

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*  
Migrant breeder/passage visitor

**2003** - Over 50 records were received from a wide selection of sites after the first at Whetstone quarry on 5th May. Breeding was confirmed at Timble Ings and was suspected on Barden Moor. Passage birds were noted at many locations including Otley Gravel Pits, Stockbridge, Beaverdyke and Fly Flatts Reservoirs, Cold Edge Dams, Windgate Nick, Trough Lane and Low Snowden. Most had departed by early September with the last record of a single at Beaverdyke Reservoir on 22nd.

**2004** - First to arrive was a single at Trough Lane, near Oxenhope, on 20th April. After this, birds were reported widely but thinly from mainly moorland locations. The moors of Burley, Barden and Bingley were mentioned, as were the reservoirs of Leeshaw and Thornton Moor, in addition to Snowden Crag. Breeding was proved at White Wells, Norwood Lane and Cold Edge Dams. Autumn movement included up to seven at Cold Edge Dams in August, and eight in September, and up to six at Nab Water Lane, Wilsden. In the former month, a single at Otley Wetland was noteworthy. In September, various sites including Soil Hill and Paul Clough had up to three birds, with the latest record emanating from Thornton Moor Reservoir on 27th September.

**2005** - Records in 2005 were in line with the pattern of recent years, with 47 reports from 19 sites, though it should be noted both are well down on those of ten years ago. The first bird was on Rombald's Moor on 29th March, a relatively early date, which was emphasised by there being no further records until a month later, and only a few in the early part of May. Birds on territory were seen late in the month, and in the following two, but by August these were overlapping with those on return migration.

As usual for this species, the majority of sightings, and all those for autumn passage, came from the south, and the general area above Oxenhope in particular. Migrating birds were seen there from the end of August, with records on 13 days, and with the year's largest gathering of eight birds on Nab Water Lane on the 29th of the month. By the middle of September, passage had reduced to a trickle, until the last bird was seen at Roils Head on 30th.

Three juveniles were seen with parents at Whetstone Gate in August, and in the same month three young birds were noted in Sconce Lane, but these could have been on migration, rather than locally raised. There was no other specific breeding information, but what was probably a family group was on Barden Fell in July.

**2006** - The 76 records submitted for this species in 2006 represents the best total in recent years, and the 22 locations involved are also up, though whether this represents an upturn in the bird's status as a summer resident in the area is open to question. This doubt is prompted by the fact that after the first arrival, on 9th May at Thornton Moor Reservoir, there were only two more records during that month, and only a further five to the end of July, probably involving no more than seven birds.

With only three exceptions, the remaining records covered the months of August and September, and, whilst some juveniles and family parties were involved, the likelihood must be that, in the absence of noted breeding activity in the preceding months, most records related to visible migration. Allowing for possible duplication, it is likely up to 75 birds were seen in this period, most of them in the south of the area, and including an impressive total of 16 seen moving west at Draughton Heights on 25th August. The three exceptions mentioned above were birds seen in October, not a regular month for the species, and were particularly notable in establishing the latest

on record, at Cononley on the 26th (MSm), only to be surpassed two days later by two birds at Coney Warren (JLT).

As indicated, the question of local breeding is somewhat clouded by the fact that obvious migration was underway by the time the first juveniles and family parties were seen. These records consisted of up to six adults and young at Bradup in August, at least five at Glovershaw in the latter part of that month and early September, and a family party at about the same time in Oxenhope. Elsewhere, the behaviour of a single bird on Haworth Moor in July was suggestive of breeding in the area.

**2007** - The 2006 Report suggested that, despite an increase in records, there was unlikely to have been any improvement in the species' status as a summer resident in the area. This year's statistics confirm this. Almost all the reports relate to birds passing through on migration, and, of the modest total of 13 adult birds seen in the first seven months, only five are likely to have been residents. More happily, two of these pairs bred on Barden Moor, raising five young, and a juvenile at Glovershaw on 30th July could also have been raised locally.

From 10th August, all the records evidently refer to relocating birds, of which (allowing for birds lingering, and possible double-counting) there were about 100. Most of these were seen, as usual, in the south of the area, principally at Soil Hill, Trough Lane, and those parts of Oxenhope Moor bordering Warley Moor Reservoir. Up to five birds were seen on several occasions in these areas and around Baildon Moor, but the year's highest count of seven birds came from further north at Draughton Heights. Trough Lane hosted the year's first and last birds: on 12th April and 25th September.

