

The Birds of Berkshire



Annual Reports
2006 & 2007

Published 2012

Berkshire Ornithological Club

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The Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC) was founded as Reading Ornithological Club in 1947 to promote education and study of wild birds, their habitats and their conservation, initially in the Reading area but now on a county wide basis. It is affiliated to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Membership is open to anyone interested in birds and bird-watching, beginner or expert, local patch enthusiast or international twitcher. The Club provides the following in return for a modest annual subscription:

- A programme of indoor meetings with expert speakers on ornithological subjects
- Occasional social meetings
- An annual photographic competition of very high standard
- A programme of field meetings both locally and further afield. These can be for half days, whole days or weekends.
- Regular mid week bird walks in and around many of Berkshire's and neighbouring counties' best birdwatching areas.
- Exclusive access to the pre-eminent site Queen Mother Reservoir (subject to permit)
- Conservation involvement in important local habitats and species. BOC members are involved in practical conservation work with groups such as Friends of Lavell's Lake, Theale Area Bird Conservation Group and Moor Green Lakes Group.
- Opportunities to participate in survey work to help understand birds better. The surveys include supporting the BTO in its work and the new Berkshire 2007–11 County Atlas and avifauna.
- The Club runs the Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund to support local bird conservation projects.

This Berkshire Bird Report is published by the Club and provided free to members. Members are encouraged to keep records of their local observations and submit them, electronically or in writing, to the Recorder for collation and analysis.

The Birds of Berkshire, published in 1996, the authoritative book on local avifauna, and the culmination of many years of member's field work, is available to members at the highly-discounted price of £5 while copies last.

For further details of the Club and membership visit www.berksoc.org.uk or contact the Hon. Secretary:

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The Birds of Berkshire

Annual Report for the years 2006 and 2007

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Introduction

For a variety of reasons the publication of *The Birds of Berkshire* annual reports has been falling behind the schedule we would all like, but we are determined to catch up! Here the reports for 2006 and 2007 have been combined in one volume, whilst retaining each year's individual systematic list. This has rather restricted the space for articles, though we include articles on the Long-tailed Skua at Queen Mother Reservoir and the Red-footed Falcon at Moor Green, both in 2006.

The Berkshire Ornithological Club is taking measures that will, we hope, expedite the preparation and publication of reports. An Editorial Board has been established with Ken Moore (Chair), Chris Heard, Derek Barker, Marek Walford and Tim Ball. The report for 2008 is well on its way to completion and work is in progress on 2009 and 2010. We would like to receive articles and photographs for these years as soon as possible.

Collection of records is the first step in the preparation of a report and has been, perhaps, the biggest hold-up faced by the report production team. Records arrive by a plethora of routes, some a year or two after the report year end. By far the best way of getting in records into the County database is on-line submission (www.berksbirds.co.uk) throughout the year; records can also be submitted confidentially this way. Otherwise records can be sent to by email to records@berkoc.org.uk or on paper to Ken Moore, Hillside, 7 Aldermaston Road, Sherbourne St John, RG24 9LA. Species requiring a description are listed after the report of the Berkshire Records Committee. To expedite report publication, please send in your records within three months of the year end.

Corrigendum

In the *Birds of Berkshire* Annual Report for 2005, the Summary of Highlights (p 44) and the Escapes and Hybrids (p 140) were titled as for 2004; they were, of course, for the 2005 year.

Acknowledgements

The preparation of the County bird report relies on the voluntary efforts of many people for data collection, species account writing, preparing articles, providing photographs, editing and, critically, the observers who put in their records. At the end of this report is a list of the observers whose records contribute to the systematic list. We hope the list is accurate: please let us know of any errors or omissions, for which we apologise.

After Derek Barker's Herculean effort in single-handedly preparing the 2005 report (which he has repeated for 2008!), the systematic lists for 2006 and 2007 were written by a team of species account writers: Paul Bright-Thomas, Brian Clews, Richard Crawford, Ken Moore, Bill Nicoll, Sarah Priest, Marek Walford and Ken White. The County Recorder, Chris Heard, was the scientific editor of the systematic lists and copy-editing was done by Keith Chard, Ray Reedman and Mike Turton. Our thanks also go to Bruce Archer, Chris Heard and Bill Nicoll who provided articles and the summary of weather and bird highlights of the two years.

A special thanks to Robert Gillmor for his picture of an Alpine Swift (two separate birds were seen in 2006 by a lucky few); if my sum is correct, this brings to fifty the cover drawings that Robert has done, first for the Reading Ornithological Club's reports, then *The Birds of Berkshire* reports.

