

Song thrush



Chris Comersall/rspb-images.com

Status

BoCC Red listed due to a marked decline in the breeding population.

Population

700,000 territories.

Habitat

Song thrushes occur where trees, scrub or bushes are associated with open unimproved grassland or leaf litter under trees, especially on damp neutral to high pH soils, where a higher biomass of invertebrates is likely.

Conservation issues

The marked decline in abundance began in the 1970s and continued into the early 1990s, but has stabilised since, and there may have been a slight increase since 1997. This decline is attributed largely to agricultural intensification, but reduced humidity in woodland and a reduction in

the shrub layer through browsing or forestry management may also be important.

Ecology

Feeding: a wide range of invertebrates and fruit is taken depending on what is available during the year. Snails are important, especially during droughts and hard weather, when other food is unavailable, and earthworms are important.

Breeding: nests are usually located in trees and shrubs, often against the trunk supported by twigs or a branch, or among dense creepers, or occasionally on the ground in thick vegetation. It is constructed of twigs, grass and moss, and is lined with a plaster-like mix of mud, dung, and (especially) rotten wood.

Eggs are laid from March to July, but nesting can take place in virtually all months. Two or three broods are normal, and four is exceptional; but only two occur in the north. Clutches of 3–5 eggs take 10–17 days to hatch, and chicks take between 11 and 17 days to fledge.

Management issues

Damp ground is important, and woodland humidity is affected by wind penetration and by field drainage along the woodland edge. Changes in rainfall patterns may also cause drying, but management to create a dense edge and a layered woodland structure will conserve humidity.

The song thrush needs dense cover for nesting and protection from predators when foraging. Deer browsing and woodland management can compromise this cover, particularly at the woodland edge, where a well-developed shrub layer could also help to reduce wind penetration and therefore retain humidity.



Figure 2.12
Breeding
distribution of the
song thrush in
England.