

THE SYSTEMATIC LIST FOR 2008

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During 2008, 207 native or self-sustaining feral species were recorded and a further 12 feral (population not self-sustaining) or escaped species were also reported. The table shows the total number of species recorded per month

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
126	127	136	158	156	136	137	152	152	129	132	127

Of the native and self-sustaining species, 84 were primarily resident, 33 were summer visitors, 29 winter visitors, 35 passage migrants and 26 scarce or rare visitors of which 5 can be classed as vagrants (no more than 10 records since 1974). Exactly 100 species were confirmed as breeding within the county, however a further 16 species probably bred, additionally Black Swans again bred in the county. There were no additions to the county list.

Abbreviations and place names

Abbreviations used in the systematic lists are shown below. For place names difficulties arise where there are several names for the same sites including where, for example, a gravel pit complex is named but not the individual pit. A map and guide to the main sites is included towards the end of the report to assist with identification and further detail can be found at www.berksbirds.co.uk/pits.asp.

AGE/SEX

Ad	adult
f/s	First summer
f/w	First winter (plumage)
imm	Immature
juv	Juvenile
s/p	Summer plumage
s/s	Second summer
s/w	Second winter
w/p	Winter plumage
w	Winter
3/s	Third summer
3/w	Third winter
4/s	Fourth summer

PLACES/LOCALITIES

Com	Common
CP	Country Park
Fm	Farm
GC	Golf course
GP	Gravel Pit(s)
K&A	Kennet and Avon
Res	Reservoir
R.	River
SF	Sewage Farm
STW	Sewage Treatment Works
Dorney W	Dorney Wetlands
QMR	Queen Mother Reservoir

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Locally common introduced resident

The monthly maxima at sites where counts were regular are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	81	19	24	–	–	–	–	44	102	86	122	136
Dinton Pastures	39	40	21	–	8	6	–	–	–	14	20	16
Eversley GPs	20	25	13	–	8	–	–	–	27	31	37	38
Windsor Great Park	19	14	12	6	15*	20*	15*	16	17	20	25	26
Lower Farm GP	5	2	7	10	7	6	11	12	9	5	6	7
Newbury Wharf	62	55	60	47	54	–	55	46	47	57	52	57
Remenham	29	30	13	–	–	–	–	–	–	11	31	53
Summerleaze GPs	26	51	43	–	–	–	–	–	–	49	–	12
Theale GPs	47	22	20	–	29	–	–	–	56	–	36	47
Windsor Esplanade	225	247	256	262	248	241	290	268	193	229	207	164

* includes young birds

The high count of 290 at Windsor Esplanade occurred on Jul 17 (DF). Away from the above locations, counts of 50+ were noted at Sonning with 57 in Apr and 54 at Bisham in Nov. **Breeding:** was confirmed at 25 sites involving 28 pairs, the largest brood being 10 at Burghfield GPs on Jul 19 (JA). The vulnerability of wildlife breeding within urban areas was clearly shown when a cob of a breeding pair at Whiteknights Lake Reading was killed by a dog. Later, the pen and 1 of the 3 cygnets also disappeared, leaving the remaining 2 to be taken into care by Swan Lifeline (PG).

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Now a scarce and declining passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

A party of 4 adults flew over twice, quite low and calling, at Lower Fm GP on Dec 30 (PD). This follows another sighting of a flock of four in Jan 2007.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Scarce winter visitor (Amber listed)

There were 2 reports at either end of the county, both on the very early date of Oct 3. One was seen flying high to the SE over Windsor Marina (CRe) whilst 4 were seen flying toward Woolhampton GPs from the south (GEW) and were then observed on the Rowney Predator Lake for 15 minutes before they continued their journey north (GF). Due to the recent disappearance of the local feral population (last seen in E.Berks in 2002), one may assume that both records refer to the early passage of wild birds.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Uncommon passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

The only records involved a party of 4 (3ad 1juv) of the Eurasian albifrons race that visited flood meadows near Aston late on Nov 4 (CDRH) that had departed by the following morning. Single individuals at Lower Fm GP on Nov 23 (RF) and Padworth Lane GP on Dec 27 (KEM) probably involved the long-term escapee.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common and widespread introduced resident

This species continues to increase being noted from 50 locations, 12 in W Berks, 20 in M Berks and 18 in E Berks. In several areas local populations have grown to such an extent that numbers are beginning to rival those of Canada Goose. The monthly maxima at the main localities are shown in the table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Borough Marsh	129	–	2	–	58	–	–	–	40	–	63	–
Eversley GPs	24	24	24	4	12	10	19	43	45	3	39	21
Windsor Great Park	3	45	46	56	52	34	81	235	180	61	173	5
N Maidenhead/Cookham*	85	20	34	–	35	70	134	–	185	256	–	47
Padworth Lane GP	150	152	76	–	–	62	53	–	321	–	–	–
Remenham	34	2	17	–	22	–	–	–	–	–	55	53
Theale/Pingewood GPs	88	112	100	10	–	–	–	112	–	–	148	–

* Includes records from Summerleaze GP, Switchback Road Cookham, White Place Farm and Cock Marsh, the population is wide ranging and visits all the sites mentioned

Unfortunately, as the table shows, only 2 sites gave monthly counts for the whole year, the lack of counts at the other localities is probably down more to under recording by observers than to a lack of birds! The high count of 321 at Padworth Lane GP occurred on Sep 27 (KEM) and is a Berkshire record. Away from the sites in the table, 86 were on the Jubilee River at Dorney W on Oct 15 (KPD) and a high count of 215 occurred at Wraysbury GPs on Dec 12 (CDRH).

Breeding: was reported from 12 locations involving 22 pairs with most sites holding 1–3 breeding pairs. However in Windsor Great Pk, a total of 8 pairs reared at least 30 young (DJB) and at Borough Marsh at least 4 pairs bred (DJB). On the R Thames at Caversham, a Greylag paired to a Barnacle Goose was escorting their 4 hybrid goslings on Jul 5 (PG).

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Common and widespread introduced resident

The monthly maxima at sites where counts were regular are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	13	36	69	–	–	–	–	–	108	96	30	30
Cookham to Summerleaze GP	60	–	22	–	–	–	–	–	445	141	38	91
Dinton Pastures / Lea Farm	200	130	13	–	56	–	–	–	–	28	10	35
Eversley GPs	200	297	140	36	62	188	240	940	258	84	250	234
Freeman's Marsh	–	–	2	2	14	53	54	14	–	40	130	60
Windsor Great Park	56	44	54	38	44	39	90	161	88	50	306	85
Lower Farm GP	80	38	47	11	55	10	29	92	20	37	80	150
R Thames, Reading – Pangbourne	157	38	41	–	–	–	–	–	170	79	62	203
Thatcham Discovery Centre	106	52	24	25	20	–	67	35	146	193	85	60
Windsor Esplanade	155	241	113	68	61	148	–	228	179	191	311	104

Away from the locations in the table there were some high counts elsewhere, the most impressive being 400 Crookham Common Pools, Aug 30 (DJB), 800–1000 Spencers Wood

on Sep 16 (NR), 600 Dorney W, Oct 15 (KPD) and 360 Borough Marsh, Nov 30 (ABT). **Breeding:** was only reported from 16 locations (poor observer coverage?), the largest number of goslings reported was 53 at Borough Marsh on May 29 (DJB).

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

The only record involved an individual of the dark bellied race B b bernicla briefly resting with gulls on QMR before flying off South-east on Nov 1 (CDRH). This is the worst year for this species since 1991 when there were no records.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common introduced resident in M and E Berks, more local in the west

Records came from 53 locations with most in M and E Berks. Birds were noted from 5 sites in W Berks however numbers remain small with 6 at Woolhampton GPs on Nov 15 (KEM) being the highest count. In the rest of the county, this species is now well established, the monthly maxima at the main sites being:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Borough Marsh	4	1	4	5*	25*	Nc	nc	13	65	14	3	nc
Cookham/N Maidenhead **	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	43	nc	104	171	88	32	nc
Eversley GPs	28	10	20	20*	24*	25*	65	92	138	134*	13*	38
Windsor Great Park	12	10	14	10*	13*	12*	5	5	2	6	6	3

* Young were part of the count

** Records from Cookham Rise, Summerleaze GP and Cock Marsh; nc = no count

The High count of 171 occurred at Cookham Rise on Sep 26 (BDC) and is a county record count. Elsewhere high numbers continued to be reported from Popes Fm near Hawthorn Hill with 60 on Jan 9–11 (DJB), 41 were at Dorney W on Sep 8 (BDC) and 98 were at Summerleaze GP on Sep 18 (CDRH). **Breeding:** was reported from 16 locations all within M and E Berks and involved 22 pairs with broods hatched from Jan to Oct. Records appear to show that breeding pairs were more successful than in most years i.e. of 9 hatched at Eversley GPs in mid Oct, 7 were still present in mid Dec.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor (Amber listed)

Records were received from 25 locations throughout the county. The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Borough Marsh / Charvil	6	9	7	9	5	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands / Slough SF	2	5	3	5	6	12	4	1	1	–	1	1
Windsor Great Park	4	4	9	14	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Lower Farm GPs	4	4	4	1	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	2
Padworth Lane GP	6	8	6	6	11*	7*	6*	–	–	–	–	3
Pingewood GPs	2	4	9	5	4	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Queen Mother Res	5	2	7	5	1	4	4	7	–	–	–	–
Woolhampton GPs	1	2	5	5	2	1	–	–	–	–	1	3
The other 17 sites	1	2	13	19	10	10*	3	–	–	–	1	2
Monthly max. totals	30	40	60	69	45	39	18	8	1	–	3	12

* Includes young birds

Jan–Jun: as the table shows, Shelducks were at their most common during this period. The high count of 14 in Windsor Great Pk occurred on Apr 13 (DJB) whilst the 12 at Slough SF occurred on Jun 27 (KPD). **Breeding:** breeding pairs were located at Padworth Lane GP with a brood of 10 on May 29 of which 4 fledged (KEM et al) and a brood of 5 at Crookham Common Pools on Jun 6 (GK) but not reported subsequently. The apparent lack of breeding success continues the poor run of breeding years with numbers averaging just over 2 successful pairs annually since 2003. **Jul–Oct:** nearly all records during this time were of juveniles, the adults having already left the county. By Aug only Slough SF (1 juv on Aug 12 CDRH) and QMR held birds. QMR held birds all month, numbers peaking on Aug 7 when 7 juvs were present (CDRH). The only Sep record involved 1 at Dorney W on Sep 4 (BAJC). Nov–Dec: after a blank October, the first 2nd winter record involved 1 at Dorney W on Nov 10 (BDC) which remained into Dec. Further Nov records occurred on Nov 23 when single birds were seen at Dinton Pastures CP (SAG; CD) and Woolhampton GP (MFW). In December single males arrived at Padworth Lane and Woolhampton GPs on Dec 27 (KEM); numbers at these sites then fluctuated between 1–3 birds and it is probable that these records represent the same birds, 2 drakes and a female. A pair also arrived at Lower Fm GP on Dec 28 (KEM) the male remaining into 2009 while singles were noted at Moadlands GP and Windsor Park.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Localised but increasing introduced resident

Mandarins were recorded from 57 locations in Mid and E Berks but only 4 in W Berks. The table shows the monthly status of the species in 2008 according to records received.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	8	7	19	23	17	12	7	5	4	2	5	6
Minimum number of birds	84	51	57	59	68	80	44	18	7	36	43	41

The two main locations for numbers were Whiteknights Park Lake in Reading with Peak

counts of 32 on Jan 2, 26 Feb 10 and 20 Nov 28 (PG) whilst in Windsor Great Pk, 36 were present on Jan 27 (DJB), 35 on Oct 3 (CDRH) and 27 on Dec 14 (CDRH). **Breeding:** was confirmed at 14 locations, 6 in M Berks and 9 in E Berks, with at least 26 broods being noted. This species is now firmly established within the Thames Valley however numbers remain low within the Kennet Valley W of Theale, the most westerly record involved a drake at Lower Fm GP on May 5 (MO).

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope*

A locally common winter visitor and rare summer visitor, has bred (Amber listed)

Records were received from 28 locations throughout the county with some of the more regular sites holding lower numbers than those of 2007. The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	275	100	36	–	–	–	–	–	107	152	408	356
Dinton Pastures CP / Lea Fm GP	59	210	120	2	–	–	–	–	6	16	18	78
Eversley GPs	418	278	100	3	–	–	–	5	116	105	176	268
Lower Farm GP	177	53	31	–	–	–	–	–	11	13	45	94
Theale GPs	70	92	70	1	–	–	–	1	48	17	98	44
Twyford GPs	–	17	40	–	–	–	–	–	4	2	87	90
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	8	5	8	2	2	1	3	4	8	6	3	7
Number of birds	185	105	254	5	4	1	10	8	221	96	106	176

The high counts of 418 at Eversley GPs occurred on Jan 27 (JMC) and the 408 at Burghfield GPs occurring on Nov 23 (JA). Away from the main sites, counts in excess of 100 were made at Bearwood Lake with 111 on Jan 2 (DJB), 130 on floods near Arborfield on Mar 19 (DJB) and 125 at Heron Lakes, Wraysbury GPs on Sep 24 (CDRH). Although birds could be encountered at many sites in March, birds quickly departed so that only 11 birds from 5 locations were reported in April. May records consisted of pairs noted at Charvil on May 8 and Horton Fields Pit on May 16 (CDRH). Apart from an injured drake that summered in the Horton/ Colnbrook area (PMC; CDRH) no other birds were noted until Jul 10 when a moulting female appeared at Wraysbury GPs (CDRH). A party of 8 birds in eclipse were located at Woolhampton GPs on Jul 24 (KEM) and 14 birds from 6 sites were recorded in August before the main return passage began in Sep.

AMERICAN WIGEON *Anas americana*

Rare vagrant

An adult male located at Lower Fm GP on Nov 19 (KEM et al) remained to winter, being seen into 2009. This is only the 3rd fully acceptable record for Berks although there were 6 reports from Nov 1985 to Oct 1988. However only the first record of 4 at Thatcham and Theale GPs in the winter of 1985–86 and a female/imm at Thatcham and Theale GPs in Nov 1987 have been accepted by the BBRC; other records were either thought to have been escapes or were not submitted to the BBRC. Note that records of this species are no longer assessed by the BBRC.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

A common winter visitor, uncommon summer resident which breeds in small numbers (Amber listed)

Records were received from 38 locations throughout the county. The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	22	18	2	4	5	–	–	–	14	6	4	16
Burghfield GPs	195	119	35	–	–	–	–	–	36	35	215	290
Dinton Pastures / Lea Fm	109	15	16	6	6	15	4	9	–	24	27	18
Dorney Wetlands / Slough SF	23	8	5	12	9	17	7	11	4	34	18	42
Eversley GPs	142	67	13	13	9	13	4	1	5	29	52	162
Windsor Great Park	47	47	30	12	14	29	18	43	50	152	171	133
Lower Farm GP	120	34	15	9	7	11	15	13	15	32	46	66
Theale GPs	205	105	17	–	–	7	–	–	48	–	111	181
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	7	6	8	5	9	5	4	4	5	2	5	7
Maximum number of birds	260	49	90	31	32	30	53	73	47	9	86	168

When one looks at the records received (as shown in the table), it is clear that like many of our wildfowl species, the Gadwall is under recorded! Now only a few of our observers count wildfowl on a monthly basis, thus for many of our top wildfowl sites, the monthly status through the year of our commoner species is often incomplete. Hopefully this can be rectified in the future. The high count in the table, 290 at Burghfield GPs occurred on Dec 14 (WEBS).

Breeding: was confirmed at 8 sites involving females with broods of 8 at Hungerford Marsh Jun 2 (RF), 11 Lea Fm GP Jun 14 (FJC), 5 and 8 at Lavell's Lake Jun 23 (FJC), 8 Slough SF Jun 26 (KPD), 7 Lower Fm June 26 (NC) and a second brood of 5 on Jul 5 (JA), 4 Theale Main GP Jun 28 (RCr), 2 Burghfield Mill GP Jul 4 (RCr) and 8 Pingewood GPs on Jul 4 (RCr).

COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor, rare in summer though occasionally breeds (Amber listed)

Birds were reported from 35 locations throughout the county. Numbers were down on 2007 with fewer counts exceeding 50 birds. The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	43	3	8	12	–	–	–	–	21	20	41	32
Dinton Pastures CP	32	100	37	11	–	–	4	15	30	30	65	91
Dorney Wetlands	50	48	11	7	–	–	–	3	8	46	18	64
Eversley GPs	77	39	26	7	1	–	2	11	35	26	23	28
Windsor Great Park	24	18	12	4	–	–	–	–	6	122	42	42
Lower Farm GP	52	30	8	3	1	–	–	6	8	12	30	50
Pingewood GPs	40	–	50	14	–	3	2	5	5	12	39	63
Wraysbury GPs	15	7	–	–	2	–	–	2	–	–	70	63
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	10	6	8	4	1	2	1	8	3	0	7	6
Number of birds	117	56	137	21	2	13	1	19	38	0	46	317

The high count of 122 in Windsor Great Pk occurred on Oct 19 (DJB). Away from the main sites, the highest counts reported were 60 at Home Fm Avington on Jan 17 (RGS) and 77 at Burghfield Mill GP on Dec 12 (MFW). The highest count of the year was c200 on floods at Arborfield on Dec 17 (DJS). With most first winter birds departing by the end of April, the only May records involved a male at Lower Fm GP (SAG) and a pair at Wraysbury GPs (CDRH) on May 4 that may possibly be the same pair at Horton GPs on May 11–14 (CDRH) and 1 at Eversley GPs (MGLR). Possible early return passage occurred in June when 9 visited Woolhampton GPs on Jun 7 (JA; KEM) followed by 3 at Pingewood GPs on Jun 10 (KEM) and 4 at Borough Marsh also on Jun 10 with 2 still present on Jun 13 (ABT). There followed the usual scattering of July records before passage began to increase in Aug. Overall, 2008 was a fairly poor year for Teal in Berks, the changes in habitat or land use to some of this species former Berks strongholds (e.g. Twyford GPs and Theale GPs) may result in lower numbers wintering in the county in future years.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common and widespread resident and winter visitor (Amber listed)

The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	42	30	49	–	–	–	–	–	28	52	68	28
Dinton Pastures CP	90	65	34	–	30	–	–	–	30	175	102	75
Eversley GPs	58	45	48	–	64	37	–	100	38	38	51	86
Freeman's Marsh	–	–	12	35	47	34	46	5	19	–	4	–
Windsor Great Park	23	69	24	17	26	28	18	60	56	95	35	24
Jubilee River	249	128	114	–	–	–	20	–	170	102	155	114
Lower Farm GP	40	15	7	13	34	14	14	70	50	43	50	60
Thatcham Discovery Centre	148	91	89	91	39	–	163	86	106	107	106	104

Away from the sites in the table, high counts included 105 at Odney Common, Cookham on Sep 13 (BDC) and 300 at Home Fm, Avington on Nov 25 (RGS). **Breeding:** as is normal for such a familiar species most observers do not record breeding, so the total of 30 broods from 17 locations is surely just the tip of the iceberg!

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

Records were received from 10 locations throughout Berks and involved 36 birds. **First winter:** birds were reported from 7 locations involving 21 birds. One of the 2007 wintering drakes remained at Lower Fm GP until Jan 14 (MO); another drake was reported from Eversley GPs on Jan 6 (RJG) and was followed by a pair there on Jan 26 (BMA). At Lavell's Lake a female was reported on Jan 14 (IDP) and at Burghfield GPs, 1 was reported on Jan 13 (WEBS) and 3 (2m 1f) were present there on Feb 24 (JA). A pair at QMR on Feb 14 (CDRH) was unusual for this site and a female visited Woolhampton GPs on Feb 18 (GEW). What may have been the QMR pair was then located at Windsor Great Pk on Feb 24 and remained until Mar 9 (DJB). Finally a party of 7 birds flew east over Lower Fm GP on Mar 15 (IW; JL). **Spring:** a drake on the R Kennet at Wigmore Lane Theale on May 9 (RCr) is only the sixth May record for Berks and the first since 1997.

Autumn/Second winter: two eclipse drakes were located at Eversley GPs on Aug 24 (RM), both remaining to Aug 30 then 1 to Sep 8 (BMA). There were no further records until mid Nov when a small influx took place. A female took up temporary residence in the Lea Fm / Lavell's Lake area from Nov 14 (FJC) to Dec 5 (PBT), other individual females/immatures visited Burghfield Mill GP on Nov 15 (MFW), Lower Fm GP Nov 21–22 (ADB et al) and Burghfield GPs (KEM) and QMR (CDRH) on Nov 27. This influx continued into December with a female at Moatlands GP on Dec 6 (JA), 3 including 1 drake at Burnthouse Lane GP on Dec 17 (KEM), 1f Eversley GPs (MJT) and 1 drake Moatlands GP (ABT; KEM) on Dec 20 and finally 1 drake at Lower Fm GP on Dec 28 (NC).

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor, has bred (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

With up to 21 birds reported from 10 sites, 2008 was the best year for this species since the record year of 1999 when at least 38 birds visited the county. **Spring:** passage began later than usual, the first being 2 drakes on Braywick Park Cut from Apr 18–23 (CTr et al). These were followed by a pair on Crookham Common Pools on Apr 20–21 (GK et al), a drake (possibly the Crookham drake) on Lower Fm GP on Apr 22 (ABT; RAl), a drake Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood GPs on Apr 23–26 (KEM) and a pair flushed from a pond at Braywood House, Fifield on Apr 26 (SA). There were no further records until May 15 when what may have been the same drake was seen at Padworth Lane GP and Burnthouse Lane (KEM) and then seen intermittently at the latter site to May 29 when it was joined by a second drake (PD; KEM). **Autumn:** records began with 1 at Burghfield Mill GP on Aug 7 (RCr) which was followed by a juv at Hosehill Lake on Aug 31 (KEM; RCr), a female and juv at Wraysbury GPs from Sep 6 to Oct 7 (CDRH), 1 juv Burghfield Mill GP on Sep 7 (KEM), 1 eclipse drake, Lower Fm GP on Sep 12–14 (CDRH et al), 1 female Heron Lakes Wraysbury on Sep 29 (CDRH) and finally 1 with Teal in Windsor Great Pk on Oct 3 (CDRH). **Second winter:** an eclipse drake was located at Lower Fm GP on Dec 14 (MFW et al) and is the first December record since the wintering 1st winter drake of 1987–88 that visited both Hosehill Lake and Slough SF in Dec 1987 before being relocated at Wraysbury GPs in Jan 1988.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Locally common winter visitor and passage migrant, scarce in summer though occasionally breeds (Amber listed)

Records were received from 32 locations throughout the county, the monthly maxima at the main sites is shown in the table. The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	25	16	25	–	–	–	–	–	36	10	7	7
Dinton Pastures/ Lea Fm	22	8	28	16	–	–	4	7	28	14	6	8
Dorney Wetlands/ SSF	19	2	1	16	3	2	2	16	39	35	52	39
Eversley GPs	94	183	146	32	1	–	–	3	4	17	29	17
Windsor Great Park	15	2	8	11	3	2	–	3	11	30	13	7
Lower Farm GPs	54	50	37	15	6	1	–	8	20	19	30	41
Moatlands GPs (MGP 1&2)	10	236	79	9	–	–	8	–	36	–	32	58
Thatcham Discovery Centre	13	12	14	8	–	–	–	15	45	12	13	20
Theale GPs	8	71	66	–	–	–	–	10	25	–	18	27

Twyford GPs	–	–	45	–	–	–	12	4	–	2	6	30
Whiteknights Park Lake	19	4	8	9	–	–	–	–	–	13	35	51
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	9	4	6	5	4	2	1	6	4	3	3	5
Number of birds	99	16	28	12	9	9	1	19	32	38	51	193

First winter: There were some impressive counts made during this period, the highest being 183 at Eversley GPs on Feb 9 (JMC) and 236 at Moatlands GPs on Feb 17 (JA). The latter count (166 on Burghfield Mill GP and 70 on Moatlands Main GP) is the highest count ever recorded in M Berks and is only bettered by counts from the extreme east of the county at QMR and Wraysbury GPs. **Spring/Summer:** during the period from May to July, birds were reported from 14 locations and included 7 at Borough Marsh on Jun 9 (ABT). However these higher than usual numbers for the period did not lead to any breeding records and it is thought that the higher counts in July probably refer to returning migrants. **Autumn/Second winter:** passage became more evident in Aug and Sep, but compared to the first winter, numbers were low. The highest counts occurred in Dec when 75 were noted on Burghfield GPs on Dec 7 (JA) and 80 were found on Orlitts Lakes on Dec 29 (CDRH).

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Scarce visitor of presumed feral origin, first breeding record

Records were received from 9 locations, 1 in W Berks and 4 in both Mid and E Berks. **First winter:** began with a drake at Burghfield GPs on Jan 3–4 (KEM; FJC et al). At Theale GPs the 3 (2m1f) from 2007 were seen again, this time on Wigmore Lane GP, on Jan 5 (MFW; KEM). One was reported from Wraysbury GPs on Jan 13 (WEBS) and the only Feb report came from Eversley GPs, a drake on Feb 21 (MGLR). In March a pair was noted on Theale Main GP on Mar 8 (KEM; MFW) before relocating to Wigmore Lane GP the nest day (WEBS), where they remained into the Spring. In the east, a female was located on Horton GP on Mar 24 (CDRH). **Spring/Summer:** the Wigmore Lane pair was seen again on Apr 4 (RCr) and the drake on May 3 (KEM). There were no subsequent site records until Jun 28 when RCr discovered a fem with 3 chicks – which were still present on Jul 13 (RCr). This constitutes the first known breeding record for this species in Berks. **Autumn:** 2, an eclipse drake and a fem were on Summerleaze GP on Aug 27 (CDRH). A fem then appeared at Padworth Lane GP on Aug 28 (KEM) and further west, 2 were found at Lower Fm GP on Sep 6 (IW; JL; NC). Two juv/fems were on Wigmore Lane GP on Sep 7 (KEM) whilst back at Lower Fm GP an eclipse drake took up temporary residence from Sep 18 (MJT) to Oct 17 (MO), often visiting the adjacent trout lake. **Second winter:** an imm/fem visited Wigmore Lane GP on Oct 31 (KEM) and was reported again on Nov 12 (WEBS). There were no further records until December when 8 (7drakes 1fem) were on Hosehill Lake on Dec 4 (RHS) and on the adjacent Theale Main GP, a drake could be seen on Dec 5–6 (KEM) with 4 (3 drakes) there on Dec 10 (KEM). The last records of the year were further east with 1 at Twyford GPs on Dec 20 (MFW) and 3 drakes on Heron Lakes, Wraysbury on Dec 26 (CDRH).

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, scarce in summer though occasionally breeds (Amber listed)

The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	337	73	8	–	–	1	1	–	100	120	112	118
Burghfield GPs	47	67	50	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	113	142
Dinton Pastures CP	60	55	11	–	1	–	–	–	1	5	5	8
Dorney Wetlands	50	60	27	–	–	–	–	–	–	33	–	72
Eversley GPs	73	33	26	1	2	1	2	4	41	29	33	38
Windsor Great Park	47	38	20	4	4	10	55	69	15	–	2	8
Lower Farm GP	61	21	8	2	4	7	9	18	11	16	25	23
Moatlands GP	126	154	–	1	–	–	2	7	97	114	190	182
Thatcham Discovery Centre	74	50	29	4	–	–	–	–	–	10	24	30
Theale GPs	93	74	42	–	–	–	–	–	9	–	42	81
Woolhampton GPs	5	7	–	1	1	–	1	10	–	–	15	32
Wraysbury GPs	100	30	14	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	100
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	6	3	2	0	2	2	0	2	3	1	3	4
Number of birds	56	28	14	0	2	4	0	8	51	6	12	56

The high count of 337 at Bray GPs occurred on Jan 1 (WAS). Away from the main sites most counts ranged from 1 to 30 birds, however 32 were present at Aldermaston GP on Jan 16 (JPM) and 44 were noted at Old Slade GP on Sep 11 (CDRH). Summer: as usual there was a scattering of records throughout the summer months and once again Windsor Great Pk showed how important this area is for this species with high counts of 55 on Jul 27 and 69 on Aug 10 (DJB). Observers should be aware that returning birds first arrive in Windsor Great Pk in late June and juveniles which have been reared elsewhere are often present with the first of the returning birds, so a full winged June/July juvenile at a Berkshire site is not always indicative of local breeding! **Breeding:** for the first time since 1998, Pochards were confirmed as breeding in Berkshire when a duck with 3 ducklings was located at Lower Fm GP on Jun 14 (SAG).

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Rare winter visitor

The 2007 female remained at Wigmore Lane GP, Theale to Jan 5 (MO), but there were no further records of “wild” birds during the year. The escaped male that has been present intermittently on the Jubilee River since Dec 2005 was seen regularly at Dorney W throughout the first winter to Mar 22 (MFW) with further isolated reports coming on Aug 10 (KPD) and Dec 4 (BDC).

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Common resident, numbers increasing in winter (Amber listed)

Monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GP	294	105	51	47	12	–	6	102	232	366	187	350
Burghfield GPs	237	318	214	–	–	–	–	–	73	232	243	356
Burghfield Mill GP	–	275	–	–	–	–	–	–	580	–	696	702
Dinton Pastures CP	194	120	106	12	4	–	–	–	–	99	117	62
Eversley GPs	268	284	287	40	72	83	40	–	63	36	103	160
Windsor Great Pk	36	54	37	42	23	23	19	14	5	3	1	7
Lower Farm GP	51	30	40	46	21	12	14	16	22	10	21	25
Queen Mother Res	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	23	235	80	40	–
Thatcham Discovery Centre	54	25	17	30	17	5	12	39	29	18	25	28
Theale GPs	592	398	174	–	–	–	–	–	100	–	672	787
Wraysbury GPs	450	115	71	85	–	7	–	–	–	–	–	550

The high counts at Burghfield Mill and Theale GPs occurred on Dec 6 (JA) and Dec 14 (WEBS). **Breeding:** was reported from 9 locations which is lower than expected (under recorded?). The highest count of broods was 4 involving 22 ducklings at Padworth Lane GPs on Aug 19 (KEM).

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red listed)

There were 12 records involving 13 birds in 2008 (2 of which were birds first seen in 2007). Most records came from the extreme east of the county or from the south Reading GP complexes; only 3 came from elsewhere. **First winter:** the 2007 wintering drakes at Wigmore Lane GP and Burghfield GPs remained throughout the winter, the Wigmore Lane bird was last seen on Mar 9 (WEBS) and the Burghfield bird on Mar 8 (MFW). Both birds were seen together at Burghfield GPs on Feb 25 (KEM). The first new bird of the year, a f/w drake, was located at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP on Feb 17 (MFW), remaining to Feb 27 (FJC). An ad drake appeared on the Rowneys Predator Lake, Woolhampton GPs on Mar 25 (KGW) and remained until Apr 13 (KEM; MFW). **Second winter:** there was an influx in early Nov which began with an ad drake at Hosehill Lake (MFW) and a juv at Wraysbury Village Pit (CDRH) both on Nov 1. An ad fem then visited Burghfield Mill GP on Nov 3 (RJB) and on Nov 4 another ad fem arrived at QMR (CDRH). The last Mid Berks record was a drake (possibly the Hosehill bird) that was present at Burghfield GPs on Nov 5–7 (KEM). In the east, apart from the individuals already mentioned, another juv arrived at QMR on Nov 9, then a f/w drake appeared at Wraysbury GPs on Nov 15. Two, another f/w drake and a f/w fem were located at Wraysbury on Nov 25 and all 6 birds remained to the year's end – being noted at Wraysbury GPs, Horton GPs and QMR (CDRH).

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

Very rare vagrant 2 records

The second record for Berks, an ad drake was located at Wraysbury GPs on Oct 5 (CDRH). However it soon disappeared before being relocated at QMR on Oct 8 (CDRH) where

it remained until Oct 15 (FJC). Record accepted by the BBRC (Brit Birds 103: 569); photographs suggest this bird was possibly the same individual that had spent the previous winter at Draycote Res, Warwickshire (see article on p. 12).

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Rare winter visitor

A juv that briefly visited the Village Pit, Wraysbury GPs on Nov 30 (CDRH) was the 18th county record and the first since a female at the same venue in 1999.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red listed)

After no reports from the first half of the year, there were 4 records during Jul to Nov. A drake was located at QMR on Jul 19 (CDRH) and another drake was present there during the afternoon of Sep 22 (CDRH). A fem/imm was then found at Moatlands GP at 11.30hrs and was joined by a further 5 fem/imms an hour later on Nov 3 (RJB et al) with 2 remaining there on Nov 4 (KEM). Finally a flock of 15, all fem/imms visited QMR on Nov 18 (CDRH). These birds formed a tightly packed group whilst on the water, reminiscent of the flock of 30 drakes that visited Theale GPs in 1993, before departing to the west at 16.55hrs.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Rare winter visitor (Amber listed)

There were 2 records in 2008, the first since 2002, and both coming from QMR. In the first winter a fem type was present on the reservoir on Jan 15–16 (CDRH et al). In the second winter a fem/juv was found on Dec 8 and later spent its time associating with a Ruddy Duck, before departing overnight (CDRH).

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Locally common winter visitor (Amber listed)

Records were received from 14 locations, 3 in W Berks, 5 in Mid Berks and 6 in E Berks, the monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	12	13	10	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	5	10
Dinton Pastures CP	21	26	8	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	12
Eversley GPs	3	4	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	4
Moatlands GPs	5	11	15	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	5
Queen Mother Res	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	4
Theale GPs	9	8	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	4
Twyford GPs	–	3	1	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Wraysbury GPs	22	49	9	1	–	–	–	–	–	4	22	26
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	2	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	3
Number of birds	2	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	5

First winter: the highest counts came from Dinton Pastures, where Sandford Lake is the favoured site with 26 on Feb 2 (PJC) and Wraysbury GPs with 49 there also on Feb 2 (CDRH). Numbers appear to have diminished from some of the county's more regular sites with none of the gravel pit complexes of Theale, Moatlands and Burghfield being able to muster more than 15 birds in either winter period. With the onset of spring, birds quickly departed the county and could only be found at 4 locations in April, the latest being a female at Wraysbury GPs on Apr 18 (CDRH). **Second winter:** the first returning birds appeared on Oct 26 with 2 at Wraysbury GPs (CDRH). Although more widespread than in the first winter, numbers were predictably lower, the only counts to exceed 20 being at Wraysbury GPs with 22 on Nov 29–30 (CDRH; MFW) and 26 on Dec 23 (CDRH). This species remains scarce in W Berks with only 4 individuals being reported from 3 sites.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

Uncommon winter visitor but regular at preferred sites (Amber listed)

Birds were reported from 5 locations, 3 in E Berks and 2 in Mid Berks. **First winter:** as usual, Wraysbury GPs was the main site within the county, and here a total of at least 8 birds (4 ad drakes, 1 part eclipse drake, 1 f/w drake, 2 r/h) were identified during Jan, the highest day count being 7 on Jan 5 (CDRH). Numbers had dwindled to 5 birds (inc 3 drakes) in Feb and the last sighting was of a pair on Mar 8 (CDRH). Elsewhere 1r/h was noted on Bray GP on Jan 5–6 (WAS) and an ad drake was seen intermittently there from Jan 12 (BDC) to Feb 7 (PR). Three r/hs visited Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP on Jan 22 (JB et al) and 1 r/h at Twyford GPs on Mar 3 (CDRH) was the only record from what is usually a very regular site. **Second winter:** the first returning bird was a rh at Wraysbury GPs on Nov 26 (PNe) and by Dec 26 the site total had risen to 4 including 3 drakes (CDRH). Nearby at QMR, an eclipse drake was with the group of Scaup on Dec 12 (CDRH) and finally an ad drake was present at Bray GP on Dec 29 (DJB).

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Uncommon winter visitor but regular at preferred sites, has summered

Records came from 15 locations, evenly spread throughout the county. The monthly status is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eversley GPs	33	46	31	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	19	67
Lower Farm GP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	3	3
Moatlands GP	3	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
Queen Mother Res	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	3
Theale GPs	3	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
Wraysbury GPs	12	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	9	6
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	1	0	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	3	5
Number of birds	1	0	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	5	7

First winter: Eversley GPs, as usual, held the bulk of the Berks wintering population, peaking at 46 on Feb 17 (RD). Elsewhere the 3 wintering r/hs that commuted between Theale and Moatlands GPs in 2007 continued to do so to Mar 26 (RCr). At Wraysbury GPs,

12 were present on the BA pit on Jan 3 (CDRH), 4 were on Heath Lake on Mar 9 (IT) while pairs were reported from QMR, Horton and Woolhampton GPs. The latest record involved a rh at Eversley GPs on Apr 8 (MGM). **Second winter:** 3 redheads arrived at Crookham Common Pools on Oct 17 (GF) before transferring to Lower Fm GP on Oct 18, where they remained to winter. November sightings included the first returnees to the main sites of Eversley and Wraysbury GPs, numbers peaking at the later site on Nov 19 when 9 were present (CDRH). One to three were seen intermittently at Padworth Lane GP from Nov 25 (KEM) to the years end and may have been the Lower Fm birds! Singles were reported from Lower Denford, Moatlands GP (Nov-Dec), QMR and Thatcham DCL (Nov-Dec). In December at least 4 were present at Theale GPs with peaks of 3rh at Hosehill Lake on Dec 4 (RHS) and a pair on Theale Main GP the next day (KEM). Single birds were also reported from Woolhampton GPs, Twyford GPs and Tilehurst whilst at Eversley GPs numbers peaked at 67 towards the end of the month (MGLR)

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Uncommon and declining introduced resident and winter visitor

Records were received from 10 locations, 2 in W Berks, 2 in M Berks and 6 in E Berks. The monthly status is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Windsor Great Park	3	1	5	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Lower Farm GPs	11	9	5	2	2	-	2	3	-	3	9	6
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	3
Number of birds	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	8	9

The high count of 11 at Lower Fm GP occurred on Jan 1 (IW); elsewhere the highest count involved 7 at Thatcham DCL on Dec 10 (GJS). All other records away from the main sites were of 1-2 birds at Dorney W, Wraysbury GPs, Summerlease GP and QMR (1 drake on Dec 8; CDRH). However 3 were noted at Moatlands GP on Jan 1 (JA) and Sep 8 (RCr), Horton GPs on Jan 14 (WAS) and Dinton Pastures CP on Nov 1 (FJC). **Breeding:** although not confirmed this year, display was observed in Windsor Great Pk on Mar 30 and Apr 20 (DJB). An isolated report from Lower Fm of 3 juveniles on Aug 9 (NC; IW; JL) could point to local breeding! Compared to recent years, 2008 was a poor one – the on-going scheme to eradicate the Ruddy Duck from Britain is beginning to take effect on the small Berkshire population and it may only be a short space of time before it disappears totally from the county.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Locally common introduced resident in suitable habitat, numbers inflated in autumn at certain sites for shooting

Records were received from 73 locations, 34 in W Berks, 11 in Mid Berks and 28 in E Berks. As is now the case, most records refer to 1-5 birds and only 8 sites provided counts of more than 10 birds. The maximum counts at these sites were: 12 Walbury Hill Apr 16 (RCr), 86 Remenham Sep 10 (DJB), 33 Cookham Sep 19 (BDC), 89 Compton Downs, Sep 26 (DJB), 12 Switchback Rd, Maidenhead Oct 14 (BDC), 12 Englefield Nov 12 (RCr), 40 Great Shefford Dec 19 (JLe) and 36 Windsor Great Pk on Dec 17 (WAN). These counts all

came from areas where numbers are bred for shooting and it is likely that all of the above counts include birds that have been bred in captivity. Breeding was only confirmed at Temple where a family party was seen on Aug 27 (CDRH) elsewhere 2 juvs near breeding pens in Windsor Great Pk on Jul 20 (DJB) and a single juv at White Chute, Lambourn on Aug 29 (JLe) probably refer to captive bred individuals

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Localised and declining resident (Red Listed)

With records coming from only 25 locations, 16 in W Berks, 2 Mid Berks and 7 E Berks, this represents a huge drop in sites from 2007 when over 40 were identified. The maximum counts at the main sites are shown in the table

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bury/Cow Down, Wilsley	16	2	–	7	8	–	–	9	9	–	10	6
Compton Downs	16	–	–	–	3	2	2	1	27	–	–	–
Englefield	6	3	2	4	2	1	1	20	4	40	11	–
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	4	8	0	2	5	3	2	3	2	1	0	4
Number of birds	12	20	0	4	13	6	2	9	8	7	0	36

High counts mentioned in the table include 16 at Cow Down Jan 2 (RD_r), 16 Compton Downs Jan 5 (DJB) and 20 Englefield Aug 30 (RC_r). Elsewhere, 13 were located at Hodcott Down Dec 8 (ABT) and 9 were at North Heath on Dec 30 (IW). In E Berks the highest count was 6 at Summerleaze GP on Aug 15 (WAS) and in the extreme east of the county just a single male was seen at QMR, associating with a group of Pheasants, on Aug 31 (CDRH). **Breeding:** was confirmed on the Compton Downs where of 3 coveys totalling 27 birds located on Sep 26, 1 covey held 4 juvs and another held 2 (DJB). Breeding also took place at Englefield when RC_r was informed by the head Game Keeper that 3 broods of 8, 10 and 15 had fledged and the total estate population may number 40–50 wild birds, hence the Oct total in the table. The State of the UK's Birds 2008 show that from 1970 to 2007 the Grey Partridge has declined by a staggering 89%! Without specialist help, one has to wonder how much longer we will be able to see this species in our countryside. It is clear that agri-environment measures designed to help our declining farmland species have had only limited success and that many species including the Grey Partridge continue to decline.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

An uncommon summer visitor in variable numbers, most regular on the Downs (Schedule 1 and Red Listed)

2008 was a poor year with records coming from 3 or possibly 4 downland areas plus 1 E Berks location. The first record involved 1 singing on the Compton Downs on Jun 10 (DJB). Two were heard there on Jul 19 (MJT) and Jul 30 (PBT) and possibly a different bird was heard on Aug 9 (ABT). Two birds were heard on the Lambourn Downs on Jun 12 (JPB), Jun 14 (ABT) and 1 there Jun 23 (JPB). Nearby 2 sang on Wellbottom Down on Jul 22 (CDRH). Away from the Downs, 1 sang in fields by Canon Court, Maidenhead on Jun 15–16 (LJF). With 1997 being the last real 'Quail Year' it seems that this is yet another migrant species that has declined in status within Berkshire in recent years. Let us hope this trend is only temporary!

COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Widespread and locally abundant introduced resident in rural areas with numbers inflated by large numbers released for shooting

Apart from 2 breeding records at sites where this species is scarce (Whiteknights Park; PG and QMR; CDRH), there were no other records of note.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

Rare winter visitor (Amber listed)

The only record this year involved an individual that circled QMR three times between 11.18hrs and 11.24hrs before departing to the north on Apr 19 (CDRH). A diver species that flew over Amwell GPs, Herts later that day was possibly this bird. This is the first record of a bird arriving in April for Berks and it is the second consecutive year for single records, both being seen by lone observers.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce winter visitor (Amber listed)

With 4 birds recorded during the year, 2008 equals the record year of 2006; however, 1 bird had been present since 2007. **First winter:** the juv that arrived at QMR on Nov 12 2007 remained into 2008 and was seen regularly through January into mid Feb (occasionally visiting Staines Res in Surrey) when it was moulting into 1st yr plumage (MO). Reports then became less regular, as the bird spent more time elsewhere, and after mid-March it was only seen on Apr 28 and May 1 (CDRH). **Second winter:** 2 juvs briefly visited Theale Main GP on Nov 9 (MFW). Subsequently a similar pattern emerged to that of the first winter – with a juv arriving at QMR on Nov 10 (CDRH) and then being seen regularly until the end of the year (MO). A juv was also present at Staines Res, Surrey but timings of each overlapped on several occasions, confirming that they were different birds.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common and widespread resident (Amber listed)

Records were received from 38 locations throughout the county. The monthly maximum counts at the most regularly counted sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	3	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	2	4	–
Dinton Pastures CP	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	4	3	6	2
Eversley GPs	2	4	3	4	3	3	2	6	6	2	1	3
Freeman's Marsh	2	–	3	5	–	4	4	3	–	1	3	–
Jubilee River	5	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	10	31	19
Lower Farm GPs	6	5	15	15	12	10	11	16	10	9	22	5
Padworth Lane GP	7	13	26	–	–	6	21	33	37	41	32	23

The high count of 41 at Padworth Lane GP occurred on Oct 1 (KEM). **Breeding:** was confirmed at Wood Pond, Windsor Forest with 1pr 3y on May 10 (DJB), Oval Pond, Padworth with 1ad 3y on Jun 22 (PD), Lieper Pond, Windsor Great Park with 1pr with 3 juvs and 3chicks on Jul 13 (MHu), Padworth Lane GP where a pair with 2 juvs on Jul 13

(PD) and a brood of 3 chicks on Aug 28 (KEM), Cranemoor Lake Englefield where a count of 21 including juvs and 5 chicks was made on Jul 29 (RCr), Eversley GPs with 1–2 pairs breeding (MGLR), 1 pair bred near Woodside (WAN) and Lower Fm GP with at least 4 broods hatched during the summer (MO).

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Common resident and winter visitor to Berkshires larger water bodies

Records were received from 37 locations in 2008. The maximum monthly counts at the most regularly counted sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	23	10	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	15	28	30
Burghfield GPs	25	38	37	6	6	–	–	26	34	40	37	33
Dinton Pastures CP	17	8	5	2	6	4	5	5	3	4	7	6
Eversley GPs	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	9	14	9	18	12
Windsor Great Pk	2	6	8	8	16	18	18	17	12	11	2	0
Jubilee River	10	13	25	8	–	–	9	–	12	–	17	13
Lower Farm GP	3	4	2	2	4	6	4	8	13	15	14	4
Queen Mother Res	–	88	20	–	–	–	–	–	31	67	14	–
Summerleaze GP	5	3	4	–	–	–	–	2	–	9	4	6
Thatcham Discovery Centre	4	4	4	4	10	–	7	10	9	9	10	7
Theale GPs	44	41	16	–	–	–	–	14	50	–	57	49
Twyford GPs	–	1	2	2	2	–	2	4	6	7	16	8
Woolhampton GPs	5	–	8	–	12	11	40	55	–	20	–	–
Wraysbury GPs	18	21	21	4	–	11	–	–	–	–	–	14

The count of 88 at QMR occurred on Feb 8 (WEBS). Away from the main sites, 46 were present on Moatlands Main GP on Sep 28 (JA). **Breeding:** was reported from 21 sites and involved at least 43 pairs. The most active sites included Woolhampton GPs where up to 5 pairs bred (KEM), Windsor Great Pk where 7 pairs bred (DJB) and Hosehill Lake where 7 pairs had young on Aug 22 (BU). A pair at Great Pond, Sunninghill Park, successfully reared 5 young (DJB) and 3 pairs managed to rear young on the R Thames this year.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

Since 1997, when there were 4 records involving 8 birds, Slavonian Grebes have become a much rarer visitor to Berkshire with just 11 records in 10 years. Therefore 2 records, both in the 2nd winter, makes 2008 a better than average year; however there is just a very slight chance that these records refer to the same bird! A single bird was seen briefly at Searle's Lane GP, Burghfield on Nov 5 (KEM) and was followed by one at the nearby Burghfield Mill GP on Dec 14–15 (MFW et al) before moving to the adjacent Moatlands Main GP and remaining to the years end.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

A fairly average year with 6 records involving 7 birds. **First winter:** 1 on Searle's Lane GP, Burghfield GPs from Jan 2 (D W Smith) to Jan 19 (KEM). **Autumn/Second winter:** 2 located at QMR on Aug 30 (ABT et al) were followed by single birds at Hosehill Lake, Sep 25 (BU), Theale Main GP on Oct 4 (BU) and Nov 7 (KEM) and finally 1 with Great Crested Grebes at QMR on Dec 14 (CDRH).

GANNET *Morus bassanus*

Rare visitor which has become more regular in recent years (Amber listed)

At Dinton Pastures, an ad was located by local fisherman D Fletcher on Sep 10 on White Swan Lake and remained long enough for several observers to see it, some having missed the previous Dinton Pastures record in 2004! This bird appeared fit and healthy and was even observed plunge diving (unsuccessfully) before departing WNW at 16.53hrs. It represents the 25th record for the county.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

*Common winter visitor, uncommon but increasing in summer; the continental race *P c sinensis* now breeds (Amber Listed)*

The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GP	15	9	7	1	-	-	-	-	5	11	16	11
Burghfield GPs	36	43	19	-	-	-	-	-	14	57	57	44
Dinton Pastures CP	16	15	11	2	4	-	-	-	8	11	3	10
Eversley GPs	20	22	24	4	4	1	-	2	4	13	24	31
Lower Farm GPs	66	33	20	5	5	2	15	22	20	42	25	19
Queen Mother Res	-	230	30	-	-	-	-	-	17	16	32	-
Theale GPs	74	41	9	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	35	20
Woolhampton GPs	-	8	-	8	6	-	10	15	24	21	25	18
Wraysbury GPs	149	83	86	4	-	4	-	144	260	-	-	10

The high count of 230 at QMR occurred on Feb 8 (WEBS); the 260 at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 4 (CDRH) were all on the BA pit. Away from the main sites, 40 were on Lea Fm GP on Oct 2 (AR). **Breeding:** at the only Berkshire breeding site (race *sinensis*), 27 occupied nests were counted on Mar 26 (JPM). Young were seen but no actual counts were received.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

The juv first reported at QMR on Dec 11 2007 remained to winter throughout Jan and was last seen on Feb 11 (CDRH). There were no further records until the autumn when 2 were reported from QMR on Aug 20 (ABT) with 1 juv still present there on Aug 26 (MMc) and Aug 28 (CDRH). At the same time, 2 juvs were located at Motland GP on Aug 31 (MFW; ABT), remaining to Sep 1 (MO).

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but increasing winter visitor (Schedule 1 and Red listed)

With just 2 records, 2008 is the worst year since 1992 (1 record). **First winter:** an ad was located in Lavell's Lake reedbed on Jan 23 (FJC) and remained until Feb 15 (BAJC). **Second winter:** the only report was of a bird flushed from reeds at Dorney W on Dec 3 (H&J Ward).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Uncommon but increasing visitor (Amber listed)

Records were received from 41 locations, 16 in W Berks, 15 in Mid Berks and 10 in E Berks. Most records involve 1–5 birds, the monthly maximum day counts at the main sites are shown in the table. This species is highly mobile so totals in the table should be only used as an estimate of the monthly population.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures/Lea Fm GP	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	1
Freeman's Marsh	5	1	1	2	–	–	4	5	3	6	6	6
Jubilee River	–	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	–
Lower Farm GP	2	–	2	–	–	–	1	1	2	1	5	4
Pingewood GPs	2	3	4	5	4	–	6	4	3	–	–	–
Wraysbury GPs	5	1	–	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	2	1
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	10	11	11	1	4	0	6	9	1	6	11	11
Number of birds	20	21	23	1	7	0	9	10	1	8	21	19

The high counts of 6 at Freeman's Marsh occurred on Oct 25 (SAG) with similar counts made at this site on several dates in Nov and Dec (MO). Six (all adults) were also noted at Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood GPs on Jul 30 (RJB). Away from the main sites 6 were reported from Donnington GC on Feb 23 (SAG) and 5 were seen on several occasions at Bagnor CBs in Feb, Nov and Dec (IW; JL). **Breeding:** there were no confirmed records this year, however breeding was possible at one Mid Berks site where anglers reported 1–2 pairs with 3 young (per JA). Evidence supporting this report comes from a record of 5 birds of which 1 poss 3 were juvs at Burnthouse Lane GP on Jul 24 (PBT). Further east a juv flew north over QMR on Jul 26 (CDRH).

2006 three just-fledged juvs (still with head down) were observed in E Berks in early July and, in view of subsequent events at this site, represent the first proof of successful breeding in the county (CDRH).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Locally common resident and winter visitor in small numbers

The monthly totals for sites where Grey Herons are regularly counted are shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eversley GPs	3	3	3	4	4	2	1	3	1	3	3	7
Windsor Great Park	6	6	4	4	5	5	3	3	2	1	1	1
Lower Farm GP	7	2	1	2	5	2	2	5	4	3	4	5

Due to the species' familiarity throughout the county, Grey Herons are under recorded, thus relatively few records of interest were obtained. The highest counts away from breeding sites were 12 circling Denford Trout Farm on Mar 24 (RGS) and 9 together at Burnthouse Lane GP on Apr 27 (KEM). **Breeding:** was reported from 7 locations: at Twyford GPs, there were 8 occupied nests on Jan 12 and at least 18 birds were in attendance on Apr 14 (MHT) however information on breeding success was not available. Thirteen nests were occupied at Burghfield GPs in Jan and had increased to 19 in March. A total of 46 young were counted there on May 3 (JA). Up to 4 nests were occupied at Donnington on Mar 1 (IW; JL) and 3 pairs reared 7 young (SAG). There were 4–5 nests at Aldermaston GP on Apr 2 (JPM), 3 occupied nests were noted at Heath Lake on Apr 13 (DJS), for the first time a pair bred at Eversley GPs rearing 2 young (MGLR) and the species was reported to have bred at Cranmoor Lake Englefield (TABR). Finally a pair attempted to breed in a reedbed in Windsor Great Pk. The female was observed sitting tight in late Mar- early Apr, but the nest had been built in an exposed position and higher water levels during April damaged the structure and caused its abandonment by late Apr (DJB).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Common re-introduced resident (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Red Kites continue to be the most recorded species in the county with over 1350 records in 2008. Areas where regular counts have been made are shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aston/Remenham	10	11	7	4	22	3	nc	12	4	4	11	4
Cold Harbour/Knowl Hill	5	2	3	nc	7	6	3	nc	6	6	6	3
Combe area	3	6	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	nc	1
Compton Downs	4	nc	1	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	4	4	1	5
Cookham area	16	28	9	15	26	33	nc	23	38	46	nc	38
Dinton Pastures CP	3	5	5	1	5	4	4	1	3	3	1	1
Twyford	3	7	10	4	6	11	3	3	4	8	7	6
Woodley	3	2	8	4	4	4	5	1	1	2	5	nc
Woolhampton	1	1	9	1	4	5	3	5	2	2	1	1
Woolley Down	67	70	51	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	54	nc	72

As is shown in the table, there were some exceptional counts made at a number of sites. The Woolley Down roost continues to attract large numbers, the first winter high of 70 occurred there on Feb 17 whilst the second winter high of 72 occurred on Dec 26 (GDS). Another roost nearby at Sparrows Cope attracted 65 on Dec 5 and 50 on Dec 26 (GDS) thus a combined total of 122 birds roosted in the area on the latter date. Further east, large numbers continue to be seen in the Cookham area, 46 together with others seen distantly on Oct 6 (BDC) being a record for the area. Away from the main sites, noteworthy counts include 13 together over Warren Row on Jan 21 (DJB), 35 roosting at Ashamstead on Feb 26 (T Culley), 18 attracted to hay-making at Pinkneys Green on Jul 17 (BR) and 14 Cold Harbour Fm, Hungerford on Sep 29 (ABT). **Breeding:** as has been the case since Red Kites were re-introduced into the Chilterns, confirmed breeding records have been few! This may in some part be due to the lack of observers visiting key areas to look for this species in the breeding season. Display was noted at 10 sites and more substantive evidence came from 5 locations where birds were either thought to have bred or juveniles were seen. The only

definite breeding record came from the SW of the county where a pair was attending a single young at the nest on Jun 9 (RGS).

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant (Amber listed)

Seven records in 2008 is slightly down on the 2 previous years, emulating the 7 records of 2005. **Spring:** at QMR an early male was seen flying high over Horton at 15.45hrs on Mar 15 (CDRH) heading SE towards Staines Res, Surrey (where it was seen by R Innes 5 minutes later). The following month a fem type was seen at Horton GPs, flying in from the south, circling then departing north over QMR on Apr 21 (CDRH). Finally a fem flew east over Windsor Forest from near the New Lodge on May 29 (CDRH). **Autumn:** began with 2 records at Lower Fm on consecutive days: an imm flew SW over the GP on Aug 24 (NC) and another imm showing missing primaries on the right wing moved through in a westerly direction on Aug 25 (NC). A juv was then located quartering the SE edge of QMR on Sep 23 (ABT) before departing to the west and lastly a moulting ad male flew SE over QMR towards Runnymede on Oct 15 (FJC et al).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red listed)

A better year for records with 6 birds (all ringtails) reported from 5 locations. **First winter:** the Cow/Bury Down individual first seen on Dec 20 2007 remained until Jan 12 (MO) and 1 was seen twice hunting roosting Meadow Pipits in the same field at Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Jan 16 and 21 (CDRH). A ringtail was seen in the Burghfield GP area, W of Reading Railway Station, on Feb 22 (Russell Wynn). **Autumn/Second winter:** 1 was reported flying over Theale Main GP on Sep 21 (TABR). One was then reported from Bury Down on Nov 24 (RD) and what is presumed to be the same bird was seen again on Dec 12 (ABT). Finally a ringtail was seen at Eversley GPs on Dec 29–30th (A Hutchinson et al per MGLR).

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

The only records this year came from the usual area on the county boundary between Apr 26 (BTB; ABT; MFW) and Jun 2 (PBT).

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare visitor

There were two acceptable records in 2008. The first involved an imm that was seen twice over Wood Pond, Windsor Forest on Mar 7 (DJB). The second was an adult female that was seen well at Withymead NR at South Stoke in Oxfordshire before flying off South across the R. Thames and passing into Berkshire at Streatley on Dec 12th (B & J Shaw).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common and widespread resident

Sparrowhawks were reported from throughout the county and continues to maintain its status as one of our more common birds of prey. **Breeding:** like all of our breeding raptors, reports confirming breeding were few and only came from 3 locations. These being Eling, a family party on Jul 4 (JLe), Southcote, 2 calling juvs on Aug 8 (RM) and Gorrick Wood, 1 calling juv on Aug 10 (RM). Probable breeding occurred in the Cookham area when independent juvs were seen in Aug and Sep (BDC) and a pair was observed mating and nest building at South Lake Reading in Apr-May (MSFW), unfortunately the outcome is not known. Adults carrying food was noted at Donnington, Greenham Common, Woodside and Sonning and display was observed at a further 8 locations. Sparrowhawks are known to take a wide variety of prey species and this year 10 species were identified including 7 species from SPA's Twyford garden alone! The most unusual being a Wood Pigeon taken by an adult male in Woodley on Mar 1 (DNTR) plus an Acrocephalus warbler (Reed or Sedge) taken at Lavell's Lake on Sep 1 (PBT). Lastly a juv male caught and ringed at Crookham Common on Oct 30 was then re-trapped on Dec 19 (JPM).

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common and widespread resident and passage migrant

The high visibility of this species as it soars over our countryside has led to nearly 1000 records being submitted to the 2008 report. Recorded throughout the county, this species rivals Red Kite for the title of Berkshires most common raptor. The monthly high counts from the most regularly reported areas are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill	3	3	3	–	4	3	–	–	–	8	11	7
Combe area	11	6	8	14	3	3	1	4	3	2	–	–
Compton to Streatley	2	3	10	–	9	–	–	–	3	–	–	4
Cookham area	19	4	–	2	3	1	–	–	9	7	–	3
Dinton Pastures/ Lea Fm	2	4	6	6	4	3	2	–	11	3	1	1
Greenham Common area	6	–	5	5	–	2	2	2	2	5	–	1
Pingewood GPs	–	1	2	4	2	–	1	1	10	5	2	2
Windsor Great Park	2	7	2	1	1	3	4	1	5	1	5	3
Woolhampton GPs	3	3	2	8	6	5	2	4	6	5	–	–

The high count of 19 at Cookham occurred on Jan 27 and included 15 birds passing over heading west (BDC). Other counts from the table include 10 Lough Down Streatley, Mar 18 (GP), 14 Combe Bottom, Apr 5 (IW; JL), 10 Burnthouse Lane, Sep 13 (KEM), 11 Lea Fm, Sep 14 (FJC) and 11 Cold Harbour, Nov 1 (DJB). Away from the tabled sites, 11 were seen on the downs between Woolley and Farnborough, Jan 27 (GDS), 8 at Englefield on Mar 19 (RJB) and Sep 21 (RCr), 8 North Heath, Apr 5 (MJT), 9 Wasing Fm, May 9 (DJB), 9 Widbrook Common, Sep 28 (BDC) and 9 Woolley Park on Dec 14 (GDS). **Breeding:** occupied nests were located at Warren Row (BDC), Waltham St Lawrence and the Compton Downs (DJB). Family groups were found in Windsor Great Park on Jul 13 (MHu) and Moor Copse on Jul 22 (PG). Calling juveniles, indicative of breeding were heard near Chaddleworth and Brightwalton (GDS), more independent juvs were noted at 5

further sites and would suggest breeding nearby. Earlier in the year, display was noted at an additional 15 sites. Throughout the year there was a steady trickle of reports of birds at the extreme ends of the colour spectrum for this species. These very dark or very pale individuals still cause confusion with the inexperienced or unwary often being misidentified as either Honey Buzzard or Rough-legged Buzzard...

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant (Amber listed)

With 17 records involving at least 15–16 birds, 2008 was one of the best ever years for this species. **Spring:** began with a series of records, probably involving 2 birds for Apr 5 with 1 flying NW over Eversley GPs (IHB per MGLR), 1 flying N over Lavell's Lake (BTB) and 1 flying W over Bury Down (CRE). Another bird visited Eversley GPs on Apr 7 (CRG) whilst a radio-tagged female (named Logie) was tracked through the county— though never actually seen – first roosting at Virginia Water on Apr 13, before moving NW over Windsor Great Park and Maidenhead, then moving into Oxon before re-entering Berks near Streatley and remaining in the Lower Basildon/Beale Pk area before roosting on the Oxon side of the R Thames on Apr 14.; Logie remained in this area until 09.00hrs on Apr 15 when she resumed her migration. One circled Horton GPs before departing to the W along the Jubilee River on Apr 28 (CDRH). After no records in May, the last of the spring was located over Theale Main GP on Jun 10 (KEM) and Jun 11 (JAN). **Autumn:** records began with 1 at Windsor Marina (PNe) and 1 heading south over Barkham (DJS) both on Aug 11. Another satellite-tracked individual (named Beatrice) was in the Binfield area on Aug 18–19 and probably accounts for the sighting of 1 flying W over the Downshire GC, Bracknell on Aug 19 (T Rogers). One flying over Woolhampton GPs on Aug 29 (GEW) was followed by singles heading S-SE over QMR on Sep 4 and 8 (CDRH). There were no further records until late Sep when 1 flew WSW over Woodley on Sep 23 (FJC), followed by a juv over Theale Main GP and Moatlands GP on Sep 28 (ABT; JA) and finally 1 at Eversley GPs on Oct 8 (M G Philpott per MGLR).

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Common and widespread resident (Amber listed)

Widely reported throughout the county although, apart from breeding records, no count exceeded 4 birds. **Breeding:** was confirmed at 19 locations involving 20 pairs and was probable at a further 2 sites. Only Eversley GPs reported more than 1 pair with 2 pairs rearing only 3 juvs (MGLR). Ringing in the west of the county resulted in 14 young ringed from 4 nests, of which 3 were in nest boxes and the other in a barn (JPM), no reported brood was larger than 4.

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus*

Rare vagrant

The near record (second to 1992) spring influx into Britain with over 60 birds reported during May and June presented Berkshire with 2 records, including the first multiple occurrences for the county. On May 30 a f/s male and fem were found feeding over Woolhampton GPs just before dusk (SNP; KGW et al). The following day both birds were still present but from Jun 1 only the male was seen until its departure on Jun 5 (MO). Therefore it was something of a surprise for KEM when he relocated the fem on Jun 7 (had it been overlooked in the recent poor weather?). Another fem was spotted above the A4 at Colnbrook, at 18.30hrs on

May 31; it then moved to adjacent horse-pastures where it lingered until 18.50hrs and then flew north over the M4, into Bucks, and was lost to view (CDRH). These constitute the 9th and 10th records for Berks.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant which has increased in recent years (Amber listed)

The best year since 2003, with 23 records from 15 locations involving at least 23 birds. **First winter:** a male was reported from Bury/Cow Down on Jan 3 (ABT) and what was probably the same bird on Jan 6 (JRe). A fem flew N over the Compton Downs on Jan 5 (ABT; DJB) and a male was located at Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill on Jan 7 (PNe et al) remaining to Feb 28 (RCW). A fem/imm was hunting over fields at North Hidden Fm, Hungerford on Feb 2 (DJB) and another fem/imm was located on the perimeter fence of White Waltham Airfield on Feb 8 (CDRH). What was possibly the January Bury/Cow Down male was seen again, attacking linnets on Feb 10 (I D Paine). One was reported from Mount Hill, Bagnor on Feb 27 (JL) and a male caught a Meadow Pipit at Borough Marsh on Mar 23 (ABT). Finally 1 visited Woolhampton GP on Mar 30 (MJD). **Second winter:** an early male put in a rare and brief appearance at Dinton Pastures where it flew S over Black Swan Lake on Sep 2 (ADB). This was followed by a fem/imm on the Compton Downs on Sep 8 (ABT) and a male at Bury/Cow Down on Sep 20 (CRe). Passage continued into October and was most evident early in the month when 1 (prob fem) flew SW over Ruscombe on Oct 2 (PBT), 1 fem chasing Meadow Pipits over Englefield on Oct 3 (RCr), 1 resting on the central tower in QMR on Oct 4 (CDRH; ABT) and later a male at Borough Marsh on Oct 20 (ABT). There were no confirmed records for Nov but an influx occurred in Dec with 1 fem/imm Bray GP on Dec 3 (CDRH), a fem Greenham Common, Dec 6 (NC), 2 (1 catching a Starling) on Bury/Cow Down, Dec 7 (MJD), 1 ad fem Cold Harbour on Dec 10 (CDRH), 1 male Bray GP, Dec 15 (BDC), 1 on the Lambourn Downs, Dec 15 (DJS) and a fem/imm there on Dec 17 (CDRH) – may refer to the same bird – and a male, possibly one of the Dec 7 birds flew north over Bury/Cow Down on Dec 29 (RJB).

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Schedule 1)

The recent history of the Hobby in Berkshire is one of continued increase, both as a passage migrant and summer resident, however confirmed breeding records remain low and in most years are exclusive to E Berks! In 2008 birds were reported from 104 locations, 17 in W Berks, 38 in M Berks and 49 in E Berks. The monthly status is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	0	0	0	22	33	35	26	32	34	1	0	0
Minimum number of birds	0	0	0	34	85	70	39	63	63	2	0	0

Apr-Jun: first arrivals involved 1 at Frogmill Hurley on Apr 10 (SJF; FMF) and 1 nearby at Borough Marsh on Apr 14 (ABT). The main arrival began from Apr 20–21 when at least 10 birds were reported, and continued into May. The highest April count of 4 at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 26–27 (KEM) was a prelude to the events at this site in May. Whilst no other site could muster any more than 4 birds during most of May, numbers at Woolhampton GPs were steadily increasing with 9 on May 6 (AEDH), 16 on May 10 (MJT) and peaking at a county record count of 20 on May 13 (AEDH). Numbers remained high through the rest of the month with 16 on May 27 (KEM) and into June with 12 on Jun 2 (NC) and Jun 5

(LRB). Elsewhere 8+ were located hawking over Wraysbury GPs on May 25 (CDRH) and 7 were present at Moatlands GPs on May 31 (JA). **Jul-Sep:** although the frequency of records remained high, counts were much lower than the spring totals with monthly highs of 5 taking Caddis Flies over QMR on Jul 21 (CDRH) and 8 at Saches Island, Cookham on both Aug 28 and Sep 13 (BDC). **Breeding:** only confirmed in E Berks and involved 3 pairs rearing 5 young (PJC; LFo). Breeding was probable at a further 3 E Berks locations where pairs were present at regular breeding sites during May-June but not checked later (DJB) and was possible at another 9 sites where juvs were seen, sometimes accompanied by adults. However it is likely that some of these records refer to migrants. The only Oct records this year came from QMR where 2 were present on Oct 4-5 (CDRH) and 1 on Oct 11 (MFW).

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon but increasing visitor throughout the year (Schedule 1)

Records were received from 56 locations throughout the county; the monthly site status is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites where birds recorded	17	16	15	8	6	9	6	7	12	11	13	12

The table shows that although records are more frequent in the winter months, spring and summer records are still increasing and the total of 9 locations recording birds in June is very encouraging. Most records involve 1-2 birds visiting isolated locations, but there are some sites that hold birds almost all year. These include the long-time regular sites of Theale GPs, where up to 5 different birds were reported during the year, including the only count of 3 (2m 1f) on Feb 2 (KEM) and a pair taking up residence in the 2nd winter and QMR where a pair resided throughout Jan-Jun and again from Sep to Dec (plus an imm female in Oct) and appear to have taken to the nest box provided for them. A pair has also taken up residence on the empty 3M building in Bracknell and remained all year. Other regular sites include the BT Building in Newbury and the Thames Tower in Reading. Some locations are also favoured for hunting, and these include Dinton Pastures CP, Eversley GPs, Pingewood GPs, Lower Fm GP and Wraysbury GPs. It is impossible to know how many Peregrines were present in Berks during 2008 as many records away from the main sites are probably of resident birds undertaking hunting forays into surrounding areas. When Prey has been mentioned in reports it seems that our birds prefer medium sized bird species such as pigeons Lapwings, Golden Plovers and Corvids, and one was watched briefly chasing a Hobby at Horton GPs on Sep 27 (CDRH)

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Uncommon winter visitor (often overlooked) and a rare summer resident

Records were received from 26 locations, 12 in W Berks, 8 in M Berks and 6 in E Berks. The monthly status is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	18	13	11	4	3	0	2	2	4	9	11	12
Minimum number of birds	38	26	16	6	3	0	2	2	6	14	14	20

First winter: January was easily the most productive month for records and although numbers reported from the county's premier site, Thatcham Marsh, were low, other locations stepped in to fill the breach! There were 4 at Moatlands GPs on Jan 1 (JA), 7 at Dorney W on Jan 23 (BDC) and 5 in Windsor Great Pk on Jan 27 (DJB). Constant checking of the reedbeds at Lavell's Lake revealed 4 on Feb 7 (FJC) while numbers increased to 5 at Moatlands GPs on Feb 17th (JA). By late Feb many sites had already been vacated, however birds were still present at 11 sites in March, their squealing pig calls betraying their presence. **Spring:** 4 sites reported birds in April, all singles except for 3 at Thatcham Marsh on Apr 13 (IW; JL). In May birds were largely confined to the counties larger reedbeds with 1 at Thatcham Marsh on May 3 (IW; JL), 1 Kintbury Cressbeds, May 4 (RGS) and 1 giving alarm calls in Windsor Great Pk on May 11 (DJB), there were no records for June! **Autumn:** there were 2 records for Jul 13, 1 at Linear Pk Calcot (RCr) and 1 at Thatcham Marsh (IW; JL). These 2 sites were also the hosts to all 3 August records. As birds became more vocal, reports increased, this was especially apparent from late September. **Second winter:** October began with the only reported juv of the year, a migrant along with 2 others heard at Horton GP on Oct 2 (CDRH). During this period, birds were reported widely but numbers only exceeded 2 on 3 occasions, the above record and 3 at Woolhampton GPs on Dec 7 (KEM) and 4 at Lavell's Lake on Dec 28th (AR).

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

Rare vagrant, formally bred (Schedule 1 and Red listed)

A singing male took up residence in a large wheat field at Hurst from about Jun 6 to at least Jun 27 (MO). It was reported to the County Recorder by the sleep-deprived residents on Jun 17 and was then heard daily (nightly) until Jun 27, but there were few – if any – genuine sightings, due to the height of the crop. The reason for the bird's protracted stay may have been the condition of the cereal crop which had clearly not been treated with herbicide, the thick growth of weeds also supporting good numbers of Skylark and Pheasant. This is the second record in 4 years (after a gap of 22 years).

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Common and widespread resident, found almost anywhere there is open water

Monthly maxima at main sites where counts are regular were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Freemen's Marsh	-	12	13	12	18	16	11	11	9	-	7	-
Lower Farm GP	17	14	22	13	11	7	11	15	12	12	18	10
Thatcham Discovery Centre	31	24	16	10	4	-	5	12	21	24	21	24

The high count of 31 at Thatcham DCL occurred on Jan 1 (GJS). Elsewhere 16 were counted along the Green Way in Maidenhead on Jan 2 (DF), 34 on the Maidenhead Ditch south of Cookham on Jan 8 (WAS), 35 at Eversley GPs in Feb (MGLR), 20 were at Whiteknights Lake on Feb 4 (LBM) and 27 were along the Jubilee River on Nov 10 (BDC). **Breeding:** as expected for such a common and familiar species, Moorhens are generally ignored by the majority of observers, thus breeding was reported from only 10 sites, involving 18 broods.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Common resident and winter visitor

The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	404	154	178	–	–	–	–	–	128	157	196	254
Dinton Pastures CP	143	113	44	–	–	–	–	–	–	19	80	61
Eversley GPs	215	109	89	–	46	46	30	–	115	104	208	232
Windsor Great Park	50	54	57	50	75	107	130	213	91	30	40	40
Lower Farm GP	86	92	65	48	43	52	78	108	80	128	138	132
Summerleaze GPs	79	37	61	–	–	–	–	–	–	223	138	148
Thatcham Discovery Centre	36	17	14	12	11	–	29	22	32	34	32	41
Theale GPs	906	309	89	–	–	–	–	–	358	120*	985	1000

*Count not complete

The high count of 1000 at Theale GPs occurred on Dec 14 (RJB) and included 646 on Theale Main GP. Away from the sites in the table, 260 were counted on Wraysbury GPs on Jan 4 (DGC). Breeding was reported from many sites within the county, however this species is still under recorded, the largest breeding population reported was in Windsor Great Pk where at least 15 pairs bred (DJB) though chick mortality was high, probably due to predation by Pike. A leucistic individual first seen by CDRH at Wraysbury GPs in Nov 2007 remained into 2008, being reported on Jan 1 (DJB) and then intermittently to Mar 8 (CDRH). This bird also visited Windsor Great Pk on Mar 2 (DJB).

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Uncommon but regular passage migrant and occasional winter visitor (Amber listed)

Thirty two records involving 29 to 37 birds were received from 13 locations: 3 in W Berks and 5 each in Mid and E Berks. **First winter:** the only record during this period was 1 at QMR on Jan 30 (CDRH). **Spring/Summer:** the majority of records occurred during this period and began with singles at Theale Main GP on Mar 13 (RCr) and Padworth Lane GP, Mar 15 – 19 (KEM; RJB). There were 7 records in April: 1 Padworth Lane GP, Apr 6 (NR; MFW) and Apr 11 (KEM), 1 Crookham Common Pools Apr 9 (JPM), 1 Dorney W Apr 9 (KPD; WMo) and Apr 15 (DBe), 1 Moatlands GP Apr 12 (ADB; KEM), 1 Horton GP Apr 21 (CDRH), 1 Lower Fm GP also Apr 21 (MO) and 1 QMR Apr 30 (MMc). In May singles were noted at Summerleaze GP (A Gibbs) and Lea Fm GP (MJM) on May 2, QMR on May 3–4 (MMc CDRH), Hosehill Lake, May 9 (TABR) before 2 appeared at QMR on May 15 (CDRH). Further singles were noted at Eversley GPs (BMA) and Horton GP (CDRH) on May 18 and back at QMR on May 31 (CDRH). A series of June- early July records at 2 sites may possibly refer to just 2 birds and began with 1 at Borough Marsh on Jun 2–5 (ABT; CDRH) increasing to 2 on Jun 11, (CDRH), Jun 21 (HRN; ABT), Jun 28 (ABT) then 1, Jul 3–10 (CDRH). Meanwhile 2 were located at Lea Fm GP on Jun 11, being seen intermittently until Jul 4 (FJC). As the crow flies these 2 locations are just over 3 miles apart and both are close to the R Loddon. **Autumn:** an early bird at Hosehill Lake on Jul 9 (BU) was followed with 1 at Eversley GPs on Aug 4 (BMA), an adult in moult at QMR on Aug 16 (CDRH), 1 Woolhampton GP, Sep 4 (JPM), 1juv QMR, Sep 7 (MMC; CDRH) and finally 2 at Woolhampton GP on Sep 15 (JPM).

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Rare passage migrant (Amber listed)

There were 2 records involving 4 birds, all in the spring. The first record involved 2 initially swimming in the middle of Theale Main GP on Mar 31 (RCr et al) and 2 were located at Lea Fm GP on May 11 (DJ Barnes et al) that showed well all day and were not even disturbed by a low-flying Lancaster Bomber!

STONE CURLEW *Burhinus oedicanus*

Scarce and localised summer visitor, very rare away from breeding grounds (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Records were received from 2 downland areas in W Berks. At the first, an area where this species has only recently occurred, a pair was located on May 7 (DJB). At the traditional downland area, birds were first reported on Apr 5 (MFW). Records point to at least 6 pairs being present and breeding was confirmed from at least 2 territories (ABT; MJT; MFW). There were no reports of autumn flocks this year and the last record involved 2 on Sep 8 (ABT). Unfortunately the results of the annual RSPB survey were not available.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant, population levels fluctuate due to the amount of available habitat (Schedule 1)

Recorded from 16 locations throughout the county, the monthly maximum counts at the main sites are:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Crookham/Greenham Common	-	-	5	8	7	7	2	-	-	-	-	-
Eversley GPs	-	-	1	6	6	6	12	2	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	-	2	4	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Fm GP	-	-	2	3	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Pingewood GPs	-	-	5	7	6	9	9	1	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	2	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	-	-	-	5	6	2	3	1	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	14	12	7	7	1	-	-	-	-

Spring: the first returning birds arrived simultaneously on Mar 17 with 2 at Greenham Common (NC), 1 Eversley GPs (BMA) and 2 at Horton GPs (CDRH). Numbers increased to 5 at Greenham Common on Mar 26 (NC) and 4 pairs were present there on Apr 11 (JL) but these birds were under constant pressure from disturbance by human activities. Elsewhere, good numbers had taken up residence at both Eversley GPs (3 pairs during **Apr-Jun:** MGLR) and Pingewood GPs where 6–9 birds were present during Apr-Jun (MO). Away from the main sites, 6 were located at Field Fm GP on Apr 12 (KEM) and 6 were at Padworth Lane GP on several dates in May (KEM). **Breeding:** was attempted at 8 sites: at Bray GP a pair reared 3 young (KPD; WAS), 1 pair had 3 young (1 ringed) at Greenham Common on May 31 (IW; JL) and 2 small chicks were located there on Jul 13

(SAG), 2 pairs laid eggs at Horton GP but 1 nest that was close to working machinery was subsequently deserted. A fully fledged juv was present there on Jul 20 (CDRH). A bird was located on a nest at Field Fm, Calcot on May 3 (JA) and nearby at Theale GPs, 1 pair reared 1y (KEM). Pingewood GPs held 3 breeding pairs all hatching young but it is not clear how many fledged (KEM) and a pair reared at least 1 young at Woolhampton GPs (GEW; KEM). A reported 5 pairs attempted to breed at Eversley GPs with at least 5 young hatched (MGLR), however it is not clear if all of these birds were in Berks and records submitted to the Berks Database indicate that only 3 pairs may have been in Berks, 1 pair rearing 2 young (BMA). **Autumn:** passage began in July and was most evident at Eversley GPs where of 11 seen on Jul 12, 5 (2ad 3juv) were migrants. The following day 12 birds were present including 5 juvs from elsewhere (BMA). An adult visited Theale Main GP on Jul 29 (RCr) and in August single juvs were reported from Pingewood GPs on Aug 14–16 (KEM; PD), Eversley GP on Aug 21 (BMA) and finally at Hosehill Lake on Aug 23 (RCr)

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Uncommon passage migrant and now a declining summer visitor (Amber listed)

Birds were reported from 10 locations throughout the county. The monthly site totals are shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eversley GPs	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	4	2	–	–	–
Greenham Common	–	–	5	5	4	2	5	–	–	–	–	–
Horton GPs	–	–	2	2	23	3	2	–	–	–	–	–
Pingewood GPs	–	–	1	2	3	5	1	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	–	–	1	1	4	1	2	1	–	–	–	–
Number of birds	–	–	1	1	14	2	4	3	–	–	–	–

Spring: began with 1 at Greenham Common on Mar 5 (JL). Numbers at this site had increased to 5 on Mar 13 (NC) with birds favouring 2 distinct areas of the common. The first arrivals away from Greenham occurred on Mar 15 with 2 at Horton GP (CDRH) and 1 at Pingewood GPs (MFW; KEM). One briefly visited Dorney W on Mar 29 (WMo) whilst another migrant passed through Padworth Lane GP on Apr 13 (DJMi). By mid-April it was clear that the 3 main sites for the species were Greenham Common, where 1 was observed on a nest on Apr 21 (KEM), Horton GP, where a resident pair was joined by a third bird on Apr 13 (CDRH) and at Pingewood GPs where 2 were regular, increasing to 3 in May (PD) and 5 on Jun 13 (KEM). In May a passage of Tundra-type birds (arctic races including *Charadrius h. tundrae*) was reported from the east of the county: on May 13 a fem/1stw was located at QMR and nearby a male was found at Horton GP (CDRH). Then a flock of 19 birds of this race visited Horton GP on May 25, all departing in the afternoon with Dunlin (CDRH). A late bird (a rather tame male) was also at Horton on Jun 15 (CDRH). Other birds arriving in May included a long-staying pair at Lower Fm GP (IW; JL), 2 at Eversley GPs on May 15 (MGLR), 3 at Lea Fm GP on May 16 (FJC) and 4 at QMR on May 25 (MMc). **Breeding:** evidence of breeding came from 3 sites, however only Greenham Common reported young with 2 on May 10 (MJT) and 3 on Jul 16 (GJS) and Jul 27 (SAG). Elsewhere a pair laid 4 eggs at Horton GPs but young were never seen (CDRH) and a pair was observed mating at Pingewood GPs on Jun 6 (KEM).