I would particularly like to thank Colin Wilson, who this year stood down as Managing Editor. Not only did he help clear the backlog of the 1990s, he enhanced the *The Birds of Berkshire* with more articles and colour photos and greatly strengthened its financial basis through advertising, sponsorship and sales.

Lastly, if anyone has inadvertently been omitted, my apologies: thanks are due to everyone who has contributed to the creation of this double annual report.

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County Directory

COUNTY RECORDER

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BERKSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

www.berksoc.org.uk

A Club for birdwatchers throughout Berkshire, with indoor and outdoor meetings, surveys and publications, including Birds of Berkshire annual reports – see page 2 for details. Collects bird records for the county, is responsible for the county database and administers 'The Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund', a charity.

Secretary, Mike Turton, 7 Fawcett Crescent,
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NEWBURY DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

www.ndoc.org.uk

A Club for birdwatchers in the Newbury area with a recording area of 10 miles radius of the town. Offers indoor and outdoor meetings, surveys and publications.

Membership Secretary, Karen Eggleton,
4 Thornfield, Headley, Thatcham, Berks,
RG19 8AQ

Telephone 01635 269566

Email: info1@ndoc.org.uk

BERKSHIRE BIRD BULLETIN

Publisher of monthly newsletters of birds reported in the County with a news summary and detailed listings of sightings. Records are welcome for publication.

County Ornithological Services.

Contact Brian Clews, Telephone 01628 525314 or

Email: brian.clews@btconnect.com

BIRDS OF BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION FUND

Charitable Fund managed for the benefit of Berkshire's birds, preferably but not exclusively related to wetland birds and sites.

Enquiries and applications to: Renton Righelato

Telephone 0787 981 2564

Email: renton.righelato@berksoc.org.uk

www.berksbirds.co.uk

An independent website devoted to offering a free resource to birdwatchers in Berkshire and providing news, photographs and records of birds with additional optional information services.

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY (BTO)

Joint local representatives for BTO matters including organising surveys: Ken White and Sarah Priest, Yonder Cottage, Ashford Hill, Thatcham, Berks, RG19 8AX.

Telephone 01635 268442

Email: btoberks.ken.sarah@googlemail.com

FRIENDS OF LAVELL'S LAKE

Conservation volunteers managing Lavell's Lake local nature reserve near Dinton Pastures Country Park, Wokingham. Bird walks, work parties, occasional meetings and newsletters.

Contact Chairman Fraser Cottington at
Fraser.cottington@ntlworld.com or see
www.foll.org.uk

MOOR GREEN LAKES GROUP

Conservation volunteers who manage Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve near Eversley. Work parties, newsletters, an annual report and access to bird hides.

Contact Membership Secretary: David Bishop,
7 Ambarrow Crescent, Little Sandhurst, Berks,
GU47 8JA

Email: dave.bishop@mglg.org.uk

THEALE AREA BIRD CONSERVATION GROUP

A local Club devoted to the conservation of birds in the Theale area, west of Reading. Indoor and outdoor meetings, annual bird race and survey work.

www.freewebs.com/tabcg/

Contact Cath McEwan, Secretary,

Email: Catherine@cmcewan.fsnet.co.uk

LOCAL RSPB GROUPS

Groups promote and represent the RSPB in the local community. Activities include indoor and outdoor meetings and fund raising events.

Further details from the RSPB www.rspb.org.uk/
or directly from:

East Berks Local Group
www.eastberksrspb.org.uk/

Reading Local Group
www.reading-rspb.org.uk/

Wokingham and Bracknell Local Group
www.wbrspb.btinternet.co.uk/

RED-FOOTED FALCON AT MOOR GREEN LAKES ON 8th-19th JULY 2006

By Bruce Archer

This is a lesson in the identification process when an unfamiliar bird is found.