**2008** - A better year for breeding records, as pairs with juveniles were seen on Barden Moor, and at Whetstone Gate and Leeshaw Reservoir. Nine young were raised. All the other reports referred to birds on passage, of which many fewer were seen than in other recent years, and most of the sightings were in the south of the area.

**2009** - Most of the birds recorded were clearly on passage, and about six were logged in spring, and 16 in autumn, mainly from the Oxenhope area and Baildon Moor. Successful breeding was noted at Farnhill Moor, and young birds were seen at Whetstone Gate, about in line with current expectations.

**2010** - Though only a few birds were seen on passage and in summer, breeding success appeared better than average, as up to 10 fledged young in total were reported from Whetstone Gate, Glovershaw and Haworth Moor. A pair was also seen on Barden Moor.

**2011** - Breeding success was clearly down on last year, with only a single pair raising up to four young on Barden Moor. A total of around 25 birds were seen on migration, but there were few summer records, and 13 birds in three parties on Barden Moor on 5th August was much the best count.

**2012** - Apart from a singing male at Whetstone Gate in June, all the records refer to dates when birds are generally on the move, and are probably so referable. Of the 20 reports, 13 came from around Baildon Moor, and 26 birds were seen there during a five week period from 20th August, though some might have been lingering birds. The remaining locations amassed eight individuals. The presence of fresh juveniles might hint towards local breeding, but it wasn't established.

**2013** - This was a far better year for this species with definite breeding records of two pairs on Barden Moor, where singing males were seen in May, followed at the end of June by juvenile birds, possibly up to six, calling from the bracken. These pairs were well-documented, as their progress was monitored until the middle of August. In the spring, seven birds were seen arriving in the area, five of these at Glovershaw between 30th April and 7th May. On the return passage, this location around Baildon Moor attracted 21 individuals from the 16th August to 10th September; occasionally some of the individuals were trapped and ringed. Also during this period there were records of ones and twos on Snowden Moor, Nab Water Lane, Oxenhope, Burley Moor, Leeshaw, Whetstone Allotment, Paul Clough and Ringby Top, Queensbury. An altogether much more satisfying year.

**2014** - A pair seen with Wheatears at Glovershaw on 24th April was the first reported in the area. Six other birds, all singles, were seen during the spring, and a male bird was seen on Barden Moor in June. A careful search of Keighley Moor in early August showed that two family parties were present, as was another on Snowden Moor, where two adults and their six juveniles were seen. In addition, reports from the moorland fringes in Airedale and the Worth Valley from 4th August to 21st September, produced records of 50 birds on passage.

**2015** - The first sighting, a bird at Nab Water Lane, was recorded on 24th April. A male on Barden Moor and another on Hazlewood Moor in spring gave strong hints of breeding, more conclusive in the case of the latter, when a family party was seen in August. A total of 26, mainly singles, dispersed across moorland during August and September, with adults accompanying juveniles at Slippery Ford, Snowden Moor, Ilkley Moor and Glovershaw, where the final birds were seen on 26th September.

**2016** - An elusive bird but still well reported with 50 submissions mainly from three sources, Slippery Ford, the Oxenhope area and Glovershaw, although birds were also reported from Barden Moor, John o'Gaunt's Reservoir, Golcar Farm, Bland Hill, Pennythorn and Cullingworth. The first bird appeared on Barden Moor on 30th April whilst the final sightings were of passage birds on Nab Water Lane (Oxenhope) up to 20th September.

Most records were of birds in bracken with one at Slippery Ford in with a party of five Stonechats, two Reed Buntings and 12 Goldfinch. From the same location two adult and three juveniles were reported and across the recording area 13 juveniles were seen in all.

**2017** - Most reports appear to concern migrants, particularly in the general area of Warley Moor Reservoir and Oxenhope, where up to 28 birds were recorded between late April and early September. The only suggestion of local breeding was juveniles near Warley Moor Reservoir in July.

**2018** - All the evidence is that the birds seen were largely transient, including a family party on Baildon Moor and a juvenile at Queensbury, both in September. The former provided the maximum count of six birds.