Autumn: passage began in July with singles at QMR on Jul 9 & 14 and 2 on Aug 8 (CDRH). A juv appeared at Eversley GPs on Aug 17 and 3 ads were there on Aug 31, 2 remaining to Sep 1 and 1 to Sep 7 (BMA).

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Rare but possibly increasing passage migrant (Amber listed)

Bury Down near West Ilsley was the host for 3 records this year involving 5 or 6 birds. The first record involved a male which entertained many visiting observers on Apr 25 (ABT et al). Early the following day (Apr 26) a trip of 4 which probably included the previous day's male and 3 new females were seen early in the morning (RRK; BBB) but flew off to the NW and were not after 07.15hrs. Finally a fem was located on May 2 (Ms Deacon; Mr Horwood; ABT). This is the first year in modern times that there has been more than 1 record and these continue the run of spring records of recent years with 2006 being the only blank year since 2003.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Locally common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

Records were received from 44 locations, 18 in W and E Berks and 8 in Mid Berks. The monthly maximum counts where birds were regularly reported are shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Borough Marsh	540	1120	400	-	-	-	-	-	1	197	1470	850
Bury/Cow Down	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	33	20	150
Cold Harbour/ Woodlands Pk	-	175	600	-	-	-	-	-	-	136	100	100
Dorney Wetlands/ Slough SF	1000	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	242	32	230
Greenham Common	100	18	40	60	-	-	-	-	-	300	-	-
Lower Farm GP	200	70	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	250	200	44
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	6	11	3	3	-	-	-	1	3	5	11	8
Min. No. of birds	886	631	100	70	-	-	-	3	8	366	3191	618
Total number of birds reported	2756	4014	1147	130	-	-	-	3	10	1524	5013	1992

First winter: the most impressive counts all came from sites east of Reading where heavy rain had caused the R Thames to burst its banks in January thus creating ideals conditions at some sites (whilst others were completely submerged). Six hundred at Bray GP on Jan 21 (DJB) were probably birds displaced by the flooding of Dorney W and although high counts did come from this site, they were of birds circling overhead. The 2000+ seen on Feb 7 (DJB) appeared to land at Dorney Lake in Bucks. Borough Marsh near Wargrave became very attractive to this species and the count of 1120 there on Feb 26 (ABT) was, at the time a site record. As numbers declined during March, the trend was bucked somewhat at Cold Harbour where 300 on Mar 20 (PBT) had increased to c600 on Mar 30 (BDC). Birds were reported from 4 sites in April, 2 at Winterbourne on Apr 15 (JL) being the last. **Second winter:** 3 at Old Warren near Fawley on Aug 27 (ABT) were the first to return and

were followed by singles at 4 sites in Sep plus 6 on the Compton Downs on Sep 26–27 (DJB; ABT). As the season progressed, numbers increased and 15 sites recorded numbers in excess of 100 birds. Counts of 350 or more included the highest W Berks count of 1200 at Oare on Nov 6 (CDRH). There followed counts of 550 at Remenham on Nov 17 (DJB), 1470 Borough Marsh on Nov 20 (HRN), 350 Ruscombe on Nov 23 (MSFW), 424 Remenham Hill on Nov 29 (ABT) and 850 Borough Marsh on Dec 6 (ABT). Due to the close proximity of the latter 4 sites these records may to some extent, refer to the same birds.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Uncommon but regular passage migrant (Amber listed)

With just 2 records, both of single birds, 2008 has continued the run of poor years for this species. In the spring, 1 in partial summer plumage was located at Horton GPs on May 4 (CDRH). In the autumn 1 flew west over Lower Fm GP on Oct 19 (NC).

NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Locally common breeding resident, common winter visitor and passage migrant (Red listed)

The monthly maximum counts at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Borough Marsh	320	284	40	4	12	138	160	135	200	200	300	200
Dorney Wetlands	95	500	–	1	–	–	2	200	3	132	–	200
Eversley GPs	40	40	12	12	14	63	180	200	223	143	296	224
Lower Farm GP	300	50	25	20	16	26	100	130	130	150	100	100
Pingewood GPs	213	187	8	3	12	165	160	200	–	–	140	–

First winter: Lapwings were widely reported throughout the county during the period and 20 sites recorded flocks of 100 or more. High counts involved 500 at Bisham on Jan 1 (PBT) increasing to 1400 by Jan 17 (DJB), 730 Bray GP on Jan 2 (DJB), 800 Bucklebury on Jan 16 (RCr), 500+ Lea Fm GP on Jan 26 and 28 (AR; FJC) and c500 over Dorney W on Feb 7 (DJB). **Breeding:** evidence of breeding came from an encouraging 32 locations (especially as this species has just been elevated to the Red List). Display was noted at 7 sites, birds either on nests or believed to be breeding were found at a further 8 sites and a total of 30 pairs with young were reported from 17 locations, the most productive being Windsor Great Pk where at least 6 pairs were successful (DJB; KPD). These totals are the best for many years. **Autumn/Second winter:** flocking began in June and although widespread, numbers did not rival those of the 1st winter. Flocks of 100 or more were found at 16 sites, the highest counts being 316 on the Compton Downs on Sep 26 (DJB) and in November a small influx accounted for counts of 300 at Bucklebury on Nov 16 (DL), 250 at Remenham on Nov 17 (DJB), 296 Eversley GPs on Nov 18 (BMA) and up to 300 regularly at Borough Marsh from Nov 12 to Dec 4 (DJB; ABT).

KNOT *Calidris camutus*

Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor (Amber list)

For the third consecutive year there were 2 records. Both were autumn records from QMR and involved 34 birds. A summer plumaged adult was located in the evening of Jul 28 and

was still present at 06.30hrs on Jul 29 (CDRH). The second record involved a flock of 33 moving through QMR at 17.02hrs on Sep 7 (CDRH). These birds were all in either juvenile or winter plumage and were flying low over the water before rapidly gaining height and departing to the west. This is the second year running that a flock has been observed migrating over QMR (in 2007, 90 birds were seen flying SW on Aug 19 accompanied by 17 Bar-tailed Godwits).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

A very good year with 16 records involving 33 birds making 2008 one of the best ever years for this species **Spring:** passage was recorded from 4 sites with most records coming from QMR. At QMR the first record involved 1 on May 13, further records were 1 s/p May 21, 2 s/p May 25, 4 May 26 (CDRH), 8 May 27 (CDRH; ABT) and 6 s/p Jun 3 (CDRH). Elsewhere 1 was located at Eversley GPs on May 26 (R M Warden per MGLR), 1 Burnthouse Lane GP on May 29 (TABR) and 1 s/p at Horton GP on Jun 4 (CDRH). **Autumn:** all records came from QMR and began with a worn s/p adult on Jul 16, 1 s/p Aug 8, 1 w/p Aug 4, 1 Aug 5 (CDRH), 1 ad moulting into w/p on Sep 3 (L Matthews; CDRH), 2 (1ad 1juv) on Sep 4 and finally 1juv Sep 8 (CDRH)

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Scarce passage migrant, principally in autumn

With only 6 records this year, the recent run of poor showings of this species continues, the last year when there were more than 10 records was 2001. **Spring:** the only record, a summer plumaged ad, was located at Horton GP on May 13 and remained until May 14 (CDRH). **Autumn:** an ad was located on the Crookham Common Pools on Aug 9 (SAG). Two juvs were then present at Borough Marsh from Sep 10 to 13 (CDRH et al) and another juv appeared there on Sep 18–19 (MFW et al). The last records involved a juv at Eversley GPs from Oct 8 to 10 (BMA et al) and an unaged individual there on Oct 16 (P Boulton).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Fairly common passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor (Red listed)

Although there were no winter records, both migration periods were busy with a total of 54 records (30 in spring and 24 in autumn) involving up to 116 birds (84 in spring and 32 in autumn) from 11 locations throughout the county. **Spring:** 1 at Crookham Common (KEM) and Lower Fm GP (IW; JL) on Mar 1, probably relating to the same bird, was the first report of the year. Records then spanned the period from Mar 17 (1 QMR: CDRH) to May 31 (1 Eversley GPs: MGLR), usually involving 1–3 birds. Higher counts were 4 at Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood GPs on Apr 19 (MO), 5 QMR on Apr 27 (ABT) and 6 all in s/p at Horton GPs on May 25 (CDRH). What may have been easily the highest count came from Burghfield GPs when a flock of 40 small waders flew over on May 3, those that were identified being Dunlin (JA). **Autumn:** an early s/p adult passed through Eversley GPs on Jun 21 (BMA) and was followed by 3 singles at 2 sites in July. The bulk of autumn passage occurred at QMR with 4 s/p adults on Aug 2 (CDRH) a group of 5 were there on Aug 12 (WMO) and 4 juvs on Aug 15 (CDRH) being the peak counts. From late August, all records referred to single birds, the last of the year being seen at Eversley GPs (BMA) and Lower Fm GP (NC) on Nov 2 and at Borough Marsh on Nov 20–22 (HRN; ABT)

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Red listed)

With only 3 records, 2008 is the worst year since at least 1974 and possibly since 1932 and highlights the lack of good wader habitat that can be found within the county at this time.

Spring: the only record was of a white plumed male at Borough Marsh on Mar 15 (ABT).

Autumn: 1 was reported from the Thatcham area (probably Lower Fm GP) on Aug 29 (BJW) and 2 juvs showed well at Borough Marsh from Sep 13 (G Walshe) to Sep 20 (MO).

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Uncommon and localised winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

Records were received from 8 locations, 2 in W Berks and 3 in both Mid and E Berks, most records involving just 1–2 birds. **First winter:** recorded from 5 locations during this period, the year began with the year's highest count of 6 at Burnthouse Lane on Jan 1 (BTB). Two were also located on Greenham Common on Jan 1 and Jan 5 (NC) and Horton GPs on Jan 2 (CDRH). The next records involved single birds at Eversley GPs on Jan 19 (IHB) and Burnthouse Lane GP on Jan 26 (KEM). The only records in February came from Horton GPs with 4 records from Feb 12 to Feb 25 with a peak of 3 on Feb 18 (CDRH). March was slightly more productive with 1 at Decoy Heath on Mar 1 (MFW), 2 Horton GP on Mar 5 and 1 there Mar 24 (CDRH), 2 Greenham Common on Mar 13 and 1 there on Mar 17 and 23 (NC). The only April record involved 1 at Horton GP on Apr 10 (CDRH).

Second winter: 1 at Lavell's Lake on Sep 29 (FJC) was followed by singles at Horton GP on Oct 2 and 26 (CDRH), Greenham Common on Oct 3 (ABT) and Dorney W on Oct 22 (BDC). There were 3 at Horton GP on Nov 3, 1 there Nov 22 and 2 Nov 26 (CDRH), 1 was seen at Greenham Common on Nov 25 and 27 (AEDH) and Midgham held 1 on Nov 22 and Dec 30 (CDRH). Other December records involved singles at Decoy Heath on Dec 11 (A Coulson-Phillips per JLe), Eversley GP on Dec 27 (IHB), Lavell's Lake Dec 29 (A McMahon) and at Horton GP 1–2 were seen on 5 dates, with the last 2 on Dec 31 (CDRH).

COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Common but declining winter visitor and passage migrant, now scarce in summer and no longer breeds (Amber listed)

Records were received from 38 locations, 13 in W Berks, 16 in Mid Berks and 9 in E Berks. The monthly maximum counts at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP/Lea Fm GP	43	29	20	2	0	0	0	0	4	6	1	25
Dorney Wetlands	16	22	5	11	0	0	0	0	15	62	8	4
Eversley GPs	29	4	11	4	1	1	1	5	4	1	1	4
Lower Farm GPs	5	3	3	2	0	0	2	12	19	2	24	18
Padworth Lane GP	4	7	18	13	0	0	0	1	11	9	22	18
Pingewood GPs	12	17	7	10	0	0	1	1	5	10	5	20
Woolhampton GPs	2	7	4	6	0	0	0	0	3	2	15	9
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	10	11	5	6	1	0	1	2	6	4	7	11
Minimum number of birds	23	43	29	9	1	0	1	7	43	12	14	26

First winter/Spring: only 6 sites held more than 10 birds, the 43 reported on Jan 24 (FJC) from Lavell's Lake DPCP was possibly a records count for the site. Away from the main sites listed in the table, good numbers were discovered wintering near Ruscombe with 17 on Feb 1 and 21 on Mar 28 (DJB). Although still widespread in April, there were only 2 reports for May with singles at Crookham Common on May 13 (MJT) and Eversley GPs on May 17 (MGLR). This or another bird was seen again on Jun 7 (MGLR). **Autumn/Second winter:** return passage began in July with 1 over the R Thames near Bray on Jul 24 (KPD) and singles at Lower Fm GP (NC) and Burnthouse Lane, Pingewood GPs (KEM) on Jul 26. Numbers were slow to build up and it was Aug 24 before the first count to exceed 10 was reported (12 at Lower Fm GP: NC). The highest September count was 20 at Horton GP on Sep 23 (CDRH) and was followed by 62 at Dorney W on Oct 22 (BDC). This was the highest count of the year. Numbers remained reasonable throughout the rest of the winter period with the highest reported count being 25 at Lea Fm GP on Dec 7 (FJC). An unusual record involved 1 flushed from beside the Ridgeway at Bury Down on Dec 29 (RJB).

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Localised resident in small numbers which has shown signs of local declines, more widely reported in winter (Amber listed)

Reported from 47 locations, 21 in W Berks, 8 in M Berks and 22 in E Berks, of these, 24 localities recorded birds during the Apr-Jul breeding season. **First winter:** reported from 20 locations usually of single birds. Higher counts involved 3 Moor Copse on Jan 20 (JLe), 4-5 flying from Gorrick Woods towards Queens Mere at dusk on Feb 3 (RJG), 2 flushed at Bowdown Wood on Feb 17 (RRK) and 2 flushed at Ashley Hill on Mar 9 (ABT). **Spring/Summer:** as already mentioned, birds were reported from 24 locations during the period however records that indicated possible breeding (roding males) came from only 20 sites. Records from the other 4 sites lacked details! Sites where 1-2 roding birds were reported were: Greenham Common (MO), Hermitage (MJT), Mortimer (RCr), Roundoak Piece Padworth (PD), Snow Hill Windsor Great Pk (MSFW), Stockcross (SAG), Wild Boar Enclosure Windsor Great Pk (MSFW), Wishmoor Bottom (PM), Mapleash Wood, Winterbourne (JLe), Wood End (MSFW), South Forest Windsor (MSFW). Higher counts of roding males involved: 7 Cranbourne Chase, Windsor Forest, May 10-11 (MSFW; DJB), 3-5 Wickham, May 25 (SAG), 3 Caesars Camp, Swinley Forest, May 30 (JCr), 4 Bucklebury Common, Jun 1 (NC), 5 Frilsham, Jun 8 (RCr), 4 High Standinghill Woods, Windsor Forest, Jun 8 (DJB), 6 Padworth Common, Jun 18 (JA) and Jun 30 (KEM), 3 Lower Star Post, Swinley Forest, Jun 24 (DJB) and 4 Snelsmore Common on Jun 25 (JD). There were no records confirming breeding! **Autumn/Second winter:** reported from 15 locations during the period and apart from single records in Aug and Sep, all fell within Nov-Dec and involved single birds in areas away from summering sites.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce passage migrant (Red listed)

Reported from 7 locations during the year, involving 18 records totalling 36 birds. **First winter:** 1 w/p at Borough Marsh on Feb 13 (CDRH) equals the earliest ever record for Berks (1 Eversley GPs in 1993) and is only the second Feb record for the county. There were no spring records. **Autumn:** the first returning migrant appeared at Eversley GPs on Jun 28 (L Spiers; IHB) and was followed by 1 at Lavell's Lake on Jul 8 (MWh), a moulting ad at Eversley GPs on Jul 13 (BMA) and 6 flew SSE over QMR on Jul 31 (CDRH). Records increased in August with a series of records at Eversley GPs involving 1 on Aug 3 (BMA), 2

Aug 4 (GR), 1 Aug 5 (MGLR) and 10 on Aug 11 (BMA). Elsewhere 2 flew east over QMR on Aug 10 (CDRH), there were 2 at Lower Fm GP on Aug 16 (NC) then 1 there on Aug 22 (NC) and a juv visited both Lea Fm GP (ADB) and Lavell's Lake (MWh) on Aug 23 before settling at the latter site and remaining there until Sep 5 (MO). What may have been the Lavells Lake bird was seen flying SW over Twyford GPs on Sep 2 (ADB) and finally 2 single birds appeared at either ends of the county on Sep 6, 1 being seen at Lower Fm GP (MO) and the other at QMR (CDRH). **Second winter:** the year ended as it began with a record from Borough Marsh. This time 3 were noted there on Nov 22 (ABT), the first Nov record since 2002.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant primarily in spring (Red listed)

A poor year with only 2 records involving 2 birds. In the spring 1 was located resting on an island in Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP on May 18 (MWh et al). The second record was unusually late, a singleton seen flying high to the west over QMR at 09.30hrs on Nov 22 (CDRH). This is only the third November record for Berks, the others being 1 Manor Farm (Reading SF) on 24 Nov 1925 and 1 over Horton GPs on 24 Nov 1973.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Uncommon passage migrant (Red listed)

There were 24 records involving 54–57 birds from 10 locations, making 2008 the best ever year for records and only bettered by 1988 (111 birds) for the number of birds involved. **Spring:** there were 20 records involving 50–53 birds. Passage began in mid-April with 1 at Eversley GPs on Apr 13 (BMA). There followed 4 flying NE over QMR (CDRH) and 2 flying E over Hurley (SJF; FMF) on Apr 16, 2 (possibly the Hurley birds) at Borough Marsh on Apr 17 (HRN et al), 8 circled Woolhampton GP before heading north on Apr 19 (KEM), 1 flew E over QMR on Apr 20 (CDRH) and 1 flew E over Hurley on Apr 21 (CDRH). There were 3 records on Apr 23, 3 briefly visited Theale Main GP (KEM), 4 were observed feeding on Caddis Flies at Horton GP (CDRH) and 2 were located at Greenham Common (AEDH; NC). After a report of 1 on the Lambourn Downs, there was a series of QMR records with 5 on Apr 27 (CDRH), 4–5 on Apr 29 (CDRH) and singles on Apr 30 (MMc), May 4, May 10 and May 17 (CDRH). Elsewhere there was 1 at Eversley GPs on May 1 (MGLR), 1 Lea Fm GP on May 3 (BTB; BSt) and 8 visited Eversley GP on May 5 (JMC; MJM). **Autumn:** a much lighter passage which commenced with 1 at Eversley GPs on Jul 20 (MGLR) with another there on Aug 11 (BMA), 1 flew SW over QMR on Aug 5 (CDRH) and finally 1 flew E over Horton GPs on Sep 11 (CDRH).

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor in small numbers (Amber listed)

Records were received from 15 locations, 10 in W Berks, 4 in Mid Berks and just 1 in E Berks. **First winter:** the only report was of a single individual at Borough Marsh on Feb 6 (ABT). **Spring:** passage and returning birds were first encountered in late March with 1 on the Compton Downs on Mar 25 (ABT) and 2 migrants at Borough Marsh on Mar 31 (ABT). One was singing near to Brightwalton Common on Apr 13 (GDS), but not subsequently, 1 was in fields beside Woolhampton GPs on Apr 21 (GEW), 1 was present at Lea Fm GP on Apr 26 (AR) whilst 4 had returned to Wellbottom Down also on Apr 26 (MFW) and single migrants flew over QMR on Apr 29 (CDRH) and Theale Main GP on

Apr 30 (KEM). Numbers had increased at Wellbottom Down to 7 by May 7 (MJD), nearby 1 flew E over Bury Down also on May 7 (DJB) and 1 (possibly the same bird) was seen over Greenham Common and Lower Fm GP on May 10 (MO). Summer: Birds were present on the Compton Downs, being heard on both May 14 and Jun 10 (DJB) however it seems that these birds now prefer the gallops over the county boundary in Oxon! One was seen at Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Jun 8 (ABT) whilst for the first time since 1997 breeding was confirmed when 5 adults and 3 young were located at Wellbottom Down on Jun 24 (PBT). **Autumn:** passage began in June with singles flying over Lower Fm on Jun 21 (RA; JL; IW) and Thatcham Marsh on Jun 22 (IW; JL). All other records occurred in Jul-Aug with 1 over Lower Fm on Jul 5 (IW), singles over Hosehill Lake NR on Jul 25 (BU) and Jul 26 (RCr), 2 Lower Fm GP, Aug 2 (JA), 2 over Newbury RC, Aug 29 (RAH) and finally 1 over Theale Main GP, Aug 30 (KEM).

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber listed)

The first record since 2005 was of a w/p adult at Lavell’s Lake on Aug 30 (SJo et al). With only 13 records in the last 10 years, this species remains one of the scarcer of our regular waders and the lack of any large areas of suitable wetland habitat, especially with the loss of such sites as Slough SF, Theale Wader Pit and Manor Farm, the status of this species within Berks is unlikely to improve!

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Locally common passage migrant, declining summer visitor, scarce in winter (Amber listed)

Records were received from 22 locations throughout the county, the monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Borough Marsh	–	3	5	3	2	2	–	–	–	–	2	–
Dinton Pastures/Lea Fm GP	2	2	3	5	6	3	–	–	1	–	–	–
Eversley GPs	–	–	6	7	4	5	2	1	1	–	–	–
Lower Farm GPs	–	–	4	3	4	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
Pingewood GPs	–	–	1	4	1	3	–	–	–	–	1	–
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	1	–	9	7	8	6	3	3	–	–	1	–
Number of birds	1	–	27	18	20	10	4	3	–	–	1	–

First winter: the Dec 2007 individual at Bray GP remained to Jan 13 (DF; MFW) and 2 were reported from Dinton Pastures on Jan 20 (WEBs). The next records involved 1 at Lavell’s Lake from Feb 15 (FJC; BAJC) increasing to 2 on Feb 27 (FJC) and 3 arrived at Borough Marsh on Feb 28 (ABT) remaining into March, these records were the start of the spring migration.

Spring: passage peaked in March when reports were received from 14 locations involving a minimum of 46 birds. High counts included 6 at Greenham/Crookham Common on several dates in Mar/Apr peaking at 7 on May 31 (ABT), 5 Borough Marsh on Mar 15 (ABT), 5 Brimpton on Mar 19 (GEW) and 7 at Eversley GPs during April (BMA). **Breeding:** breeding was only confirmed at Eversley GPs where 2 pairs had young but unfortunately none fledged (MGLR). Elsewhere changes to the conditions of their habitats and disturbance from human activities thwarted any other breeding attempts. **Autumn/Second winter:** most birds had

left the county by the end of June, a few lingered into July at Eversley GPs and Lower Fm GP, otherwise all records during Jul-Sep referred to migrants moving through. A small influx occurred in Nov with 1 Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood GPs on Nov 2 (KEM), 1 Bray GP, Nov 9 (CDRH) and 30th (KPD) and 2 Borough Marsh on Nov 16 (ABT).

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

Records were received from 14 locations equally spread throughout the county. The monthly status is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	0	0	0	4	9	3	3	4	6	0	0	0
Number of birds	0	0	0	4	17	3	3	17	14	0	0	0

Spring: passage began with 1 at Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood GPs from Apr 17 (KEM; MFW) to Apr 22 (MO). Single birds were also noted at Lavell's Lake, Woolhampton GPs and Lea Fm GP (possibly the Lavell's bird) in April; however May produced the bulk of the spring records with 14 from 9 sites. Most records involved single birds except for those at Greenham/Crookham Common where after 3 on May 6, numbers increased to 5 on May 9 (GK) with 2 remaining to May 13 (MO). In June, 1 was located on flooded fields near Holyport on Jun 4 (CDRH) and 1 at Burnthouse Lane GP on Jun 13 (CDRH) was the last of the spring. **Autumn:** passage began very early with 1 flying over Brimpton on Jun 22 (GEW). There followed 3 records in July and numbers peaked in Aug/Sep when there were 17 records, the highest count being 7 at Eversley GPs on Aug 18 (BMA) and 4 at Lower Fm GP on Sep 21 (MFW) which was also the last record of the year.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

Records were received from 32 locations, 12 in W Berks, 14 in M Berks and 6 in E Berks. The monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brimpton	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1
Crookham Common	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP/Lea Fm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	1	1	-
Dorney Wetlands/ Slough SF	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1
Eversley GPs	1	1	2	3	-	1	6	13	10	6	3	3
Horton GPs	-	1	2	-	-	1	2	3	3	3	3	1
Lower Farm GPs	1	1	2	1	-	-	1	6	4	3	1	1
Padworth Lane GP	3	3	2	2	1	1	7	4	11	12	2	1
Pingewood GPs (Burnthouse La)	-	2	6	5	-	1	3	7	4	-	1	5
Woolhampton GPs	-	1	1	1	-	1	2	1	1	1	1	3
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	6	2	9	3	0	1	1	2	4	1	2	3
Number of birds	8	2	12	3	0	1	1	2	5	6	2	3

First winter: although widespread during this period, numbers were on the low side with most reports being of single birds during Jan-Feb. The high counts of 3 occurred on Jan 26–30 and Feb 7 at Padworth Lane GP (KEM) and Jan 27 at Brimpton (GEW). **Spring passage:** numbers increased in March as birds began to move through the county, culminating with 6 at Burnthouse Lane GP on Mar 15 (KEM). The period of spring passage in Berks is relatively short and by late April most birds had already moved through, again Burnthouse GP held the largest number with 5 on Apr 19 (KEM). The last April record involved 1 at Eversley GPs on Apr 28 (MGLR) however there were 2 May records, 1 over Greenham Common on May 18 (SAG) and 1 at Padworth Lane GP on May 27 (KEM) that may have been an early returning migrant. **Autumn passage:** this period of migration is substantially longer than that of the spring passage, usually beginning in June and continuing to late Oct. In 2008, 6 sites held birds in June, the earliest being a moulting ad at Horton GP on Jun 13 (CDRH). As you can see from the table numbers increased in July, but it was the 3 following months that held the largest counts. The high count of 13 at Eversley GPs occurred on Aug 9 (BMA) and Aug 27 (MGLR), whilst at Padworth Lane GP numbers peaked at 11 on Sep 27 (KEM) and 12 on Oct 2 (KEM), the highest October count since 1991 when 12 were present at Theale GPs. Worthy of mention was a count of 6 flushed from the R Kennet at Avington on Oct 20 (GDS) as it is rare for such numbers to be found on our rivers. **Second winter:** birds were reported from 13 locations during Nov-Dec, 6 reports involving single birds, 6 more of 2–3 birds whilst at Burnthouse Lane GP 5 were present on Dec 20 (KEM).

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber listed)

There were 3 records this year all in May. At Greenham/Crookham Common 1 was located on Crookham Pools on May 11 (ABT), a second bird was discovered there on May 12 (FJC) and both birds remained to May 13 (MO). Further east, 1 was located on Borough Marsh on May 30 (CDRH; ABT et al).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Common passage migrant, scarce in summer and winter, has bred (Amber listed)

Records were received from 25 locations, 7 in W Berks, 12 in M Berks and 6 in E Berks, the monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eversley GPs	–	–	1	3	1	1	7	6	8	–	–	–
Lower Farm GPs	–	–	–	1	3	–	1	5	1	1	1	1
Padworth Lane GP	1	1	1	1	2	–	5	4	2	1	1	1
Pingewood GPs	–	–	–	2	2	–	1	1	2	–	1	–
Queen Mother Res (QMR)	–	–	–	2	7	–	10	12	9	2	–	–
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	0	0	0	8	10	3	10	8	4	2	0	0
Min. Number of birds	0	0	0	10	19	4	13	11	5	2	0	0

First winter: the only record involved the regular wintering bird at Padworth Lane GP which remained in residence throughout the period. **Spring passage:** after a report of 1 at Eversley GP on Mar 13 (JPe), passage began in earnest in April, beginning with 1 at Lea

Fm GP on Apr 2 (FJC) then reports from a further 12 sites including 3 at Eversley GPs on Apr 22 (MGLR). Numbers increased in May, high counts being 7 QMR on May 4 (CDRH) and 5 at Lea Fm GP on May 6 (FJC). The last spring record involved 1 at QMR on May 29 (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** the first of the autumn arrived at Eversley GPs on Jun 21 (BMA). June birds were also noted at Dorney W, Woolhampton GPs and Theale Main GP where 2 were present on Jun 26 (KEM). The main period of passage fell between July and Sep with birds being reported from 19 locations. The highest counts came from Padworth GP with 5 on 3 dates in Jul (KEM), Eversley GPs with 7 on Jul 16, 6 on Aug 25 and 8 Sep 3 (BMA) and QMR with 10+ Jul 28, 11 Aug 1, 12 Aug 12, 8 Sep 6 (CDRH) and 9 Sep 7 (ABT). A few stragglers lingered into Oct, 2 at QMR on Oct 11 (MFW) being the last. **Second winter:** unusually 3 sites recorded birds. At Lower Fm GP, an elusive individual, first seen on Oct 14 (GK) remained to the years end. At Padworth Lane GP, 1 was first located on Oct 29 (KEM) and then seen regularly to the years end. This is the 10th consecutive year that a Common Sandpiper has wintered at this site! Finally 1 visited Pingewood GPs on Nov 18 (KEM); although Pingewood GPs are fairly close to Padworth it is unlikely that this bird was the bird from the latter site as KEM had also seen the Padworth Lane bird on Nov 18.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber listed)

Three records involving 3 birds is below average for this species in Berks. **Spring passage:** 2 records, both of s/p individuals at Eversley GPs on May 3 (GR; DN) and Horton GP on May 25 (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** an immature was located at Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood GPs on Aug 16 and remained to Aug 17 (KEM).

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Rare visitor usually associated with autumn storms

The 27th record for Berks, a juv moulting into f/w plumage was located at QMR on Sep 2 (CDRH et al). Initially only glimpsed in flight over the Reservoir, the bird was relocated later in the day and was the first inland sighting of a large influx that reached the south and west coasts at this time. This is the fifth record for QMR and equals the earliest ever autumn date for this species (when 2 were at Reading SF, Manor Farm on Sep 2 1922).

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Rare vagrant

For the third consecutive year a bird was recorded from QMR. A dark morph juv put in a brief appearance on Sep 24 (CDRH). The bird flew in at 11.18hrs, it retrieved a food item (dead fish?), rested and bathed before departing high to the west, whilst being mobbed by gulls. This is the fifth county record: all have been juveniles and apart from the first (seen flying over Wraysbury GPs in Aug 1978) all have occurred at QMR since 2003.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional records in summer (Amber listed)

Records were received from 14 locations, the vast majority being in E Berks; 4 Mid Berks sites recorded birds but none were seen in W Berks. It is thought that at least 35 birds had visited the county. The table shows the monthly total of birds reported from the main site (QMR), then the totals from all other locations, and numbers in brackets refer to birds also seen at QMR.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Res	4	4	3	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	4	2
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
Number of sites	0	3	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	3
Number of birds	0	3	1	4	4	2	2(1)	(1)	2(1)	2(1)	2	4(1)

First winter: the poor winter of 2007 continued into 2008, with a small w/p ad at QMR on Jan 1 then intermittently to Mar 6 (partially hooded from Feb 14) which was presumed to be the same individual that was first located in Nov 2007 (CDRH). New birds arrived at QMR at the end of the month with a f/w from Jan 28 then on 5 dates to Mar 25 (CDRH et al) and a largish ad in partial s/p and s/w appeared in the roost on Jan 29 (CDRH). The s/w reappeared on Feb 4 and both were seen on Feb 15 (CDRH). Meanwhile a w/p ad visited on Feb 4 (CDRH) and a partially hooded ad on Feb 10 (MMc) is presumed to be one of the previously reported adults. The last records for QMR involved a s/s sharing the roost with the long staying f/w on Mar 14, 17 and 25 (CDRH). Elsewhere in the county a moulting ad was noted at Lavell's Lake on Feb 17 (MFW) and Feb 18 (NC), a partially hooded ad (QMR bird?) departed to the N from Colnbrook Tip on Feb 21 (CDRH) and a moulting s/w was located in the Moatlands GP roost on Feb 27 (PBT) and Mar 7 (ABT).

Spring/Summer: the Black-headed Gull colony at Eversley GPs attracted 3 birds during the spring. An ad located on Apr 14–15 (MGLR) and Apr 21 (GR) was followed by a s/s on Apr 17 (PBT) and again on Apr 21 (MGLR), May 5 (SAG) and May 8 (GR) and a f/s on May 3 (GR), 5th (BMA) and May 8 (PBT). Two s/p ads briefly visited Lavell's Lake on Apr 28 (MHT), 2 f/s were over Horton GP on May 12 (CDRH) and a f/s visited Dorney W on Jun 4 (PNe) and Jun 5 (WAS) and floods near to Ockwells Manor, Maidenhead also on Jun 5 (PNe; CDRH). Burnthouse Lane GP hosted a s/p ad on Jun 28 (TGB; KEM) another s/p ad at QMR on Jul 7 and 17 (CDRH) had begun its summer wing moult while a f/s, moulting into s/w was on playing fields near Slough on Jul 11 (CDRH). A juv arrived at QMR from the NE on Jul 20 and remained in the area to Aug 1 being seen at the Res and the adjacent Horton Fields (CDRH). **Autumn/Second winter:** apart from an imm at Dorney Wetlands on Sep 8 (BDC), all early records came from QMR and the adjacent Horton Fields with 1 w/p ad flying east on Sep 8, 1 f/w Sep 9–10 (CDRH) and a f/w on Oct 5 (CDRH; FJC), what may have been this bird was then located at Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill on Oct 18 (DJB). An influx occurred at the beginning of Nov with a w/p ad at QMR on Oct 29 followed by a f/w retaining many juv feathers there on Nov 1 (CDRH), a f/w in Windsor Great Pk on Nov 5 (CDRH) and 1 (not aged) at Dorney W on Nov 10 (BDC). Back at QMR a f/w and w/p ad were seen on Nov 15, with further sightings of the ad on Nov 20, Dec 16 and Dec 22. Another ad appeared on Nov 27, being seen again on Nov 29, Dec 14 and Dec 29. This bird also visited Colnbrook Tip on Dec 23 and 29 (CDRH). Finally an ad was in the Moatlands GP roost on Dec 21 (MFW) and a f/w was at Burghfield GPs on Dec 28 (MFW).

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoelus minutus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

Birds were reported from 10 locations across the county, making 2008 a fairly poor year with no large flocks and only an estimated 37 individuals, most in the spring. **Spring:** passage began in March with a s/p ad at Moatlands GP on Mar 28 (RCr). The main arrival occurred from mid-April with 1 s/p at Eversley GPs on Apr 16 (BMA; IHB) then 2 (1ad 1 s/s) on Theale Main GP, Apr 20 (ABT) initiated a series of records from the Theale/Moatlands area to Apr 27 and involved at least 8 individuals, the highest count being 5 (3ads 2 f/s) on Theale Main GP on Apr 23 (ABT). Other April records involved 1 at Thatcham DCL on Apr 22 (MJD) that may have been the 2nd summer bird that was present at Lower Farm GP (NC) and 1 ad Eversley GPs on Apr 23 (CRG) and 1 reported from the RThames by Cock Marsh on Apr 29 (D M Ferguson). May was a poor month! The only reports being 4 f/s moving through QMR on May 18 (CDRH) and 3 f/s at Horton GPs on May 31, 2 of which were also seen at QMR (CDRH). This late E Berks passage continued into June and for the fifth successive year birds favoured Horton GPs where a f/s bird arrived from the SE on Jun 1, 4 f/s were present on Jun 3–4 and 1 f/s on Jun 13 (CDRH). Two f/s birds were then found at Dorney W on Jun 20 remaining to Jun 26, occasionally visiting the adjacent Slough SF (KPD; D Taylor et al). **Autumn:** passage was very poor this year, the only records being 1 juv QMR on Sep 12–14 (ABT et al), 1 f/w Moatlands GP on Sep 28 (JA; HRN), 1 juv Moatlands GP Oct 4 (BU) and 2 f/w at QMR on Nov 2 (CDRH). **Second winter:** the only winter record this year involved a single adult that visited QMR on Dec 26 (CDRH).

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant which now breeds in increasing numbers (Amber listed)

First winter: counts of 1000 or over came from Borough Marsh with 1000+ on Jan 22 (DJB), c1000, Bucklebury Ford on Feb 3 (RF), 17000 in the Moatlands GP roost on Feb 15 (RCr), c1000 Lea Fm GP on Feb 18 (FJC), 1500 Lower Farm GP on Feb 27 (GJS) and 2500 at Summerleaze GP on Mar 2 (WAS). **Breeding:** was reported from 4 locations. At Eversley GPs, 144 nests were counted, however the colony was again affected by predation and very few young were fledged (MGLR). At Hosehill Lake at least 50 pair's bred (TABR) but exact figures on the amount of young reared is not available. The Lower Farm colony reared at least 16 young (SAG) but again it seems that details are not complete. A bird was located on a nest at Lavell's Lake on May 27 (DJB; MHT) and breeding was confirmed at this new site on Jul 17 when 3 young were being attended by an ad (FJC). **Second winter:** high counts were 1800 at the Theale Main GP roost on Nov 3 (RCr), 1500 were noted at Lower Farm GP on Nov 5 and 12 (GJS), c1000 at Lea Fm GP (FJC) and there were c1500 at Dinton Pastures CP on Dec 9 (ADB). A leucistic ad was observed at QMR on Jul 19 and 29 (CDRH).

