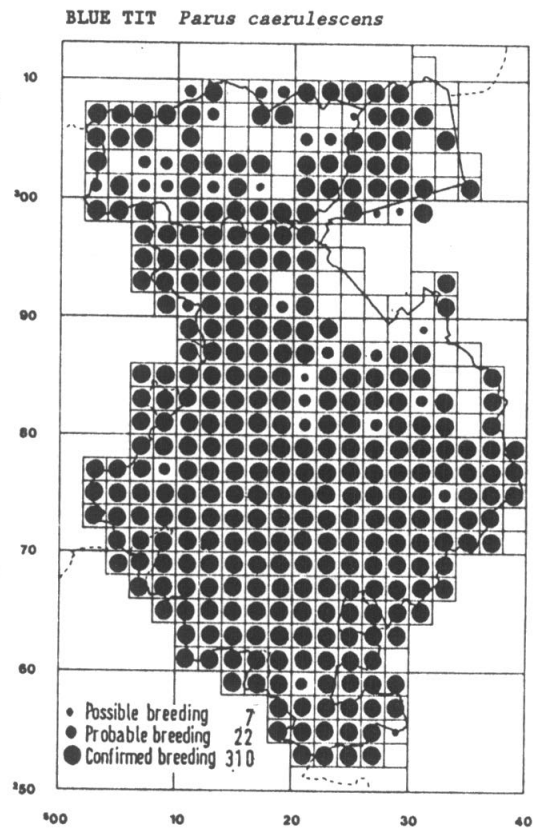
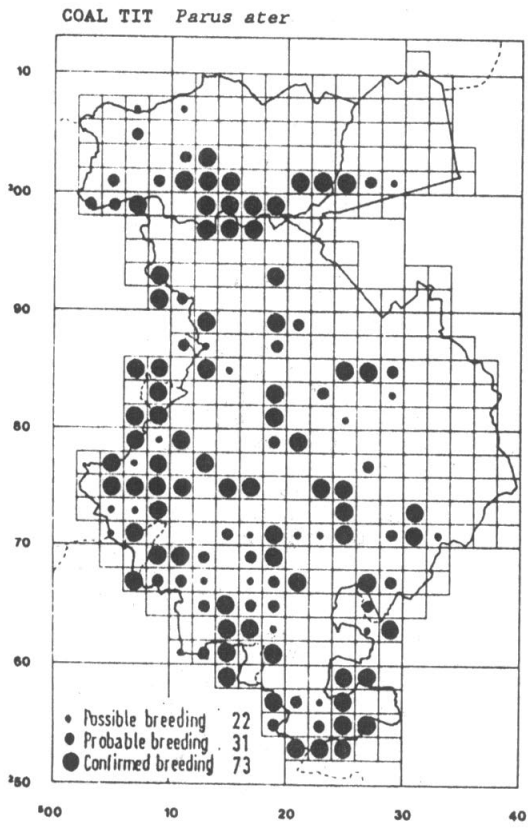