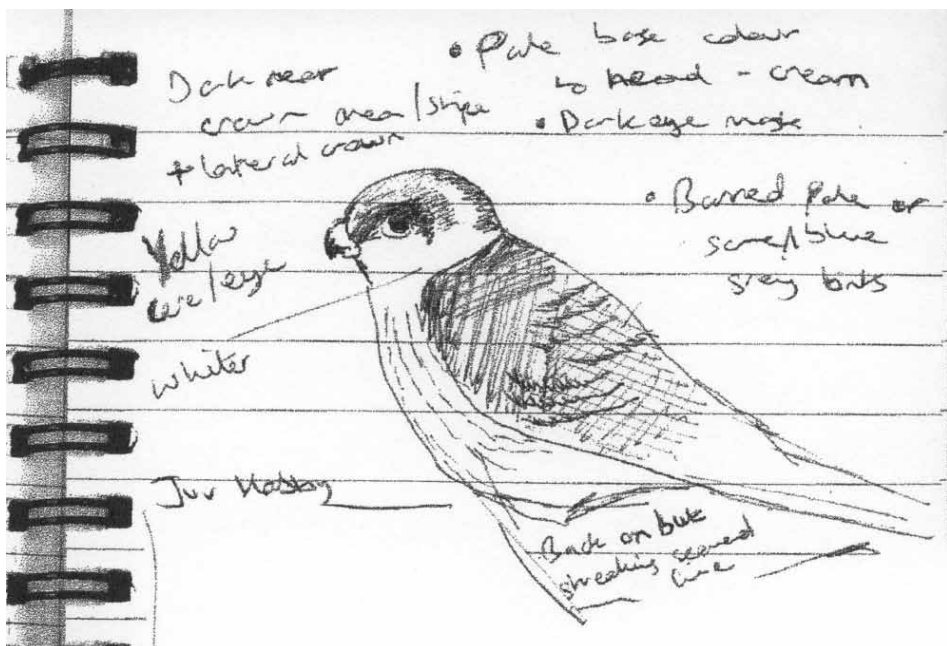
Sat 8th July – I saw the bird in question at Moor Green Lakes when Jim Reid brought it to my attention. It was a small falcon flying over the lake and reed beds west of the Reserve. Jim suggested that it was a Merlin, the barring and brown plumage was very like a female Merlin, but I felt it was more like a Hobby because I had never heard of a summer Merlin in Berkshire and because the amount of white on the head and the emerging moustachial stripe were Hobby features. Also it was behaving and hunting like the first-summer Hobby that was also in the area. My diary recorded: “2 juv Hobbies over the new workings, one seemed very young and brown”!

Mon 10th July – Email to the HOS [Hampshire Ornithological Society] email group from Allen Worgan:

“Request for info - juvenile Red-footed Falcon id

Can anyone provide guidance on when, if at all, juvenile Red Footed Falcons turn up in the UK? Also what are the diagnostic features determining this from juvenile Hobby? The reason I ask is that I saw what I thought was a juvenile Hobby over the weekend (out of county) so don't panic!!!!) but there were a few plumage anomalies from prior ones I had seen which got me thinking. Any guidance appreciated.”

Attached was this field sketch by Allen, showing the bird as seen on the ground.



Fortunately the bird remained throughout the week, while debate continued via the HOS and Berksbirds email Groups and on Surfbirds, moving the opinion toward Red-footed Falcon.

Wed 12th July – Input from Patrick Crowley “It is about a month too early for a 2006 juvenile Hobby to be around, but it could be a 1st summer bird, as these don’t always have the full adult plumage.”

Thu 13th July – Chris Gent observed the bird and noted that it had barring on the upper tail, which ruled out Hobby in any plumage state.

By the weekend the bird was confirmed as a first-summer female Red-footed Falcon in arrested moult, being mainly juvenile plumage with some female first summer plumage showing. This is visible in a photograph taken on 17th July (*opposite*).

This is a good example of the varying approaches to identifying birds. Generally, I find there are those that assume anything different is a common bird, and those that assume it is a rare species. I tend to be the former. What we should all be doing is note all details before resorting to the field guide or website. Allen’s field sketch and notes is a good example of how things can be recorded. Photography is becoming more frequent and can be used to record sightings, sometimes allowing identification of something not suspected by the photographer, but is likely to show that what was thought to be a rare bird is, in fact, a common one.

THE LONG-TAILED SKUA AT QMR IN 2006

By Chris Heard

A juvenile Long-tailed Skua was found at QMR in September 2006 and, unlike the two previous Berkshire records, it lingered at this site for a remarkable nine days – enabling many county birders to catch up with this normally transient species.

I had visited QMR during the morning of Sept 9th and seen nothing of note, apart from four Black Terns. These had departed by midday but I then got a call from Rob Innes, at Staines, asking me to come and check out a marsh tern sp. at KG 6 Reservoir...

It turned out to just be a juvenile Black Tern but, as a result, I found myself heading back past QMR during the afternoon and thought I’d give it another look. Doing so I spotted a skua swimming on the open water which I was soon convinced was a juvenile Long-tailed!