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

This species continues to be under-recorded; records were received from 55 locations including 5 from W Berks where this species is less common than in the rest of the county. **First winter:** counts made during this period were usually of groups of up to 200 birds, higher counts involved 350, West End on Jan 15 (DJB), 635 at Windsor Great Pk on Jan 20 (DJB), 275 at Hurley on Jan 22 (DJB), 231 Moatlands GP on Feb 27 (PBT), 450+ at

Warfield on Mar 10–11 (DJB) and c300 Windsor Great Pk on Mar 16 (DJB). The highest counts from W Berks were 48, Compton Downs on Jan 5 (DJB) and 29 at Lower Fm GP on Feb 22 (NC). **Spring/Summer:** by April numbers were much reduced, but four sites recorded birds in May with 1 Dorney W on May 8 (KPD), a f/s at QMR on May 12, 16, 18 and 22 (CDRH), a different f/s at Horton GP on May 25 and 27 which was also seen at QMR on May 31 (CDRH) and 2 ads at Borough Marsh on May 29 (ABT; CDRH). An ad that visited QMR on Jun 16 (CDRH) may have been an early returning bird. Return passage was more evident in Jul, with 1 ad Horton GPs on Jul 1 (CDRH) birds were then located at a further 5 locations with a high count of 10 including 1juv at QMR on Jul 28 (CDRH), although numbers remained low for the rest of the autumn. **Second winter:** large counts involved 350 in Windsor Great Pk on Nov 2 (DJB), 110 Moatlands GP, Nov 29 (JA), 150 on the Compton Downs on Dec 6 (DJB), 106, Hurley on Dec 9 (PNe) and c300 in Windsor Great Pk on Dec 21 (DJB)

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, increasingly common in summer and now breeds (Amber listed)

First winter: largely overlooked, the highest counts received involved 750 Lower Fm GP on Jan 2 and c1000 there on Feb 27 (GJS), 500 Bucklebury on Feb 3 (RF) and 1650 Moatlands GP on Feb 15 (RCr) **Spring/Summer:** small numbers were reported widely, the highest being 56 at Borough Marsh on Jun 9 (ABT). Although birds were present in the Slough area, breeding was not confirmed this year. **Autumn/Second winter:** large flocks began to be seen from Aug when 500 were counted at Old Warren, Fawley on Aug 27 (ABT). Numbers at the Theale Main GP roost increased from 5400 on Sep 25 to 6300 on Oct 3 and 7500 on Nov 3 (RCr). The pre-roost gathering at Lower Fm GP held c500 on Oct 30 (GJS) however numbers then decreased to 3000 on Nov 20 and 2500 on Dec 3 (GJS). Elsewhere 1100 were on Englefield on Nov 12 (RCr) and c7000 were roosting on Moatlands GP on Nov 29 (JA).

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Uncommon but increasing autumn passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

Records were received from 22 locations, 2 in W Berks, 9 in Mid Berks and 11 in E Berks; the table shows the monthly county status (minimum no of birds).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
W Berks no.of sites	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1
Number of birds	2	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1
M Berks no.of sites	4	5	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	4	6
Number of birds	10	11	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	9	13
E Berks no.of sites	2	5	1	1	2	3	3	7	4	1	3	2
Number of birds	4	8	2	1	9	4	57	90	84	22	5	6
Total number of birds	16	22	7	2	10	5	60	91	85	23	16	20

First winter: numbers from Jan to Mar were generally low with most records coming from Mid Berks. The highest count at this time involved 5 at Burghfield GPs on Jan 14 (RCr). **Spring:** there were 2 reports in April, a s/s at Lea Fm GP on Apr 21 (FJC) and a sub ad at QMR on Apr 29 (CDRH). A minimum of 9 birds were identified at QMR during May (CDRH), a s/s was noted at Horton GPs on May 12 (CDRH) and a f/s was located at

Burnthouse Lane GPs on May 25 (FJC; PD). Only 5 birds were located during June, a surprising total, given that it is this month that the autumn influx usually begins. **Autumn:** at the main site, QMR, numbers quickly increased in July, notable dates being Jul 9 when there was a flock of 24 (23 ads 1 3/s), a pair with an attendant juv arrived on Jul 13 and 50 were present on Jul 17 (CDRH); elsewhere no counts exceeded 3 birds. August highlights included 20 ads on Horton Fields on both Aug 13 and 18 (CDRH), 5 ads at Cold Harbour on Aug 23 (DJB) and 60 on Colnbrook Tip on Aug 28 (CDRH). Forty ads were seen at both Colnbrook Tip on Sep 3 and at QMR on Sept 8 and Sep 29 (CDRH); the last high count from this area was of 22 on Horton Fields on Oct 4 (CDRH). **Second winter:** once the autumn passage was over, the focus of attention shifted to Mid Berks where a number of birds could be found in the Moatlands GP gull roost, the highest counts being 6 (4 ads 2 3/w) on both Nov 29, (MFW) and (4 ads 1 s/w, 1 3/w) on Dec 30, (MFW). E Berks was not totally deserted and a total of 5 birds were identified at QMR during Dec (CDRH).

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Scarce autumn/winter visitor

Records were received from 8 locations involving at least 18 birds; all were in Mid and E Berks. **First winter:** at least 11 birds were reported during this period. At the main site, QMR, the Polish ringed f/w that was first seen on Oct 22 2007 remained to at least Jan 28 and was also seen at Colnbrook Tip on Jan 31 (CDRH). On Jan 5 this bird was joined by another f/w and on Jan 6 another, more heavily marked f/w was located (CDRH) – thus 3 f/w birds were present at QMR in the 1st week of Jan! What may have been another f/w which was lame in the left leg was noted in the roost on Jan 28 (CDRH). Other QMR records involved an ad on Feb 11–12, 1 s/w on Feb 18 and a new f/w on Mar 25 (CDRH). Elsewhere a f/w was located in the Moatlands GP roost on Jan 4 (ABT) and was seen again at Burghfield GPs on Jan 5 (MFW; KEM). An ad was present at the Knowl Hill Landfill site on Jan 14 (CDRH) and a f/w was noted in the Moatlands GP roost on Feb 27 (PBT) and Mar 1–2 (MFW). Finally a s/w was found at Burnthouse Lane GP on Mar 24 (TGB). **Spring:** a very late f/s was present on QMR on Apr 27–28 (CDRH); another sighting at QMR on May 20 was likely to be the same bird (CDRH) and is the latest ever spring record for Berks. **Autumn/Second winter:** the first of 6+ birds reported during this period, a near ad, was on Colnbrook Tip on Sep 8 and relocated to Horton Fields the next day (CDRH). An adult that was located on QMR on Nov 25 was probably the same bird seen at Colnbrook Tip on Dec 19 (CDRH). Another ad (presumed to be a fem due to small size) appeared at QMR on Nov 27 and was also seen on Dec 21 and 25; a f/w was also present on the latter date (CDRH). The year ended with ads at Padworth Lane GP on Dec 27 and 31 (KEM) and Searle's Farm Lane GP (prob fem) on Dec 31 (MFW).

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, increasing in summer and now breeds (Red listed)

Although under recorded, analysis of records received show that this species is most common in the east, becoming scarcer as you go west. **First winter:** unfortunately there were no roost counts or counts from landfill sites and the largest count reported was 375 in fields south of Knowl Hill on Jan 26 (DJB). At QMR, an ad with an orange ring on its left leg (ring no 1037) on Jan 4 (CDRH), was ringed as a f/w at Gerrards Cross Landfill, Bucks on Jan 21 2004. A leucistic individual was found on QMR on Feb 2 (CDRH) and could possibly be the same bird that was photographed at Beddington SF, Surrey earlier in the year. Further west at Smallmead Fm GP a f/w with milky coffee coloured primaries on Feb 15 (MFW) could

have caused some initial confusion as to its identity. A count of 14 at Lower Farm on Mar 8 (IW; JL) was the highest W Berks count for the year! **Spring/Summer:** there were some surprisingly high counts during the period with 130 at Dorney W on Apr 24 (DJB), 500+ (75% immes) at QMR on May 12 (CDRH), 220 (all immes) on pasture at Felix Fm, Shurlock Row on May 30 (DJB) and 200 including 2 juvs at QMR on Jul 21 (CDRH). **Breeding:** was confirmed in Reading where a pair was attending young on rooftops in the town centre on Jul 3 (WB); however no information was received from the main breeding area at Slough Trading Estate. With its elevation to the Red List, due to a long term decline in breeding population and to a lesser extent wintering population, any data concerning breeding within the county in future years would be especially welcome. **Autumn/Second winter:** once again very few observers' submitted counts, sites where numbers were monitored included Cold Harbour where highs of 600+ were present on Aug 23 and Sep 22 and 500+ there on Dec 24 (DJB) and in Windsor Great Pk, with 700 on Nov 2 (DJB).

SCANDINAVIAN HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus argentatus*

This larger and darker northern form is a common visitor to the county during the winter months. In the 1st winter an ad thayeri type (limited amount of black to the wing tips) was located at QMR on Jan 4 (CDRH). In the 2nd winter, birds began to appear at QMR early in the autumn with 2 ads on Sep 9 but it was not until Dec that numbers increased substantially. It was at this time that a f/w with a wholly dark tail (a Smithsonian feature) was located on Dec 5 and another thayeri type was seen on Dec 7 (CDRH).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Rare winter visitor (Amber listed)

First winter: the adult that roosted at QMR during Nov/Dec 2007 was seen again on Jan 1 (CDRH). There followed a series of records from this area, all involving a single adult that is presumed to be the same bird. On Jan 29 an ad flew from Colnbrook Tip to Withy Bridge Slough, on the Berks/Bucks border where it settled in fields before departing to the SE, avoiding QMR. Further records from Withy Bridge occurred on Feb 14 (later being seen in the QMR roost) and Feb 23; the last sighting was back in the QMR gull roost on Mar 3 (all CDRH).

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare winter visitor (Amber listed)

First winter: 3 f/w individuals were identified in the east of the county during this period. On Jan 1 a f/w arrived at QMR at midday and remained to roost (CDRH; CL). This bird was easily identifiable due to the oily patch on the primaries of the right wing, proving it to be the bird that was seen previously at Beddington SF Surrey in Dec 2007 and also roosting at Broadwater GP, Herts. Further sightings at QMR occurred on Jan 6, 29, and 30 (CDRH), Feb 3 (CDRH; FJC), Feb 9 and 15 (CDRH). The second individual (dark eyed with a more faded plumage) was first located at Colnbrook Tip on Jan 12 before roosting at QMR on Jan 12-13 (CDRH). Further sightings at QMR occurred on Jan 20 (MO), Feb 6 (CDRH) and what is presumed to be the same bird on Feb 10 (MMc). The last sighting of this bird was at Withy Bridge on Feb 14 when it was in the same flock as the ad Iceland Gull (CDRH). The third individual (quite small with a smoky tone to the head and neck) was first located on Colnbrook Tip and then in the QMR roost on Feb 25 (CDRH). Three individuals in one year is the highest total since 1998 (Berkshires best ever year) when there were 4 birds.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

A better year for records with birds reported from 24 locations, 2 in W Berks, 12 in Mid Berks and 10 in E Berks. Like the Herring Gull, numbers appear to diminish the further one goes west. The table shows the monthly minimum number of birds reported throughout the county.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	11	8	7	2	1	0	1	5	4	5	4	8
Number of birds	584	64	28	4	4	0	2	10	5	5	40	214

First winter: some impressive counts were made during this period beginning with 350 at QMR on Jan 1 (CDRH) who states that this was one of 10 species of gull present at this site on this date! At Smallmead Fm GP, 88 were noted on Jan 5 and 41 were still present on Feb 7 (MFW), 26 ads were at Cold Harbour on Jan 13 (MFW), 39 were at Burghfield GPs on Jan 14 and 70 were at the Knowl Hill Landfill on Jan 14 (CDRH). The highest W Berks count was just 3 at Lower Fm GP on Mar 1 (NC). **Spring:** March sightings quickly diminished and by April birds could only be located at 2 locations with a f/w at Burnthouse Lane GP on Apr 3 (MFW) and a series of records from QMR involving a f/s on Apr 21–22, 2 f/s on Apr 27 and a subad on Apr 28 (CDRH). All May records came from QMR with an ad on May 10 (JA), a s/s and subad on May 16 and a f/s on May 20 (CDRH). **Autumn/Second winter:** the first reports came from Theale Main GP where 2 ads were located on Jul 8 and 1 on Jul 9 (RCr). Four sites held single birds in Aug; but 6 ads were on Horton Fields on Aug 29 (CDRH). The first juvs were noted in Sep with the earliest 1 at QMR on Sep 6 (CDRH) but Sep and Oct were poor months for records and it was not until early Nov that the first double figure count was logged, 30 beside the M4 at Junction 11 on Nov 3 (G Brown). Apart from 18 at Cold Harbour on Dec 24 (DJB) the only large count came from QMR where 187 were present on Dec 27 (CDRH).

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

This is the worst year since 2000 (when there were no records), with only 4 records involving 4 birds, all from QMR. The first, an ad in s/p was located on Feb 26, another ad passed through on May 26 and finally a juv flew in to the reservoir from the east at 08.26hrs on Nov 2 and remained to at least 09.00hrs. Shortly afterwards an ad flew in from the SE at 0908hrs and departed back toward the SE at 09.42hrs (all CDRH).

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber listed)

Two spring records this year, both on May 17! At QMR 1 visited for just a few minutes before departing high to the east (CDRH), meanwhile 1 was located on Theale Main GP (KEM; MFW) before moving to the adjacent Moatlands GP (ABT) and then returning to the Main Pit.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber listed)

Records were received from 10 locations throughout the county and involved up to 75 birds in the spring and 24 in the autumn. **Spring:** passage began with 1 at Theale Main GP on Apr 27 (KEM et al) and continued to Jun 1 when 3 were noted at Woolhampton GPs (DJMi). The table shows the site totals during the main period of passage.

	27/4	28/4	29/4	30/4	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	6/5	7/5	8/5	9/5	10/5
Eversley GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	-	-	-	1	-
Crookham Common Pools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Hosehill Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	4	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	-
Moatlands GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	2	8	1	-	1
Queen Mother Res	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Summerleaze GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Theale Main GP	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	2	3	3	4	2	-	1
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	1	0	3	1	0	0	3	6	23	5	12	9	7	4

Apart from the dates above, the only other record was of 1 at Eversley GPs on May 16 (DN). The observers of the high counts of 8 at Moatlands GP was RCr, on May 5, and BU on May 7. It is thought that the 3 seen at Crookham Common Pools on May 9 were probably the same as seen at nearby Lower Fm GP (GKim; CDRH). **Autumn:** passage was more protracted but less pronounced and began with single ads at Hosehill Lake (BU; RCr) and at QMR (CDRH) on Aug 1. There were no further records until the end of Aug when single birds were noted at QMR on Aug 27 (WAS) and Aug 31 (CDRH; ABT), at Theale Main GP on Aug 30 (RCr) and there were 3 at both Lower Fm GP (RRK) and Moatlands GP (JA; RCr; ABT) on Aug 31. In September birds were reported from Moatlands GP with 1ad on Sep 1 (MO) and Sep 10 (BU) a juv on Sep 12 (RCr) (roosting on Theale Main GP: CDRH) and Sep 26 (KEM); Dinton Pastures CP, a juv on Sep 2 (ADB) and at QMR where 4, (2ads 2juvs) were present on Sep 7, 1 ad on Sep 8 and 3 (2ads 1juv) on Sep 9 (all CDRH).

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber listed)

In 2008 there were 12 records from 4 sites involving 28 birds. **Spring:** very light passage was observed from mid-April when 1 was present at Moatlands GP on Apr 18. Further records involved 2 singles passing through QMR on Apr 24, 1 lingering from 0828 to 0900hrs and another flying NE at 1324hrs (CDRH). Finally 3 were observed resting on a boat at QMR on May 4 (ABT). **Autumn:** passage began early with a s/p ad feeding with Common Terns at QMR on Jul 9 (CDRH). One was then reported from Eversley GPs on Aug 8 (N Silver per MGLR) then 5 ads were located at Lower Fm GP on Aug 30 (NC; IW; JL). Passage peaked in September when after singles at Moatlands GP (an ad) on Sep 1–2 (ADB; RCr) and at Lower Fm GP on Sep 5 (NC) all records came from QMR. After an ad and 1 juv flew east over the Res on Sep 6, 7 (including at least 3 juvs) were located in the evening of Sep 13 resting on the pier with Gulls before departing to the SW (CDRH). The last record involved 2 ads and 2 juvs which spent much of Sep 14 at QMR (CDRH MFW). First located at 0900hrs the birds left to the SE at 0955hrs, only to return later and were still present at

1600hrs; these birds are presumed to be the same 4 seen earlier that morning at QE2 Res and later at Wraysbury Res, Surrey.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common passage migrant and regular summer visitor although breeding numbers have declined in recent years (Amber listed)

This species was recorded from 43 locations throughout the county, however one should be aware that breeding or breeding behaviour was only noted at 10 of these, 7 others were regular feeding sites and the rest appear to be sites that are only used occasionally or where migrants were passing through. **Spring:** first reported from Moatlands GP when 4 were present on Apr 13 (MFW), a further 19 sites recorded birds by the months end, the highest counts being c50 at Theale Main GP on Apr 28 (DJB; MFW) and 29 (TM) and increasing to 60 on May 1 (RCr). Elsewhere in May, 43 were reported from Twyford GPs on the 1st (WEBS), 68 were on Moatlands GP on the 3rd (JA), 16 visited QMR on the 16th (CDRH), there were 30 at Wraysbury GPs on the 31st (CDRH) and up to 27 were present at Eversley GPs during May (MGLR), another 25 sites recorded between 1 and 15 birds. Horton GPs held 30 birds on June 1 (CDRH), after this date most counts referred to breeding birds.

Breeding: 2008 was a poor year! Records reveal that although breeding was attempted at 8 sites, very few young were reared. At Dinton Pastures CP, 1 pair attempted to breed but failed (FJC), 4 pairs failed at Dorney W (KPD), 11 pairs at Eversley GPs only reared 1 chick (BMA), 7 pairs at Hosehill Lake were flooded out (TABR), 2 young were located at Lower Fm GP on Jul 5 (IW) but not subsequently, there were 7 pairs with 8y on the Thatcham DCL raft on Jun 14 (IW; JL) and 16 including juvs on Jul 7 (GJS), 15 pairs failed at Theale Main GP (TABR) however a fledged juv was noted on Jul 14 (KEM) and 4 pairs were reported breeding at Wraysbury GPs (CDRH) although the level of success is not known. Additionally, pairs were observed mating at Aldermaston GP on May 6 (JPM) and at Woolhampton GPs on Jun 10 (PBou). **Autumn:** passage began in July and continued to late Sep. During this period birds were reported from 18 locations, high counts came from QMR with 20 on Jul 19, 21 on Aug 16 and 110 (including 1 flock of 73) on Sep 5 (CDRH); Hosehill Lake held 33 on Jul 29 (KEM) and 17 on Aug 7 (TM); 29 were at Moatlands GP on Aug 8 (RCW) with 10 there on Sep 7 (MFW) and 19 flew south through Horton GP on Aug 16 (CDRH). The last sighting of the year was 1 at Burnthouse Lane GP, Pingewood on Sep 23 (RJB).

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon passage migrant in varying numbers (Amber listed)

Although not a record year, both migration periods gave observers good opportunities to catch up with this elegant tern and the number of juvs reported in the autumn (10–15 birds) is the best total since 2003. **Spring:** passage began on Apr 21 when 9 were located at Moatlands GP (RCr). Birds then arrived on a fairly broad front on Apr 23 with 2 at Eversley GPs (BMA), 1 QMR (CDRH), 7 Summerleaze GP (CDRH) and 4 over Theale Main GP (KEM et al). Further records at Theale Main involved 1 on Apr 24 (RCr) and 4+ on Apr 28 (KEM). Elsewhere, 7 flew NE through QMR on Apr 30 (CDRH) and single birds were at Moatlands GP on May 4 (TGB), Hosehill Lake on May 10 (BU) and at Horton GP on May 15 (CDRH). **Autumn:** began with a juv at Moatlands GP from Sep 1–5 (KEM; MFW et al). Birds were then seen daily at Moatlands GP for the first 10 days with 6 (1ad 5 juvs) on Sep 6 (FJC), 2 juvs on Sep 7–8 (MFW et al) and 1 juv Sep 9–10 (KEM). Further juvs were located at QMR where 1 was present on Sep 6 and 4 flew SW on Sep 7 (CDRH). Finally 1 juv (possibly a Moatlands bird) was on Theale Main GP on Sep 12 (ABT).

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Abundant urban resident

The only counts of 100 or more were 130 Canon Court Fm Maidenhead on Nov 12, c100 Slough Crematorium on Dec 26 and c100 at Cookham on Dec 29 (all BDC)

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common resident and winter visitor (Amber listed)

Birds were reported throughout the county outside of the breeding season. Most breeding season records came from the more wooded areas of the county especially in Mid and E Berks. **First winter:** widely reported in small numbers, however some larger counts were reported; these include 400+ at Horton GPs on Feb 2–6, then 500+ on Feb 8 (CDRH), 77 Cold Harbour on Feb 3 (DJB), 103 Remenham on Feb 15 increasing to 160 there on Mar 4 (DF) and 200+ at Wigmore Lane GP on Mar 8 (KEM). **Spring/Summer:** 113 at Frogmill Hurley on Apr 9 (SJF; FMF) was the largest count during this period. Territorial pairs or song was recorded from 13 locations; a survey in Swinley Pk revealed 15 territorial pairs with most centred on the old oaks and beech trees within the site (DJB). Breeding was confirmed at 3 locations and although this may seem a small number, Stock Doves, like most of our pigeon species are generally overlooked by the majority of observers. **Autumn/Second winter:** very few records of significance were received during this period and the only counts involving 30+ birds were 33 Eversley GPs on Aug 27 (BMA), 200+ Cold harbour Oct 4 (DJB) and 180 Horton GPs on Dec 28 (CDRH).

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor

High counts were received during both winter periods especially in the second winter. **First winter:** generally, numbers reported were fairly low, high counts being 1500 in Windsor Great Pk on Jan 30 (WAN), c500 at Long Lane Cookham on Feb 7 (BDC), c500 at Bury Down on Feb 24 (LJF; MJF) and c1200 in rape fields at Waltham St Lawrence on Mar 12 (DJB). **Second winter:** numbers began to build in early October no doubt help by the arrival of winter migrants. At Cold Harbour, 750 were present on Oct 4 (DJB) whilst further east between Cookham and Maidenhead c3200 were noted on Oct 14 with 3000 still present on Nov 4 (BDC). Migration was noted over Woosehill, Wokingham when 772 flew south (largest flock 170) on Oct 31 (PBT). Flocks were smaller in Dec with 550 in the Fifield area on Dec 19 (PNe) increasing to 1035 on Dec 22 (BDC), 1000+ at Cold Harbour on Dec 24 (DJB) and 500 at Oakley Green on Dec 27 (BDC). The lack of records from the west of Reading is almost certainly down to lack of coverage.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common and widespread resident

The only large counts received were of 94 at Long Lane Cookham on Oct 19 and 75 there on Dec 29 (BDC). Records do however show that this species remains common and widespread throughout the county, but it does seem that the large three figure flocks that used to occur regularly are now only rarely encountered.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Localised and declining summer visitor (Red listed)

The decline continues. Records were received from only 16 locations (up to 24 in 2007) with 7 in W Berks, 4 in Mid Berks and 5 in E Berks. Of these, only 8 localities may have had territorial birds (song heard or seen on multiple dates). **Spring/Summer:** first reported from Greenham Common where 2 flew over Crookham Pools on Apr 21 (GACJ). These were followed by 1 singing at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 26 (KL) and 2 there on Apr 29 (GEW) and 1 at Ruscombe on Apr 27 (MFW). May began with 2 at Brimpton GP on May 1 (GEW), 1 Hosehill Lake on May 2 (JLe), 10th (BU) and 25th (KEM), 1 Thatcham Marsh on May 3 (IW; JL), 1 Stanford Dingley on May 7 (ABT), 1 singing Padworth Lane GP on May 11, 20th and 27th (KEM), 1 singing Aldermaston GP on May 17 (JPM), 1 Compton Downs (ABT) and 1 singing Littlewick Green (DJB) both on May 20. Woolhampton GPs was the only site where birds were regularly encountered and it is thought that at least 3 territorial pairs were in residence throughout May and June (MO). A migrant flew N over QMR on Jun 1 (CDRH) and territorial birds were present at Foliejon Pk, 1 singing on Jun 1 (MFW), Ruscombe, 1 singing on Jun 4–5 (PBT; CDRH), Aldermaston GP, 2 (1singing) on Jun 6 (GDS), Brimpton GP, 1 carrying nest material on Jun 19 (GEW) and Theale GP with 2 on Jun 28 (RCr). There were no confirmed breeding records. **Autumn:** apart from the regular birds at Woolhampton GPs where 3–4 were seen on many dates in July, the only report came from Herons Nest, Theale GPs where at least 3 were present on Jul 19 (KEM). At Woolhampton GPs, numbers had diminished to 1 bird by Jul 27 and birds (all singles) were seen on only 3 dates in Aug, the last being on Aug 30 (ABT).

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Common introduced resident throughout E Berks and parts of M Berks, spreading west

Records were received from 79 locations throughout the county. As would be expected, most records were from the east of the county; however birds are steadily spreading throughout Mid Berks with birds being reported from 19 locations. As previously in the east, this westward spread is mainly focused within the river valleys with birds reaching Arborfield in the Loddon Valley and Reading in the Thames. The only W Berks record involved an individual flying west over Newbury on Feb 27 (THe). There were no confirmed breeding records this year although it is likely that breeding occurred at a number of sites, especially in the east, such as Windsor Great Pk (where birds are attracted to the many veteran oaks) and along the RThames from Wraysbury to Maidenhead. Counts were somewhat disappointing compared to 2006–7, the largest E Berks count being 67 over Dorney W on Sep 21 (WMo) whilst in Mid Berks it was only 10, seen at Borough Marsh on Sep 18 (ABT). Although birds were observed flying to winter roosts, there were no reports of actual roosting within the county.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Common but declining summer visitor (Red listed)

Like many sub-Saharan migrants, the Cuckoo is declining throughout the country and due to the increase of this decline it has now been elevated to the Red List. Records were received from 66 locations, 25 in W Berks, 22 in Mid Berks and 19 in E Berks. The table shows the known (based on records received) monthly status within the county.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	–	–	–	26	47	15	2	1	–	–	–	–
Minimum number of birds	–	–	–	36	64	17	2	1	–	–	–	–

The first arrival of the spring was located on Apr 8 at Woolhampton GPs (GEW). From Apr 10 passage became quite brisk and by the months end birds had been reported from 24 locations. Most reports were of 1–2 birds; however 4 were reported from Thatcham Marsh (IW; JL) and 3 were noted at Woolhampton GPs (RCr) both on Apr 27. As would be expected, numbers increased in May and counts of 3 came from Swinley Forest on May 2 (DJB), Thatcham Marsh on May 3 (IW; JL) and Swinley Park on May 30 (DJB) and 4 were present at Woolhampton GPs on May 22 (KEM). A female was observed laying an egg in a Dunnock's nest at Eversley GPs on May 31 (IHB). Records declined during June (only 2 sites recorded more than 1 bird) and there were no reports of breeding until a juv being fed by a Dunnock was photographed in a Reading garden on Jul 12 (B Perry per RSPB Birds magazine) and a calling juv was located at Moatlands GP on Jul 23 (RCr). Another juv located at Moatlands on Aug 24 (JA) proved to be the last sighting of the year.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Uncommon but widespread resident which has shown signs of increase in recent years (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Barn Owls were reported from up to 82 locations during 2008, half of which were in W Berks, the rest equally spread throughout Mid and E Berks. These figures compare well with site totals from 2005 and 2006 and have reversed the lower totals reported in 2007. The table shows the monthly status throughout the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	6	15	16	27	28	34	22	2	3	5	7	10
Number of birds	6	17	17	43	50	56	35	2	4	6	7	10

The high counts from Apr to Jul are due largely to the regular checking of known nest sites, often in areas away from public access. The remaining months totals result from casual observations by observers. All non-breeding records refer to 1–2 birds and 36 locations reported birds on more than 1 date. All other sites recorded birds on just 1 occasion, although this may (in part) be down to lack of observer coverage. **Breeding:** was reported from 20–21 sites, all involved birds breeding in nest boxes in either Mid or W Berks. A total of 63 young were recorded from 17–18 nests, most, if not all were ringed. A further 3 nest boxes held clutches of viable eggs when inspected. Most breeding records were provided by the Pang Valley Barn Owl Nest Box Project, JPM and S Croft of Wokingham District Council. No breeding records were received from E Berks, Lambourn and parts of the Kennet Valley, areas where breeding records have been provided in previous years. Thus it can be presumed that Berkshire's breeding population is larger than what is reported here! The provision of nest boxes has benefited the Barn Owl hugely in the last ten years. In 1998 birds were recorded in only 34 locations whilst in 1988 the Hawk Trust published its 5 year Barn Owl survey (1982–1987) and showed that the county population stood at about 38 pairs, a 68% decline over the preceding 50 years. Could the current Barn Owl population be now nearing the levels of the 1930's and 40's and furthermore, can these levels be sustained?

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Widespread and locally common introduced resident

Records were received from 63 locations, 21 in W Berks, 15 in M Berks and 27 in E Berks. As is usual for this species, records generally refer to 1–2 birds usually heard calling. Higher counts involved 3 at Burnthouse Lane GPs, Pingewood GPs throughout Jan (KEM; RHS), 3 Dukes Lane, Windsor Great Park, 3 Padworth Lane GP on Jul 12 (JA) and 5 (a late family party?) at Canon Court Fm Maidenhead on Oct 20 (K Cotton). **Breeding:** was reported from just 4 locations; at Great Meadow Pond, 1 pair bred and calling young were heard from within the nest cavity (in an oak) on Jun 15 (DJB), 2 chicks from a nest box at Barton Court were ringed on Jun 26 (JPM), at Eversley GPs where a reported 4–5 territories had been located (MGLR), at least 1 pair bred with a juv being located on Aug 23 (GR) and a pair bred in the Binfield area rearing 1 chick (WBOP).

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Widespread resident, common in suitable habitat including urban areas

Records were received from 85 locations throughout the county. Most records involved 1–3 calling birds, higher counts involved 10 calling from various woods in the Frilsham area on Feb 10 (RCr), 4 calling, Bucklebury common on May 19 (JA) and 4 (3m 1f) calling at High Standinghill Woods, Windsor Forest on Jun 8 (DJB). **Breeding:** it was a poor year for records with confirmation of breeding only coming from 3 sites and possibly from a 4th. A check of nest boxes in Bisham Woods on Apr 28 revealed 1 box with 2 eggs and another with 1 chick (BDC; M Tucker), 2 juvs were heard at Spray Wood, Chaddleworth on Jun 20 (GDS) and 2 pairs were reported to have bred at Eversley GPs (MGLR). A check of nest boxes in Cookham on Dec 9 found single abandoned eggs in 2 boxes. It is presumed that these were infertile eggs from a clutches that otherwise hatched (BDC).

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Rare resident, scarce winter visitor

All records came from just 4 locations. At the regular roost site 14 were seen in Jan, with another 2 hunting a game-strip a few miles away on the same date (CDRH), while at an undisclosed location in W Berks 4 were observed with Short-eared Owls emerging from a daytime roost at dusk on Feb 2 (DJB). At the south Oxon breeding site bordering Berks, single adults were noted hunting in Berks on May 20 (ABT) and Jun 10 (DJB). On both occasions up to 2 juvs could be heard calling from the Oxon nest site. In Dec the regular roost site held 10–12 birds (CDRH).

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

Short-eared Owls were reported from 6 locations in 2008 and the number of records indicates that between 28 and 38 birds were involved. **First winter:** birds were only reported from 2 areas, both in W Berks. At the main wintering site, Bury/Cow Down, West Ilsley, the year began with 13 on Jan 3 (ABT) and numbers peaked at 14 on Jan 23 (J Edwards). Lower numbers were noted during February, 7 on the 10th (RAn) being the highest count and in March only 1 was reported. At the other location on the Lambourn Downs, 8 were present on Jan 16 (CDRH) and 4 were still present on Jan 22 (CDRH) and Feb 2 (DJB).

Spring: 1 flew N over Mount Scippet, Fifield on Apr 21 (CDRH). 7 were reported from Bury Down/Cow Down on Apr 5 (ABT) and unusually 1 remained into May, being seen to at least May 7 (DJB; CDRH). **Autumn:** the possibility that the late Bury Down bird may have summered was bought into question when 1 was found freshly dead on the Bury Rd, West Ilsley on Aug 16 (KGW). Autumn migrants were noted at QMR with 1 flying NNW on Sep 14 (CDRH) and 1 was found in the Dorney W/ Slough SF area on Oct 11, remaining to Oct 13 (KPD et al). At Bury Down the first returning birds had also arrived with 3 seen on Oct 11 (CRe). **Second winter:** at Bury Down/Cow Down 3 were reported again on Nov 6 (CDRH) and 16th (MFW) and had increased to 10 on Dec 12 (ABT). One flushed at QMR on Nov 26 (CDRH), lingered for an hour before departing to the south. One was located at Brightwalton Common on Dec 7 (GDS) and it or another bird was located nearby on Woolley Down on Dec 13, then 2 were noted there on Dec 26 (GDS).

EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Regular summer visitor in small numbers to suitable habitat (Red listed)

Nightjars were reported from 13 locations throughout the county. First reported on May 8 when a male was churring at Gorrick Wood (EN), thereafter most of the favoured sites were soon occupied. The table shows the minimum number of birds (churring males in brackets) reported from all locations.

Site	No.of birds	Observer	Site	No.of birds	Observer
Bucklebury Common	1 (1)	NC; GJS	Ufton Nervet	4 (3)	PD
Cranbourne Chase WF*	2 (2)	DJB	Snelsmore Common	4 (3)	MO
Decoy Heath	2	KEM; LJF	South Ascot	2	PM
Gorrick Wood	3 (2)	RM	Stockcross	1 (1)	SAG
Greenham Common	2 (1)	MO	Swinley Forest	17 (12)	MO
Mortimer	6 (5)	RCr	Wood End	1 (1)	MSFW
Padworth Common	5 (4)	MO			

*WF = Windsor Forest

High counts include 6 (5m 1f) at Mortimer (RCr) and 7 (3 seen 4 heard) in the Caesars Camp area of Swinley Forest (JCr) both on May 30. Four were churring on Padworth Common on Jun 18 (JA) and 9 (8 churring) from Wishmoor to Lower Star Post in Swinley Forest on Jun 24 (DJB). It is clear from records received, that coverage of most of the regular sites was at best patchy this year, and totals at most sites, but especially Bucklebury Common, Windsor Forest, Gorrick Wood, Greenham Common and South Ascot were lower than in previous years. It is hoped that more observers will submit records in years to come. **Breeding:** evidence of breeding came from 2 sites; at Padworth Common a pair successfully bred, fledging young (TGB; KEM) whilst at Snelsmore Common, a female with a brood patch was caught and ringed on Jul 14 (IW; JL). The last record for the year was of 2 accidentally flushed at Greenham Common on Aug 8 (JPM). Note. To help produce a clearer picture of this species' status within the county, the recording team request that all observers submitting records of Nightjars please state what the bird was doing (i.e. was it churring) and when able to, record the bird's sex.

COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common though declining passage migrant and summer visitor (Amber listed)

Spring: the first sightings this year occurred on Apr 17 when 1 was at Wraysbury GPs (CDRH) and 2 were noted at Woolhampton GPs (NC). The first large count was reported on Apr 27 when 200 were seen feeding over Moatlands GP (MFW) and 300+ were over the adjacent Theale Main GP the following day (RCr). Throughout May the Theale/Moatlands GPs area was the most popular site for the species within the county with a maximum count of 500 over Theale Main GP on May 26 (RCr). Elsewhere, although reported frequently from many sites, numbers only exceeded 100 at Lower Fm GP where 100+ were noted on both May 15 and 21 (NC). Summer: birds were widely reported throughout Jun/Jul with high counts involving 150+ over Cold Harbour on Jun 5 (DJB), 150 Eversley GPs on Jun 12 (BMA), 300+ Windsor Great Pk on Jun 22 (DJB) and c150 Lower Fm on Jun 26 (NC). As July commenced, numbers increased as migrants joined the local breeding population and during persistent heavy rain up to 2000 congregated over QMR on Jul 9 (CDRH). During this time, although there were no confirmed cases of breeding, the presence of bands of screaming individuals chasing each other around buildings would indicate that breeding occurred widely throughout the county. **Autumn:** as already mentioned, passage had begun in July. A flock of c200 moving south over fields at Hawthorn Hill on Jul 21 (DJB) was followed by many reports of migrating flocks, culminating with a gathering of c3000 birds at QMR on Aug 2 (CDRH). Numbers quickly diminished during the rest of Aug with no count exceeding 55 birds. Five locations recorded birds in Sept, the highest count being 3 at Lower Fm on Sep 3 (GJS). The last of the year was a single flying SE over Lea Fm GP with hirundines on Sep 14 (FJC).

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Common but thinly distributed resident (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Records were received from 100 locations, 30 in W Berks, 35 in Mid Berks and 35 in E Berks. Over 90% of all records can be attributed to river valleys or smaller watercourses; however 1 visited a garden fountain in Dedworth on Jun 2 (H Brown). The table below shows the distribution of the Kingfisher throughout the county based on records received.

Location	No. sites	Location	No. sites	Location	No. sites
Barkham Brook	1	R Enbourne	1	Maidenhead Ditch**	2
R Blackwater**	4	Grand Union Canal	1	R Pang	4
Colne Valley**	1	Jubilee River**	5	Thames Valley**	22
The Cut	3	Kennet Valley**	31	Winterbourne	1
R Dunn	2	R Lambourn	5	Other sites*	9
Emmbrook	2	Loddon Valley**	6		

* Sites away from main rivers

** Includes side streams and adjacent GPs.

Being a fairly sedentary species, most records involved sightings of just 1–2 individuals and only 5 sites had records of 3 or more adult birds. **Breeding:** evidence of breeding came from 5 locations; at Eversley GPs 2 pairs were reported to have bred (per MGLR), a pair were observed visiting a nest hole at Pingewood GPs during June (KEM), an ad was attending 1 juv at Thatcham Marsh on Jun 24 (JCh), 2–3 birds including 1 juv were noted at Woolhampton GPs on Jul 18 (RAH) and a pair bred on the K&A Canal at Newbury (JCh) with 1 juv seen on Jul 22 (TBu).

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Scarce passage migrant

One located along a byeway near to Oare on Apr 6 (MJT et al), continues the run to 4 consecutive years that this species has occurred within the county. However there have been no records of birds remaining for more than 1 day since the Courage Brewery bird of March 2005.

WRYNECK *Fynx torquilla*

Scarce passage migrant, formally bred (Red listed)

The first record since 2004 involved 1 briefly at QMR on Aug 28 (CDRH). Present from 1130hrs to 1200hrs the bird was first located on the grass bank by the yacht club but was not seen again despite a thorough search of the area. This record recalls the 2004 bird which was located in the same area of QMR on Sep 9 and remained for only 1½hrs!

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Common resident (Amber listed)

Records were received from throughout the county, even in the NW of the county where suitable habitat is at a premium. This year a number of above average counts were submitted and these include 7 Knowl Hill on Jan 26 (DJB), 16 Jubilee River on Feb 16 (BDC), 7 Ashley Hill on Apr 21 (BDC), 11 (inc 3 juvs) Wishmoor Bottom on Aug 28 (DJB), 8 Greenham Common on Sep 16 (RPy) and 14 along the Jubilee River on Nov 27 (BDC). Apart from Wishmoor Bottom, breeding was reported from a further 10 locations. Nine of these records referred to fledged juveniles, only 1 occupied nest was located, that being at Lea Fm GP on Jun 17 (PBT).

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common and increasing resident

One to six birds were widely reported throughout the county, non-breeding counts in excess of this involved 9 at Frilsham on Feb 9 (RCr), 7 Cranbourne Chase, Windsor Forest on Apr 5 (DJB), 7 Warren Row, including 2 pairs mating on Apr 20 (BDC), 8 Wishmoor Bottom on Aug 28 (DJB) and 7 Greenham Common on Sep 16 (RPy). **Breeding:** was confirmed at 17 sites and involved at least 26 pairs. High breeding counts were 4 pairs confirmed on Bowsey Hill on May 21 (DJB) and 6 nests with young located within Swinley Park during June (DJB).

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

Uncommon and declining resident (Red listed)

With just 21 records from 18 locations evenly spread throughout the county, 2008 was the worst ever year for records. All records involved just single individuals and there was no concrete evidence that breeding even took place within the county, in fact only 2 localities recorded birds on more than 1 occasion! **Jan-Mar:** the year began with a female located in poplars beside the K&A Canal at Bottom Lane Theale on Jan 2 (FJC; DJB). This was followed by 1 Hosehill Lake on Jan 12 (MWh) and 1 calling at Lousehill Copse Tilehurst, Jan 13 (RCr). Others were located in Bussock Wood on Feb 2 (JLe), Bowdown Woods on Feb 11 (MRD), Bottom Lane on Feb 22 (JLe) and Mar 2 (JA), Datchet, Mar 3 (PWrr)

and Kintbury Cressbeds on Mar 6 (RGS). **Apr-Jun:** there were only 6 records during this important time of year. A female visited Padworth Common on Apr 13 (MFW), 1 was found at Boxford Common on Apr 22 (JL), 1 was calling at Bucklebury Common on May 2 (RCr), 1 flew from Berks into Hants at Mortimer on May 4 (PD), 1 was reported from Newbury on Jun 20 (JBR) and another sighting at Bowdown Woods occurred on Jun 24 (MRD). **Jul-Sep:** the pattern of fewer and fewer records occurring throughout the county as the year progressed was most evident during this period and may have been partly due to birds being less vocal during this time of year, however only 2 birds were noted, 1 at Bray GP on Jul 12 (WAS) and 1 at Eley on Sep 29 (WB). **Oct-Dec:** 5 birds were reported beginning with 1f Lavell's Lake on Oct 29 (RR), 1 Wraysbury GPs on Dec 16 (CDRH) and singles at Crazies Hill and Warren Row on Dec 24 (PNe).