MARSH TIT *Parus palustris*

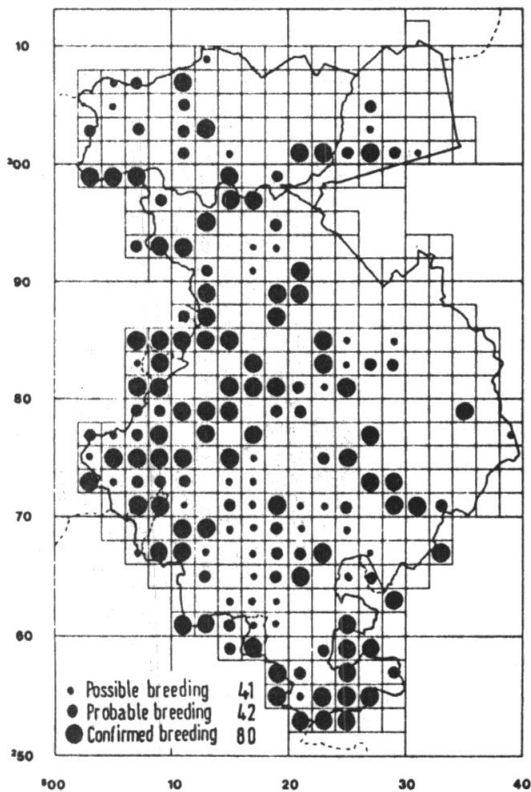


WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*

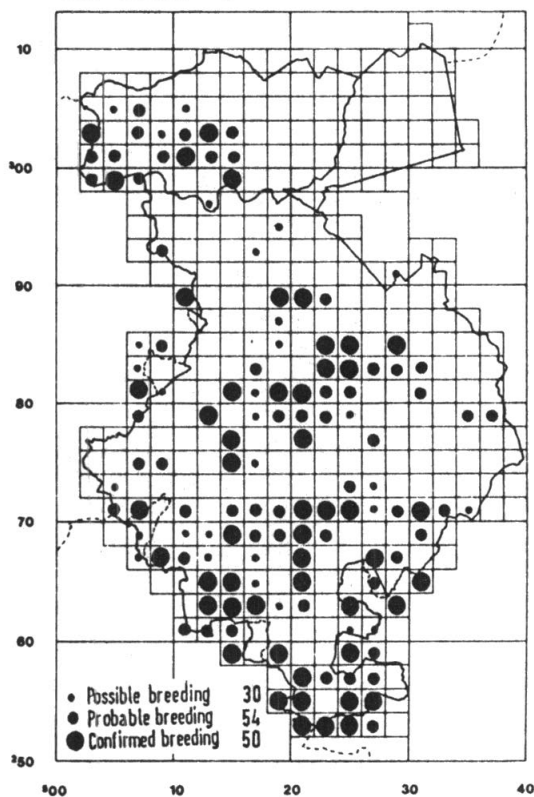




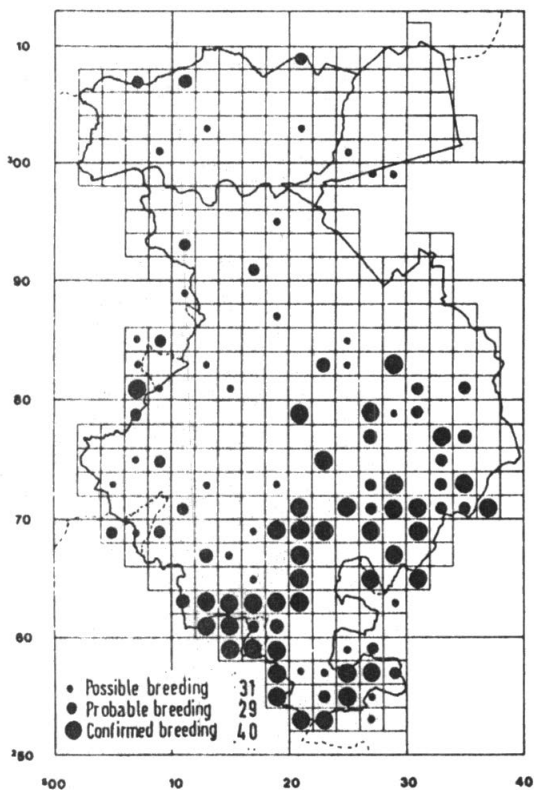
TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*