It proved to be quite settled (and tolerant of passing yachts!) and over the ensuing days, with generally calm sunny conditions, maintained the same feeding technique of gently picking food items from the water surface. Few other Berks birders had seen this species in the county before, so it attracted a lot of interest and inevitably the yacht club wanted to know what all the fuss was about. They subsequently offered to take birders out onto the water for closer views and this proved very successful, with the bird quite approachable and some excellent photos obtained. With growing demand from birders the boatmen soon started charging a small fee for the ‘skua excursions’!

The bird’s main characteristics are well conveyed in the photos, but the plumage is best described as towards the darker end of intermediate morph. This is typical of the majority of the juveniles that I have seen on coastal sea-watches (in recent years I have seen good



Red-footed Falcon – Moor Green Lakes, 17th July 2006. See article opposite



*Long-tailed Skua – An intermediate juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir on 10th September 2006.
Photo: Nic Hallam.*

numbers of Long-tails during annual sea-watches at the Bridges of Ross, Co Clare – including 24 juvs during 19th–27th August 2004).

The bird was last seen at midday on the 17th – when I saw it make a relaxed flight halfway across the reservoir. The resulting nine-day stay is most unusual and, in fact, is the longest stay by any Long-tailed Skua in the LNHS (London) recording area. Some have commented that it may never have left the county, but it is worth mentioning that the previous record (a juvenile on August 17th 2003), while seeming exhausted when it was first found, was later seen to soar off high to the West with barely a flap of its wings. In fact, my first ever Long-tailed, at Dawlish Warren in September 1974, was so ‘tired’ that it allowed me to catch it by hand... and then upon release put on a spirited pursuit of a Sandwich Tern!

The first Berkshire record (a pale morph juvenile, with a striking creamy-white head) was a more typical fly-through at Wraysbury Res (now Surrey) on 30th August 1978, that barely paused before continuing South over Wraysbury GPs.

There have been two further sightings since 2006, both of them at QMR. An intermediate morph juvenile flew through the site on 21st August 2007, briefly landing on the water before being mobbed by a juv Herring Gull and flying off, low, to the South-west. Then in 2008 a dark juvenile was present for about 20mins, retrieving a food item from the water surface and then bathing before circling off high to the West.

Although Long-tailed Skua is still the rarest of the small skuas in Berkshire, the number of sightings has clearly increased in recent years. This must be partly due to increased coverage at QMR (although Arctic Skua sightings have not increased) but is also likely to be due to the improvements in the field identification of juvenile skuas (notably Olsen & Jonsson in *Brit. Birds* 83: 143–176 and Olsen & Larsson’s book ‘Skuas & Jaegers’). It seems likely that some birds – that might have previously been passed off as ‘dark Arctics’ – are now being correctly identified as Long-tails. Even a rather problematic buffy-looking juvenile (with pale spots on the primary tips!) at Staines Res on Sept 9th 2004 was eventually nailed as a pale morph Long-tailed. However, as this last example demonstrates, there are almost no invariable features when identifying juvenile skuas. It is essential to assess *all* of a skua’s characteristics.



Ortolan Bunting – A juvenile trapped and ringed on 5th September 2007 by the Runnymede Ringing Group at Wraysbury GP. Photo Bill Haines.



*Little Auk – Queen Mother Reservoir 15th November 2007.
Photo (taken with a handheld mobile phone): Chris Heard*

SUMMARY OF WEATHER AND BIRD HIGHLIGHTS OF 2006

By Bill Nicoll and Chris Heard

JANUARY–FEBRUARY

The first week of January was mostly mild and sunny by day with only a little local ground frost overnight. In the second week blustery weather from the west brought mild, unsettled conditions. In the 3rd week high pressure over the southeast brought colder weather with several grey, drizzly days and some snow on high ground. The month ended with a light, cold, northerly airflow over Berks, giving settled weather with gradual warming. This was the warmest January since 1990, with above average sunshine and below average rainfall. February 1st to 9th were dull, mild, dry days with light winds with only a few light night frosts. A NW airstream from 10th to 15th brought blustery, showery days with some long sunny periods. From 16th until the end of the month very light winds from the NE quarter drew cold air over the region. During this period, there were 10 days with light snow (max 1 cm on 26th) that did not lie for long, but there was plenty of sunshine on most days. Mean temperatures were generally above average and rainfall levels generally below average.