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

Locally common summer visitor to our heaths, scarce elsewhere, uncommon in winter (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Nationally the Woodlark is on the increase and due to these recent improvements in populations it has been removed from the Red List and now resides in the Amber List. In Berkshire, records were received from 21 locations, 14 of which reported song. In West Berks: 11 localities recorded birds, the main sites being the Greenham/Crookham Common area and Snelsmore Common. At Greenham, 1 was singing on Jan 1 (NC) and then from Feb 19 (KEM; RHS) and by April, 3 territories had become established and henceforth birds were noted regularly throughout the summer. Nest building was noted on Apr 28 (JPM) and a family party of 6 was discovered on Aug 23 (IW; JL). Some post-breeding flocks were encountered into the autumn, 10 on Sep 8 (RF) was the highest count received and the last birds were noted on Oct 10 (GF; ABT). At Snelsmore Common, 2 territories were present from April into June but there were no reports of breeding. Elsewhere, 1 flew south over Brimpton GP on Jan 27 (KEM) and song was heard from Bucklebury Common (2 birds) on Feb 9 (JLe), Upper Woolhampton on Feb 18 (RF), Hoe Benham on Apr 22 (ABT) and Honey Bottom near Snelsmore on May 10 (MJT). Other records involved 3 on Boxford Common on Apr 22 and 1 there on Jun 9 (JL), 1 Brimpton on Jul 11–13 (GEW), 1 Combe on Oct 10 (RH) and 1 over Bagnor CB on Nov 15 (IW; JL). Mid Berks: records came from 4 sites. At Ufton Nervet 1 sang on Jan 19 and 23 (when 2 birds were present) (PH), Paices Wood held 2 birds on Feb 22 and 3 (1 singing) on May 24 (JLe), 1 sang at Decoy Heath on Mar 6 and 2 were present on Mar 27 (JLe) and finally 1 was singing beside the A327 near Farley Hill on Jun 24 (PBT). Birds were noted from 5 areas in East Berks with Swinley Forest SPA being the main area. On the SPA birds were first noted on Feb 9 (DJS) and a survey of the area revealed only 30 territories this year (41 territories in 2007) with at least 3 pairs breeding (DJB; PJC). Song was also noted at South Ascot on Mar 15 (DJB), Gorrick Wood in Apr-May (DJS), Wildmoor Heath where there were 2 territories in the spring (DJS; DJB) and at Wellington College where they were regularly reported (RRG). One flew over Swinley Pk on Mar 14 (DJB) but no territories were located at this 'regular' site this year.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Common but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Red listed)

First winter: birds were reported from 43 locations and early song was noted at 12 of these. Most reports were of less than 100 birds, the exceptions being 100+ at Bury Down on Jan 3 (ABT), at Englefield, monthly highs were 330+ on Jan 22, c400, Feb 17 and 100, Mar 4 (RCr) and 165 at Hurst on Feb 6 (ABT). **Spring/Summer:** reported from only 39

locations this year. The low number is probably due to under recording, as not for the first time there were relatively few records from the Downs an area where this species thrives. Song was reported from most sites and high counts included 8 singing Widbrook Common on Apr 3 (WAS), 5–6 singing Arlington Grange on Apr 11 (IW), 21 singing Cold Harbour, May 1 and 13s on Jun 13 (DJB) and at least 6 pairs at Woodlands Park on May 21 (DJB). Up to 100 were noted at Englefield on Jun 8 and it is thought that 50–100 pairs are present there in summer (RCr). Breeding was confirmed at Brimpton where 2 nests both with 2 chicks were found on Jul 13 (GEW) and an adult was attending a juv at Dorney Wetlands on Aug 3 (BDC). **Autumn/Second winter:** lower numbers were reported during this period and records only came from 30 sites. Generally flock sizes were of less than 100; however 4 sites did record higher numbers. At Cold Harbour 100+ were present in the area from Sep 22 to at least Nov 7 (DJB), 100 Englefield on Sep 29 then peaking at 180 on Oct 22 (RCr), 100 at Cookham on Oct 22 (BDC) and finally 160 at Bury Down on Dec 12 (ABT).

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

An encouraging year! Birds were reported from 35 locations and breeding took place at 7 sites and involved about 160 pairs. **Spring passage:** began with an exceptionally early record of 2 at Summerleaze GP on Feb 27 (CDRH), the earliest record since 1993 when 1 was reported from QMR on Feb 25. These were followed by 5 at Lower Fm GP on Mar 3 (NC) thereafter passage slowly increased until mid-March when birds were widespread. High counts during this period involved counts of 100+ from 4 locations and higher counts of 150 at Woolhampton GPs on Mar 23 (KGW), 150+ at Thatcham DC on Apr 18 (NC) and 200 Padworth Lane GPs on Apr 19 (RCr). Summer: evidence of breeding came from 7 sites. Birds were seen entering pipes within the brickwork of the Blackpott's Viaduct near Eton on Apr 9 (PWil) and 8 such pipes were occupied on Jun 15 (WAS), birds were also prospecting the artificial site at Thatcham DC on Apr 12 (GJS) and several pairs were in residence on Jun 14 (SAG). At least 52 holes were excavated at the new diggings at Eversley GPs on May 17 (MGLR) but it is thought that not all were successful. The artificial wall at Lea Fm GP was very successful, 75 holes were in use on May 27 (DJB) and many juvs were noted on Jun 3 (FJC). Later, 10–20 holes were being used for second broods and 2 holes were still occupied by young on Aug 8 (FJC). Two nests were found in the bank of the R Thames at Cookham on Jun 5 (WAS), 2 active nests were located at Newbury Station on Jun 22 (SAG) and 17 pairs bred in an artificial bank at Hosehill Lake (TABR). **Autumn passage:** the first large flocks began to appear in late June and early July with 150 at Theale Main GP on Jun 22 (RJB), 130 at Padworth Lane GP on Jul 8 (RCr) and c500 at QMR on Jul 9 (CDRH). No counts numbered more than 100 until 200+ were present at Lower Fm GP on Aug 10 (NC) and 250 were noted at Moatlands GP on Sep 5 (RCr). Numbers soon declined during Sep and there were only 2 Oct records; 25 at Woolhampton GPs on Oct 1 (KEM) and 8 at Thatcham GPs on Oct 4 (BJW).

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

This familiar and widespread summer visitor enjoyed a slightly better year than that of the previous 3 years; however numbers were still lower than that of the good year of 2004. **Spring:** first noted on Mar 17 when 1 was present with Sand Martins at Horton GPs (CDRH). Numbers increased as April arrived and counts of c100 were noted at 3 locations, higher numbers came from Woolhampton GP, 200+ on Apr 17 (NC), Padworth Lane GP,

200 on Apr 19 (RCr), Moatlands GP, 250 on Apr 20 (JA), Theale Main GP, 200 on Apr 28–29 (MJT; RCr) and Lower Fm GP, 150+ on May 15 (NC). Summer: although it is thought that breeding occurred throughout the county, the choice of breeding site (often in private buildings such as farms) can make confirmation of breeding difficult. Breeding was confirmed at Dene House, Shaw (IW), Twyford (SPA), near Caversham (JLan), Chaddleworth (GDS), Broadmoor Fm (PJC), Spencers Wood (GB), The Village, Windsor Great Pk (WAN) and Home Grange, Wokingham (DJS). **Autumn:** the first signs of passage occurred in early August when 50+ had gathered at Lower Fm GP on Aug 10 (NC) and c200 were over Theale Main GP on Aug 13 (RCr), the rest of August was quiet and no counts exceeded 50 birds. Passage improved in September with birds passing south through QMR at c200 per hour on Sep 8th (CDRH), c500 at Cold Harbour on Sep 10 (DJB), c100 over West Ilsey on Sep 13 (GDS), c150 south over Remenham on Sep 14 (DJB), 100+ on the Compton Downs on Sep 16 (ABT) and 100 over Lavell's Lake on Sep 19 (FJC). Thereafter numbers quickly diminished and birds were only reported from 5 locations in October, the highest count being 20 at Woolhampton GP on Oct 1 (KEM) and the last being 2 over Arlington Grange, Curridge on Oct 15 (IW) and 1 Eversley GPs on Oct 19 (BMA). The final record involved an individual flying east over Freeman's Marsh on Nov 16 (MFW) which is the latest date for 5 years.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Locally common (but declining) summer visitor and common passage migrant (Amber listed)

Spring: 1 at Woolhampton GP on Mar 18 (KEM), along with 1 on the same date in 2002, is the second earliest date for the county after 1 at Horton GP on Mar 13 1977. This was followed by another bird (or the same?) at the same site on Mar 22 (IS) a date that in itself is earlier than usual. All March records were confined to W Berks with the exception of 1 at Summerleaze GP on Mar 25 (CDRH). As April arrived passage became more evenly spread and the first large count involved 50 at Brimpton on Apr 6 (GEW) but it was not until mid-April that counts reached 3 figures with 100+ at Thatcham DC on Apr 18 (NC) followed by 100 at Theale Main GP on Apr 29 (RCr). The Theale total had increased to 150 on May 1 (RJB) and 150+ were noted at Lower Fm GP on May 15 (NC). An influx occurred on May 26 when at least 550 were hunting over Moatlands GP, Theale Main GP and Hosehill Lake (RCr); however passage also abruptly came to an end shortly after this date and there were no June records that exceeded 50 birds apart from c100 local birds feeding over water in Windsor Great Pk on Jun 22 (DJB). **Breeding:** records came from 17 locations and involved at least 114 breeding pairs. However, as with many of our more common breeding birds, House Martins are under-recorded and breeding colonies are often ignored, so the total here is probably a substantial under-estimate of the county breeding population. **Autumn:** the first signs of passage involved 41 over Englefield on Jul 10 (RCr).

There followed, 150 at Horton GP on Aug 2 (CDRH) and 200 at Lower Fm GP on Aug 10 (NC). Counts of 100 to 150 were reported from 7 locations between Aug 11 to Sep 15, with higher totals from Eversley GPs, 200 on Aug 23 (MGLR), Theale Main GP, 250+ on Sep 5 (KEM), Lower Fm GP, 200+ on Sep 7 (IW) and Windsor Great Pk with 200+ on Sep 7 (DJB). A total of at least 450 hunted over Theale GPs on Sep 9, with 100+ at Hosehill Lake (BU), 150 at Moatlands GP (RCr) and 200 at Theale Main GP (RCr), Also 500 were over fields at Cold Harbour on Sep 10 (DJB), Spencers Wood held 200+ on Sep 15 (NR) and c200 were feeding over Inkpen Hill on Sep 21 (SAG). Passage slowed after this date and peak counts were 80 at Wraybury GP on Oct 3 (WAS) and 75 at Woolhampton GP on Oct 4 (KEM). The last of the year were 15 at Lough Down, Streatley (GP), 18 Woolhampton GP (KEM) and 1 Eversley GP (MGLR) all on Oct 6.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Locally common but declining summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant (Red Listed)

Over the past 25 years, the Tree Pipit has declined nationally by a massive 70% and has now been put onto the Red List. Records were received from 21 locations, 8 in W Berks, 3 in Mid Berks and 10 in E Berks and, of these 18 sites, an encouraging 15 either recorded song or recorded birds into the breeding season. The first arrival appeared at Wishmoor in the Swinley Forest SPA on Mar 29 (DJB) and was followed by 2 singing at Greenham Common on Mar 30 (IS) – although there were no further records at the latter site – and 1 was singing at Finchampstead Ridges on Apr 22 (RM). Single migrants were noted at Wraysbury GP on May 4 (CDRH) and Combe Hill on May 10 (IW; JL). All other records came from areas of suitable breeding habitat and from April numbers began to build, especially in more favoured areas. In W Berks single singing birds were noted at West Woodhay Down (IW; JL), Walbury Hill (ABT) and at Arlington Grange, Curridge (IW). Higher numbers were located at Snelmore Common where up to 3 sang from Apr to Jun (MO) and 6 were seen on May 30 (JL); Bucklebury Common with 3 territories on Jun 1 (NC); and Boxford Common where birds were present from April and 3 were seen on Jun 9 (JL). In Mid Berks singles were noted at Padworth Common on Apr 20 and 28 (TGB; KEM), singing at Decoy Heath on May 21 (JLe) and at Ufton Nervet on Jun 24 (PD). In E Berks the main stronghold remains Swinley Forest where survey work revealed only 39 territories (DJB) down from 60 in 2007! Breeding was confirmed at Swinley when 2 pairs were located feeding young at Round Hill on May 27 (DJB) and 1 was carrying food at Gorrick Wood on Jul 13 (RM). Elsewhere single singing males or pairs were noted at Swinley Park, Wildmoor Heath (DJB), Wellington College (RRG) and Windsor Forest (MSFW; DJB). Autumn passage was very light with 1 Padworth Common on Sep 8 (TGB), 1 Winter Hill on Sep 12 (ABT), 1 Eversley GPs on Sep 13 (IHB) and singles ringed at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 17 and 20 (RRG).

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common migrant and winter visitor, locally common summer resident (Amber listed)

Birds were recorded from 79 locations throughout the county. The table shows the monthly status according to records submitted.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of sites	13	19	16	13	8	4	6	1	25	18	13	18
Minimum number of birds	191	382	260	113	29	12	33	4	705	364	101	177

Analysis of the table shows that this species is (as expected) most common in the winter months. However passage is heaviest in September when the number of birds reported was substantially larger than any other month. **First winter:** birds were reported from 35 locations with most records reporting fairly low numbers however there were 9 records of flocks of 40+, the highest being 88 in Windsor Great Pk on Feb 17 (DJB). By the end of March, birds had begun to re-populate breeding areas and song was reported from East Garston Down (2 birds) on Mar 30 (GDS). **Spring/Summer:** although more evident in late March, passage continued into April, with peaks of 40 at Walbury Hill on Apr 16 (RCr) and 27 at Borough Marsh on Apr 10 (ABT). As April progressed, numbers reduced and by May, birds had completely disappeared from Mid Berks, and only 3 records of single birds were received from the east. In W Berks 11 sites held birds from May into July, most counts being 1–6 birds with some song. Two sites held higher numbers: at Bury Down, 9 birds were noted on May 7 (DJB) and included an anxious pair, 1 carrying food, 1 with nest material

and 1 singing; at Greenham Common, 10 were noted on May 10 (MJT), 20+ including some young were seen on Jul 20 (IW; JL) and 4 (the only Aug record) were located on Aug 25 (SPA). **Autumn/Second winter:** the first September record involved 1 at Lower Fm GP on Sep 3 (NC) however the close proximity this site has with Greenham Common probably accounts for this record. The first record of what were probably migrants came from Kintbury with 8 on Sep 4 (JD). Passage then occurred on a broad front throughout the county. At QMR a continuous northward passage of small flocks occurred all afternoon on Sep 14 (CDRH). High counts involved 80 at Englefield on Sep 25 with 100 there on Oct 3 (RCr), 80–100 at Bury Down on Sep 26 (PA) and c100 at Woolley Down on Sep 28 (GDS). Numbers declined during October and although widespread in Nov-Dec, the only count to exceed 25 was 40 at QMR from Dec 12 to 25 (CDRH).

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

The only spring record involved 1 showing characteristics of the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis* at Field Fm GP on Apr 12 (KEM), which constitutes the sixth county record of this race. **Autumn:** passage was confined to QMR where 2 on Oct 7 (CDRH) were followed by 5 on Oct 8 (MMc; ABT), the highest count since 8 were present at QMR on Oct 11 1989. One present on Oct 13–14 (PMC; MMc) had increased to 3 on Oct 15 (FJC). The last of the year was 1 on Nov 1–2 (CDRH). Autumn records suggest that 9 birds moved through QMR, a better than average showing.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber listed)

A poor year with only 2 records, both in the spring. One was located on Crookham Common Pools, Greenham Common on Apr 3 (PH) and a summer plumaged individual briefly visited Eversley GPs on Apr 23 (IHB).

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Common but declining passage migrant and localised summer visitor (Red listed)

This is another species that has recently been added to the Red List due to the size of the national decline. Records were received from 35 locations, 18 in W Berks, 11 in Mid Berks and 6 in E Berks. The table shows the 2008 status based on submitted records.

2 week periods	Mar 31– Apr 13	Apr 14– Apr 27	Apr 28– May 11	May 12– May 25	May 26– Jun 8	Jun 9– Jun 22	Jun 23– Jul 6
Number of sites	6	14	9	2	2	2	4
Min. no. of birds	9	42	15	4	2	6	4
2 week periods	Jul 7– Jul 20	Jul 21– Aug 3	Aug 4– Aug 17	Aug 18 – Aug 31	Sep 1 – Sep 14	Sep 15– Sep 28	Sep 29– Oct 12
Number of sites	2	3	3	7	11	7	2
Min. no. of birds	3	13	39	21	31	54	3

Spring: first reported on Apr 4 when 2 were present at Lea Fm GP (FJC; KIT). There were no further records until Apr 11 when 1 was noted at Borough Marsh (ABT). The main arrival began on Apr 12, however numbers moving through were low and 5, located

at Borough Marsh on Apr 20 (HRN) increasing to 7 on the 21st (ABT) and 5 at Padworth Lane on Apr 20 (RRK; MJD) were the only counts to exceed 4 birds. Passage diminished as May arrived and most reports during this month were of birds on potential breeding habitat, song or display being noted at 4 sites. Summer: apart from regular summering sites, birds became very difficult to come by (lack of birds or coverage from observers?). At the main sites at least 1 pair bred at Englefield (RCr), birds were regularly reported in the Churn/Blewbury area of the Compton Downs from May to July with breeding confirmed when 2 juvs were found on Aug 2 (ABT) and at least 3 territories had been established at Cold Harbour from May to Jul (DJB). Elsewhere 1 juv at QMR on Jul 17 (ABT) and 4 juvs located at Wellbottom Down on Jul 22 and 6 there (2juvs) on Aug 15 (CDRH) may have been of local origin. **Autumn:** passage began in late July and unlike in the spring, flocks were more in evidence, the first of which involved 30 on the Compton Downs on Aug 9 (ABT). Passage peaked in mid-September when amongst other reports, 8 flew south over Wooshill, Wokingham on Sep 14 (PBT), there were 32 at Cock Marsh on Sep 15 with 15 still present on Sep 25 (WAS) and 12 at Dorney W on Sep 19 (WAS). Passage ceased in early October, the last being 2 at Cock Marsh on Oct 3 (WAS) and a 1st w at QMR on Oct 5 (CDRH)

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flava*

Scarce passage migrant

The only record this year involved a single male at QMR on Apr 24 (CDRH), just yards from where a male had been seen the previous autumn (same bird?).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Locally common resident and winter visitor (Amber listed)

Birds were reported from 105 locations, 31 in W Berks, 31 in Mid Berks and 43 in E Berks. The table shows the monthly status of this species throughout the year based on records submitted.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of sites	20	23	32	25	19	18	17	9	23	21	22	15
Minimum no. of birds	26	31	56	42	42	36	34	16	40	32	34	18

Breeding: birds were reported from 39 sites during the breeding season (Apr-Jun); however breeding was confirmed at only 10 of these, all single pairs except 2 pairs breeding at Eversley GPs (MGLR). Passage/**Winter:** although there was some post-breeding dispersal (eg. 8 at Wokingham STW on Jul 28–31; DJB and 5 Thatcham Marsh on Aug 24; IW; JL), passage was not that evident. However a succession of records at QMR in Sep, peaking at 4 on Sep 27 (MFW) would point to passage taking place at this time. Winter site totals were low for both periods; the only counts to exceed 4 were 5 at Wokingham STW on Feb 11 and Nov 12 (DJB) and 5 at Eversley GPs on Oct 11 (MGLR).

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrelli*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Records received confirm the Pied Wagtail remains common and widespread throughout the county and with only 51 observers submitting records, it is clear that the species is under-recorded. There were 9 records involving 50+ birds, the highest counts being 118 at Borough Marsh on Feb 12 and 130 there on Oct 13 (ABT) and 175 at Wokingham STW on Nov 27

increasing to 200+ on Dec 4 (DJB). **Breeding:** only 5 reports of breeding is disappointing! At Waltham St Lawrence, a pair was feeding 4 juvs on May 21 (DJB), a pair was feeding young at Vodafone, Newbury on May 23 (SAG), a pair was attending 1juv at Lower Fm GP on May 25 (IW; JL), 1ad was with 2 juvs at Dorney W on Jun 6 (BDC) and a pair bred at the Village in Windsor Great Pk (WAN).

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba*

Uncommon passage migrant – which bred for the first time close to the county boundary this year

This, the nominate race of *Motacilla alba*, was reported from 10 locations this year.

Spring: an exceptionally early report involved a male at Burnthouse Lane GPs, Pingewood GPs on Mar 5th (MFW). [an earlier record of 1 at Newbury on Feb 3 1974 is no longer acceptable] Other March records include 2 Borough Marsh on Mar 19 (HRN), 2 (m&f) at Burnthouse Lane GP on Mar 21 (KEM) and further singles at the latter site, Padworth Lane GP and Twyford GPs. Passage increased in April with 24 reports from 9 sites involving a minimum of 16 birds, a high count of 3 was reported from Eversley GPs on Apr 23 (MGLR). The only May records involved a male at Aldermaston on May 16 (KEM) and a female at Horton GPs on May 31 (CDRH). Summer: the female at Horton GPs was seen again on Jun 4 gathering food! This bird was then relocated feeding 2 fledged juvs on the Wastewater Management Building at Wraysbury Res (100yds inside Surrey) on Jun 11 and further sightings were obtained back at Horton GP on Jul 1 (feeding 2 juvs), Jul 28 and Aug 16 when accompanied by 1 juv (CDRH). Throughout these observations the other parent was never confirmed, although it was probably a male Pied. **Autumn:** the challenge of identifying autumn White Wagtails has yet to have been taken up by the majority of Berks observers. Hence the records reproduced here are all come from just 2 locations. At Borough Marsh, f/w birds were noted on Aug 29, Sep 6, 2 on Sep 10 and 3 (2 f/w and 1f) on Sep 16 (CDRH). At QMR a f/w was noted on Sep 5, 1f on Sep 22, 3 (2 f/w and 1f) on Oct 4–5, 1 f/w on Oct 26–Nov 1 increasing to 3 f/w on Nov 2 and finally 1 f/w on Nov 18 (CDRH)

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Irregular and scarce but irruptive winter visitor

The large invasion which affected mainly Scotland and Northern England during November penetrated south during December albeit in much smaller numbers. In Berkshire, 4 were reported from Winnersh on Dec 2 (M Ireland) and 2 were reported from Tilehurst on Dec 24 (J Haseler); unfortunately none lingered.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident

Few records of note were submitted of this widespread resident, however, 38 were counted at Boxford Common on Apr 22 and Jun 9 (JL), 25 were noted at Bussock Wood on Jun 11 (JL). A pair was nest building on Feb 29 at Frogmill Hurley (SJF; FMF) and the only breeding record submitted involved a pair with 6 juvs at Maidenhead Thicket on Jun 28 (BDC)

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Common resident (Amber listed)

Like most of our more common species, the Dunnock has been ignored by the majority of observers. Records received do show that it maintains its widespread distribution throughout the county, especially as a garden bird. There were some counts of interest submitted this year including 15 in Winterbourne Wood on Feb 8 (JL), 16 Dinton Pastures CP on Feb 20 (RBor) and 16 in Bussock Wood on Apr 17 (JL).

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident

Unusually for such a common bird there was an absolute flood of records for 2008! There were 34 counts submitted of more than 10 birds from 23 locations throughout the county, the highest counts being 46 Wraysbury GPs on Jan 22 (DGC), 30 Dinton Pastures CP on Jan 30 (RBor), 30 Winterbourne on Feb 8 (JL), 31 Bussock Wood on Feb 11 (JL), 34 Boxford Common on Apr 22 (JL) and 63 along the Jubilee River on Sep 16 (BDC).

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*

Uncommon and local summer visitor, scarce passage migrant (Amber listed)

Records were received from 17 locations, 10 in W Berks, 6 in Mid Berks and 1 in E Berks. **Spring:** during the period Apr-May, birds were reported from 16 sites with song confirmed at 14 of these and involving at least 45 males. The first of the year was singing at Lavell's Lake on Apr 3 (JLan). There were no further reports until Apr 10 when one was singing at Theale Main GP (RCr). From this date birds quickly reoccupied favoured sites with 1-2 singing males noted at Boxford, Brimpton GP, Denford, Eversley GPs, K&A Canal Hamstead Lock to Dreweat's Lock, Kintbury CBs, Marsh Benham, Thatcham Marsh and Theale Main GP. Larger concentrations involved 8 singing Crookham Common on Apr 28 (JPM), 3 singing Dinton Pastures CP throughout May (MO), 4 singing Hosehill Lake on May 18 (JA), 3 singing Moatlands GP during Apr-May (MO) and up to 11 territories at Burghfield GPs from Apr-Jun (JA). Reports of singles at Hamstead Marshall on May 8 (RH) and West Newbury on May 10 (JBR), lacked details. **Breeding:** was recorded from 2 locations: at Burghfield GPs 5 nest sites were located on Jun 8, young were heard at 4 of these and a family party was discovered at the other on Jun 14 (JA). At Moatlands GP an adult was feeding 2 juvs on Jul 1 (RCr). **Autumn:** July records continued at both the breeding locations already mentioned and unusually the were 3 records in August: 1 Field Fm GP on Aug 3 (JA), 3 Theale Main GP on Aug 14 (RJB) and 1 Moatlands GP on Aug 17 (JA).

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Scarce passage migrant, winter visitor and rare summer visitor (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

The report of the state of the UK's Birds 2008 show that the breeding population of the Black Redstart has undergone a decline of between 25-50% in the last 25 years and in Berkshire this is mirrored by the low number of records now reported annually. **Spring passage:** began with a female reported from Eversley GPs on Mar 4 (KSm). Other female types were then located at Greenham Common on Apr 3 (JL et al) and Oare on Apr 9 (ADB). **Spring/Summer:** only 2 records both of single males were submitted from Central Reading this year, 1 singing on Apr 19 (MJS) and 1 calling on Jun 6 (RCr). The last year that breeding was confirmed was 2003! **Autumn:** a fem/imm was located at the Newbury

football ground on Oct 24 (The) and finally, a stunning adult male was located at QMR on Nov 6 (CDRH).

COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Localised summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant (Amber listed)

There were comparatively few spring passage records and the summering population continued with the decline first noted in 2007. However autumn passage was the heaviest ever recorded. **Spring:** passage commenced with a male at Oare on Apr 7 (AEDH) then, single males at Crookham Common on Apr 9 (JPM) and Whiteknights Park on Apr 15 (PG). Single females were then reported from Theale Main GP on Apr 21 (BU) and at both Clayfield Copse (ABT) and Woolhampton GP (KEM) before, lastly, a late male at Lower Fm GP on May 25 (SAG). Summer: birds were first reported from Swinley Forest on Apr 25 (1pr and 4 singing in the Wishmoor area, DJB) and as usual DJB and PJC carried out a survey of the area, locating just 20 territories, down from 30 in 2007. The gradual opening up of the forest by mountain bike groups has led to a higher level of disturbance in many areas. The bike tracks are quickly utilised by dog walkers (often with uncontrolled dogs) and this may cause birds to abandon areas where disturbance is too high. The only breeding record involved a pair feeding 3 juvs at Wishmoor Cross on May 29 (DJB). **Autumn:** at least 30 birds were reported from 19 locations, the site details are as follows: Wigmoreash Pond Inkpen, 1 f/imm Aug 3 and 2m and 1f on Aug 31 (SAG), Weathercock Hill, 1m Aug 4 (ABT), Lough Down, 1m Aug 7 (ABT), Woolhampton GPs, 1m Aug 9 (SAG) and 1 f/w male Aug 18 (KEM), Cock Marsh, 1f Aug 11, Sep 8 and Sep 25 (WAS), Lower Fm GP, 1m Aug 12 (JL) to Aug 25 (MO), Brimpton GP, 2 (1m 1j) Aug 14 (JPM), Larden Chase, 1m Aug 15 (CDRH), Brimpton, 1f/w Aug 25 (GEW), Sheep Down, 1j Aug 26 (ABT), Swinley Forest, 2 (1f/w 1m) Aug 28 (DJB), Greenham Common, 1 Aug 29 (AEDH) and 1 f/imm Sep 17 (RAH), Walbury Hill, 1 f/w Aug 30 (DJB) and 2j Sep 19 (ABT), Colnbrook 1 f/imm Sep 4 (CDRH), Widbrook Common, 2 (1m 1f) Sep 8 and 1f Sep 9 (WAS), Maidenhead Ditch, 1f Sep 8 (WAS), Cow Down, 1 Sep 13 (CR), Twyford, 1 f/w male Sep 20 (SPA) and finally Wraysbury, 1m Sep 26 (CDRH).

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Uncommon (and declining) passage migrant, formerly bred (Amber listed)

A tale of 2 passage periods! Spring records continued to be few with 18 birds reported from 11 sites; however the autumn passage was much improved with at least 76 birds reported from 22 sites. **Spring passage:** passage began with a male at the traditional site of Englefield on Apr 18 (RCr). Single individuals were then seen on another 15 dates to May 11 and 2 were seen at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 27 (KEM; MFW) and Lower Fm GP on Apr 29 (NC). The last spring record was of 1 at Greenham Common on May 17 (IW; JL). **Autumn:** began with a juv at Dorney W on Jul 29 (KPD); the next (another juv) was not until Aug 16 at Woolley Down (GDS). After this date passage became more widespread with high counts of 4 at Wishmoor Bottom on Aug 28 (DJB), 4 Colnbrook on Sep 3 and Oct 2 (CDRH), 4 Walbury Hill on Sep 7 (RF) and 6 at Remenham Hill on Sep 17 (ABT). Passage continued into October with (apart from the aforementioned record at Colnbrook) 2 Woolhampton GPs (GF) and 1 Wraysbury GPs (CDRH) on Oct 3, 1 Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 8 (PJC) and 1 Greenham Common on Oct 16 (JD) the last of the year.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquatus*

Increasingly common winter visitor and passage migrant, locally common summer visitor

With the general predominance of milder winters since the early nineteen nineties, the Stonechat has increased as both a winter visitor and summer resident. Records were received from 73 locations (Swinley Forest counting as one) with 32 in W Berks, 15 in Mid Berks and 26 in E Berks. The table shows the monthly totals at breeding and non-breeding sites throughout the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>Breeding areas</i>												
Greenham Common	4	4	6	16	20	6*	8*	6*	9	18	nc	3
Swinley Forest SPA	6	6	19	52	60*	62*	18*	37*	nc	10	3	4
Wildmoor Heath LNR	nc	1	nc	8	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1
Windsor Great Park	1	2	2	2	4	4	2	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Elsewhere</i>												
No. of sites	26	34	16	5	1	0	2	0	14	16	17	18
Minimum no. of birds	60	83	33	7	2	0	3	0	30	44	36	44
Totals	71	96	60	85	101	72	31	43	39	72	39	52

* = Counts not complete

First winter: birds were reported from 56 locations during the period. Most records involved 1–2 birds, usually pairs, but larger counts were made at 17 locations with peaks of 6 Fobney Marshes on Jan 2 (AVL), 6 Bury/Cow Down on Jan 16 (DF), 6 Englefield on Jan 22 (RCr), 11 Jubilee River (including Dorney W) on Jan 23 (BDC), 11 Hampstead Norreys on Feb 3 (DL), 10 Brimpton on Feb 24 (GEW), 5 Jealott’s Hill on Mar12 (PJC), 6 Greenham Common on Mar 15 (IW; JL) and 19 Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Mar 29 (DJB). The last 2 records involved returning breeding birds. **Spring/Summer:** numbers began to increase in the breeding areas from late March whilst wintering sites had been all but deserted by April with singles noted only from Englefield, Eversley GPs, Fobney and Hosehill Lake. Three males noted in scrubland near to Broadmoor Hospital on Apr 27 (PJC) were probably summering birds. Away from breeding sites the only May record concerned a pair at Bury Down/Cow Down on May 7 (CDRH). **Breeding:** was confirmed in 4 areas this year. In Swinley Forest, 26 territories were located mainly in the Wishmoor/Broadmoor Bottom area, however 3 were located further north (DJB; PJC; BMA). Breeding was confirmed at Wishmoor Bottom with at least 6 pairs feeding young on May 29 (DJB) and what may have been another brood was located on Jun 8 (PM) and 3 probable second broods were noted on Jul 21 (CDRH). Second broods were located in the Wishmoor and Lower Star post area where a total of 37 birds included 15+ juvs from 8 broods plus 6 f/w birds on Aug 28 (DJB). At Wildmoor Heath LNR where coverage was poor this year, 4 pairs had young on May 27 (DJB). For the first time in many years a pair bred in Windsor Great Park, rearing 2 young (CDRH; KPD). In W Berks, 8 territories were located on Greenham/Crookham Common (NC) and records show that at least 4 pairs bred (IW;JL). **Autumn/Second winter:** there was some post-breeding dispersal in July with 2 juvs at Aldworth on Jul 19 (MJT) and a male at Englefield on Jul 25 (RCr). However passage did not begin until September, the first being 1 at Eversley GPs on Sep 12 (BMA). From this date birds were noted at 39 locations and high counts include 5 Dorney W on Sep 26–27 (WMo; MFW), 9 Colnbrook on Oct 2 (CDRH), 6 Wraybury GPs (CDRH) and 18+ Greenham Common (ABT) on Oct 3 (indicating a period of strong passage), 10 Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 19

(JPe) and a report of 15 there on Nov 16 (BR), 5 Hodcott Down, West Ilsley on Dec 8 (ABT) and 5 nearby at Bury Down on Dec 14 (AEDH) that may be the same birds!

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant, very rare summer visitor, formally bred (Amber listed)

Records were received from 56 locations with 28 in W Berks, 14 in Mid Berks and 14 in E Berks. The tables below show the distribution of records throughout the 2 migration periods.

Spring

Week ending	16/3	23/3	30/3	6/4	13/4	20/4	27/4	4/5	11/5	18/5
Number of sites	6	4	10	7	6	7	11	10	3	3
Minimum no. of birds	18	22	34	14	14	11	24	29	8	3

Autumn

Week ending	27/7	3/8	10/8	17/8	24/8	1/9	8/9	15/9	22/9	29/9	6/10	13/10	20/10
Number of sites	1	2	5	7	7	12	11	11	11	6	2	4	2
Minimum no. of birds	1	3	10	27	20	27	16	30	25	24	3	6	5

Spring passage: began with a flock of 8 at Greenham/Crookham Common on Mar 14 (JD) numbers quickly increased here and 18 were noted on Mar 17 (NC) and 10 on Mar 30 (IS). Records came from a further 33 locations beginning with 2 at Brimpton (GEW), Pingewood GPs (MFW) and QMR (CDRH) all on Mar 15. High counts involved 5 by the Churn Rd, Compton Downs on Mar 25, 8 Streatley Warren on May 2, 5 QMR on May 4 and 6 on the Compton Downs on May 6 (all ABT). The last spring birds occurred on May 18 with singles at Brimpton GP (KEM) and QMR (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** a juvenile at Englefield on Jul 23 (RCr) was the first of several reports of juvs in late Jul/early Aug. Passage came to a peak from mid-August and remained at this level throughout September with birds being reported from 38 locations and high counts involved: 5 Wellbottom Down on Aug 15 (CDRH), 6 Compton Downs on Aug 17 (CRe), 6 QMR on Aug 21 (ABT), 8 Greenham Common on Aug 23 (IW; JL) with 7 there on Sep 12 (CDRH), 6 Bury Down on Aug 30 (CRe) with 7 there on Sep 9 (ABT) and 7 Lowbury Hill on Sep 27 (ABT). Birds were noted at 5 locations during October, the last dates being 1 Englefield on Oct 13 (RCr) and 4 at Greenham Common on Oct 16 (JD).

GREENLAND WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*

Scarce passage migrant

The only definite records of this form involved 3 males at Cockpole Green on Apr 25 (CDRH) and, in the autumn, 4 including an adult male at QMR on Aug 29 and 2 adult males at Colnbrook on Sep 8 (CDRH).

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce passage migrant (Red listed)

Strong passage through the middle of April accounted for all of Berkshires records in 2008. A male at Greenham Common on Apr 12 (KEM; ANS; MFW) began the series of records and was followed by 1 (not sexed) at Wraysbury (WHa) and a male at Farnborough (M R Kipps) on Apr 17. The first birds identified as females were seen on Apr 18 with singles at Inkpen Hill (MMc) and Widbrook Common (CDRH). A female at what has become a favoured

spot at Burnthouse Lane, Pingewood GPs showed to (KEM) on Apr 19 before giving itself up to others on Apr 22 (MO). Finally a male was located at Fawley on Apr 25 (ABT).

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident and winter visitor

Although widely under-recorded, 14 counts of 20 or more were submitted to the Database; the highest counts being 3 counts of 40 birds at Moatlands GP on Jul 23 (RCr) and at Waltham St Lawrence (PNe) and Winterbourne (MJT) both on Dec 11.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common winter visitor, has bred (Red listed) due to the decline in the British breeding population

Although under recorded, this common winter visitor was still reported from 124 locations throughout the county. The table shows the monthly status according to records received; only the highest monthly count from each site is included, so the totals should be looked upon as a minimum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	37	33	37	14	0	0	0	0	0	20	31	36
Minimum no. of birds	4171	3013	3828	511	0	0	0	0	0	856	1347	1950
No. of flocks 50-99	9	3	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	5
No. of flocks 100+	12	11	15	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	6

First winter: the year began with high numbers of birds being reported widely throughout the county. Peak counts in January included 1000+ at Cold Harbour on Jan 1 and 11 (DJB) and c600 at Padworth Lane GP on Jan 26 (KEM). Numbers dropped a little in February and March, and so did maximum counts; however 332 were noted at Englefield on Feb 16 (RCr) then 350 at Shurlock Row on Feb 29 (DJB), 500+ at Shottesbrooke on Mar 3 (DJB) and 750 at Arborfield on Mar 10 (DJB) as return passage increased. As migration diminished through April, at least 120 were still present at Combe Bottom on Apr 5 (IW; JL) and the last report from the period involved 22 at Waltham St Lawrence on Apr 24 (PBT). **Second winter:** large numbers of returning/passage birds arrived on Oct 18 with at least 488 birds being recorded from 12 locations, the largest numbers being 80 at Eversley GPs (MGLR), 90+ at Lower Fm GPs (MO) and c100 at Wishmoor Bottom (FJC). This influx was not sustained however, and apart from 250 at Old Warren near Fawley on Oct 20 (ABT) numbers for the remainder of the month were low. Distribution increased in Nov-Dec but numbers remained much lower than those of the first winter and the only counts that exceeded 200 birds were 220 flying NW in 3 flocks over QMR on Nov 1 (CDRH) and a flock of c500 in the Bury Down/Cow Down area from Nov 29 (FJC) to Dec 3 (JPe).

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident and winter visitor (Red listed)

Widely reported throughout the county, Song Thrushes, although still classified as red listed (due to previous large declines) are now doing well within the county. The 2008 Berkshire Bird Index, showed that birds were recorded in 86 of the 97 1 kilometre squares covered this year and represents a 35% increase since the 2000 BBI. **First winter:** most records involved 1-6 birds and singing territorial males were much in evidence from January onward.