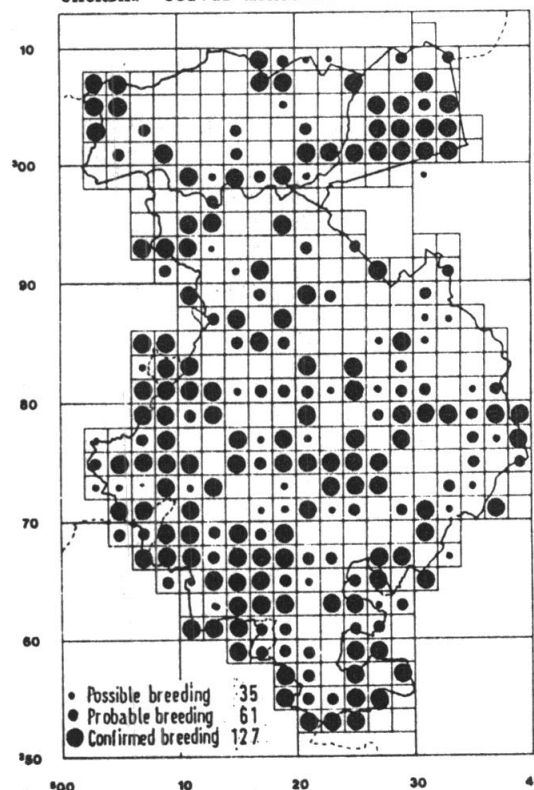
JAY *Garrulus glandarius*



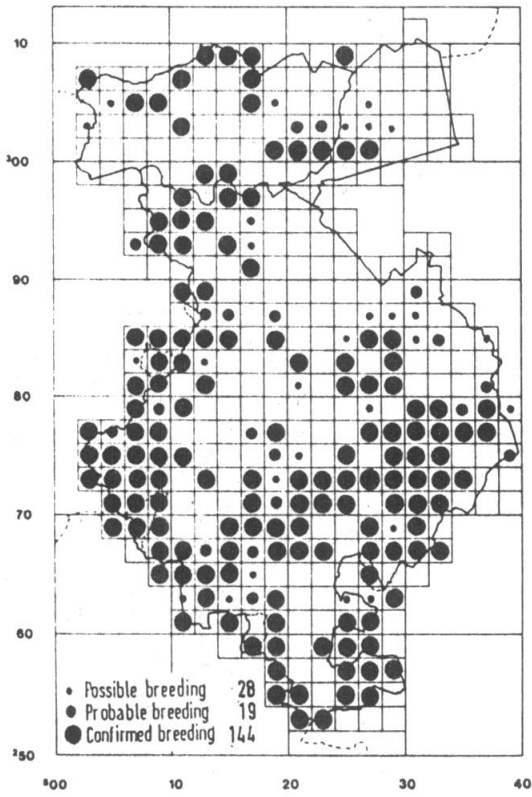
MAGPIE *Pica pica*



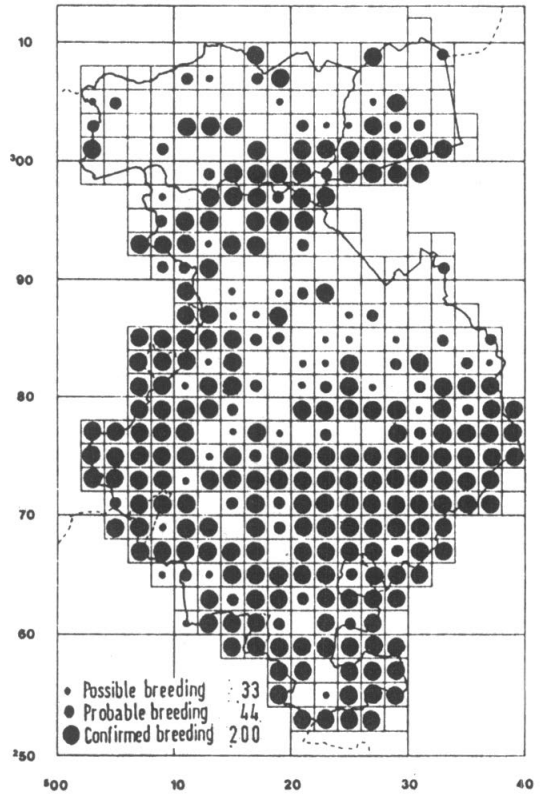
JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*



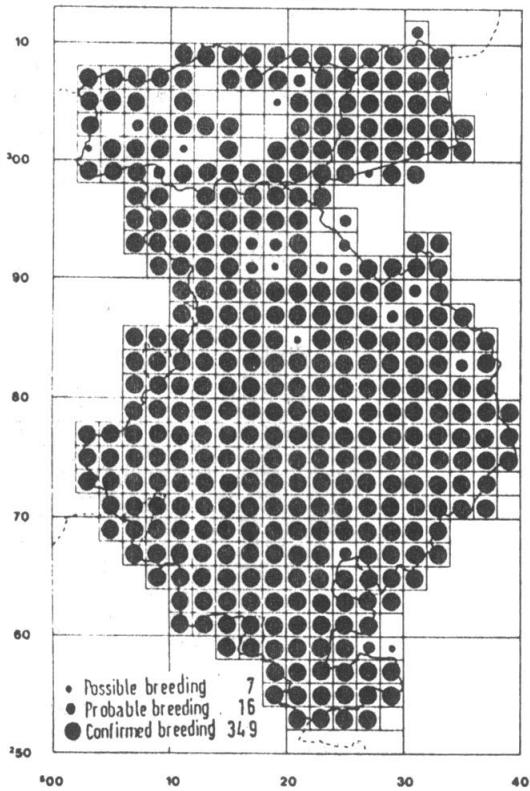
ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*