Jan–Feb Birds The year started with several carry-overs from the previous year, most notably the Laughing Gull – which continued to entertain observers at Reading Business Park until the end of March. There were 5 Bitterns at Dinton Pastures CP and up to 8 Short-eared Owls in the Bury Down area. There was also a roost of up to 3 Long-eared Owls at a new mid-Berks site, but they had soon dwindled to 1 by Jan 7th. A Knot at Lower Farm on 25th–29th was an unusual mid-winter sighting (reports of its demise proved to be premature!) and, more obscurely, QMR claimed the first county record of a Mediterranean × Black-headed Gull hybrid on 30th. The first days of February brought some interesting waterfowl, with a dark-bellied Brent Goose at Horton on 1st, a Common Scoter at Theale on 3rd and, nearby, 17 White-fronted Geese at Pingewood on 4th. A Slavonian Grebe was also found at the latter site on 11th. The only Iceland Gull of the year was, surprisingly, at Eversley GP on 5th but QMR did provide the earliest-ever Spring flock of Little Gulls – with a party of nine through on 22nd. Elsewhere there were up to 12 Ravens together at Combe and the ongoing influx of Mealy Redpolls amounted to at least nine birds.

MARCH–APRIL

The cold light airstream from N or NE continued through the first week of March with 6 days on which snow fell (up to 1 cm) that lay for several days on high ground. Then, as the airflow moved towards the SE, temperatures rose towards the March average by 13th. From 14th to 19th westerly winds brought mild days while the associated rain belts passed mostly north of Berkshire. The last 12 days were mild and unsettled, with two fairly wet days (23rd & 29th) but there was plenty of sunshine too. Rainfall over the month was close to the average. There were 12 days with 4 or more hours of sunshine spread fairly evenly through the month; the warmest day was 19th (21°C). April was a very mixed month with weak ridges and weak frontal systems succeeding each other every few days. Rainfall was slightly above average, with 19 days having measurable rain. During the 1st week a light easterly flow brought dry, sunny days with cool nights succeeded by south-westerlies bringing scattered showers with sunny spells. The second week was colder as the light wind swung daily through NW, N, NE to east. The third week consisted of a series of weak fronts from the west giving

showers, longer periods of rain and occasional thunder. The final week started cold and dull under a weak ridge, became unsettled with some sunshine and ended with light winds giving generally warm, dull weather.

Mar–April Birds During March a Hawfinch made regular visits to a garden at Wildmoor Heath (where it was photographed) and a drake Ring-necked Duck was found at Theale on 24th. There were also up to 40 Ruddy Ducks at Wraysbury GP at this time – such gatherings must surely now be a thing of the past. The highlight of the Spring was an Alpine Swift that showed up at Maidenhead, mid-April, and was then followed by another at Greenham on 23rd (both part of a nationwide influx). Three Pied Flycatchers served to re-emphasize that this is now the best month to catch up with one of these beauties. There was also a Brent Goose at Dorney wetlands on 19th, the only Waxwing of the year – at Warfield on 21st – and at least 100 Crossbills in the Broadmoor area. Up to 3 Ring Ouzels drew many admirers at Streatley Warren.

MAY–JUNE

May began warm and humid, with some intense thunderstorm, and a peak temperature of 25°C. From 3rd to 9th a series of ‘lows’ from the west brought mixed weather including a few hail showers, several ground frosts and, when the sun shone, some quite warm spells (19°C). From 10th to 18th high pressure over UK produced a cold north-easterly flow (sometimes gusty) leading to some frosty nights and dry days with some sunny periods a few very light scattered showers. From 19th low pressure produced a weak, variable south or south-westerly airflow giving fairly mild weather, generally quite cloudy, with frequent showers and some heavier rain (sometimes containing Sahara dust). Winds from south brought a very hot day (30°C) on 27th. The month ended with mild, variable days following a cold front from the west. The first week of June brought generally unsettled westerly weather, wet and thundery at times. This was replaced in the second week by an easterly flow under high pressure giving some cold nights and dry days with plenty of sunshine. The third week started with 2 wet days, and then it quickly became very hot with heavy thundery showers as the wind swung to southeast (max 31°C on 19th). The final week was mixed, often wet and thundery weather, but it remained quite warm in a variable, but predominantly easterly, airstream (26°C on 28th).

