

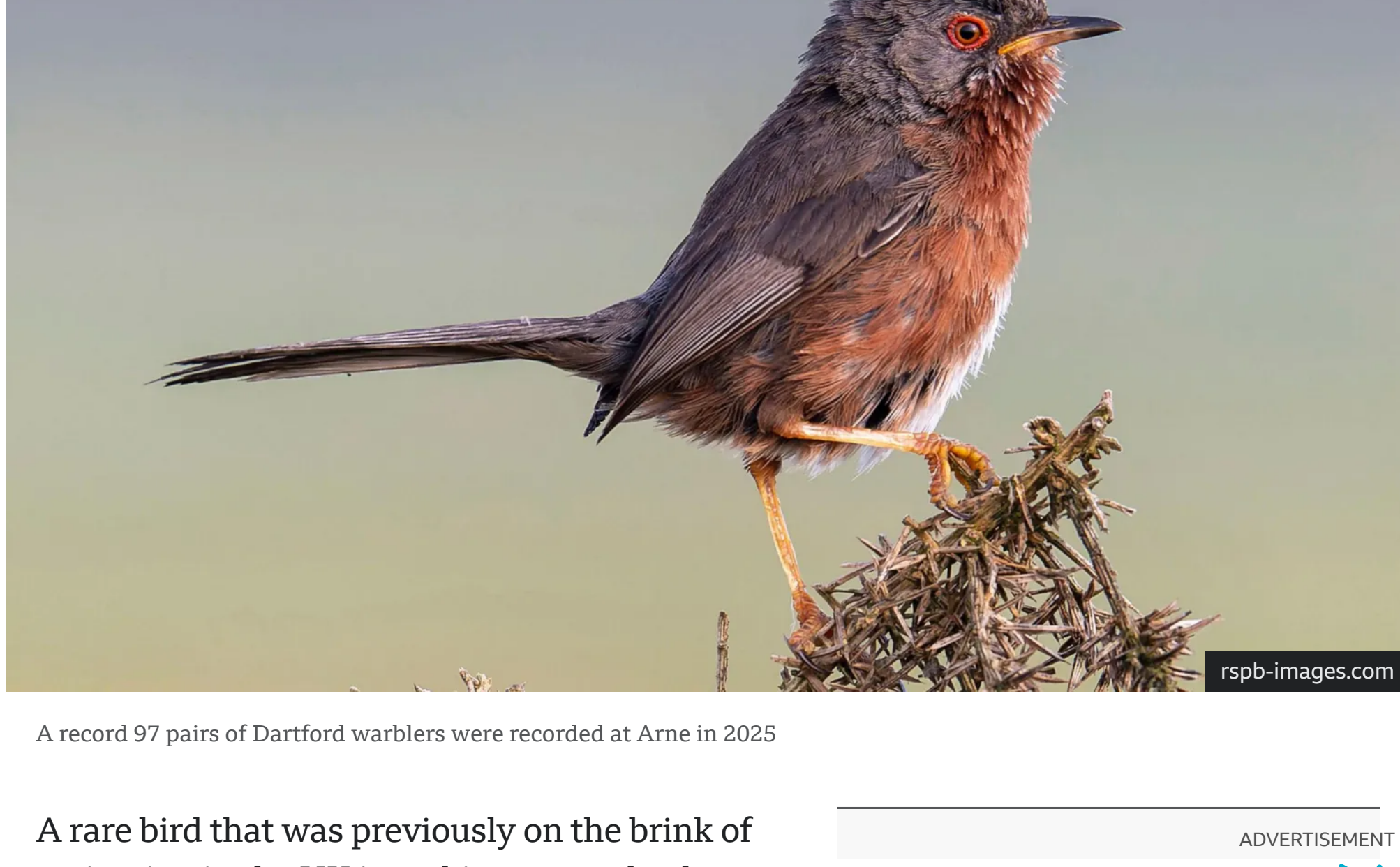
Record numbers of Dartford warblers at nature site

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Ros Tappenden
South of England



A record 97 pairs of Dartford warblers were recorded at Arne in 2025

A rare bird that was previously on the brink of extinction in the UK is making a comeback, surveys have shown.

The Dartford warbler suffered from a population crash in the 1960s, leaving only a few pairs in Dorset.

The latest national surveys have revealed a 44% increase in the species in the past five years, with 264 pairs counted in 2025.

The RSPB said a record 97 pairs were at RSPB Arne, near Wareham, where the charity has been carrying out habitat restoration.

The Heathland Birds Survey, carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the RSPB, aimed to survey nightjars, woodlarks and Dartford warblers throughout the UK and Channel Islands.

The survey estimates the UK population of Dartford warblers at 4,100, up from 3,200 in 2006.

The birds thrive in lowland heath habitats, nesting in the dense gorse, where they also hunt for spiders and caterpillars.



Site manager Peter Robertson said the birds could be heard singing "everywhere" at Arne

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In addition to restoring the habitats, the RSPB has also been returning a further 15 hectares of farmland to heathland.

Site manager Peter Robertson said: "Restoration of heathland across RSPB Arne has been on a truly landscape scale.

"Staff and volunteers have helped connect and enlarge fragmented patches of precious heathland to give wildlife, such as the distinctive Dartford warbler, the space to thrive.

"Visiting heathland during summer, the sound of Dartford warblers singing is everywhere."

BTO senior research ecologist Dr Greg Conway said: "Volunteer participation is key to the success of such projects, and we are truly grateful to all the people who contributed to the Heathland Bird Survey in 2025.

"With the creation and improvement of more suitable sites, we can hope to see continued range expansion, and population increases in the future."