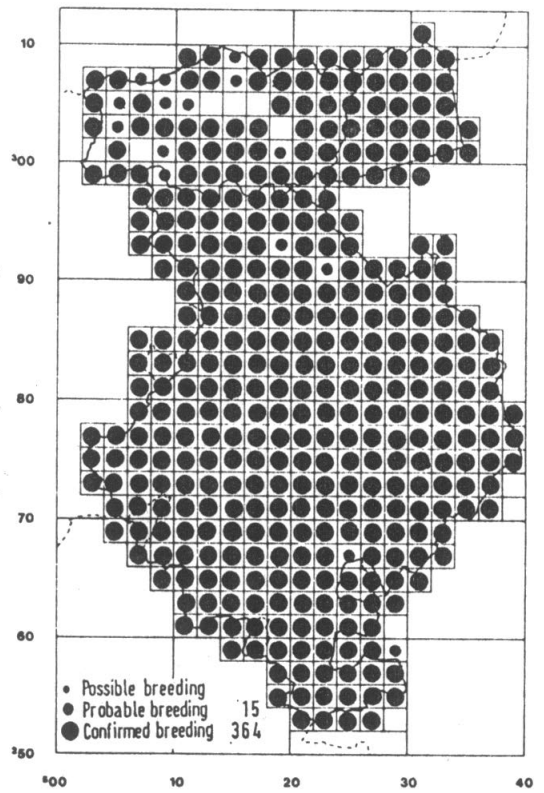
CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*



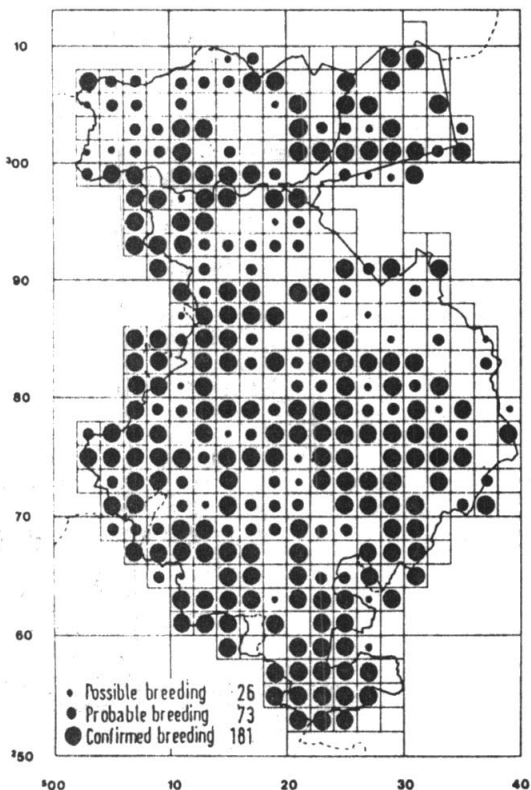
STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*



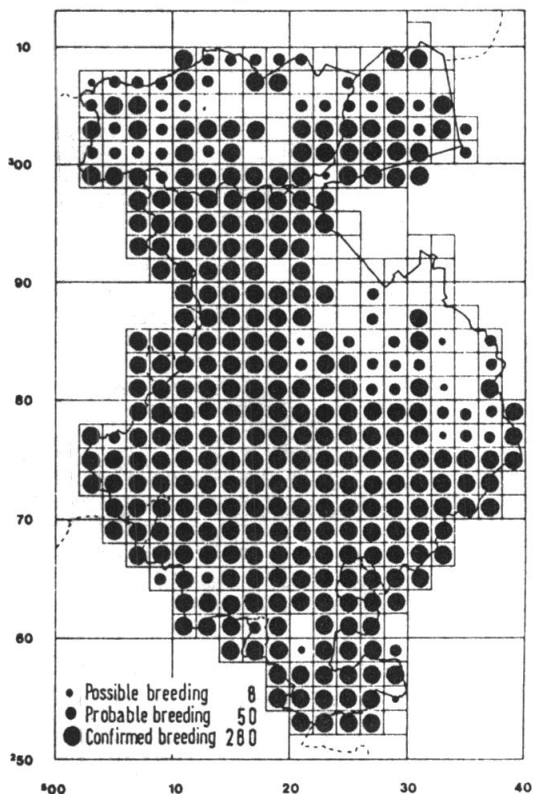
HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*