May–June Birds After no Garganey during April, a pair at Midgham GP on 2nd May were very welcome. The 1st May had produced a Honey Buzzard over Caversham and subsequent raptors included 3 Marsh Harriers, including 2 together, and a late Hen Harrier flying over Windsor Great Park on 29th. A single Grey Plover at QMR was the only one of the year. A Wood Warbler at Buckleberry on 4th June, followed an earlier sighting there at the end of April. Siskins were confirmed as breeding at 3 sites within Swinley Forest and Shelduck bred at five sites. The first post-breeding Curlews flew over at two locations on June 16th.

JULY–AUGUST

It was generally changeable and showery for the first 8 days of July with temps in the mid teens to low 20s and light, variable winds predominantly from the western quadrant. The 2nd & 3rd weeks were a complete contrast – high pressure and an easterly flow brought hot (touching 30°C on several days) and dry conditions, except for heavy thunder showers on 18th. The final week was like the first, cool (max of 20°C on 24th), cloudy and wet as Atlantic westerlies returned. The 30th was the wettest July day for many years and there was local flooding. During the first 2 weeks of August it was showery but quite sunny, though

there was prolonged heavy rain on 4th and 13th. Winds were light and variable. Temperature maxima were 22–25 in the first week, a little warmer in the second. During the following 10 days Atlantic weather predominated. An unusually deep depression over Scotland led to cool wet conditions with much less sunshine (max of 16 °C on 24th). There were strong to gale force westerly winds on 24th, while on 25th large hailstones (up to 20mm) fell in several places. In the final 6 days, with winds from the SE, it became dry, increasingly hot and very sunny again (max 31°C on 31st) but marred by severe thunder storms locally.

July–Aug Birds July surprised everyone with a first-summer Red-footed Falcon at Eversley GP from 8th–18th, which was so ‘scruffy’ that it was almost overlooked (see Bruce Archer’s account in this report). A Spotted Redshank was also found there on 8th August and there was a flock of five Turnstones at QMR on 17th. A subsequent Little Tern there on 27th was the first juvenile to be recorded in the county for 19 years! There were also at least 4 Garganey in the county around this time.

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER

September was mainly warm and sunny with temperatures exceeding 20°C on most days. Pressure was fairly high and the few weak fronts that crossed the country from the north or west had little effect in Berkshire. There were only 4 dull days and 3 wet days. Winds were mostly from the W quadrant, generally light but strong on 26th. On 10th thundery showers brought heavy rain to many places, heaviest in West Berks where there was up to 75mm. For most of the first 2 weeks of October a light wind from a generally northerly direction brought dry weather with temperatures mostly 16–20°C, though there was 1cm of rain on 12th, and several very sunny days during the second week, when 23°C was achieved on 10th. During the third week a moderate airstream from the SW kept temperatures in the 16–20°C range but gave up to 1cm of rain on several days and useful sunshine only on 21 & 22nd. The final week was a mixture – mostly dull though the 25th and 27th were exceptions, calm for the first 4 days then stormy, the wind coming from the west or northwest throughout.

Sept–Oct Birds September’s ornithological highlight was the long-staying juvenile Long-tailed Skua at QMR from 9th–17th. Two days later, a Manx Shearwater was picked-up on the King’s Road in Reading (but never made it back to the sea). A Honey Buzzard flew over Moatlands GP on 15th and, nearby, another Common Scoter was found at Theale. Up to 100 Yellow Wagtails at Cockmarsh suggests that they are breeding successfully *somewhere...* Oct 1st delivered a party of five Little Stints at Eversley GP and a couple of days later a Hoopoe was reported in a garden in Englefield. A family party of Quail was an exceptional find on the Downs on 7th–8th and there were also 30 Stone Curlews in the area at the same time.

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER

For the first 10 days of November mild air from the Atlantic flowed gently southwards over Berkshire, giving pleasant days (12–18°C) and frost free nights. There were 2 wet days but there were 5 sunny days. The winds strengthened a little in the second 10 days as the Azores high directed a light SW flow over southern England. Temperatures dropped day by day and there were some night frosts. It was largely dry with mostly sunny days. The final 10 days were cold as the wind (strong at times) moved into the NW bringing Arctic air. There was little rain and up to 3 hours of sun on most days but hard frost at night (down to -4°C). Parts of Berkshire saw a little snow but elsewhere in UK it fell heavily. December was very wet on 1st and 30th; when some areas got snow, and there was light rain on 7th, but mostly

the month was dry. Temperatures were close to average (5–10°C) with maximum of 12°C on 16th and daytime minimum of 0°C on 29th. It was a bright month with over 4 hours of sunshine on 10 days. Only 5/6th, 20–23rd and 29–31st were dull, but on 11th, the smoke cloud from the huge fire at Buncefield reduced sunshine in some areas on what would have been a bright day. There were frosts on 8 nights. Snow fell on 4 days, but none lay. Winds were typically about 8 knots, from the north for the first 10 days then from SW until strong, cold NW winds arrived during the final 3 days.

