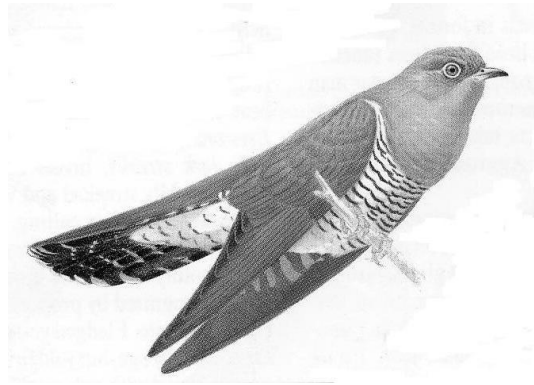


## The vanishing Cuckoo

On 5<sup>th</sup> May there was a notable event – a Cuckoo was heard calling in Dale. Until recently this would not have been notable but many people have mentioned to me recently that Cuckoos seem to have disappeared. It seems that their decline first started in the early 1950s and has accelerated recently, to the point where in most years, most people in our area never get to hear a Cuckoo.



National surveys indicate that Cuckoos have declined by 59% over the whole of the UK and I suspect this average figure masks large variations. Whilst they still seem to be doing OK in the uplands (you can still hear Cuckoos up in the Preselis) they have largely disappeared from the lowlands. We will know more about their current status in Pembrokeshire when the current breeding atlas is published later this year.

The reason for the decline is thought to be lack of food. Cuckoos particularly like to eat big hairy caterpillars - when was the last time you saw one of those? They also seem to be having problems finding food in their wintering areas – and of course they spend much more time there than they do here. So there is probably not much we can do about it – except celebrate with the Pipits, Dunnocks and Warblers who are the Cuckoo's main hosts!

*Rosemary Royle*