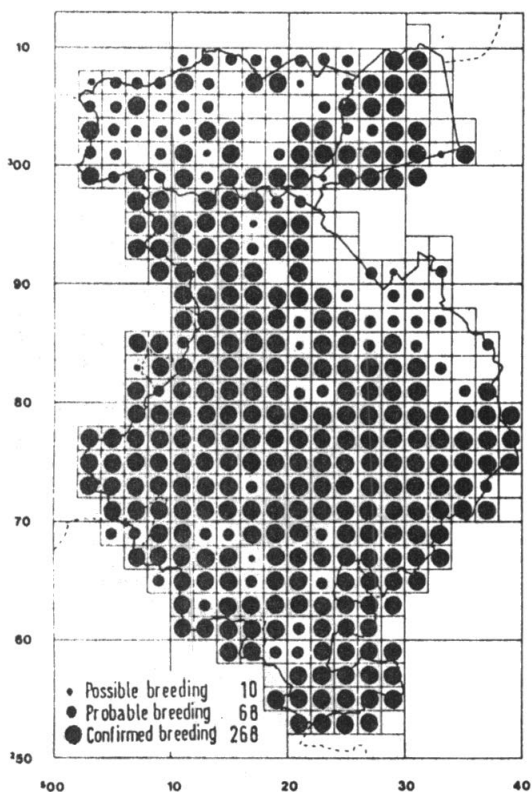
TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*



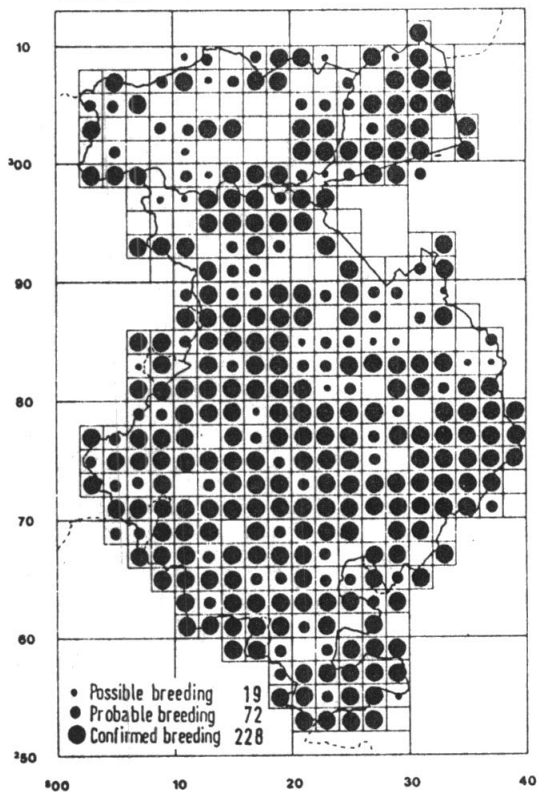
CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*



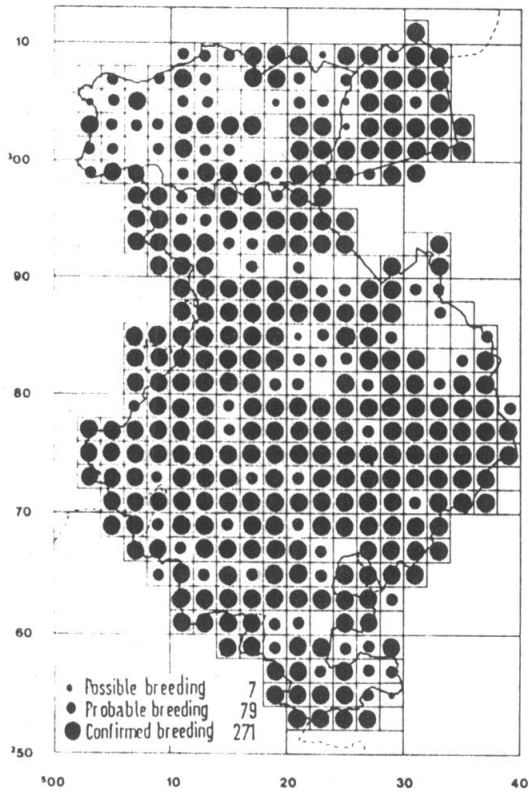
GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*