Nov–Dec Birds November produced a couple of Bearded Tits at Horton GP on 7th and an frustratingly mobile Twite at Slough SF on 18th. The following day the year's second Ring-necked Duck was found at Eversley GP, but it was to be a one-day wonder. Two Siberian Chiffchaffs were at Arthur Jacob NR from 28th but were erratic in their appearances and close-by a Black-necked Grebe lingered for a month at Horton. The reedbeds at Brimpton were hosting 2000 roosting Starlings and up to 74 Red Kites roosted at Woolley Down. Several exceptionally late House Martins ended with 2 at Lavell's Lake on Dec 10th. December also delivered at least four Great Northern Divers – with three of them at QMR. This site also produced Leach's Petrel on 7th, Red-throated Diver on 23rd, and both Glaucous Gull and a Purple Sandpiper on Boxing Day – when the reservoir was, unfortunately, closed for Christmas (with the gates padlocked!).

REPORT FOR 2006 & 2007 BY THE BERKSHIRE RECORDS COMMITTEE (BRC)

By Chris Heard

Committee for 2006–2007: Chris Heard (Chairman), Ken Moore, Peter Standley

The BRC examines all records that involve rare species (see the accompanying lists), unusual dates and unusually large counts that are accompanied with descriptive notes. Unfortunately there are still a substantial number of records that have to be omitted from the report due to the lack of supporting notes. On occasions when the bird has been seen by a large number of observers the BRC may accept the record without further details. However the record may run the risk of being attributed to the wrong observer/s, or may be attributed to many observers (MO).

Species for which notes or descriptions are required fall into 3 categories:

(Cat 1) Nationally rare species for which records first have to be accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

(Cat 2) Locally rare species for which a full description is required.

(Cat 3) Locally scarce species (or commoner species seen at an unusual time of year or exceptional circumstances) for which short supporting notes are required.

The species in categories 2 and 3 are as follows:

Category 2

Bean Goose; Pink-footed Goose; American Wigeon; Green-winged Teal; Ring-necked Duck; Ferruginous Duck (from 2006); Velvet Scoter; Fulmar; Manx Shearwater; Storm Petrel; Night Heron; Purple Heron; White Stork; Spoonbill; Honey Buzzard; Black Kite (from 2006); White-tailed Eagle; Goshawk; Rough-legged Buzzard; Golden Eagle; Red-footed Falcon (from 2006); Spotted Crake; Corncrake; Crane; Kentish Plover; Dotterel; Pectoral Sandpiper; Purple Sandpiper; Red-necked Phalarope; Grey Phalarope; Pomarine Skua; Arctic Skua; Long-tailed Skua; Great Skua; Sabine's Gull; Ring-billed Gull; Caspian Gull; Iceland Gull; Glaucous Gull; White-winged Black Tern (from 2006); Roseate Tern; Guillemot; Razorbill; Little Auk; Puffin; Alpine Swift (from 2006); Short-toed Lark; Shore Lark; Red-rumped Swallow (from 2006); Richard's Pipit; Tawny Pipit; Red-throated Pipit (from 2006); Dipper; Bluethroat; Aquatic Warbler; Marsh Warbler; Icterine Warbler; Melodious Warbler; Yellow-browed Warbler; Bearded Tit; Golden Oriole; Woodchat Shrike; Hooded Crow; Rose-coloured Starling; Serin; Twite; Common (Mealy) Redpoll; Common Rosefinch; Lapland Bunting; Cirl Bunting; Ortolan Bunting; Little Bunting; all rare subspecies (e.g. Scandinavian Rock Pipit; Yellow Wagtail races and Siberian Chiffchaff) and all non-BB Rarity species (Cat 1) not currently on the Berkshire List.