High counts during the period included 6 singing at Braywick on Jan 23 (DF), 7 (3singing) at Littlewick Green on Feb 1 (DJB), 7 Winterbourne Wood on Feb 8 (JL), 16 of which 15 were singing in the Frilsham area on Feb 9 (RCr) and 6 singing at Caesars Camp on Feb 29 (DJB). **Spring/Summer:** song was heard from over 50 locations during the period, impressive counts involved 11 singing at Frilsham in Apr 13 (RCr), 22 Boxford Common on Apr 24 and 9 there on Jun 9 (JL), 8 singing in High Standinghill Woods, Windsor Forest on May 6 and 10 singing Rapley Lake, Swinley Forest on May 9 (DJB). Although breeding was thought to have occurred throughout the county, it was only confirmed at 6 sites. **Autumn/Second winter:** there were few records of interest during this period. Overall counts (due to lack of song?) were lower; the only reports of more than 5 were 6 at Lavell's Lake on Oct 10 (PBT), 10 on the Compton Downs on Dec 6 (DJB), 6 Hurley on Dec 9 and 8 at Summerleaze GP on Dec 16 (PNe).

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Red listed) due to the decline in the British breeding population

Like the Fieldfare, this common winter visitor has to some extent been under recorded throughout the winter months. This is partly due to observer familiarity with the species and its less obtrusive nature, being more likely to be encountered in woodlands than the Fieldfare. The table shows the monthly level of abundance throughout both winter periods, based on records received.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	35	31	42	5	0	0	0	0	1	35	28	30
Minimum no. of birds	1579	1240	1812	25	0	0	0	0	4	1846	562	825
Number of flocks of 50-99	9	8	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	3
Number of flocks of 100+	3	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

First winter: birds were widely reported from throughout the county. Flocks of 100–150 were noted at 7 locations, larger gatherings included 360 at Shurlock Row on Jan 15 with 250+ still present on Feb 29 (DJB), 300 Padworth Lane GP on Jan 26 (KEM), 200 Oakley Green on Feb 27 (BDC), 200+ Shottesbrooke on Mar 3 (DJB) and 300 at Arborfield on Mar 10 (DJB). Although a bird was located singing at Bucklebury Common on Mar 15 (NC), most birds were already beginning to depart and by April birds could only be located at 5 sites with 16 at Tilehurst on Apr 2 (JA), 3 Windsor Great Pk (DJB) and 2 Moor Copse (JLe) on Apr 6, 2 Windsor Forest on Apr 12 (DJB) and finally 2 Waltham St Lawrence on Apr 21 (PBT). **Second winter:** passage began on Sep 24 when 4 flew over Lavell's Lake (PBT) and was followed by a single flying W over Finchampstead on Oct 3 (RCr). Passage continued throughout October and the table shows the pattern of occurrence through the month.

	Oct 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No. of birds reported	0	1	21	0	26	21	3	1	5	0	2	6	0	0	10
	Oct 17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
No. of birds reported	13	967	145	64	0	16	15	63	72	12	29	32	0	210	112

Like the Fieldfare, the main influx occurred on Oct 18 when numerous small flocks moved

through the county in a westward direction. High counts on this day included 120 over Eversley GPs (MGLR), 200 over Greenham Common (NC) and c300 over Wishmoor Bottom (FJC) a further 135 in 3 flocks moved through Windsor Great Pk on Oct 19 (DJB) but there were no reports of any individual flock numbering over 100 birds. Passage occurred again on Oct 30 when 160 flew SW over Wokingham with a further 90 flying W there on Oct 31 (PBT). The rest of the second winter was quiet, the only flocks to exceed 100 being 220 at Stanford Dingley on Dec 17 (RCr) and 103 at Chapel Green, Wokingham on Dec 28 (BMA).

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common though declining resident (Amber listed)

Records were received from 124 locations throughout the county, making 2008 the best year since 2002. However this may be due to more observers now regularly recording a species that they are encountering less often! According to BBI data, based on the surveying of selected 1 kilometre squares in 2008, the Mistle Thrush has shown a decline of 65% since 2000 and this year only 38 out of 97 squares recorded the species. Most records involve just 1–2 individuals; double figure counts are now largely confined to the autumn when post-breeding flocks assemble in favourable areas; however 10 were feeding on polo pitches in Windsor Great Park on Jan 21 (DJB). Autumn gatherings included 10 Charvil on Jul 22 (SJo), 14 Wokingham STW on Jul 24 (DJB), 13 Windsor Great Pk on Aug 17, (DJB), 10 Cow Down on Sep 18 (ABT), 15 Wraybury GPs on Sep 24 (CDRH), 13 Eversley GPs on Sep 25 (BMA), 12 Finchampstead on Oct 18 (BMA) that due to the date may have been migrants and 11 at Whatcombe, South Fawley on Nov 15 (GDS). As well as the Oct 18 record, there are other reports that may be of migrating birds, notably 4 flying N over Lea Fm GP on Mar 18 (FJC), 6 flying N over Dinton Pastures CP on Mar 24 (FJC) and 7 flying S over Bray on Sep 8 (PBT). **Breeding:** breeding season records (Mar–Jun) came from 57 localities but breeding was only confirmed at 7 of these, all involving single pairs feeding young at the nest or attending juveniles. One was observed attacking and driving off a Sparrowhawk from a Maidenhead Court Garden on May 2 (DF).

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Localised resident in small numbers (Schedule 1)

Records were received from 27 locations, 18 in W Berks, 6 in Mid Berks and 3 in E Berks. All but 6 locations were situated within the Kennet Valley. Kennet Valley: the elusiveness of this species means that most records refer to singing males and song was noted along the R Kennet from Fobney Marshes in Reading through to the county boundary at Hungerford. As one would expect, records peaked in the breeding season (March–June) when the species is at its most vocal; peak counts at this time being 3 singing Burghfield GPs on Apr 19 (MFW) and Apr 27 (JA), 6 Thatcham Marsh on Apr 20 (JLe), 6 Woolhampton GPs on Apr 22 (GEW) and 4 singing at Moatlands GPs throughout May (MO). Compared to recent years these counts are somewhat lower than normal, but there seems no reason for the species to have declined, so it may be due to less coverage from observers. **Breeding:** evidence of breeding came from Burghfield GPs where 1 was observed carrying food on Jun 8 (JA), an adult with 2 young was noted at Thatcham March on Jun 26 (TBu) and later 3 juvs were ringed on Jul 13 and Aug 24 (IW; JL) and single juvs were ringed at Woolhampton GPs on Jul 11, Aug 7 and Sep 26 (JPM). Outside of the breeding season, the highest count involved 6+ at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 21 (IW; JL). Sites away from the Kennet: of these 6 locations, only Dinton Pastures CP proved to have birds regularly throughout the

year. At this site, song was first heard on Feb 13 (NC) and 1 regularly sang throughout April. Song was heard again from Sep 10 to Dec 2 (MO) with 2 heard on Sep 29 and Oct 17 (FJC). Elsewhere, single birds were noted at Wraysbury GPs on Jan 18 (FCC), Apr 26 (D Housely), 1 ringed on Sep 17 (RRG) and song on Nov 2 (KPD). One was reported from Eversley GPs on May 6 (KSm) but not subsequently, 1 sang by the R Lambourn at Westbrook on Jun 21 (MJT), 1 was reported from the Thames Valley Park on Sep 27 (PG) and singing there on Oct 28 (JLan) and finally 1 sang in Windsor Great Pk on Nov 2 (DJB).

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant which has declined in recent years (Red listed)

There were 16 records involving at least 25 birds from 11 locations in 2008; of these 11 records were in the spring (Apr-Jun) and 5 in late summer/autumn. The first records of the year involved 1 reeling at Chamberhouse Marsh (MFW) and a report of 5 in the Greenham Common area on Apr 16 (JL); the Greenham record must have involved migrants as this was the only record from this well watched site but the Chamberhouse individual remained and 2 were noted on Apr 22 (NC). Three were reeling at Thattham Marsh on Apr 20 (IW; JL) with 1 still present on May 10 (JA). Other April records involved 1 reeling at Caesars Camp, Swinley Forest on Apr 24 (BTB) and 1 at Wraysbury GPs on Apr 27 (DMo). May/June records involved 1 reeling at Eversley GPs on May 6 (KSm; C Rose), 3 at Freeman’s Marsh on May 7 and 1 there on Jun 5 (JWar), 1 reeling at Hosehill Lake on May 10 (ANS; KEM) and May 22 (KEM) and 1 seen at Wraysbury GPs on May 25 (CDRH). Later reports involved 1 at Freeman’s Marsh on Jul 19 (JWar), 1 Chamberhouse Marsh on Jul 22 (GF), 1 reeling at Burghfield Mill GP on Aug 10 (JA), 1, possibly 2 at Wishmoor Bottom on Aug 28 (DJB) and finally 1 juv ringed at Brimpton GPs on Sep 21 (JPM). Looking at the 2008 records, it seems that Grasshopper Warblers probably summered within the Thattham – Chamberhouse Marsh area and may have summered at the under-watched Freeman’s Marsh; while the low number of records from the once prolific Wraysbury GPs is a cause for concern. Although this species is always difficult to confirm breeding, it must come as a sobering thought that the last confirmed breeding record for Berkshire was in 1997 at Thattham Marsh!

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant

For what is a fairly common and familiar bird to many observers during the summer, it may come as a surprise to some that this species was only recorded from 32 locations throughout the county in 2008. The table shows the number of sites known to be occupied on a monthly basis during the year.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	18	23	11	11	12	12	0	0	0

Spring: the first records occurred on Apr 3 with singles singing at Lavell’s Lake, Dinton Pastures CP (KIT) and Thattham Marsh (NC). Numbers were slow to build up at first, but by the end of Apr most of the main sites had registered the species arrival. High counts included 5+ singing at Eversley GPs on Apr 15 (BMA), 11+ Thattham Marsh on Apr 19 (RRK) which increased to 20+ on May 3 (IW; JL), 5 singing Wargrave Marsh on Apr 23 (DJB), 8 Moatlands GP on Apr 27 (JA) and 5+ singing at Dorney W on Apr 29 (DJB) increasing to 13 singing on May 7 (BDC).

Other high counts occurred in May with 8 singing along the K&A Canal between Hamstead Lock and Dreweats Lock on May 4 (IW), up to 9 territories at Eversley GPs in May-June (MGLR) and 6 singing along the Maidenhead Ditch between Cookham and Maidenhead on May 11 (WAS). An interesting record involved 1 singing from a hawthorn hedge on the Compton Downs on May 2 (ABT), an area where this species bred in 2000. **Breeding:** was thought to have occurred at most sites where regularly reported through the summer but was only confirmed at 3 sites. At Dorney W, at least 2 pairs were feeding young on Jun 4 (BDC), an adult was attending 2 juvs at Eversley GPs on Jun 14 (BMA) and at Thatcham Marsh, at least 24 juveniles were ringed between Jun 14 and Jul 26 (IW; JL). **Autumn:** from July birds began to vacate the breeding areas. This exodus however was barely noticed by many observers and all of the high counts came from the nets of ringers including 10 at Woolhampton on Aug 29 (JPM) and, of a total of 30 ringed in Windsor Great Park, 21 were ringed in August (RRG). Small numbers were noted in a maize crop at Englefield during Aug and early Sep (RCr). The last birds of the year were at the end of September with 2 at Thatcham Marsh (IW; JL) and 1 Windsor Great Pk (DJB) on Sep 28 and finally 1 ringed at Woolhampton GPs on Sep 29 (JPM).

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant

This reedbed specialist was reported from 29 locations throughout the county in 2008, 11 in W Berks, 7 in Mid Berks and 12 in E Berks. Generally this species is rather thinly distributed throughout the counties river systems, with most sites holding between 1-5 pairs. However there are at least 9 sites where habitat allows this species to be very common and these sites hold the vast majority of Berkshire's breeding population (note: no records were received from the usually productive site of Englemere Pond this year). **Spring/Summer:** reported from mid-April when single singing males were located at Brimpton GP (ABT) and Burghfield Mill GP (KEM) on Apr 13 and at Twyford GPs on Apr 14 (MHT). The first large counts involved 15 singing at Moatlands GPs on Apr 27 (JA) and 10 singing in Windsor Great Pk, also on Apr 27, increasing to 18+ singing throughout May (DJB) and 96 were ringed there during the year by the RRG. At least 12 were singing at Dorney W on Apr 29 (BAJC), and the widespread planting of reeds at this site has benefited this species immensely and 52 were counted singing there on May 7 (BDC). Elsewhere, although no thorough counts were attempted, it was clear that large numbers were present at Thatcham Marsh and Woolhampton GPs while at Eversley GPs, 8 territories were located (MGLR), 8 were noted at Brimpton GP on May 5 and 7 sang along the Maidenhead Ditch on May 29 (WAS). Eventually song was heard from 27 locations during the period including 1 singing from scrub at Cold Harbour on Jun 20 (DJB). **Breeding:** like the Sedge Warbler, it is thought that breeding occurred at many sites although it was only confirmed at 5. In Windsor Great Pk several pairs were confirmed as breeding (DJB), 1 pair bred at Bray GP (WAS), at least 2 pairs bred on the Maidenhead Ditch (WAS; BDC), of the 69 (37 singing) birds at Dorney W on Jun 6 (BDC) several were recently fledged juvs and 56+ juvs were ringed at Thatcham Marsh from Jun 14 to Aug 10 (IW; JL). **Autumn:** passage began in July and high counts involved 16 ringed at Woolhampton GPs on Aug 22 (JPM), 11 ringed at Thatcham Marsh (IW; JL) and 8 seen in Windsor Great Pk on Sep 14 (DJB). The last of the year were one ringed at Woolhampton GP on Oct 10 (JPM) and 1 observed at Thatcham Marsh on Oct 12 (IW).

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor

Although under-recorded during the summer months, records received do suggest that the Blackcap has maintained its status as one of our most common summer visitors, whilst the recent run of mild winters has allowed more birds to winter successfully within the county. The table shows the species status throughout both winter periods based on minimum counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar*	Nov	Dec
No. of W Berks sites	4	8	2	3	3
No. of birds in W Berks	4 (2m, 1f, 2 n/s)	8 (5m, 2f, 1 n/s)	2 (1m, 1 n/s)	3 (1m, 1f, 1 n/s)	4 (2m, 1f, 1 n/s)
No. of M Berks sites	15	10	5	5	15
No. of birds in M Berks	20 (14m, 6f)	13 (8m, 4f, 1 n/s)	6 (4m, 2f)	11 (7m, 4f)	21 (14m, 4f, 3 n/s)
No. of E Berks sites	8	8	5	4	8
No. of birds in E Berks	9 (7m, 1f, 1 n/s)	14 (7m, 4f, 3 n/s)	8 (4m, 3f, 1 n/s)	3 (3m, 1f)	14 (8m, 5f, 1 n/s)
Total no. of birds (min)	33	35	16	17	39

* Only records before March 20 have been used, to try to eliminate spring migrants. n/s = not sexed

First winter: recorded from 49 locations throughout the county, almost all being observer's gardens. Population densities mirrored that of local observers and it is likely that many wintering birds went un-noticed in less bird friendly areas. Most counts involved 1–2 birds with males easily out-numbering females; the highest count involved 3 (2m 1f) in a garden at Bullbrook, Bracknell on Feb 6 (RJB) and 3 (1m 2f) in a garden at Woodlands Park, Maidenhead on Feb 23 increasing to 4 (2m 2f) in early March (DJB), these birds were (at times) observed feeding on Birch sap escaping from holes that had been made by Blue Tits. Most birds had vacated their wintering sites by mid-March, but some remained to the end of the month with late birds noted on Apr 6 at Early (RR) and Tilehurst (a window strike; JLe).

Spring/Summer: the first of what were probably summer migrants arrived in mid-March with singing males at Dorney Wetlands on Mar 17 (BDC) and Sandhurst STW on Mar 18 (MGM). By April birds had occupied most of their summer haunts, the most productive sites generally being in lowland areas, singing birds being less numerous on the Downs. High day counts and significant survey results came from Burghfield GPs where 15 were noted on Apr 8 (RCr) and 12 at Boxford Common on Jun 9 (JL). In E Berks surveys by DJB located 23 territories in Windsor Forest, 33 in Swinley Park and 19 in Swinley Forest, elsewhere 12 territories were noted at Eversley GPs (MGLR). **Breeding:** was thought to have occurred throughout the county but breeding was only confirmed at 10 sites. **Autumn passage:** was noted at many sites through Aug-Sep with many counts of up to 10 birds. At Wraybury GPs, a total of 451 birds were ringed with most (348) in September, the highest day total being 73 on Sep 20 (RRG). Passage continued into October and 12 were seen together at Strand Lane, Cookham on Oct 13 (BDC). The last probable local birds were single males at Moatlands GP on Nov 8 (JA) and at Stanford Dingley on Nov 9 (RCr). **Second winter:** the first returning garden bird was a male at Binfield on Nov 11 (MAS). Birds were reported from 30 mostly garden sites and, like the first winter, records were mainly of 1–2 birds and again males were most numerous. High counts involved 5 (2m 3f) feeding together on Callicarpa berries at Emmer Green on Nov 27 (HRN), 5 (4m 1f) at Cookham on Dec 9 (BDC) and at least 4 visiting a Caversham Heights garden during Dec (TGB).

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant

Records were received from 50 locations throughout the county, the majority of records coming during May-June. **Spring:** the first records involved 2 at Winnersh on Apr 12 (RAnG) and 2 at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 18 (GEW). Records came from a further 11 sites in April but it was in May that numbers increased dramatically with records coming from 37 locations, high counts being 8 (7 singing) at Eversley GPs on May 2 (DJB), 10 Burghfield GPs on May 5 (JA) and 10 Wraysbury GPs on May 11 (DHo). Later surveys indicated that at least 16 males held territories at Eversley GPs during the summer, an increase from 12 in 2007 (MGLR) and 9 territories were located in Swinley Forest (DJB). **Breeding:** evidence that would confirm breeding came from 6 sites: a female with a brood patch was ringed at Thatcham Marsh on Jun 1 (IW; JL), an adult was attending a juv at Dorney W on Jun 4 (BDC), 6 nest sites were located at Burghfield GPs during June (JA), 2 ads and 3 juvs were ringed at Woolhampton GPs on Jun 20 (JPM) and a family party were noted there on Jul 2 (TBu), an adult was feeding young in scrub near Woodley on Jul 8 (MSFW) and 2 family parties were located at Dinton Pastures on Jul 13 (FJC). Ringing: a small number were ringed in the west of the county, but at Wraysbury GPs 47 were ringed from Apr to Sep (a 55% decline on totals for 2007), the majority in Jul-Aug (RRG); one that was controlled on May 3 (RRG) had been ringed as an adult at Dinton Pastures CP in Apr 2005. **Autumn:** from July onwards, birds became increasingly difficult to locate and records were received from only 7 locations in both Jul-Aug and 5 in Sep. The highest count involved 9 at Burghfield GPs on Aug 2 (JA). All 9 September records involved single birds except for 3 at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 3 (RRG). The last record involved 1 seen at Burghfield GPs on Sep 28 (JA).

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Thinly but widely distributed summer visitor and passage migrant, which has declined in recent years

Records were received from 53 locations evenly spread throughout the county. The table shows the monthly status based on records received, known singing males are in brackets.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	0	0	0	21	23	10	8	10	6	0	0	0
Minimum no. of birds	0	0	0	24(19)	32(20)	16(4)	14	26	17	0	0	0

Spring: passage began on Apr 20 when a male was singing at Swallowfield (BMA) and was followed by singing birds at Brimpton, Frilsham and Hoe Benham on Apr 22. Birds were widespread by the end of April, high counts being 2 singing at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures on Apr 27 (MJM) and 3 singing at Ashampstead on Apr 28 (JLe). May records were mainly of 1–3 birds; however 6 were noted on the Compton Downs on May 2 (ABT). BBI survey results during the spring/summer period was disappointing for this species, with only 12 BBI squares out of 97 holding birds in 2008, the BBS long term trend from 1970–2007 shows a decline of 16% whilst the 1995–2007 trend shows a decline of only 1% so hopefully populations are beginning to stabilise. **Breeding:** was confirmed at 3 locations: Dorney W, adults feeding 2 juvs on Jun 4 (BDC), at Top Farm, Ashley Hill, a pair was attending 2 juvs on Jun 25 (BDC) and at Moatlands GP where a pair with 2 juvs were noted on Jul 26 (JA), although the lateness of this record may indicate non-local origin. **Autumn:** passage was noted from late July into September, most sight records involving 1–2 birds except for 4 together at Woolhampton GPs on Aug 30 (ABT). During this period, small numbers were

ringed throughout the county, the largest total coming from Wraysbury GPs where the RRG caught and ringed 21 birds (3 in Jul, 10 in Aug and 8 in Sep). The Sep total compares poorly to the 2006–7 totals of 18 and 17 birds ringed and mirrors the poor total for Sep 2005; in fact only 27 Lesser Whitethroats were ringed in the whole of the RRG recording area (much of which is outside Berks) representing the lowest annual total ever for the species! The last Berks record was of 1 at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 29 (CDRH).

COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

This species is doing well in Berkshire with Database records coming from 76 locations, 60 of which produced records indicative of at least summering. The BBI annual survey, recorded birds present in 63 of the 97 squares surveyed this year and recent trends show that this is one of the few summer migrants that is now on the increase (i.e. the BBS trend from 1995–2007 shows an increase of 18% while the BBI trend for the same period shows an increase of 43%). **Spring:** 1 noted at Brimpton on Apr 1 (GEW) is the earliest since 2002. This was followed by 2 at Pinkneys Green on Apr 10 (BR) before the main arrival began on Apr 13, quickly becoming widespread. High counts included 12 at Sheepdrove on Apr 26 (ABT), 21 singing between Woolhampton and Aldermaston on Apr 27 (RCr), 19 Territories in the Dorney W/Slough SF area in late Apr–early May (DJB; BDC), 10 Lands' End, Farnborough on May 9 (GJS), 14 (12 singing) on the Ridgeway, Compton Downs on May 14 (DJB), 10+ territories at Cold Harbour during May–June (DJB), 12 singing Wildmoor Heath on May 27 (DJB), 13 Wraysbury GPs on Jun 7 (DGC) and 11 territories at Eversley GPs (MGLR) and 14 territories during the summer at Wishmoor Bottom (DJB). **Breeding:** was suspected at many sites and confirmed at Brightwalton Common, Brimpton, Cold Harbour, Maidenhead Ditch, Dorney W, Lea Fm GP, Twyford GP and Eversley GPs. **Autumn:** there were only 10 sight records submitted for July, of which 4 may have involved possible migrants. During Aug–Sep, most records involved 1–5 birds, higher counts coming from ringing operations, notably at Wraysbury GPs where the RRG ringed 100 birds throughout the year, 75 in the autumn period with another 49 controlled, the highest Sep total was 8 on the 3rd (RRG). This site also held the last of the year with 1 on Sep 24 (CDRH).

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

Resident in small numbers in suitable habitat, rare away from breeding sites (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Dartford Warblers were reported from 8 locations in 2008, 3 in W Berks, 1 in Mid Berks and 4 in E Berks; although Swinley Forest SPA has been counted as one location, birds were recorded from 6 different areas within its boundaries. **First winter:** in E Berks, most records came from Swinley Forest where high counts involved 11 at Wishmoor Bottom on Jan 1 (DJB) and 7 there on Feb 2 (ABT) while 4 were present at Caesars Camp on Jan 30 (BMA). Elsewhere 1 male was noted at Swinley Brickpits on Feb 9 (DJB) and 1 was seen at Wellington College Heath on Feb 26 (DJS). In Mid Berks a pair was located at Padworth Common on Jan 22 (K Tucker) and W Berks records all came from Greenham/Crookham Common with 1–2 seen regularly throughout the period (MO). **Spring/Summer:** the annual survey of Swinley Forest uncovered 29 territories with at least 4 pairs confirmed as breeding in May–June (DJB; PJC) and another 6 juvs from 3 broods located on Aug 28, indicating successful second broods (DJB). A further record of 1 at Pudding Hill, near the Lookout on Jun 11 (BMA) is the first record from this part of the forest at this time of year. Away from Swinley Forest, at least 1 pair bred at Wellington College Heath (RRG) and DJS

located 4 territories at the under-watched Wildmoor Heath BBOWT Reserve. Further west 1 sang at Bucklebury Common on May 2 (RCr) while numbers increased at Greenham/Crookham Common with at least 4 birds present and breeding was confirmed when a pair was observed carrying food on Jun 26 (JPM) and a juv was ringed on Aug 9 (JPM) and a juv was seen on Aug 11 (ABT). Finally a pair was reported breeding at Padworth Common (TGB) – the first modern day Mid Berks breeding record. **Autumn/Second winter:** birds continued to be reported from the main sites throughout this period with highs of 8 at Greenham/Crookham Common on Sep 16–17 (RPy; RAH), 10 Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 24 (DJB) and Nov 16 (BR) and 8 in the Wishmoor-Lower Star Post area on Dec 22 (DJB). Elsewhere 1 was present at Lower Farm GP on Oct 17–18 (SAG et al) and 1 at Wildmoor Heath on Dec 12 (DJW; DJS).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER

2007 One was found on the patio of a Bracknell garden, having possibly struck a window, on Oct 19th (Paul Kingsnorth); it was photographed and subsequently flew off but was not seen subsequently.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Formerly an uncommon summer visitor now an increasingly rare passage migrant (Red listed)

The slight increase in records in 2007 was not maintained in 2008 and only 3 migrants were reported during the year; in fact the plight of this species is such that it has now been added to the Red List due to a national decline of 62% since 1994 (State of the UK's Birds 2008).

Spring: a singing male was located in reasonable habitat at Wood End on Apr 28–29 (DJB et al) and another was singing near to Lower Star Post (a once regular site) in Swinley Forest on May 10–12, (DMo et al) and intermittently to May 24 (MDL). **Autumn:** records at this time of year are now rare! One caught and ringed at Kintbury Cressbeds on Aug 28 (RGS) being the first autumn record since 2003.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

A common summer visitor and scarce but increasing winter visitor

Although the Chiffchaff is diligently recorded throughout the winter months, and to a lesser extent during migration, the species is vastly under-recorded during the summer months. Records were received from 165 locations and the table shows the monthly status throughout the year, based on records submitted.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May–Jul*	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of locations where recorded	9	13	73	57	48	22	39	21	12	11

* = Summer records amalgamated to produce a more accurate total although still under-recorded!

Jan-Feb: records were received from 19 locations, most sites holding 1–2 birds and including 1 showing eastern race characteristics at Woolhampton GPs on Feb 3 (GEW) and Feb 21 (KEM). Higher counts involved 3 at Dorney W on Jan 23 (BDC), 7 including 1 abietinus type (which was still present on Feb 27) at Sandhurst STW on Feb 11 (PBT) and 3 at Fobney Meadows on Feb 29 (DJS). **Spring/Summer:** March passage began slowly and it was not until Mar 9–10 that numbers began to increase above Jan/Feb levels. The beginning of the main influx occurred on Mar 15 when birds were reported from at least 16 locations. The highest March count involved 10 at Dinton Pastures CP on Mar 23 (MJF). From April, singing birds were encountered in most habitat types found in the county as long as trees

were present. High counts involved 10 Woolhampton GPs on Apr 4 (GEW), 15 Wraysbury GPs on Apr 5 (DGC), 10+ South Lake, Earley on Apr 6 (MSFW), 11 Freeman’s Marsh on Apr 6 and May 5 (JWar) and 10+ Thatcham Marsh on Apr 13 (IW; JL). Later in the season, survey results located 58 territories in Swinley Forest (DJB), 12 territories at Eversley GPs (MGLR), 66 territories in Windsor Forest and 25 territories in Swinley Park (DJB). It is thought that breeding occurred widely, however due to the under recording of this species during this period, it was confirmed at only 10 localities. **Autumn/Second winter:** passage occurred from August with highs of 10+ in one area of Windsor Great Pk on Aug 17 (DJB) and 15 at Horseshoe Lake, Eversley GPs on Aug 23 (BMA). Passage numbers peaked in September with high counts of c20 at Cock Marsh on Sep 15 (WAS) and 63 trapped at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 17 (RRG) – part of a total of 228 birds ringed at that site during the month. Numbers quickly fell during October and by Nov 12 the last of what were probably passage birds had left. There followed a gap of 11 days before the first winter record (1 Lower Fm GP on Nov 23: NC) and thereafter, birds were located at 15 sites with high counts being 6 at Wraysbury GPs on Nov 28 (CDRH), 4 at Eton Wick on Dec 14 (KPD), 3 Sandhurst STW on Dec 29 (ABT) and 4 at Midgham on Dec 30 (CDRH); otherwise all records involved 1–2 birds. A f/w controlled at Wraysbury GPs on Nov 29 had been ringed at Icklesham, East Sussex on Nov 13. The late date and direction of movement may relate to this bird being a continental bird wintering in Britain.

SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

Scarce winter visitor

Breeding no closer to Britain than the Ural Mountains in Russia, this is one of very few truly eastern passerines to have been recorded in Berkshire. The fact that this subspecies is now reported almost annually within the county is remarkable when one considers that its normal wintering range lies in the Indian Sub-continent. In 2008 birds were reported from 2 locations: at Sandhurst STW, one was located on Feb 9 and remained with up to 7 nominate-type Chiffchaffs to Mar 5 (MO). This bird was heard to sing, but it is not clear as to whether the call was heard (another eastern type seen here on Feb 11, and remaining into March, was thought by some to be another *tristis* while others thought the bird to be a pale *abietinus*). What may have been this individual returned to Sandhurst STW in the second winter being noted on Dec 15, 19 and 22 (BBB) and remained into 2009 when its call was heard. Another presumed *tristis* was located at Horton GP on Dec 16 (CDRH); although all the classic features were noted, the bird was not heard to call – the only burst being drowned out by a passing Boeing 747!

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Common and widespread (though declining) summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber listed)

A poor year! Records were received from 74 locations throughout the county in 2008. The table shows the monthly status, based on occupied sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of occupied sites	0	0	6	43	20	10	10	18	15	0	0	0

Although under recorded after the initial spring arrival, many observers are now recording this species more regularly and records show that the summering population continues to decline. **Spring:** passage began in late March with the first arriving at Dinton Pastures on Mar 29 (PJC). A further 5 sites held birds on Mar 30–31 before the main arrival in early

April; however numbers were low and the highest April counts were 7 Dinton Pastures CP on Apr 10 (JBe), 10 Wraysbury GPs on Apr 17 (WHa) and 14 singing in the Wishmoor area of Swinley Forest on Apr 25 (DJB). Numbers did not improve in May and many old regular sites held very few birds or none at all! High counts at this time came from heaths or higher ground eg 9 were singing on the Compton Downs on May 14 and 8 sang at Wildmoor Heath on May 27 (DJB). Summer: the regular survey of the East Berks Heaths and Woodlands from Swinley Forest to Windsor Forest by DJB produced only 62 territories, a massive decline compared to only 5 years ago when 165 territories were found in 2003. The only confirmed breeding record involved a pair at Wraysbury GPs (RRG). **Autumn:** migrants began to move through the county from late July but nowhere recorded high numbers. Ringing totals were also down and only 27 birds were ringed at Wraysbury GPs from July onward; in-fact the year's total of 33 birds ringed at Wraysbury was less than half the 2007 total of 70 (RRG). Passage continued to late September, the last of the year being 2 at Farnborough Down on Sep 28 (GDS).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Common, locally abundant resident and winter visitor (Amber listed)

Widely recorded throughout the county, although under recorded, Goldcrests continue to be a common bird especially in our more wooded areas. **First winter:** high counts included 50 at Caesars Camp, Swinley Forest on Jan 1 (WAN) and 18 there Jan 16 (BMA), 10 at Frilsham on Feb 9 (RCr) and 9 at Bussock Wood on Feb 11 (JL). **Spring/Summer:** although not extensively surveyed in SE Berks, surveys were undertaken at Swinley Park where 92 territories were located and in Windsor Forest where 118 territories were found (DJB). Elsewhere smaller counts came from Boxford Common with 9 on Jun 9 (JL), 9 Lower Green on Aug 3 (RH) and 15 Eversley GPs on Aug 14 (JPe). Breeding was thought to have occurred at many sites (27 locations recording song in Apr-Jun) but was only confirmed at 7. **Autumn/Second winter:** there were few counts of interest: c20 were noted at Snelmore Common on Sep 16 (JL), 15 Padworth Common on Oct 25 (TGB), 13 Maidenhead Thicket on Nov 11 (PNe), 15 Wraysbury GPs on Nov 12 (RTheobald) and 13 at White Waltham on Dec 22 (PNe).

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce visitor to most of Berkshire in all seasons, however a locally common summer visitor in selected woodlands in the east (Schedule 1 and Amber listed)

Winter: the only winter records came from Heath Lake, where 3 were seen together on Feb 16 (DJS), 1 at Upper Star Post, Swinley Forest on Nov 14 (WAN) and Wellington College where 5 were ringed during the 2 winter periods (RRG). **Spring/Summer:** migrants were noted from late March when a male was ringed at Greenham Common on Mar 26 (NC), 1 was with Goldcrests at Moor Copse LNR on Mar 27 (R J Hardie), a f/w male was ringed at Wokefield Common on Apr 2 (per TGB) [and 1 singing from just over the county boundary in Hants at Eversley GPs on Apr 25 could be heard from the Berks bank of R Blackwater (DJB)]. The main stronghold for this species remains in East Berks where survey work found birds in 6 woodland blocks. First noted back on the summering sites on Mar 7, when 3 were singing, a total of 78 territories (a record) were located and breeding was confirmed at 2 localities; involving 1 pair feeding young at a nest in a spruce plus a pair feeding 5 newly fledged juvs on Jun 9 and 1 pair feeding young at the nest and a male feeding 3 juvs nearby on Jun 13. High day counts included 20 singing and 2f on May 10 and 21 singing plus 1-2f on Jun 6 from different woodlands (DJB). Elsewhere, 1 was singing in woodlands in

W Berks on Apr 24 and a juv was located in the same area on Jul 20 (ABT), 1 was singing Finchampstead Ridges on Apr 22 with 2 singing there on Jun 8 (RM), whilst another male sang from a Wokingham garden on May 20 (PBT). Finally a juv male was ringed at Woolhampton on Aug 28 (JPM).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Widespread but thinly distributed summer visitor and passage migrant which has declined in recent years (Red listed)

Records were received from 51 locations: 29 in W Berks, 10 in Mid Berks and 12 in E Berks and the table shows monthly status based on records received (the number of young from confirmed Berks breeding are shown in brackets in the June column).

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Number of sites	0	22	13	10	15	7	0
Number of birds reported	0	52	55(12)	19	38	7	0

Spring: early birds were reported on May 2 from Dorney W (WMO) and Caesars Camp, Swinley Forest (1 singing DJB). High day counts in May involved 3 singing in both Swinley Forest on May 9 and Windsor Forest on May 11 (DJB), all other counts involving 1–2 birds.

Breeding: nest building was observed at Caesars Camp on Jun 6 (WAN) and occupied nests or pairs feeding recently-fledged young were located at 2 sites near Englefield (R Rose), Temple GC (BDC; CDRH), Brightwalton (GDS), Basildon Pk (per JLe), Crookham Common (JPM), Lardon Chase, Streatley (MJM) and Streatley Warren (SPA) in June-July. Surveys in Swinley Forest located 7 territories and 5 territories were found in Windsor Forest (DJB) however none were found in Swinley Park this year. **Autumn:** passage had already begun by late July and peaked in August when 10 were reported from the Lough Down-Larden Chase area on Aug 7 (ABT) with 8 including some juvs still present on Aug 15 (CDRH). Elsewhere what may have been locally bred family parties were noted in Windsor Great Pk on Aug 13 (JBe) and Swinley Forest on Aug 16 (DJS). The last multiple count involved 3 at Denford on Aug 31 (RH) and all 7 September records were of single birds, the last being at Wraybury GPs on Sep 26 (CDRH) and at Dorney W on Sep 28 (WMO).

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Scarce but annual passage migrant, very rare summer visitor (Amber listed)

Like so many of our summer visitors the Pied Flycatcher has undergone a severe decline in recent years (State of the UK's birds 2008) and this has been mirrored in the lower numbers of migrants that are now being recorded in Berkshire. In 2008 only 2 records were submitted, both being spring migrants. A male was located on Greenham Common on Apr 12 (MFW et al) and a female was then located at Wooshill, Wokingham on Apr 20 (EN et al).

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

Very scarce winter visitor and now rare summer visitor that has bred (Amber listed)

The only record this year involved 2 (1m) birds seen briefly at Freeman's Marsh on Nov 6 (JLe).

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common and widespread resident

The largest counts reported this year involved 42 at Burghfield Mill GP on Aug 17 (JA) and 40 at Theale Main GP on Sep 23 (RJB). Forty birds were ringed during the year at Silwood Pk (RRG) and an individual caught at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 3 (RRG) had been ringed at this site on Oct 9 1999 and is the oldest example of this species recorded by the BTO! Breeding was thought to have occurred throughout the county and included a pair nest-building at Marsh Benham on the early date of Feb 2 (DJB).

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident

There were some interesting records this year. At Silwood Park, the RRG ringed a total of 1035 birds, 814 being pulli from 166 broods. Sixty-nine eggs were laid in 6 nest boxes at Englefield, fledging 65 (JPM) and at Eversley GPs 8 nest boxes were used and 36 young fledged (MGLR). Other counts of note involved 65 in Winterbourne Wood on Feb 8 (JL), 67 in Bussock Wood on Apr 22 (JL) and 50 (mostly juvs) at Brimpton on Jul 13 (GEW).

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident

On the Englefield Estate, 9 nest boxes were used with 76 young fledging from a total of 82 eggs laid (JPM) whilst monitoring of nest boxes at Eversley GPs resulted in 22 nest boxes used, 188 eggs laid and 121 young fledging (MGLR). Silwood Park ringing totals for the year resulted in 133 birds ringed with only 4 being pulli (RRG). Elsewhere the highest counts involved 36 at Warren Row on Dec 24 and 35 at Cranbourne on Dec 31 (PNe). A bird with a deformed upper mandible (1 inch long and curved) was found in a Maidens Green garden on Jan 11 (C Howarth-Booth) and a melanistic individual was located in a Hurst garden on Dec 27 (ADB).

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common, locally abundant resident

Although more patchy in its distribution within Berkshire, the Coal Tit is the most common tit in our coniferous woodlands. The largest population densities are centred in the belt of conifer and pine woodlands from Mortimer west to Hermitage and in Swinley and Windsor Forests, where the species is abundant. However the species is scarce at some of our better known bird sites such as Brimpton GP, Dinton Pastures CP and Eversley GPs and is virtually absent from the Berkshire Downs. Unlike Great and Blue Tits, the species is an uncommon visitor to our gardens and was only recorded from 10 such locations in 2008. Within the county, the Coal Tit is an increasing species and the BBI trend from 2000 to 2008 shows an increase of 93%; in 2008 37 of the 97 BBI squares covered held birds. The highest counts all came from the SE of the county. At Swinley Park, 66 territories were mapped during the Apr-Jun survey, 27 were singing in Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 11 and there were counts of 30+ on Jun 9 and 60 on Jun 14 in different parts of Windsor Forest (all DJB) and included young. Breeding was confirmed at 9 locations but probably occurred at many more.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

Uncommon and declining resident, now almost completely confined to W Berks (Red listed)

The steep decline that this species has undergone in the last 30–40 years continues; nationally long term trends from 1970–2007 show a massive decline of 89% whilst the short term trend from 1994–2007 records a 67% decline (State of the UK's Birds 2008). Locally the picture is no different and the species has long since disappeared from the county east of Reading. In 2008, records were received from only 10 locations, all in W Berks. The main stronghold continues to be in the SW of the county, especially Combe Wood where 1–3 birds were recorded regularly throughout the year. Nearby a pair bred at West Woodhay Down, rearing at least 4 young (IW; JL) and singles were noted at Walbury Hill on Aug 30 (DJB) and Sep 19 (ABT) and at Sheepless Hill on Oct 12 (MJT). Records away from this area involved 1 Bowdown Woods on Jan 14 (NC), 2 Woolhampton GP on Jan 25 (JPM), 1 Frilsham on Jan 30 with 2 there on Apr 22 (RCr), 1 Boxford Common on Apr 22–25 and 2 on Jul 30 (JL), 1 caught at Thatcham Marsh on Jun 26 (IW; JL) had been ringed there in 2007 and finally singles at Kintbury Cressbeds on Aug 19, Sep 7 and Dec 3 (RGS).