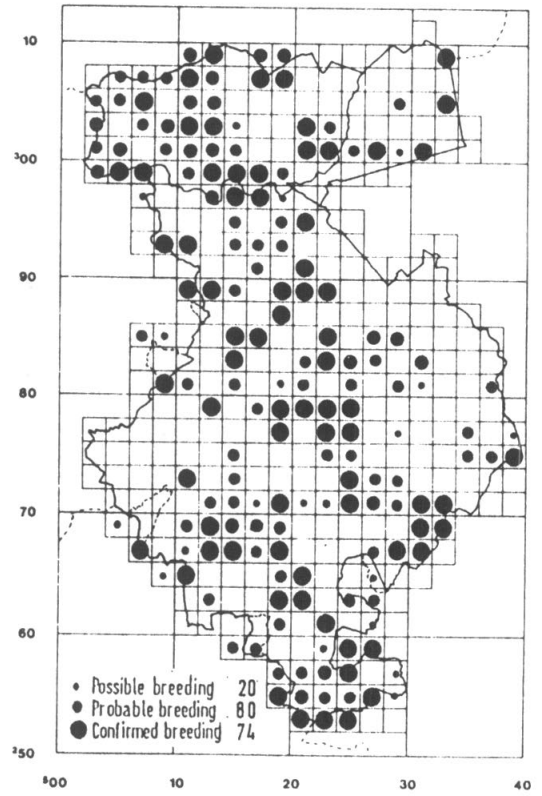
GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*



