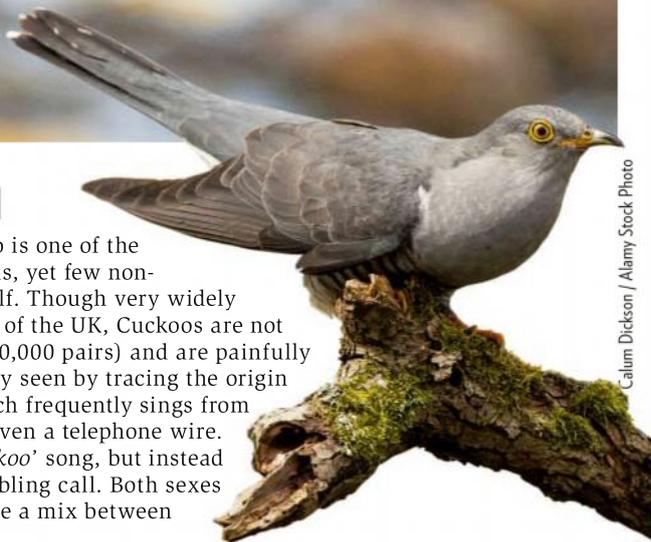




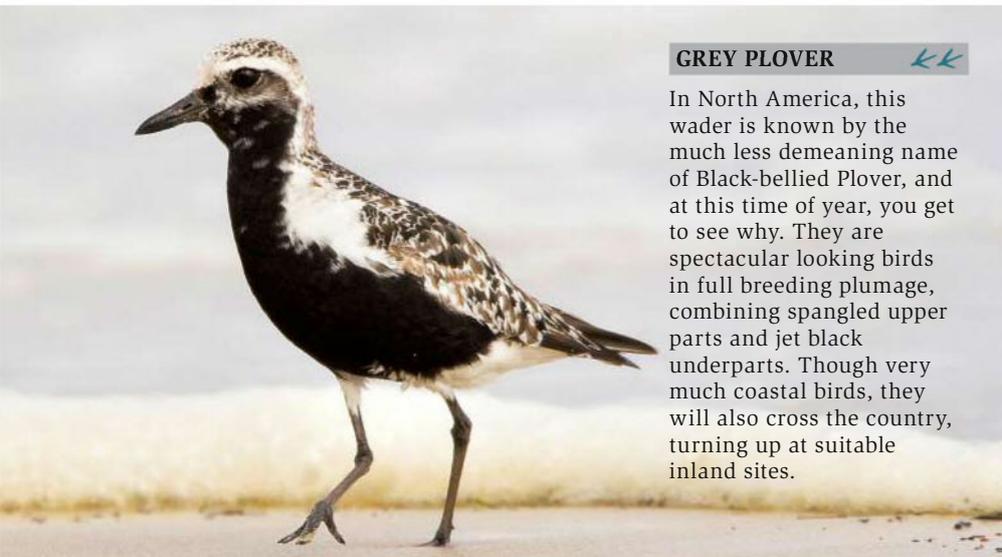
**CUCKOO** <<

The song of the male Cuckoo is one of the most well-known bird sounds, yet few non-birders ever see the bird itself. Though very widely distributed across the whole of the UK, Cuckoos are not common birds (fewer than 20,000 pairs) and are painfully shy. They are most frequently seen by tracing the origin of the song of the male, which frequently sings from the top of a tree or bush or even a telephone wire. Females don't make the 'cuckoo' song, but instead have a pleasing, excited bubbling call. Both sexes are quite similar, looking like a mix between a slim dove and a falcon.



**GREY PLOVER** <<

In North America, this wader is known by the much less demeaning name of Black-bellied Plover, and at this time of year, you get to see why. They are spectacular looking birds in full breeding plumage, combining spangled upper parts and jet black underparts. Though very much coastal birds, they will also cross the country, turning up at suitable inland sites.



**RARITY PREDICTOR**

This is the place where we have a semi-educated stab in the dark about which 'mega' rarity may turn up during the month, this time in May. Remember, these are not regular or expected rare birds, but at the 'mega' end of the rarity spectrum. There will be guaranteed glory for anyone finding one of these three special birds this year.

**WHITE-TAILED LAPWING**

There have only ever been six accepted records of White-tailed Lapwing in the UK. The last was in 2010 (pictured right), with a bird first found on 27 May at Seaforth NR, Lancashire, before moving to Essex, Gloucestershire and Kent before its departure on 21 July. Luckily, it is not a hard bird to identify, with a striking wing pattern, plus very long yellow-legs and, of course, a white tail.



**TRUMPETER FINCH**

Another extremely rare bird, the tiny Trumpeter Finch has reached the UK on only 16 occasions, with little influxes in 2005 and 2008 accounting for nearly half of these. Most records have been from coastal sites, especially (but not exclusively) in the south-east of England.



**LITTLE SWIFT**

Just 24 records of Little Swifts have been accepted in the UK, so it is another extremely rare bird. However, nearly half of these were found during May, and nearly all the rest in June, so now is the time to be scouring the skies looking for half-pint-sized swifts with square tails and extensive white rumps. Little Swifts are widely distributed birds, with a resident population in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent and scattered breeding populations breeding in North Africa, southern Spain and the Middle East.



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