

Nuthatch moves north in Britain

24 December 2005

The tiny nuthatch, one of the smallest birds in Britain, has been moving north and is now breeding successfully in southern Scotland.

Pete Gordon of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland said that the birds were first seen north of the border in 1989.

"It is highly likely that this move ties in to climate change, because the northern edge of its range has clearly extended and they are steadily creeping up the country," Gordon told The Scotsman.

Duncan Orr-Ewing, director of land use policy for RSPB Scotland, suggested that milder winters mean more food for the birds, allowing them to breed farther north. He said the proliferation of bird feeders also may have affected the range.

The nuthatch lives in holes in trees that it stops with mud. It feeds on nuts as well as insects it digs out of tree trunks.

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