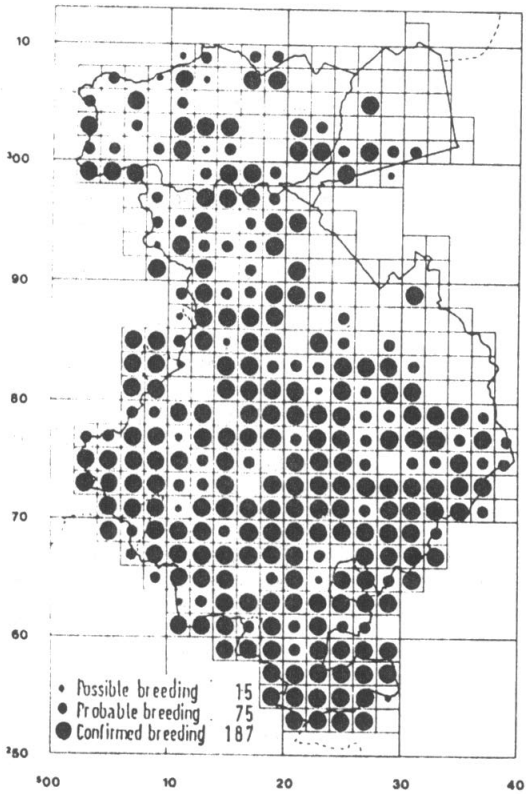
LINNET *Acanthis cannabina*



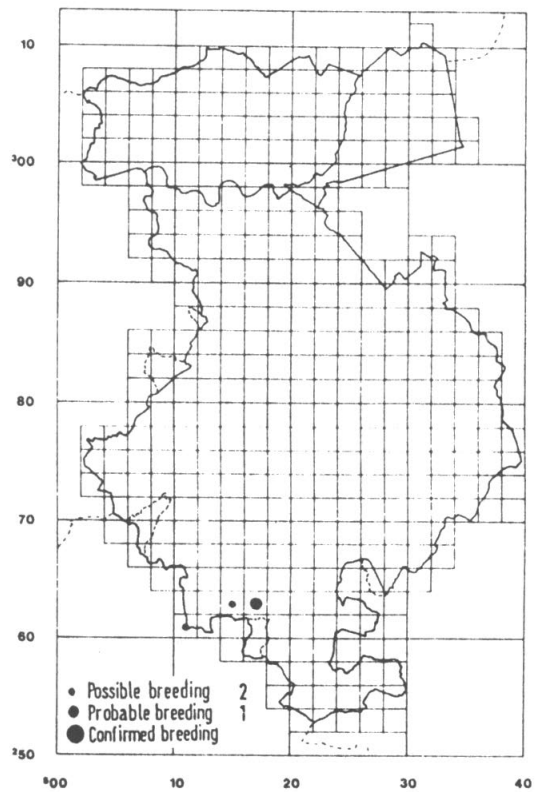
REDPOLL *Acanthis flammea*



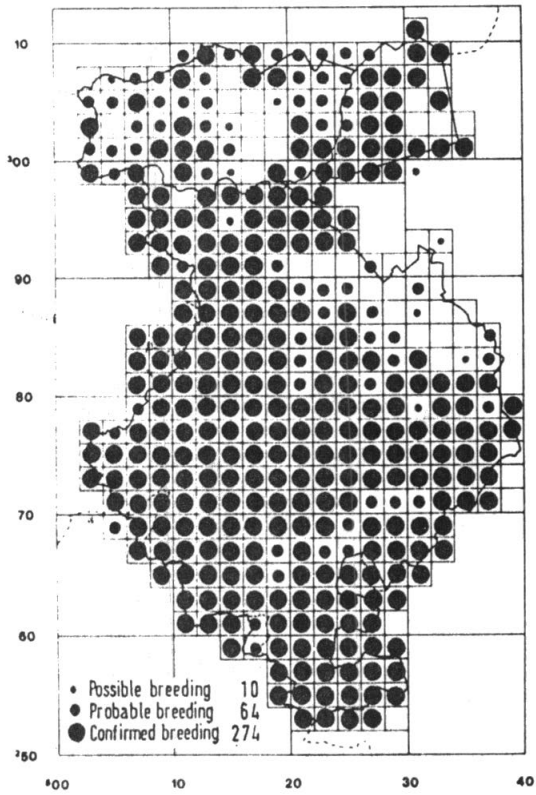
BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*



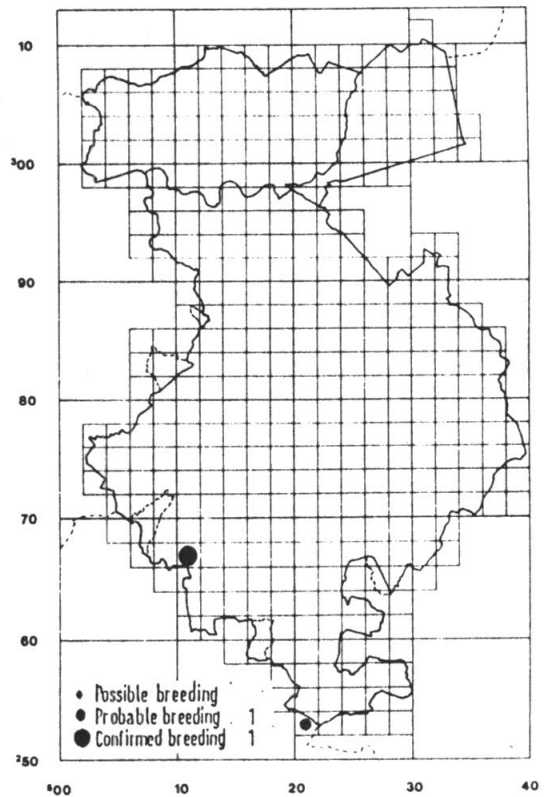
HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*



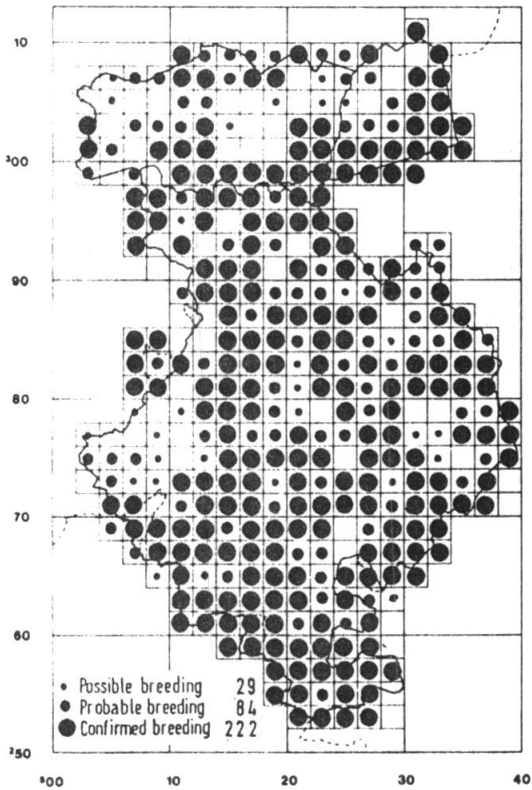
YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*