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

Locally common resident in W Berks, an uncommon and declining resident in M and E Berks (Red listed)

Records were received from 64 locations, 43 in W Berks, 10 in Mid Berks and 11 in E Berks. These figures are close to those of 2006–7 and may be due to a slowing in the rate of decline (BBS long term = 67%; BBS short term = 22%). The monthly status based on records received is shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	14	16	8	15	5	7	8	6	8	7	13	12
Minimum number of birds	23	37	13	31	11	9	13	7	10	9	31	15

Jan-Mar: birds were reported from 30 locations with most records involving 1–3 birds; higher counts involved 12 at Combe Wood on Feb 2 (DJB) and 5 at Winterbourne Wood on Feb 8 (JL). **Apr-Jun:** reported from 20 sites, high counts being 5 at Boxford Common on Apr 22 (JL) and 4 at Combe Wood on May 8 (MJD); 3 at High Standinghill Woods, Windsor Forest on Apr 26 was the highest E Berks count (DJB). Breeding was suspected at several sites, however was only confirmed at Bowdown Woods (SAG), Eling (JLe), Moor Copse (JA) and Snelmore Common (MJT). **Jul-Aug:** reported from 18 sites, it is at this time that some dispersal is noted away from the main areas. Garden sightings came from 3 locations whilst other isolated records came from Moatlands GP, Sole Common and the Compton Downs. No counts exceeded 3 birds. **Oct-Dec:** reported from 23 sites, high counts involved 4 at Ufton Woods on Nov 6 (RCr), 6+ Bagnor Cressbeds on Nov 15 (IW; JL) and 4 at Lower Green, Inkpen on Nov 16 (RH). Concluding this account, records do point to a still widespread and fairly substantial population in the west of the county but the lack of records as one moves east through the county continues to be a cause for concern and there were no reports away from the Windsor and Maidenhead areas in E Berks!

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Common and widespread resident

Records were received from throughout the county except from the downlands in the NW, where this species is virtually absent. The BBI trend from 1994–2008 shows a small decline of 12% however these figures contradict the national BBS trend spanning 1995 – 2007 which showed an increase of 47%, whilst the long term BBS trend has shown this species to have undergone a substantial increase of 171% (State of the UK's Birds 2008). Most non-breeding records involved 1–6 birds; higher counts were 7 Combe Wood, Feb 2 (DJB), 7 Bussock Wood, Apr 17 (JL), 8 Frilsham, Apr 22 (RCr) and 9 High Standinghill Woods on Jun 16 (DJB); 20 birds were ringed by the RRG at Silwood Pk during the year. **Breeding:** although somewhat under-recorded, breeding was confirmed at 11 locations, all but one site recording single pairs; the exception was Swinley Pk where at least 3 pairs were successful (DJB).

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident

Although under-recorded, enough records were submitted to show that this species continues to maintain its status as one of our more common woodland species even though its presence is sometimes difficult to confirm. The species' distribution is similar to the Nuthatch, the downlands of the NW being the only part of the county where the species is not regularly recorded; however populations in more urban areas do appear to be small. The highest counts all came from the east of the county, especially the Windsor and Swinley Forests with 13 noted at the latter site on Jun 17 (DJB). **Breeding:** was confirmed at 14 locations all involving single pairs except for 2 (including 1 nest behind a sign at the Lookout) in Swinley Forest (MJT; DJB) and 2 in High Standinghill Woods, Windsor Forest (DJB).

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce winter visitor, rare passage migrant

The 2007 individual remained at Wishmoor Bottom into 2008 but its appearances on the Berks side of the county boundary were erratic with sightings on Jan 1 and Feb 16, when it attempted to catch a Lesser Redpoll (DJB,) and finally on Feb 17 (RDj). In the second winter a first winter individual was located at Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 8 and remained into 2009 (PJC et al); this is the earliest autumn record since 1970 when 1 was present at Reading SF (Manor Fm) on Oct 4. A sighting of this, or just possibly a second bird was made 1½ miles to the NW of Wishmoor Bottom at Caesars Camp on Dec 14 (PJC).

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident and uncommon passage migrant

First winter: this period was quiet with few records of note. A sample of the species vocal range came in the form of 1 mimicking a female Tawny Owl at Woodley on Feb 19 (MSFW). Six were displaying together at Cantley Pk, Wokingham on Mar 8 (P Lewis) and 7 flew over Twyford on Mar 9 (LFO). **Spring/Summer:** there were some counts of note during the period, the highest being 8 at Frilsham on Apr 13 (RCr). Although reported from over 50 locations (under-recorded) during the period, actual records confirming breeding were very few and a pair with 3 young at Farnborough on Jul 5 (GDS) and 2 ads with 6 juvs in

a Caversham Heights garden on Jul 25 (MRWS) were the only definite sightings of young. The wide range of food items was emphasized when 1 was observed devouring a tit species at Lavell's Lake on May 24 (DBi). **Autumn/Second winter:** several counts of up to 6 birds seen in August may have been family parties. Passage was first noted in late Sept when 3 flew high S over the Compton Downs on Sep 26 (DJB) and groups of 8 flying W over Woolhampton (KEM; MFW), 4 high over Wokingham heading NW (PBT) and 5 high over Thatcham Marsh (IW; JL) occurred on Sep 28. After this, the Oct-Dec period was quiet, the largest count of note being 10 at Waltham St Lawrence on Dec 11 (PNe).

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Abundant resident

The highest counts reported involved 63+ roosting at Theale Main GP on Jan 16 (KEM), 71 along the Jubilee River on Jan 23 and 57 there on Sep 16 (BDC), 50+ Slough SF on Nov 3 (DJB) and 35 at Eton Wick on Dec 17 (PNe); the last record was the highest count of this species at seven E Berks locations visited between Dec 16–22 by PNe who recorded a total of 139 birds seen! Prey items included a juv Robin caught in a Twyford garden on May 4 (SPA).

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Abundant resident

Of interest is the report of a Nordic-type individual seen at Braywoodside on Apr 21 (CDRH); plumage details noted included a whitish half collar, paler grey nape and lighter underparts but with a more uniform mantle. Otherwise there were few records of note. High counts included c2000 going to roost at Windsor Marina on Jul 7 (KPD) and 760 at Englefield on Jul 24 (RCr). Breeding records were few, 4 broods reared in nest boxes were ringed at three W Berks localities (JPM) whilst the use of veteran oaks in Windsor Great Pk as breeding sites by large numbers of pairs ensured that the bird's status as one of the commonest species within Windsor Great Pk remains.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Abundant resident especially in rural Berkshire

Although not by any means a complete survey, more nest counts at rookeries were attempted this year, the results are shown in the table

Site	No.of nests	Observer	Site	No.of nests	Observer
Beale Park	35	BDC	Hungerford Common	45	RGS
Burchett's Green	30	BDC	Maidenhead Thicket	16	BDC
Mill Eyot, Cookham	15	BDC	Pinkneys Green	20	BR
East Garston	170	GDS	Shottesbrooke Park	33	BDC
Lower Fm Farnborough	14	GDS	Waltham St Lawrence	22	BDC
B4494, Farnborough	58	GDS	Warren Row	7	BDC
Upper Grove Wood, Farnborough	22	GDS	Whatcombe Copse	40	GDS
Great Shefford	20	GDS			

The total of 547 nests from just 15 rookeries shows why this species has boomed in recent years with the BBI 2000–2008 trend showing an increase of 244%! As expected rookeries appear to be larger and more frequent in the west due to the huge amount of their favoured habitat (farmland) that exists. Further east, urbanisation of much of the county limits the number of rookeries; however some large rookeries still exist in more favourable areas. High counts include 3500 feeding in pig fields near Bucklebury on Jun 6 (RCr) and c1000 at Lands' End, Farnborough on Jul 11 (GJS).

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant resident

There were relatively few records of interest for this overlooked but familiar species. The largest counts reported involved 240 at Colnbrook Tip on Jan 28 (CDRH) and 108 at White Place Fm, Cookham on Nov 20 (BDC). One was observed catching a fish and then devouring it at Eversley GPs on Apr 4 (BMA).

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Scarce but increasing visitor

Records were received from 52 locations, 30 in W Berks, 9 in Mid Berks and 13 in E Berks. The close proximity of some sites coupled with the high mobility of the species (the vast majority of records refer to birds in flight) does make it difficult to ascertain how many birds are involved, however it is clear that the Raven is now well established within the county and the confirmation of successful breeding is only a matter of time! Records for 2008 are dealt with here in a regional context rather than the whole county as one, due to the differing status of the species throughout the county. West Berks: was the only region where the species was reported throughout the year. The main stronghold is in the Combe area, and it was here that the highest county counts were made with 8 in Combe Bottom on Jan 26 (IW; JL), 7 at Combe Wood on Feb 9 (KEM) and 4 in Combe Bottom on Apr 5 (IW; JL). Elsewhere most records referred to 1–2 birds with the majority of records occurring in the period from Jan to May. There were signs of attempted breeding with a displaying pair over Walbury Hill on Feb 2 (DJB) and Inkpen Hill on Feb 9 (DF), which may have been the territorial pair that resided in the area throughout the spring, but no nest was found. A pair was observed with nest material in Hamstead Park on Mar 2 (SAG) but there were no further sightings; a displaying pair was also seen at Snelsmore Common on May 2 (JL) but again, there were no further reports. A report of 5 together on Sep 18 at Walbury Hill (seen by a local farmer per ABT) may have been a family party? Mid Berks: there was 1 at Twyford GP on Apr 12 (MJM) and 2 over Twyford on Apr 13 (KF). There were no further records until September when 1 flew over Twyford GP on Sep 2 (ADB) then 2 were sighted over Lea Fm GP on Sep 14 (FJC) and 1 was at Emmer Green on Sep 20 (ABT). Nearby at Clayfield Copse 2 were noted on Oct 22 (HRN) then 2 singles were seen over Englefield on Dec 21 (RCr) and over Hurst on Dec 27 (ADB). East Berks: after 2 flew over Knowl Hill on Jan 1 (ABT), 1 was over Remenham Hill on Feb 1 (CDRH) and 1 was seen at Remenham on Apr 11 (TGB). Birds were regularly reported from Windsor Great Pk where a pair took up residence in one location from Jan 6 to May 11, 2 pairs were present there on Jan 20, 1 pair leaving to the NW (DJB). One or two birds were seen at 3 other sites within the Great Park during this period and it is thought that these sightings refer to the same birds. Elsewhere singles were reported from Widbrook Common on Jan 8 (WAS), Howe Lane, Paley Street on Jan 28 (DJB) and Winter Hill on Mar 20 (BDC). Late spring records involved 1 over Cookham Rise on Apr 22 (BDC) and a pair (1 in wing moult) at QMR on Apr 26 and May 1 (CDRH) – the first

records for this site – they were also seen at Windsor Forest, being seen in 2 different areas on May 3 and 6 (DJB). There were no further records until October when 1 was located in Windsor Great Pk on Oct 1 (CDRH); there followed further sightings of 1 at Jealott's Hill on Nov 8 (per RBA), 2 over Hurley Chalk Pit on Dec 5 (CDRH) and finally 2 over Cookham on Dec 29 (BDC).

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common resident and winter visitor though declining, formerly abundant (Red listed)

Although still a common bird in much of urban Berkshire, data published by both the BBI and BBS show that the species is still declining and it is now becoming scarce in some rural parts of the county during the breeding season. Nearly all counts exceeding 300 birds were recorded during the winter periods when the local population is increased by wintering birds from the east. However 700 were noted at Dorney W on Aug 24 (WAS) and 400 were on Widbrook Common on Aug 25 (BDC). High first winter counts included 400 at Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Feb 2 (ABT) and 1000+ flying east over Walbury Hill on Mar 25 (ABT). There were more high counts in the second winter, the largest being 500 roosting at Lavell's Lake during Nov (FJC; MFW), 1200 roosting at Burghfield Mill GP on Nov 3 (RCr), 800 over Cow Down (JPe) and 1500 at Lower Fm GP (GJS) on Dec 3, 650 flying E over the Compton Downs on Dec 6 (DJB) and 600 flying S over Newbury on Dec 31 (SAG). Finally an albino was located at Slough SF on Mar 12 (CDRH).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common but declining resident (Red listed)

Due to the familiarity of the species, only 29 observer submitted records, however it is clear from records received that the species continues to decline; the BBI reports a 51% decline from 2000 to 2008. An example of how poorly this species is doing can be seen in records submitted to the report by SPA. As in previous years monthly totals from her Twyford garden were submitted to the report, but this year the max count was only 4 and none were seen from mid-August to Dec 31! The highest counts reported involved 20 at the Village, Windsor Great Pk on May 22 (WAN), 22 at Field Barn Farm, Beenham on Jul 21 (JPM), 20 Clewer Green on Nov 3 (WAN), 30 Woodlands Park on Dec 23 (DJB), c24 at Leckhamstead on Dec 30 (IW) and 20 at Cranbourne on Dec 31 (PNe). The largest colony reported involved 7+ pairs breeding in farm buildings near Waltham St Lawrence on May 21 (DJB).

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant resident and winter visitor

High counts involved 200 at Hamstead Norreys on Jan 13 (DL), c400 Long Lane, Cookham on Jan 27 (BDC), 200+ at Englefield on Feb 17 (RCr), 200+ at Remenham on Mar 1 (DJB) and 200+ at Cold Harbour on Dec 29 (DJB). Passage was observed at Wishmoor Bottom when small groups totalling 100+ birds moved through heading W on Oct 18 (FJC).

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Winter visitor and passage migrant in varying numbers

The influx into Berks during late 2007 continued in 2008 and, due to poor beech mast crops, most birds moved onto farmland or into gardens where they became regular visitors

to many garden feeding stations. In 2008 nearly 500 records were submitted covering 98 sites including 44 gardens, the vast majority being in the first winter; however nearly all records involved small numbers and not one report involved over 100 birds! **First winter:** the table shows the status throughout the period.

14 day period	1– 14/1	15– 28/1	29/1– 11/2	12– 25/2	26/2– 10/3	11– 24/3	25/3– 7/4	8– 21/4	22/4– 5/5
Non garden sites	13	8	12	12	12	13	10	7	2
Minimum number of birds	151	92	59	52	180	96	46	64	2
Garden sites	15	15	16	14	21	21	21	16	3
Minimum number of birds	48	49	100	157	183	161	118	61	8
Total number of sites	28	23	28	26	33	34	31	23	5
Total number of birds	199	141	159	209	363	257	164	125	10

High counts during the period involved 30+ at Bradfield on Jan 2 (WB), 25at Hampstead Norreys on Jan 13 (DL), 75+ Remenham on Jan 17 with 65 still present on Mar 1 (DJB), 20 regularly in a garden at Birch Hill, Bracknell from Jan 30 to Mar 26 (WAN), 50 in a Cold Harbour garden on Feb 24 (DJB; MFW), 31 in an Ascot garden on Feb 28 (SA), 60 + in a Twyford garden on Mar 1–10 (SPA), 60+ Shottesbrooke on Mar 3 then moving to White Waltham on Mar 10 (DJB), 20+ Hungerford on Mar 7 (P Bysh), 45 Hungerford Marsh on Mar 21 (RF), 28 in a Brightwalton Common garden on Mar 23 (GDS) and c50 at Wishmoor Cross on Apr 11 (DJB). The last report was of 1 male in SPA's Twyford garden on May 1. **Second winter:** numbers were very low during this period and birds were reported from only 15 locations, nearly all of 1–2 birds. The first was an imm male that was ringed at Lambdens, Beenham on Oct 10 (JPM); the highest count was just 3 (!) at Remenham on Dec 11 (CDRH).

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Common and widespread resident and winter visitor, there are signs of a possible decline

There were very few records of note submitted this year; the highest count being 60 Cold Harbour on Jan 13 (MFW), 40 in GDS's Brightwalton Common garden on Mar 23, 100+ at Compton Downs on Aug 9 (ABT) and c60 at Cock Marsh on Sep 15 (WAS).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Common and widespread resident

With nearly 300 records provided by 65 observers, this species was undoubtedly under-recorded. **First winter:** high counts involved 100+ at Bury Down on Jan 3 (ABT) and 40+ at Burghfield GPs on Feb 17 (JA). **Spring/Summer:** there were widespread reports of small numbers in suitable breeding habitat. However breeding was only confirmed from 10 locations, a total that is surely just a small proportion of actual breeding attempts! By July small flocks were beginning to reappear and larger counts were made in August with 100+ on the Compton Downs on Aug 9 (ABT), 80 juvs at Brimpton on Aug 14 (GEW) and 50 at Eversley GPs on Aug 28 (DJB). **Autumn/Second winter:** high counts involved 50 at Cock Marsh on Sep 15 (WAS), 100+ still on the Compton Downs on Sep 16 (ABT), 50 Eversley GPs on Oct 3 (BMA), 120 Bury Down on Nov 8 (MJD), 75+ Wishmoor Bottom on Dec 22 (DJB) and finally 65+ visiting garden feeders in Woodlands Park on Dec 23 (DJB).

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, scarce in summer

Records were received from 109 locations widely spread throughout the county except for the downlands of the NW where there was only 1 record. The table shows the monthly status throughout the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	29	33	28	13	6	2	0	1	20	25	27	27
Minimum number of birds	583	528	408	33	9	3	0	1	274	303	644	455

Jan-Mar: birds were reported from 64 sites, including 14 gardens, with most records involving counts of 1–60 birds. Higher counts were 112 at Bottom Lane Theale on Jan 10 (RJB), c100 Dinton Pastures CP on Jan 29 (MJF) and 100+ at Wishmoor Bottom on Feb 10 (ABT). The highest March record of 60 occurred in a Greenham garden on Mar 17 (JL) who also ringed 146 individuals there between Feb and early Apr; another garden site in Upper Bucklebury recorded 30+ on several occasions during Feb (NC) who estimates at least 100 birds visited the garden during the month. The end of the period produced the first reports of song, primarily in the SE of the county, although 1 sang at Snelsmore Common on Mar 31 (RAH). **Apr-Jun:** most wintering sites had been vacated by early April and the only double figure count reported involved 12 at Combe on Apr 17 (RH); elsewhere all records were of 1–4 birds. May reports all came from the SE of the county, where this species hangs on as a summer resident, and included records from 2 Bracknell gardens: 1m on May 13 (JBe) and 1pr regularly to Jun 2 (JCr). Apart from the latter record, the only June report involved 1 flying over Swinley Park on Jun 6 (DJB). **Jul-Sep:** there were no records for July and the only Aug report came from JBe's Bracknell garden with 1 on Aug 15. This record betrays the species continued presence within the nearby Swinley Forest at a time of year when the site is generally under-watched. Autumn passage began in early Sep when 3 were noted moving south over Lavell's Lake on Sep 8 (PBT). Passage slowly gathered momentum and the first sizable flock (of 30) flew south over QMR on Sep 14 (CDRH). The next day 50 visited Twyford GPs (ADB) and by the months end birds were present at many of the more regular wintering sites. The only record from the downlands of the NW occurred at this time with 1 at Farnborough Down on Sep 28 (GDS). **Oct-Dec:** numbers slowly increased during Oct, peaking at the end of the month when a high of 80 were at Padworth Lane GP on Oct 29 (KEM). The species was most common in Nov when, apart from many flocks of up to 60 birds, flocks of 70+ at Bagnor Cressbeds (IW; JL) and 120 at Eversley GPs (MGLR) were noted on Nov 15 and 90 were at Moor Copse on Nov 28 (RCr). Although still well distributed through Dec, numbers were lower with no counts exceeding 60 birds.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Locally common resident which is in long term decline, more common on passage and in winter (Red listed)

Records were received from 66 locations, 37 in W Berks, 12 in Mid Berks and 17 in E Berks. Although this suggests that a reasonably healthy population is still present within the county; the 2000–2008 BBI trend does show a decline of some 63% and the low numbers reported in the summer months reflect this. The table shows the monthly status of the species based on records received, however it must be stressed that this is an under-reported species that some observers ignore when counts are low!

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	14	15	9	16	11	8	8	11	9	10	12	12
Minimum number of birds	983	633	214	452	77	31	21	247	233	330	376	696

Jan-Mar: the records provided show that Linnets were most common through the first winter period. High counts involved 100 Bury Down/Cow Down on Jan 3 (ABT), 100+ Remenham on Jan 17 (DJB), 105 Frogmill, Hurley on Jan 18 (SJF; FMF), 150 Boxford Common on Jan 25 (JL), c100 Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Feb 2 (ABT) and 150 Canon Court, Maidenhead on Feb 20 (LJF; MJF). **Apr-Jun:** there were some surprisingly high counts in April with 70 Moor Copse on Apr 3 (JLe), 80 Borough Marsh on Apr 20 (HRN) and 95 Bury Down/Cow Down on Apr 25 (SAG). The largest count in May was 20 pairs in breeding habitat on Greenham/Crookham Common on May 31 (ABT), all further records for the period were low, although singing males were noted at 9 sites and the frequency of records at a number of locations would point to at least attempted breeding. **Jul-Sep:** after a quiet July, flocks began to appear in Aug with 100+ on the Compton Downs on Aug 9 (ABT) and 80 at Cold Harbour on Aug 27 (DJB) then smaller flocks were noted in September with 50 at Bury Down/Cow Down, Greenham Common and the Compton Downs (MO). **Oct-Dec:** numbers did not reach the levels of the first winter but there were some significant counts reported including 100+ Cold Harbour on Oct 4 and Dec 29 (DJB), 100 Englefield on Oct 16 and 110 there on Dec 24 (RCr), 100 Cannon Court on Nov 12 (BDC) and finally 200 at Bury Down/Cow Down on Dec 12 (ABT) and Dec 14 (AEDH).

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret*

Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly a sporadic breeder (Red listed)

Not a vintage year! Records were received from 52 locations, 23 in W Berks, 16 in Mid Berks and 13 in E Berks. Most records came from the river valleys, heaths and woodlands; there were no reports from the high chalk downlands of the NW and SW. This species is now primarily a winter visitor and passage migrant in varying numbers; the last published breeding record being in 1997 in Swinley Forest. The lack of breeding records within the county accords with the near catastrophic decline of 90% witnessed within the UK since the 1970's (BBS); however the most recent trends have shown that population levels have stabilised and might now be showing signs of recovery. The table shows the monthly status based on records received.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Minimum number of sites	10	19	13	12	0	0	0	0	2	13	10	16
Minimum number of birds	91	128	81	63	0	0	0	0	2	71	137	93

First winter: although fairly widely distributed, the species was nowhere really common and most reports involved less than 15 birds. Higher counts were 16 Bucklebury on Jan 16 (RCr), 17 Brimpton GP (KEM) and 20 roosting beside the R Kennet in Reading (RRi) both on Jan 29. A flock of c50 visited Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Feb 16 (DJB) but due to the attentions of the local Great Grey Shrike they did not linger! **Spring passage:** during March and April the only counts of note were 21 Ashley Hill on Mar 9 (ABT), 15 over Thatcham Marsh on Mar 18 (JL) and 17 Wishmoor Bottom (PJC) and 20+ Cranbourne Chase, Windsor Forest (DJB) both on Apr 5. Numbers in the usually productive Swinley Forest were the lowest since 1996 and may have been due to the poor cone crop afflicting the site this year. The last spring birds were 2 at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 25 and 1 at Swinley Park on Apr 26 (DJB). **Autumn/Second winter:** first returning birds were singles at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 18 (JL) and at Burghfield GPs on Sep 20 (JA). Passage increased in October, with 21 over Wishmoor Bottom on the 18th (FJC) being the highest total before a small influx occurred in Nov when 60 were reported from Eversley GPs on Nov 1 (MGLR) and 50+ were feeding in alders near to Lower Farm GP on Nov 16 (IW; JL). December totals were disappointing, the largest count being 18 at Burnt Hill on Dec 12 (RCr).

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Regular (irruptive) visitor in variable numbers (depending on the cone crop) occasionally breeds (Schedule 1)

Birds were recorded from 16 locations, 5 in W Berks, 1 in Mid Berks and 9 in E Berks (3 Crowthorne gardens and several sites within Swinley Forest have been classed as 2 single locations due to the high mobility of the species). **First winter:** the poor cone crop of the 2007–08 winter led to Crossbills being almost totally absent from the county during this period. The only exception being 3 reports from Swinley Forest involving 2 over the Devils Highway on Feb 29 (DJB), 3 Caesars Camp on Mar 18 (DJR) and 1 over Wishmoor Bottom on Mar 29 (DJB). **Spring/Summer:** the late March records in Swinley Forest were followed by further sightings during April including 5 on Apr 17 (PBT), 6 on Apr 26 (PMC) and 14 on Apr 27 (MJD). It was clear that an influx into the area had begun and further records in May showed a steady increase in numbers, the most notable being 25 on May 10 (PBT) and 20 on May 24 (MDL). The first record from outside the SPA occurred on May 12 when 1 visited Swinley Park (DJB). This influx became county-wide in June with 8 visiting PJC's Crowthorne garden on Jun 7, 4 were bathing in IT's Crowthorne garden pond on Jun 17 and on the same date 43 were counted at Wishmoor Bottom (DJB). Further west 13 were located in Roundoak Piece, Padworth on Jun 27 (PH) with similar numbers there to Jun 30 (MO) and 7 flew N over Greenham Common on Jun 29 (NC). There were more W Berks records in July with 12 flying N over Greenham Common Jul 4 (AEDH), 4 flew S over Upper Lambourn on Jul 6 (SNP) and 5 were in woods near to Little Hungerford on Jul 18 (RCr) whilst 10 (incl sev juvs) were noted in Swinley Park on Jul 21 (CDRH). August records were restricted to E Berks where, apart from some small flocks in Swinley Forest, 40 were located in Gorrick Wood on Aug 7–11 (PJC), 10 visited Wildmoor Heath BBOWT reserve on Aug 7 (DJS) and 16 flew W over BMA's Crowthorne garden on Aug 26. Many of the above flocks included juveniles but evidence (extreme scarcity during Feb-Mar) would point to these birds breeding elsewhere before moving into Berks. **Autumn/Second winter:** records continued from Swinley Forest until the years end but, as observer interest in the area waned, records became more intermittent although high counts of 15 were made at Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 25 (RRi) and 25 were in the Surrey Hill area on Dec 22 (DJB). Elsewhere, singles appeared at Upper Bucklebury on Sep 9 (RF) and Finchampstead on

Oct 14 (PBT) then 2 were calling at Snelsmore Common on Oct 18 (MJT). A party of 15 was found at Gorrick Wood on Sep 29 (RM) and 10 were seen over Finchampstead on Oct 4 (RM). Eleven were found at Swinley Brickpits on Nov 15 (MSFW) with 1 nearby at Whitmoor Bog on Nov 21 (DJS) and finally a female flew in to drink at Blacknest, Windsor Great Pk on Dec 30 (CDRH).

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Locally common though declining resident and occasional passage migrant (Amber listed)

Records were received from 106 locations spread throughout the county. First impressions from these figures is that a healthy population can still be found within the county; however closer scrutiny of these records show that 61 of these locations have reported birds on only 1 occasion, a further 14 sites recorded birds on just 2 occasions and the vast majority of records were of only 1–2 birds. Evidence from the BBS show that the species continues to decline nationally. The table, below, shows the monthly status based on records received.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	26	25	22	22	16	15	9	17	13	9	22	19
Minimum number of birds	55	49	54	41	30	28	16	35	22	17	47	48

As already mentioned most sites only recorded birds on 1–2 occasions; the only locations to record birds in 6 or more months of the year being Combe, Dinton Pastures CP, Eversley GPs, Farnborough Down, Greenham Common, Hosehill Lake, Lower Green near Inkpen and Thatcham Marsh/GPs. Counts of 5 or more involved 5 Fawley on Jan 3 (ABT), 6 Upper Bucklebury on Jan 13 and 12 there on Mar 3 (NC), 6 Thatcham Marsh on Feb 17 (GJS) and Aug 10 (IW; JL), 5 Burghfield GPs on Nov 8 (JA), 5 Dinton Pastures CP on Nov 21 and Dec 19 (PBT) and 5 at Waltham St Lawrence on Dec 11 (PNe). **Breeding:** was only confirmed at 6 sites; juvs from single broods being noted at Aldermaston GP (JPM), Ashley Hill (BDC), Eversley GPs (PJC), Hosehill Lake (CMc) and Wooshill, Wokingham (EN). Of a pair seen at Woodley on Jul 8, the male was disposing of a faecal sac (MSFW).

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

A scarce visitor that may no longer be resident (Red listed)

The only record this year involved single individual briefly in a garden at Forest Park, Bracknell on Jan 15 (TS).

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Fairly common but declining resident, numbers increase in winter (Red listed)

Records were received from 67 locations, 34 in W Berks, 16 in Mid Berks and 17 in E Berks. **First winter:** although reported from 37 locations, numbers were low in most areas visited. High counts involved 50 at Bury Down/Cow Down on Jan 1 (E Urquhart), 27 Long Lane, Cookham on Jan 27 (BDC), 45 near Bradfield on Jan 28 (JLe) and 40 on the Compton Downs on Feb 19; there were no counts exceeding 8 in March! Records during Spring/Summer show that birds were present in most rural areas of the county, with birds being noted at 41 sites, mostly in the west. However coverage at many of these sites was at best patchy with only occasional reports during the period. Better coverage came from Compton Downs, Combe, Cold Harbour and in the farmland to the north of Maidenhead

bordering Cookham. High counts involved 14 at Bury Down on May 14 (DJB), 11 Cold Harbour on Jun 5 (DJB), 12 Winterbourne on Jun 10 (JL) and 13 in the Lands' End area near Farnborough on Jul 11 (GJS). **Breeding:** was reported from 6 locations but as singing birds were widely reported it is thought that many breeding pairs went unnoticed. **Autumn/Second winter:** this period was notable for the lack of records and during the Aug-Nov period birds only reported from an average 5 sites per month; the highest count during this time being 21 on Compton Downs on Sep 6 (DJB). There was a slight improvement in December when records came from 10 locations with highs of 42 Compton Downs on Dec 6 (DJB), 20+ Rowdown Fm, Peasmore on Dec 12 (DJS) and 20+ Cold Harbour on Dec 29 (DJB). Analysis of the years records show that, although a declining species (BBI 2000–2008 trend show a 52% decline), the Yellowhammer is still a fairly widespread resident which unfortunately is under recorded (only 48 observers submitted records). The recording team urge all observers to report any sightings of this species and those other declining (common) species; so that we can monitor these populations better as they rise or fall.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Locally common resident and passage/winter visitor, has declined in recent years (Amber listed)

Records were received from an encouraging 78 locations this year and nationally the long term decline appears to have been halted; the BBS short term trend from 1995 to 2007 shows an increase of 30%! Site totals were comparable to 2006–7 but the largest flocks reported remained down on the largest flock sizes reported in 2005. **First winter:** birds were reported from 50 locations, including at least 7 gardens, during the period. High counts involved 30 at Wishmoor Bottom on Jan 1 (DJB), 22 Reading on Jan 2 (AV Lawson), 20+ at Englefield on Feb 17 (RCr) and a max of 20 at Remenham on Feb 27 (MRWS); a further 6 locations recorded 10–19 birds including 10 in a Hungerford garden from late Jan and throughout Feb (R Barker). **Spring/Summer:** during the Apr-Jul period birds were reported from 44 locations including an unusual report of 2 in a Woodley garden on Apr 9 (P Redding). Otherwise most records came from wetland areas, high counts being 13 Dorney W (inc 2juvs) on Jun 4 (BDC), 5 territories Windsor Great Pk (DJB), 6 territories Eversley GPs (MGLR) and 16 at Englefield (early dispersal?) on Jul 15 (RCr). Evidence confirming breeding came from just 7 locations but song was heard at most summer sites and it must be presumed that many breeding pairs were overlooked. Away from the traditional wetland habitats, singing males were located singing in oil-seed rape fields at Brightwalton Common, Bury Down, Cold Harbour and Compton Downs. **Autumn/Second winter:** records came from 29 locations during this period with most occurring during Nov-Dec. The autumn months were quiet but this may be due to the under recording of the species as singing stops and birds busy themselves with feeding, often keeping a very low profile; however 15 were counted at Dorney W on Sep 8 (BDC). At some wetland sites, birds move out to find better forage on farmland and it was this habitat that held the largest winter flocks including 23 on Compton Downs on Dec 6 (DJB) and 40 at Remenham on Dec 11 (CDRH). Small numbers again wintered in the wet heath along the Wish Stream in Wishmoor Bottom, a max of 15 being noted on Dec 22 (DJB)

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Locally common resident on the NW Berks Downs, seriously declining elsewhere in the county (Red listed)

Records were received from 24 locations throughout the county; the table shows the monthly status based on records received.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
W Berks sites	3	4	1	7	6	9	5	3	3	1	2	5
Minimum number of birds	183	158	3	60	34	60	15	39	12	6	8	181
M/E Berks sites	0	2	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	1
Minimum number of birds	0	43	1	9	2	2	0	0	0	6	0	11
Total number of birds	183	201	4	69	36	62	15	39	12	12	8	192

Totals from the table clearly show that the species is under-recorded (eg the March totals; a total of only 44 observers submitted records and even at traditional strongholds such as the West Ilsley Gallops and the Compton Downs, reports were not regular!). **First winter:** birds were only reported from 6 locations. In W Berks, birds were noted at Bury Down/Cow Down with 40 on Jan 22 (RR), 60 on Feb 14 (DJS) and 50 on Feb 24 (MJF; LJF); Compton Downs with 98 on Jan 5 (ABT); Farnborough Down with 45 on Jan 27 and 27 on Feb 17 (GDS) and Sheepdrove, Lambourn with 51 on Feb 2 (ABT). In E Berks a flock of 32 at White Place Fm, Cookham on Feb 24 (BDC) was the first record from this area for 8 years; however this flock soon departed to the SW and was not seen again. After an absence throughout Jan, birds reappeared at Cold Harbour with a flock of 11 on Feb 27 (MSFW). The only March records came from Bury Down (3 birds) and Cold Harbour (singles throughout). **Spring/Summer:** birds were reported from 19 locations. West Berks: counts of 1–9 were noted at 11 locations with singing birds reported from at least 5 of these. Numbers at 4 other sites peaked with 36 (some singing) at Sheepdrove on Apr 26 (ABT), 14 (10 singing) at Bury Down/Cow Down on May 7 (DJB), 20 (some song) on the Compton Downs on Jun 4 (DJS) and 11 at Old Warren on Jun 14 (ABT). Mid/E Berks: the countryside to the west of Maidenhead accounted for all records. Six were located at Cockpole Green on Apr 16 (CDRH) then 2 were noted at Waltham St Lawrence on Apr 21 (PBT). At Cold Harbour, 2 singing males were present throughout May and June (DJB) and another bird was located nearby at Altmore on May 21 (BAJC). Breeding was not confirmed from anywhere within the county although it was thought probable at several sites. **Autumn/Second winter:** as is normally the case, birds were difficult to locate during the months from Aug–Oct, so a flock of 30 at Old Warren on Aug 27 (ABT) was noteworthy as was 5 on Inkpen Hill on Sep 14 (RH) and 3 at Ruscombe on Oct 2 (PBT). No other count exceeded 6 birds until December when there were records of 25 at Farnborough Down on Dec 6 (GDS), 11 Mortimer on Dec 7 (PD), 26 Hodcott Down on Dec 8 (ABT), 101 on the Compton Downs on Dec 12 (ABT) and 24 at Bury Down/Cow Down on Dec 29 (RJB).

ESCAPES AND HYBRIDS 2008

ESCAPES

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

The resident pair remained in Windsor Great Pk all year (DJB) and bred for the fifth consecutive year, hatching 4 cygnets by Apr 13; however all had disappeared by Jul 20 (DJB; CDRH). The resident pair was joined by a third adult from Dec 21–27 (DJB; CDRH). Three were noted at Searle's Fm GP, Burghfield GPs on Jan 3, increasing to 4 on Jan 5 (KEM) then 1–2 to Jan 13 (MO) and 3 were noted from Nov 23 to Dec 24 (WEBs; MFW). Sightings on the R Thames at Reading involved 1 on Jan 16, a pair on Feb 12, 3 on Feb 25, 2 in April, 1–2 ads with 4 well-grown cygnets on Jul 1 to Sep 2, and 7 on Oct 7 (all JLan). Although records point to local breeding, the R Thames forms part of the county boundary in this area so it is not clear as to whether the birds chose to nest on the Berks bank or Oxon bank. Other records involved 1 Bearwood Lake on Feb 15 (DJB), 1 on the R Loddon at Arborfield on May 19 (DJS), 1 at Twyford GPs from Aug 30 (CDRH) to Sep 15 (ADB), then 2 there on Nov 19 (MHT), and finally 1 visited Eversley GPs on Oct 18–19 (MGLR).

Chinese (Swan) Goose *Anser cygnoides*

One was still present at Thatcham DCL on Jan 1 to Feb 22 (GJS).

Snow Goose *Anser cygnoides*

Occasional escapee and feral resident at one site where numbers continue to decline

At the once regular site of Eversley GPs only 1–3 birds were reported from Jan to Sep. Early in the year a flock of 19 (inc 4 blue morphs) visited Theale Main GP on Feb 14 (KEM) with 1–2 remaining until Feb 22 (MO). On Feb 15, the rest of this flock (17 birds, 4 blue morphs) circled Dinton Pastures several times before departing to the east (FJC). Other records involved the regular blue morph at Remenham on Feb 13 and 27 (CDRH), 1 flying west over Thatcham on Feb 16 (RRK), the regular blue morph at Summerleaze GP on Sep 4 (CDRH), 1 Pingewood GPs on Sep 7 (KEM), 3 Spencers Wood on Sep 16 (NR), 2 Green Park, Reading on Oct 11 (JLan), 2 Swallowfield Park on Nov 12 (DJB) and probably the same 2 birds at Arborfield on Dec 17 (DJS).

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Records involved 1 at Borough Marsh and nearby Charvil on Jan 8 and Feb 7 (DJB) then on May 31 (DJB; ABT) then regularly to Nov 30 (CDRH; ABT). Two were on Winkfield Polo Grounds on Jan 24–30, then 1 on Feb 8–14 (CDRH), 1 was seen at West Woodhay Lakes on Feb 29, Mar 5 (RGS) and May 7 (DJB), 1 Swinley Brick Pits on Apr 4–6 (J Mason), 1 Sunninghill Park on Jun 6 (DJB), 1 Dorney W on Aug 12 (DBe), 1 Summerleaze GP on Aug 31 (CDRH), 1 Windsor Great Pk on Sep 14–21 (DJB), 2 Switchback Rd, Maidenhead on Sep 15 (BDC), 1 Winkfield on Nov 11 (CDRH) and 1 Warfield House Lake on Dec 30 (MSFW).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Rare vagrant and localised and declining feral visitor/resident all 2008 records refer to feral bred or escaped birds

Eversley GPs continues to be the only regular site within the county; however numbers here have seriously declined since 2007. Here the monthly maximum counts were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
36	35	24	4	1	2	0	22	22	1	21	22

Elsewhere, apart from a flock of 19 (Eversley GP birds?) at Spencers Wood on Sep 16 (NR) all records involved single birds, most being long staying individuals, reported from Avington, Charvil, the Cookham area (4 sites), Lower Fm GP and Swallowfield Park.

Red-breasted Goose *Anser indicus*

A flock of 14–15 on land near Wokingham on Oct 23 were reported to the Recorder by the landowner!

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

A drake could be found in the Cookham Rise and Summerleaze GP area from Sep 4 to Dec 17 (CDRH; BDC; WAS)

Muscovy Duck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Three were noted at Mill Pond, Bracknell on Mar 8 (MFW).

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

The small mid Berks population continues to diminish! There were 1–2 drakes regularly at Whiteknights Park Lake from Jan to Mar (PG et al) plus a report of 3 there on Jan 4 (LBM). Single drakes were also noted on Apr 15 (PG), Jun 24 (BDC), Oct 5 and Nov 19 (PG). Elsewhere 1 drake was located on Maiden Erleigh Lake on Oct 12 (PG) and 2 drakes were there on Dec 4 (JLe).

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

1 Lea Fm GP (identified from photos posted on the internet) on Oct 4 (AR) may possibly have been the adult seen at Compton on Dec 17 (CDRH).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

The juv, first seen in 2007 was seen again at QMR on Feb 2 (CDRH). However an adult falcon hybrid (Saker type) was seen at QMR on Oct 4 and Dec 3 (CDRH) and could possibly have been the juv seen in the 2007–8 winter!

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One, a Barbary Falcon type, was seen over Horton Fields and QMR on Sep 13 (CDRH); also 1 with jesses was noted over Lower Early on Nov 20 (J Stratton).