Category 3

Bewick's Swan; Whooper Swan (unless feral); White-fronted Goose; Brent Goose; Barnacle Goose (unless feral); Garganey; Scaup; Eider; Long-tailed Duck; Common Scoter; Red-breasted Merganser; Quail; Red-throated Diver; Black-throated Diver; Great Northern Diver; Red-necked Grebe; Slavonian Grebe; Black-necked Grebe; Leach's Storm Petrel; Gannet; Shag; Bittern; Marsh Harrier; Hen Harrier; Montagu's Harrier; Osprey; Merlin; Avocet; Grey Plover; Knot; Sanderling; Little Stint; Temminck's Stint; Curlew Sandpiper; Black-tailed Godwit; Bar-tailed Godwit; Whimbrel; Spotted Redshank; Wood Sandpiper;

Mediterranean Gull; Little Gull; Yellow-legged Gull (spring records); Kittiwake; Little Tern; Sandwich Tern; Arctic Tern; Long-eared Owl; Hoopoe; Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (where i.d. is based on drumming only); Wryneck; Woodlark (away from usual habitat); Rock Pipit; Water Pipit; White Wagtail (rump colour needed and full details for autumn records); Waxwing; Black Redstart; Ring Ouzel; Wood Warbler; Pied Flycatcher; Willow Tit; Red-backed Shrike; Great Grey Shrike; Raven; Tree Sparrow; Hawfinch; Snow Bunting.

The lists above are the same as produced in the 2004 report apart from Dipper which has been moved from Category 3 to Category 2. Also listed are several species that had been mistakenly omitted from either category on the 2004 report.

Review of records for 2006 and 2007

Due to limits on time and space in this two-year issue, the following list may not be comprehensive; however we have endeavoured to include all major sightings. Observers should note that Caspian Gull remains a 'description species' (although they have been shown to be of regular occurrence, they can still be tricky to identify conclusively).

Records that the Committee has not been able to accept are listed below. * indicates that no description was received, 'date' indicates that a sighting has not been accepted due to the unusual date; 'count' due to unusual number.

2006

Whooper Swan	Woose Hill 2/2; Woolhampton GP 9/11*
Smew	11, Horton GP 15/1 (count)
Red-throated Diver	Wraysbury GP 1/11 & 19/11*
Red-necked Grebe	Thatcham 24/10*
Honey Buzzard	Cookham 14/4*; Bucklebury 25/7; Maidenhead Thicket 9/10
Goshawk	West Berks 18/3*; Theale GP 19/3*; Greenham Common 15/8* Bisham Woods 9/12*
Osprey	Jealott's Hill 5/8*
Red-footed Falcon	Arborfield 16/7*
Spotted Crane	Hurley 30/8
Corncrake	Whitchurch June*
Ruff	8, Dorney Wetlands 28/10*
Little Gull	Martins Heron 10/12*
Mediterranean Gull	Bray GP 21/10*; Bisham Woods 9/12*
Caspian Gull	Pingewood GP 2/12; Moatlands GP 24/12*
Sandwich Tern	Twyford GP 6/8 – 20/8
Waxwing	Dorney Wetlands 4/3*
White Wagtail	Newbury 28/1 (date)*
Willow Tit	Englemere Pond 26/3 & 9/5 – 15/5*
Raven	Paley Street 2/9*
Mealy Redpoll	Ankerwyke 1/1*; Burghfield Mill GP 20/2*
Arctic Redpoll	Aldworth 2/2
Yellow Warbler	Earley 20/4

2007

Whooper Swan	Hungerford 23/10*
Garganey	Wraysbury GP 1/5* 13/5* 31/5* 12/8* 16/9* 7/10*
Black-throated Diver	Theale GP 9/12*
Red-necked Grebe	Lower Farm GP 7/1*

Shag	Mill pond, Bracknell 13/2* R.Thames at Borough Marsh 25/8*
Cattle Egret	Lea Farm GP 21/5
Glossy Ibis	Winnersh 6/5*
Honey Buzzard	M4 jctn 11 16/5*; Streatley 9/9*; Lavell's Lake 3/5*
Goshawk	Billingbear 14/10*; Birch Hill 24/10*
Osprey	Wraysbury GP 25/4*; 4, Combe 2/4 (count)*
Red-footed Falcon	Winter Hill 17/5
Ringed Plover	QMR 9/7*
Jack Snipe	2, Dorney Wetlands 13/1*
Caspian Gull	Dorney Wetlands 7/9*; Lower Farm GP 21/11*; Smallmead GP 29/12*
Black Tern	Dorney Wetlands 2/6*
Arctic Tern	Bracknell 3/5*
Tree Pipit	Wishmoor 29/9*
Wood Warbler	Eversley GP 13/9*
Willow Tit	Birch Hill, Bracknell 19/2*
Great Grey Shrike	Walbury Hill 21/4*
Hawfinch	17, site withheld 11/2 (count)*