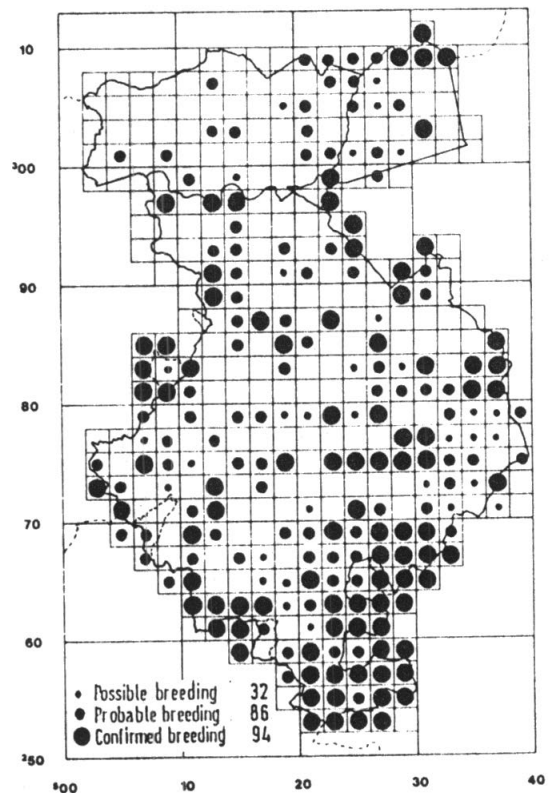
CIRL BUNTING *Emberiza cirius*



REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*



CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*



INDEX OF SPECIES NAMES

Blackbird	29	Kestrel	17
Blackcap	31	Kingfisher	24
Bullfinch	38	Lapwing	20
Bunting, Girl	39	Linnet	38
Corn	39	Magpie	35
Reed	39	Mallard	15
Chaffinch	37	Mandarin	14
Chiffchaff	32	Martin, House	26
Coot	19	Sand	25
Crow, Carrion	36	Moorhen	18
Cuckoo	22	Nightingale	28
Dove, Collared	22	Nuthatch	34
Stock	21	Owl, Barn	23
Turtle	22	Little	23
Tufted	16	Long Eared	23
Duncock	28	Short Eared	24
Flycatcher, Pied	33	Tawny	23
Spotted	32	Oystercatcher	19
Gadwall	15	Partridge, Grey	18
Garganey	16	Red Legged	17
Goldcrest	32	Pheasant	18
Goldfinch	37	Pigeon, Feral	21
Goose, Canada	14	Pintail	15
Greylag	14	Pipit, Meadow	26
Grebe, Great Crested	13	Pipit, Tree	26
Little	13	Plover, Little Ringed	19
Greenfinch	37	Ringed	19
Gull, Black Headed	21	Pochard	16
Hawfinch	38	Rail, Water	18
Heron, Grey	13	Redpoll	38
Hobby	17	Redshank	20
Jackdaw	35	Redstart	28
Jay	35	Robin	28

cont.

Rook	36	Wheatear	29
Shelduck	14	Whitethroat, Common	31
Shoveler	16	Lesser	30
Skylark	25	Woodcock	20
Snipe	20	Woodpecker, G Spotted	25
Sparrow, House	36	Green	24
Tree	37	L Spotted	25
Sparrowhawk	17	Woodpigeon	22
Starling	36	Wren	27
Swallow	26	Yellowhammer	39
Swan, Mute	13		
Swift	24		
Teal	15		
Tern, Common	21		
Thrush, Mistle	29		
Song	29		
Tit, Blue	34		
Coal	34		
Great	34		
Long Tailed	33		
Marsh	33		
Willow	33		
Treecreeper	35		
Wagtail, Grey	27		
Pied	27		
Yellow	27		
Warbler, Garden	31		
Grasshopper	30		
Reed	30		
Sedge	30		
Willow	32		
Wood	31		

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