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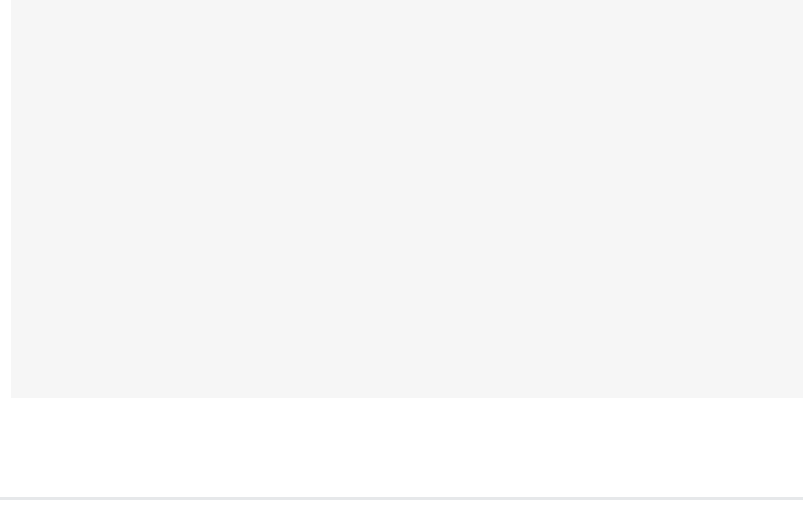
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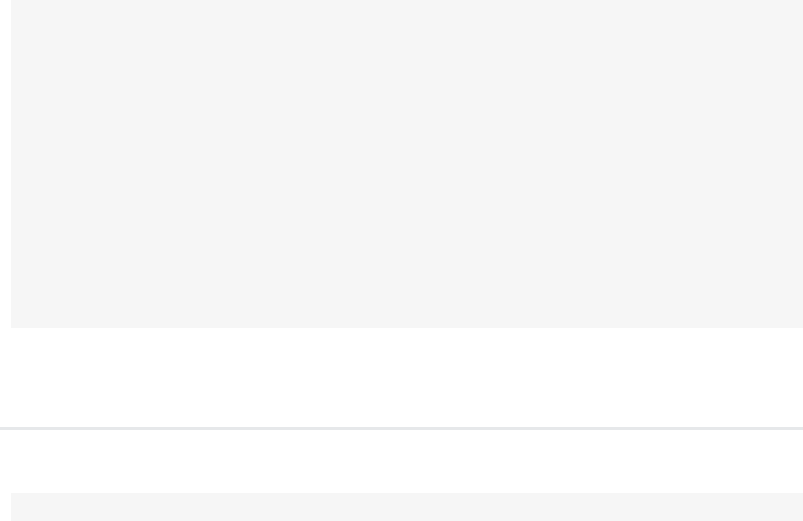
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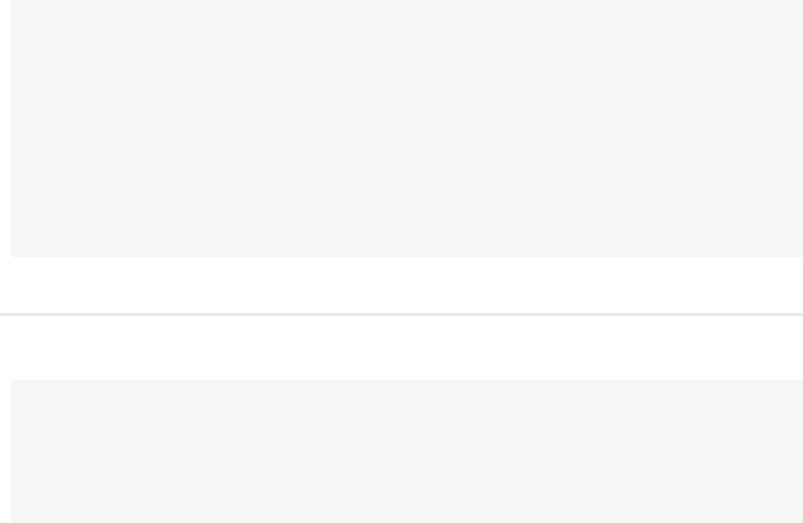
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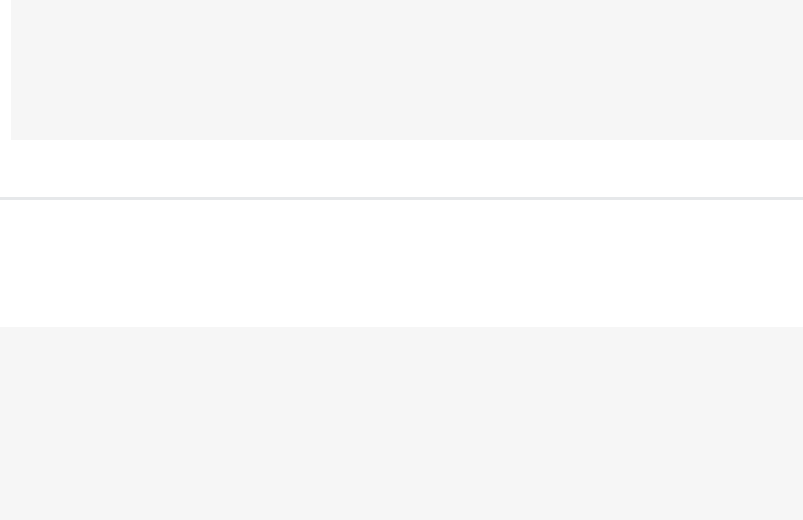
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