Yellow-Collared Lovebird *Agapornis personatus*

One was seen at Woosehill, Wokingham on Sep 28 (PBT)

Canary *Serinus canaria*

Singles were seen at Woosehill Wokingham on Jan 18 (MSFW) and Langley, Slough on Sep 19 (PBT).

HYBRIDS

Greylag × Canada Goose

One juv Windsor Great Park on Aug 29 and Sep 26 (CDRH).

One Wraysbury GP on Dec 16 and nearby at Datchet on Dec 31 (CDRH)

Greylag × Bar-headed Goose

One Windsor Great Park present all year, it paired with a Greylag Goose and produced 2 juvs in July (CDRH; DJB); note that this bird shows a passing resemblance to a White-fronted Goose.

One (presumed same as above) at Wraysbury GPs on Dec 16 (CDRH).

Greylag × Snow Goose (?)

One Bearwood Lake on Apr 28 (DJB).

Barnacle × Snow Goose

One Eversley GPs on Aug 11 (BMA).

Barnacle × Greylag Goose

Four goslings with their pure bred parents on the RThames at Caversham on Aug 11 (JLan).

***Aythya* hybrids**

Scaup-type

One drake Searle's Lane GP, Burghfield GPs on Jan 5 (MFW).

One drake (presumed Scaup × Tufted Duck) Wraysbury GP on Apr 25 (CDRH).

One drake Woolhampton GPs on Oct 1, Oct 29 and Nov 4 (KEM).

One female Bray GP on Oct 19 (BDC); (same?) female at Dorney W on Dec 21 (BDC)

Lesser Scaup-type

The 2007 drake re-appeared at Woolhampton GPs on Feb 4 remaining to Apr 17 (KEM; NC).

One female Tufted Duck × Pochard) Searle's Lane GP, Burghfield present since 2007 was seen again on Jan 3 and 5 (KEM); another female on the Car Park Pit at Moatlands GP on Jan 31 (KEM).

One drake Burghfield Mill (different to the Burghfield GPs bird) on Nov 3 (RJB) to year end (MO), also visited Theale Main GP on Dec 24 (KEM). One drake (Tufted Duck × Pochard?) at Burghfield GPs on Nov 15 to Dec 29 (MFW et al)

One drake (Tufted Duck × Pochard) on Wraysbury GPs on Nov 18 to Dec 13 (CDRH)

Tufted Duck Type

One drake (Pochard × Tufted Duck?) at Orlitts Lakes on Nov 9 (CDRH); probably same drake (Pochard × Tufted Duck?) at Wraysbury GPs on Dec 7 (CDRH). A drake 'Baer's Pochard-type' (Tufted × Ferruginous Duck?) was displaying to a fem Tufted Duck (CDRH) at Horton GP on Dec 25th.

Ferruginous Duck type

One returning drake (Pochard × Ferruginous Duck) on Heron Lakes, Wraysbury GPs on Nov 15–16 was noted in both 2006 and 2007 (CDRH).

***Aythya* hybrid**

One on the Car Park Pit at Moatlands GP on Jan 31 (KEM).

Pochard × Red-crested Pochard

A returning drake at Wraysbury GPs on Nov 17 (CDRH).



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WINTER

Species	DEPARTURE			ARRIVAL		
	Location	Date	Observer	Location	Date	Observer
Pintail	Theale, R Kennet	May 9	RCr	Eversley GPs	Aug 24	RM
Scaup	Woolhampton GPs	Apr 13	KEM, MFW	Hosehill Lake, Wraybury GP	Nov 1	MFW, CDRH
Goldeneye	Wraybury GPs	Apr 18	CDRH	Wraybury GPs	Oct 26	CDRH
Smew	Wraybury GPs	Mar 8	CDRH	Wraybury GPs	Nov 26	PNe
Goosander	Eversley GPs	Apr 8	MGM	Crookham Common	Aug 6	AEDH
Bittern	Lavell's Lake	Feb 15	BAJC	Dorney Wetlands	Dec 3	H&J Ward
Merlin	Woolhampton GP	Mar 30	MJD	Dinton Pastures CP	Sep 2	ADB
Golden Plover	Winterbourne	Apr 15	JL	Fawley	Aug 27	ABT
Jack Snipe	Horton GP	Apr 10	CDRH	Lavell's Lake	Sep 29	FJC
Short-eared Owl	Bury Down*	May 7	DJB, CDRH	QMR	Sep 14	CDRH
Rock Pipit	Field Fm GP	Apr 15	KEM	QMR	Oct 7	CDRH
Fieldfare	Waltham St Lawrence	Apr 24	PBT	Many Locations	Oct 18	MO
Redwing	Waltham St Lawrence	Apr 21	PBT	Lavell's Lake	Sep 24	PBT
Brambling	Twyford	May 1	SPA	Lambdens, Beenham	Oct 10	JPM
Lesser Redpoll	Swinley Park	Apr 26	DJB	Thatcham Marsh	Sep 18	JL

* records do not include the report of a roadside corpse at Bury Down on Aug 16



Great Crested Grebes, Phil Jones

SUMMER

ARRIVAL			DEPARTURE			
Species	Location	Date	Observer	Location	Date	Observer
Garganey	Braywick	Apr 18	CTr	Wraysbury GPs*	Oct 7	CDRH
Quail	Compton Downs	Jun 10	DJB	Compton Downs	Aug 9	ABT
Osprey	Eversley GPs, Lavell's Lake, Bury Down	Apr 5	IHB, BTB, CRe	Eversley GPs	Oct 8	MGLR
Hobby	Frogmill, Hurley	Apr 10	SJF, FMF	QMR	Oct 11	MFW
Stone Curlew	Berkshire Downs	Apr 5	MFW	Berkshire Downs	Sep 8	ABT
Little Ringed Plover	Greenham Com, Eversley GPs, Horton GPs	Mar 17	NC, BMA, CDRH	Hosehill Lake	Aug 23	RCr
Ringed Plover	Greenham Common	Mar 5	JL	Eversley GPs	Sep 7	BMA
Common Tern	Moatlands GP	Apr 13	MFW	Burnthouse Lane GP	Sep 23	RJB
Turtle Dove	Greenham Common	Apr 21	GACJ	Woolhampton GPs	Aug 30	ABT
Cuckoo	Woolhampton GPs	Apr 8	GEW	Moatlands GP	Aug 24	JA
Nightjar	Gorrick Wood	May 8	EN	Greenham Common	Aug 8	JPM
Swift	Woolhampton, Wraysbury GPs	Apr 17	CDRH, NC	Lea Fm GP	Sep 14	FJC
Sand Martin	Summerleaze GP	Feb 27	CDRH	Thatcham GPs	Oct 4	BJW
Swallow	Horton GPs	Mar 17	CDRH	Freeman's Marsh	Nov 16	MFW
House Martin	Woolhampton GPs	Mar 18	KEM	Woolhampton GPs, Streatley, Eversley GP	Oct 6	KEM, GP, MGLR
Tree Pipit	Wishmoor Bottom	Mar 29	DJB	Wraysbury GPs	Sep 20	RRG
Yellow Wagtail	Lea Fm GP	Apr 4	FJC, KIT	QMR	Oct 5	CDRH
Nightingale	Lavell's Lake	Apr 3	JLan	Moatlands GP	Aug 17	JA
Redstart	Oare	Apr 7	AEDH	Wraysbury GPs	Sep 26	CDRH
Whinchat	Englefield	Apr 18	RCr	Greenham Common	Oct 16	JD
Wheatear	Greenham Common	Mar 14	JD	Greenham Common	Oct 16	JD
Grasshopper Warbler	Chamberhouse Marsh, Greenham Common	Apr 16	MFW, JL	Brimpton	Sep 21	GEW
Sedge Warbler	Lavell's Lake, Thatcham Marsh	Apr 3	KIT, NC	Woolhampton GPs	Sep 29	JPM
Reed Warbler	Brimpton GP, Burghfield Mill GP	Apr 13	ABT, KEM	Thatcham Marsh	Oct 12	IW
Garden Warbler	Winnersh	Apr 12	RAng	Burghfield GPs	Sep 28	JA
Lesser Whitethroat	Swallowfield	Apr 20	BMA	Wraysbury GPs	Sep 29	CDRH
Whitethroat	Brimpton	Apr 1	GEW	Wraysbury GPs	Sep 24	CDRH
Willow Warbler	Dinton Pastures CP	Mar 29	PJC	Farnborough Down	Sep 28	GDS
Spotted Flycatcher	Caesars Camp, Dorney Wetlands	May 2	DJB, WMo	Dorney Wetlands	Sep 28	WMo

* records do not include the report of a roadside corpse at Bury Down on Aug 16

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

ABBOT S	SA	BYSH P		EVANS G	
ABBOTT C		CALLAM D D		EVANS H W	
ABSOLOM A		CAMERON A	ACa	EVANS L G R	
ABSOLOM J		CAMP A.....	ACam	EVANS S	
ADAM N		CAPEWELL R R		FARNELL G.....	GF
ADAM P		CARR D G.....	DGC	FARNSWORTH F M	FMF
ADAM S P	SPA	CARTER N		FARNSWORTH S J.....	SJF
ADDISON R		CHAPMAN C B		FARRIER M	
ADNAM S R		CHAPMAN J		FELL M	
ALEXANDER T O		CHEESEMAN A.....	ACH	FERGUSON D M	
ALLEN B		CHIVERS J L.....	JCh	FEWTRELL-SMITH I	
ALLEN R.....	RAI	CLARK B A J.....	BAJ	FIELKER M	
ANDREWS J.....	JA	CLARK F C	FCC	FINCH L J	LJF
ANGUS R.....	RAng	CLARK J M	JMC	FINCH M J.....	MJF
ARCHER B M	BMA	CLEAL D		FIRTH T	
BAKER E		CLEERE N	NC	FISHER S L	
BALL J P.....	JPB	CLEWLEY G		FLETCHER D	
BALL T G	TGB	CLEWS B D.....	BDC	FLETCHER M R	
BANKS P S		CLIFFORD M N		FLOWER C H	
BARKER D J.....	DJB	COLLARD M		FORBES T	
BARKER N H		COLLINGS H		FORSTER L	LFo
BARKER R		COLLINS A		FORSTER V	
BARNARD W L		COON M J		FOSKETT D	
BARNES D J		COTTINGTON F J.....	FJC	FOSSEY A	AFo
BASSETT A D.....	ADB	COTTON K		FOSTEKEW K	
BASSETT D C		COULSON-PHILLIPS A	ACP	FRANKUM R.....	RF
BAYTON R		CRATHORNE B		FULLER D	DF
BEE S D		CRATHORNE L		GALE T	
BEECROFT P		CRAWFORD R.....	RCr	GARDENER T	
BEERY L		CREED K		GENT C R.....	CRG
BEEVER D.....	DBe	CRISPIN J		GIBBS A	
BEEVER J	JBe or JB	CROFT S		GIBSON T	
BEGLOW B		CRONIN A		GIFFORD D L	
BENNET B T.....	BTB	CROOCH J	JCr	GIPSON P.....	PG
BERNARD R		CROPPER P M.....	PMC	GIRLING K	
BLACKMORE D		CROWLEY P J.....	PJC	GODDEN N G	
BLUNDELL L R	LRB	CROZIER H V J		GODDEN R J	RJG
BOND R		DARBY B		GOLDING C	
BOOTH A	ABo	DAVIES S		GOLDSMITH G	
BORWICK R.....	RBor	DAVIS N		GOODCHILD J	
BOULT P	PBou	DAVIS-ELSBURY D		GOODEY J	
BOWLER D		DAWSON R.....	RD	GRAHAM S A.....	SAG
BRIGGS C A		DAY M		GRIFFITHS E	
BRIGHT-THOMAS P	PBT	DEAR M J.....	MJD	GRIST M	
BRITNELL M		DELLOW J.....	JD	GUILFOYLE R T	
BROOKES G		DIMOND S		HAINES W.....	WHa
BROWN G		DINNADGE R.....	Rdi	HARDIE R J	
BROWN H		DODDS D A M		HARDY R	RH
BROWN I H.....	IHB	DODINGTON C		HARMER A	
BROWN W.....	WB	DORMER M R.....	MRD	HARROLD M	
BRYANT T		DRAZIN J		HARTLEY A	
BUCKNEL N J		DRIVER P	PD	HASELER J	
BULL P		DRYDEN	RDr	HAWKER G	
BUNCET T.....	TBu	DUNCAN K P.....	KPD	HAWTREE J	
BURDEN P		EAST D		HAYDON R	
BURNES R J.....	RJB	EAST T A		HAYNES R	
BUTCHER J		EDWARDS J		HAYNES R A.....	RAH
BUTLER D		ELPHICK I M		HAYTER M	

HEARD C D R.....	CDRH	LUGG K		RAPER M G T	
HEFFER S		MANN L B	LBM	REAR D	
HEMMETT T		MANN W		REDDING P	
HERRING T	THc	MANNION P.....	PM	REEDMAN R	RR
HEWLETT A		MARLOW T.....	TM	REEVE B.....	BR
HEYES J		MARRIOT C		REEVE C	CRc
HICKMAN A E D	AEDH	MARSHALL V		REID J JRe	
HICKMAN P.....	PH	MARTIN J P	JPM	REYNOLDS DJ	DJR
HOLLAND D		MARTIN K		RICHARDSON P	
HOOK J		MARTIN S		RICKS S	
HOOSELY D		MASON J		RIGHELATO R	RRi
HOPGOOD B		MATTHEWS L		RIMES D N T	DNTR
HOSKING P		McCARTHY M G	MGM	RIX J B JBR	
HOWARTH-BOOTH C		McEWAN C	CMc	ROBERTS Mr	
HOWE R		McEWAN D D		ROBERTS P	
HOWES B		McGINNETY F G		ROBSON C	
HUDSON D		McGOWAN J E		ROGERS T	
HUGHES S		McKEE M J.....	MMc	ROSE P PR	
HUMPHREY C C		McMAHON A		ROSE R	
HUMPHREYS D		McWILLIAM S		ROSSITER N	
HUNT M.....	MHu	MERCERT	TMe	RYMER A	AR
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JACKMAN T		MOORE K E.....	KEM	SELL M R W.....	MRWS
JACOBS R S		MOORE R C.....	RCM	SHAILER T E	
JOHN G A C.....	GACJ	MORELAND T		SHARPLES K	
JONES B		MORGAN W.....	WMo	SHERIDAN J B	
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KENDALL J		NEWMAN M		SMITH K.....	KSm
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TAYLOR M J MJT	UTTLEY B BU	WHITE K G KGW
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TROLLEN C CTTr	WALSHE G	WILLIAMS G
TUBB K I KIT	WARD H	WILLIAMS P PWi
TUCKER K	WARD J	WILSON G E GEW
TUCKER M	WARDELL J JWar	WILSON R D
TUCKER S	WARREN J E	WOOD P S
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Report on Berkshire Bird Ringing in 2008

Tim Ball

A total of very nearly 16,000 birds of 84 species were ringed in the County during 2008. This total comes from the national figures collated by the BTO and includes all birds ringed in the county including those ringed by ringers based outside the county. A few birds (mostly scarcer raptors) ringed at confidential locations are likely to have been omitted from the totals by the BTO.

Table 1 demonstrates that 2008 was a good year for ringing in Berkshire, the high totals reflect the expansion of the two main county ringing groups – Newbury and Runnymede as well as work by a number of independent ringers. Non-passerines tend to be harder to catch than passerines and their low totals reflect a lack of ringers specialising in them rather than their inherent rarity. The decreasing numbers of some formally common species is well illustrated by the low numbers being captured – just 3 Redstarts and 1 Spotted Flycatcher were ringed and no Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers or Willow Tits.

The BTO runs two major national ringing projects gathering detailed information on survival and productivity:

- The Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme is a standardised ringing programme where ringers operate the same nets in the same locations over the same time period at regular intervals through the breeding season. The Scheme provides valuable trend information on abundance of adults and juveniles, productivity and survival rates for about 25 species of passerine.
- The Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) project gathers survival data for individual species where as many of the breeding adults in the study population are recorded each year either by retrapping metal ringed birds or by re-sighting colour ringed birds.

In addition there are a growing number of colour marking projects where birds are marked with colour rings or wing tags and these allow birds to be identified by non-ringers and provide much more information on movements and survival.

In 2008 there were three CES projects operating in Berkshire – Thatcham (started 1992), Windsor Great Park (1986–2002 and re-started 2004) and Wraysbury (started 1993). There were no RAS projects operating in 2008. The only colour ringing project I'm aware of that operated in 2008 was the RSPB's long-term project on Stone Curlews. The Reading and Basingstoke Ringing Black-headed Gull project started in 2009 and was registered as a RAS project in 2010.

Table 1: Birds ringed during 2008

Species	Pulli	FG	Total
Mute Swan	36	1	37
Greylag Goose	–	7	7
Canada Goose	1	–	1
Egyptian Goose	–	5	5
Mandarin Duck	–	4	4
Mallard	–	1	1
Quail	–	1	1
Cormorant	–	1	1
Sparrowhawk	–	12	12
Kestrel	22	1	23
Water Rail	–	1	1
Moorhen	–	22	22
Little Ringed Plover	7	–	7
Ringed Plover	2	–	2
Lapwing	19	–	19
Black-headed Gull	2	1	3
Common Tern	10	–	10
Stock Dove	8	2	10
Woodpigeon	–	22	22
Collared Dove	–	6	6
Barn Owl	35	5	40
Little Owl	2	–	2
Nightjar	1	5	6
Kingfisher	–	22	22
Green Woodpecker	–	17	17
Great Spotted Woodpecker	–	74	74
Skylark	–	1	1
Sand Martin	–	1	1
Swallow	115	5	120
House Martin	–	24	24
Tree Pipit	–	3	3
Meadow Pipit	–	43	43
Grey Wagtail	15	4	19
Pied/White Wagtail	25	–	25
Wren	12	325	337
Duncock	4	331	335
Robin	8	483	491
Nightingale	–	2	2
Redstart	–	3	3
Stonechat	–	4	4
Blackbird	2	325	327
Fieldfare	–	4	4
Song Thrush	–	126	126

Pulli = chicks, FG = Full grown

Species	Pulli	FG	Total
Redwing	–	22	22
Mistle Thrush	–	2	2
Cetti's Warbler	–	44	44
Grasshopper Warbler	–	5	5
Sedge Warbler	–	217	217
Reed Warbler	–	462	462
Blackcap	–	816	816
Garden Warbler	–	96	96
Lesser Whitethroat	–	36	36
Whitethroat	–	137	137
Dartford Warbler	–	5	5
Wood Warbler	–	1	1
Chiffchaff	4	911	915
Willow Warbler	–	99	99
Goldcrest	–	370	370
Firecrest	–	8	8
Spotted Flycatcher	–	1	1
Long-tailed Tit	–	477	477
Blue Tit	2131	2008	4139
Great Tit	1482	1509	2991
Coal Tit	5	278	283
Marsh Tit	8	48	56
Nuthatch	98	65	163
Treecreeper	–	76	76
Jay	–	26	26
Magpie	–	13	13
Jackdaw	17	4	21
Rook	–	1	1
Carrion Crow	–	2	2
Starling	–	78	78
House Sparrow	–	39	39
Chaffinch	3	630	633
Brambling	–	61	61
Greenfinch	–	449	449
Goldfinch	3	422	425
Siskin	–	295	295
Linnet	–	3	3
Lesser Redpoll	–	9	9
Redpoll (Common/Lesser)	–	1	1
Bullfinch	–	96	96
Yellowhammer	–	18	18
Reed Bunting	–	155	155
Totals	4077	11889	15966

Berkshire Ringing Recoveries highlights for 2008

Mute Swan

Z72337	First-year Female	19-08-1990	River Thames, Windsor Racecourse, Berks
	Alive (ring read)	26-01-2008	Heath Lake, near Crowthorne, Berks 18km SW 17y 5m 7d

Whilst well short of the current UK record of over 26 years this was still a very old bird.

Cormorant

SVS 9285212	Nestling	04-06-2003	Haron, Roxen, Ostergotland, Sweden
	Long dead	03-02-2008	Hurley, Berks 1,305km SW 4y 7m 30d

This illustrates that some of our wintering birds come a long distance.

Stone Curlew

EG88220	Nestling		
	Alive (colour marks seen)	03-06-2003	Site Confidential, nr Lower Basildon, Berks
		06-04-2008	Fanel, Neuchatel, Switzerland 777km SE 4y 10m 3d
EL59931	Nestling	12-07-2005	Site Confidential, nr Compton Downs, Berks
	Freshly dead (shot)	15-10-2006	Peki, Ghana 4,528km S 1y 3m 3d

These two birds are the only recoveries there have ever been of British ringed Stone Curlews in Switzerland and Ghana.

Black-headed Gull

EW49055	Nestling	15-06-2007	Moor Green Lakes, Berks
	Sick (hit by car)	24-01-2008	Risca, Newport, Gwent 159km WNW 0y 7m 9d
EW49056	Nestling	15-06-2007	Moor Green Lakes, Berks
	Sick	16-06-2008	Saint-Cyr-Sur-Loire, Indre-et-Loire, France 453km SSE 1y 0m 1d
DKC 254706	Nestling	08-06-1994	Fiskeholm, Agernaes, Fyn, Denmark
	Freshly dead	08-01-2008	Maiden Erlegh Park, Earley, Berks 838km WSW 13y 7m 0d
SFH ST198079	Nestling	09-07-1998	Rovaniemi, Lappi, Finland
	Alive (ring read)	17-02-2008	Wokingham, Berks 2,242km SW 9y 7m 8d

Records that illustrate that locally bred birds tend to move south and west in the winter and that some stay away for their first summer. The winter population includes many birds from Eastern Europe.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

GN21033	Nestling	02-07-1999	Bristol, Avon
	Alive (colour marks seen)	06-04-2000	Matosinhos, Douro Litoral, Portugal 1,233km SSW 0y 9m 4d
	Alive (colour marks seen)	26-03-2002	Gloucester Landfill Site, Hempsted, Gloucestershire 47km NNE 2y 8m 24d
	Alive (colour marks seen)	30-11-2003	near Newbury, Berks 91km E 4y 4m 28d
	Alive (colour marks seen)	19-12-2007	Lower Farm GP, Newbury: 51°24'N 1°20'W Berks 87km E 8y 5m 17d

One bird that demonstrates the value of colour ringing – many British bred birds go to Iberia for their first winter and then frequently travel much shorter distances in subsequent winters.

Herring Gull

GC13191	Nestling	26-06-2006	Bristol, Avon
	Alive (colour marks seen)	07-02-2008	Champteusse-Sur-Baconne, Maine-et-Loire France 445km SSE 1y 7m 12d
	Alive (colour marks seen)	29-10-2008	Gloucester Landfill Site, Hempsted, Gloucestershire 48km NNE 2y 4m 3d

Herring Gulls tend to go less far south in their first two winters than Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

Blackbird

NLA L182791	First-year Male	20-10-2002	Vrouwenpolder, Oranjezon, Zeeland, The Netherlands
	Caught by ringer	18-02-2008	Kintbury Farm, Kintbury, Berks 351km W 5y 3m 29d

This bird probably originated even further east and was probably on migration when it was ringed in The Netherlands.

Cetti's Warbler

V911467	Full-grown Female	07-10-2007	Cauldwell Hall Farm, Hollesley, Suffolk
	Caught by ringer	15-03-2008	Windsor Great Park, Berks 159km WSW 0y 5m 8d

Cetti's Warblers are not long distance migrants but ringing has demonstrated that some birds do move fairly substantial distances.

Sedge Warbler

V501359	First-year Male	13-08-2007	Pett Level, Sussex
	Caught by ringer	11-05-2008	Thatcham Marsh, Thatcham, Berks 146km WNW 0y 8m 28d
X053147	Juvenile	13-07-2008	Thatcham Marsh, Thatcham, Berks
	Caught by ringer	05-08-2008	Tour Aux Moutons, Donges, Loire-Atlantique, France 458km S 0y 0m 23d

These are the longest distance movements recorded during 2008.

Reed Warbler

T979583	Adult Male	08-06-2007	Windsor Great Park, Berks
	Caught by ringer	24-08-2008	Ile de Malprat, Biganos, Gironde, France 755km S 1y 2m 16d
	Caught by ringer	17-05-2009	Windsor Great Park, Berks
V523446	Juvenile	21-07-2007	Wraysbury Gravel Pits, Berks
	Caught by ringer	18-08-2007	Saint-Vigor-D'ymonville, Seine-Maritime, France 228km SSE 0y 0m 28d
FRP 5525642	Full-grown Female	09-08-2007	Tour Aux Moutons, Donges, Loire-Atlantique, France
	Caught by ringer	10-05-2008	Dinton Pastures, Hurst, Reading, Berks 466km N 0y 9m 1d

Three fairly routine interchanges with France, T979583 was presumably a regular breeder in Berkshire and FRP 5525642 was probably a British breeder caught in France on migration and returning north through Berkshire the following year.

Blackcap

V462541	Juvenile Male	19-09-2007	Wraysbury Gravel Pits, Berks
	Freshly dead (hit glass)	24-05-2008	Roeselare, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium 262km ESE 0y 8m 5d
X053275	First-year Male	21-09-2008	Thatcham Marsh, Thatcham, Berks
	Caught by ringer	04-10-2008	Villeton, Lot-et-Garonne, France 792km S 0y 0m 13d

Both these birds were probably part of the British breeding population rather than the central European population that now winters here in increasing numbers.

Chiffchaff

BXE872	First-year	04-10-2007	Brimpton Gravel Pit, Berks
	Caught by ringer	06-12-2008	South Milton Ley, Devon 225km WSW 1y 2m 2d
CEL857	Juvenile	26-08-2008	Brimpton Gravel Pit, Berks
	Caught by ringer	12-09-2008	Pett Level, Sussex 140km ESE 0y 0m 17d
CRJ574	First-year	13-11-2008	Pett Level, Sussex
	Caught by ringer	29-11-2008	Wraysbury Gravel Pits, Berks 105km NW 0y 0m 16d

It's interesting to speculate about what CRJ574 was doing heading NW quite fast in November, presumably it was intending to winter in the UK.

Goldcrest

BPB205	Full-grown Female	11-11-2007	Wellington College, nr Crowthorne, Berks
	Caught by ringer	04-04-2008	Calf of Man, Isle of Man 403km NW 0y 4m 24d
BTN007	First-year Male	26-03-2008	Bidston, Wirral, Merseyside
	Caught by ringer	11-12-2008	Wokefield Common, Berks 263km SSE 0y 8m 15d

It never ceases to amaze me how far these birds move! It looks like there's a good link between Berkshire and the northwest.

Chaffinch

R446306	First-year Male	21-02-2003	Silwood Park, Sunninghill, Berks
	Alive	27-05-2008	Darbu, Ovre Eiker, Buskerud, Norway 1,130km NE 5y 3m 6d
NOS 2E27852	Adult Male	22-05-2003	Stavsenga, Trondheim, Sor-Trondelag, Norway
	Caught by ringer	16-12-2007	Jealott's Hill, Berks 1,470km SSW 4y 6m 24d

These are the first Norwegian ringed Chaffinch ever found in Berkshire and only the second Berkshire ringed bird to be found in Norway.

Goldfinch

T688259	First-year Female	03-01-2006	Corby, Northamptonshire
	Freshly dead (hit glass)	02-03-2008	Riseley, Reading, Berks 126km S 2y 1m 28d

This isn't a long movement for a Goldfinch and it is easy to forget how far they can move, but this has rarely been shown by Berkshire ringed birds and this is the 5th longest movement recorded by 2008.

Siskin			
V957894	First-year Male	10-02-2008	Theale, Berks
	Caught by ringer	09-03-2008	Crynant, Neath, Glamorgan 187km W Oy 0m 28d
V534781	Adult Male	27-02-2008	Upper Bucklebury, Berks
	Caught by ringer	02-04-2008	Polleur, Liege, Belgium 507km ESE Oy 1m 6d
V794772	First-year Male	26-03-2008	Greenham, Berks
	Caught by ringer	05-04-2008	Kerkhoven, Limburg, Belgium 459km E Oy 0m 10d
V794781	First-year Female	26-03-2008	Greenham, Berks
	Caught by ringer	07-04-2008	Chevron, Liege, Belgium 507km ESE Oy 0m 12d
V957894 illustrates how mobile some Siskins can be during a winter and the other three birds establish a clear link with the continent but unfortunately don't shed much light on their eventual breeding grounds.			

Reed Bunting			
R250125	First-year Male	11-04-2003	Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire
	Caught by ringer	06-12-2008	The Wilderness, near Kintbury, Berks 233km SSE 5y 7m 25d
This is the third longest Reed Bunting movement involving Berkshire and interestingly the second longest was also a bird from Woolston Eyes which was caught at Jealott's Hill in 2004.			

These ringing totals and recovery details are taken from Robinson, R.A. & Clark, J.A. (2009) The Online Ringing Report: Bird ringing in Britain & Ireland in 2008 BTO, Thetford (<http://www.bto.org/ringing-report>, created on 21-July-2011).

Nest recording in 2008

The BTO's Nest Record Scheme has run since 1939 and collates a vast amount of very important data on breeding success of a wide variety of species. The data is used to identify trends in breeding performance, and identify problems at the different stages of the breeding cycle. NRS data are also used to measure the impacts of pressures such as climate change on bird productivity.

Not all nest recorders are ringers but because many are I have included a record of the Berkshire contribution to this national data set below. Three groups/individuals contributed more than 100 nest records (some from outside Berkshire) during 2008: Matt Prior (339), Newbury Ringing Group (321) and Philip Bone (103).

Table 2: Nest Records completed during 2008

Species	Nest Records	Species	Nest Records	Species	Nest Records
Great Crested Grebe	3	Nightjar	1	Song Thrush	3
Mute Swan	1	Swallow	41	Blue Tit	136
Mandarin Duck	5	Meadow Pipit	1	Great Tit	206
Kestrel	6	Grey Wagtail	3	Nuthatch	12
Little Ringed Plover	4	Pied Wagtail	3	Jackdaw	5
Stock Dove	6	Wren	4	Chaffinch	3
Barn Owl	10	Duncock	1	Goldfinch	1
Little Owl	1	Robin	2	Total	463
Tawny Owl	1	Blackbird	4	Species	25



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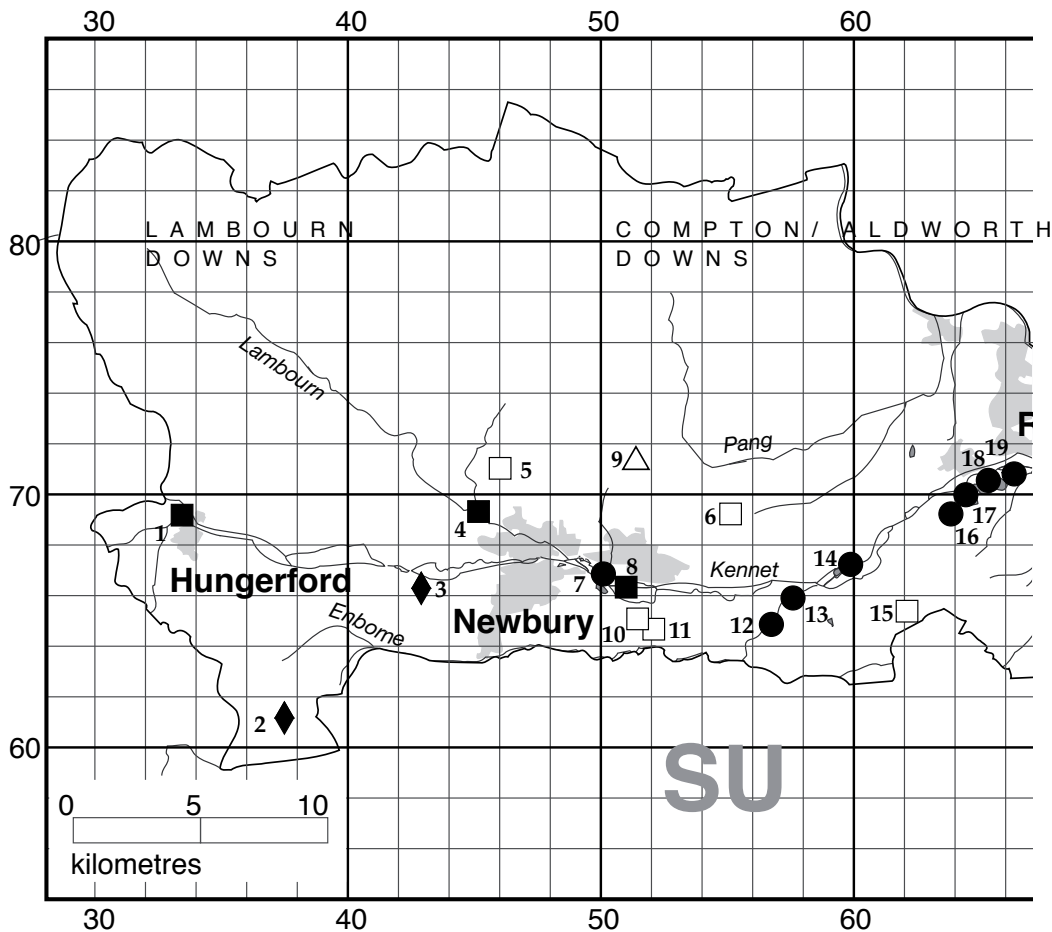
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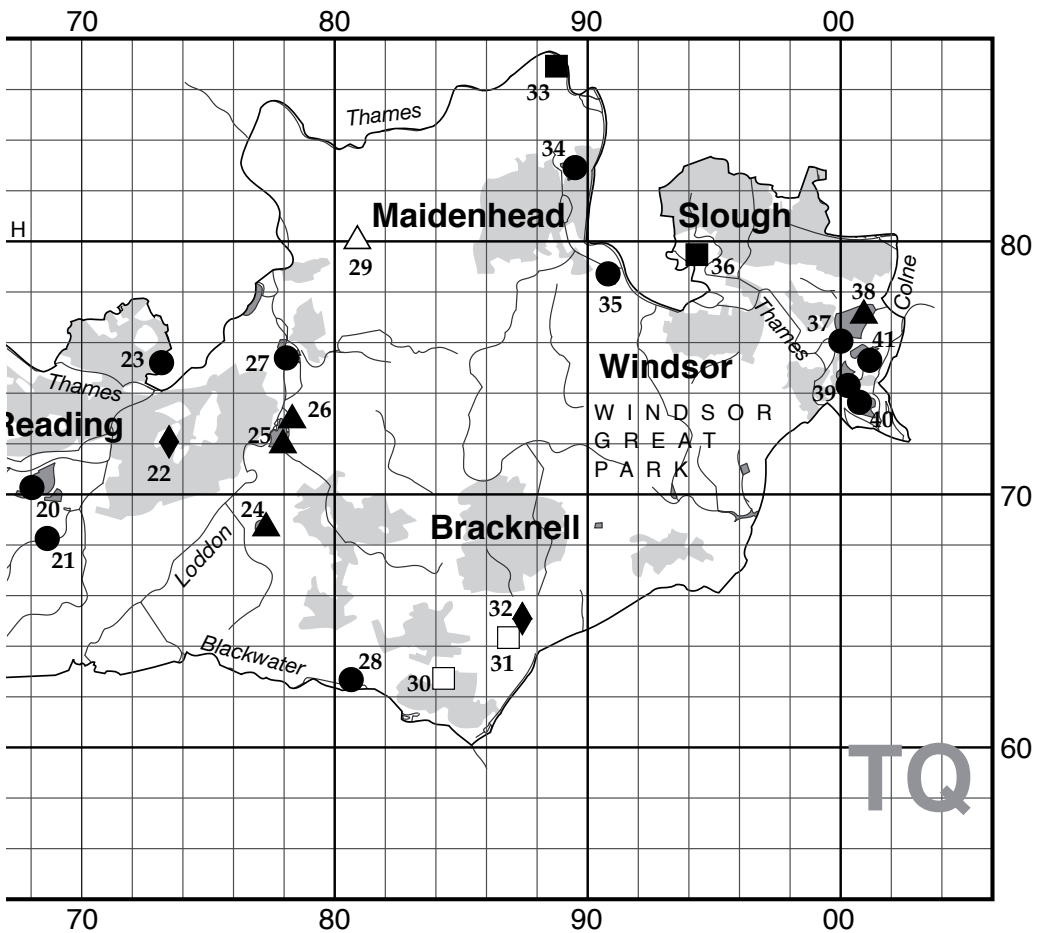
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- | | | | | | |
|----|------------|---|----|-------------|--|
| 1 | SU 333 686 | Freeman's Marsh | 23 | SU 735 745 | Caversham Lakes/Henley Road GP – Oxon |
| 2 | SU 375 616 | Walbury Hill/Combe Wood | 24 | SU 773 685 | Bearwood Lake |
| 3 | SU 428 662 | Hamstead Park | 25 | SU 780 725 | Dinton Pastures CP Country Park |
| 4 | SU 452 694 | Bagnor Cress Beds | 26 | SU 783 730 | Lavell's Lake |
| 5 | SU 460 710 | Snelsmore Common | 27 | SU 783 757 | |
| 6 | SU 555 690 | Bucklebury Common | | and 785 750 | Twyford Gravel Pits |
| 7 | SU 502 665 | Thatcham/Muddy Lane/Lower Farm GPs | 28 | SU 807 625 | Moor Green Lakes (Eversley Gravel Pits) |
| 8 | SU 505 665 | Thatcham Marsh | 29 | SU 807 800 | Bowsey Hill |
| 9 | SU 515 715 | Fence Wood | 30 | SU 842 625 | Wildmoor Heath (aka Edgebarrow Heath) |
| 10 | SU 500 646 | Greenham Common | 31 | SU 877 630 | Swinley Forest (Wishmoor area) |
| 11 | SU 526 643 | Crookham Common | 32 | SU 875 655 | Swinley Forest, Crowthorne Woods (Caesar's Camp and The Lookout) |
| 12 | SU 568 652 | Brimpton Gravel Pits | | | Cockmarsh |
| 13 | SU 570 660 | Woolhampton Gravel Pits | 33 | SU 885 870 | Summerleaze Gravel Pits |
| 14 | SU 596 668 | Aldermaston Gravel Pits | 34 | SU 895 825 | Bray Gravel Pits |
| 15 | SU 620 648 | Padworth Common | 35 | SU 908 788 | Dorney Wetlands, Slough Sewage Farm and Jubilee River |
| 16 | SU 697 648 | Hosehill Lake | 36 | SU 935 795 | Datchet Common Gravel Pits |
| 17 | SU 635 703 | Theale Gravel Pits (Wigmore Lane area) | 37 | TQ 000 760 | Queen Mother Reservoir |
| 18 | SU 655 705 | Theale Gravel Pits (Theale Main) | 38 | TQ 008 770 | |
| 19 | SU 665 707 | Theale Gravel Pits (Moatlands and Field Farm) | 39 | TQ 005 745 | |
| 20 | SU 680 705 | Burghfield Gravel Pits (Searles Farm) | | and 010 735 | Wraysbury Gravel Pits, (Sunnymeads) |
| 21 | SU 688 685 | Pingewood Gravel Pits (Burnthouse Lane) | 40 | TQ 010 735 | Wraysbury Gravel Pits (Village Pit) |
| 22 | SU 735 720 | Whiteknights Park | 41 | TQ 010 755 | Horton Gravel Pits |



The main areas for birdwatching in Berkshire are the river valleys of the Kennet, Lambourn, Loddon, Blackwater and the Thames, the areas of downland around Walbury Hill, Lambourn, Compton and Aldworth and the forests and heathlands in the south and east of the county.

This map shows the general area of the Lambourn, Compton and Aldworth Downs and Windsor Great Park but includes most other frequently mentioned sites visited regularly by birdwatchers. For further detailed site information try www.berksbirds.co.uk or www.birdsofberkshire.co.uk where maps and site descriptions can often be found. Sites on this map have been given a number, a map reference (approximate centre) and one of the following symbols:

- Gravel Pits
- Commons and Heaths
- Marshes and Sewage Farms
- ▲ Lakes and Reservoirs
- △ Downland and Parkland
- ◆ Woodland

Please note that inclusion of a site does not guarantee free or safe access.

County Directory

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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 and is responsible for the county database and administers 'The Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund'. Registered Charity number 1011776

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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.

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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.

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.

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 and Sarah White, 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.

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.

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/

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/