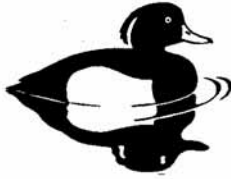


The Birds of Berkshire



Annual Report
2009

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Berkshire Ornithological Club

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The Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC) was founded as Reading Ornithological Club in 1947 to promote education and study of wild birds, their habitats and their conservation, initially in the Reading area but now on a county wide basis.

It is affiliated to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Membership is open to anyone interested in birds and bird-watching, beginner or expert, local patch enthusiast or international twitcher. The Club provides the following in return for a modest annual subscription:

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

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

The informative and fully illustrated County Atlas and Avifauna, The Birds of Berkshire, published in 2013, can be purchased at www.berkshirebirdatlas.org.uk, price £35, and is available to members at meetings at the discounted price of £30.

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

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Annual Report for 2009

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Introduction

Here at last is the Berkshire annual bird report for 2009, much later than we had hoped for a variety of reasons, not least the commitment of some of the team to completing the atlas and avifauna, which was published in December 2013. To economise on printing costs, this report is being published in tandem with that for 2010, a process that we intend to repeat with 2011 and 2012 later this year.

One of the causes of delay is still the collection of records. Although the great majority of observers submit records on line during the year, we are still receiving a minority a year or two after the year end. The county database of bird records is the source of information for research, for advising conservation organisations and planning authorities and for preparing these annual reports. Please help us maintain a database that is complete and up to date by submitting records promptly, preferably on line at www.berksbirds.co.uk or as excel or .csv files to records@berksoc.org.uk. See below for submission guidelines. As a result of late acquisition of data, there is a large number of records missing from the 2006/7 report. These, together with some corrections, have been published as a sheet for insertion into the report.

2009 was one of the survey years for the national and county atlas (2007–2011). As a result a great many more records on the commoner species were available than is normally the case. This is referred to in some of the accounts of commoner species but is best viewed in the new edition of *The Birds of Berkshire* or at <http://berkshirebirdatlas.org.uk>.

Many bird-watchers are also interested in other animals, particularly those with wings, so this year we have started to include a summary of records of dragonflies and damselflies. We would like to invite readers to submit similar summaries of Berkshire records for other taxa, eg butterflies and moths, bats etc.

Lastly, at the end of this report, you will find a summary of the RSPB's bird-watching code. We ask everyone to comply with its guidance. In particular, please note that the use of recordings of calls and songs in the field can be disruptive, preventing birds feeding or protecting their nests; bird-watchers and photographers should take particular care not to disturb breeding birds.

Acknowledgements

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

The systematic list for 2009 was written by a team of species account writers who are listed in the report and on whose work the report relies. The County Recorder, Chris Heard, was the scientific editor of the systematic lists and copy-editing was done by John Walker. Our thanks also go to Tim Ball, Mike Turton and Bill Nicoll who provided articles and to the photographers who generously provided their best shots. Thanks also to Robert Gillmor for his cover picture of the Bluethroat, which a lucky few saw.

Renton Righelato, Chairman, Berkshire Ornithological Club
63 Hamilton Road, Reading, RG1 5RA renton.righelato@berksoc.org.uk

Submitting records

Sending your records promptly and electronically will enable the County database to be kept complete and up to date. To facilitate review and report preparation, records may be sent throughout the year and anyway should be filed within three months of a year end. If you are unable to send your records electronically, we may be able to help: please contact Renton Righelato¹.

Records can be entered on line at www.berksbirds.co.uk or sent by email to records@berksoc.org.uk as an excel file or as a CSV file. Excel files should have the following eight columns in this order:

Species, Site, Grid reference, Arrival date, Departure date, Number, Notes, Observer, Breeding status.

Species: Required. If possible please use the species name from BWP. Please not use plurals. *i.e.* do not enter “Siskins” or “Canada Geese”, but “Siskin” or “Canada Goose”.

Site: Required. If possible please use the **BBB abbreviations**. Please enter the site as the nearest landmark on an OS map and if necessary quantify this with a grid reference in the “Grid reference” field. Sites such as “my garden”, “River Thames”, “3 miles east of Reading” or “by the A33” are examples of inappropriate site names.

Grid reference: Optional. Four or six figure grid ref. The prefix, either “SU” or “TQ” should be included and there should be no spaces between characters. Grid references are only required for less well-known sites, or to give a very precise location within a large site.

Arrival date: Required. In the format “dd/mm/yyyy” *i.e.* “01/01/2005”. For records that refer to more than one day enter the first date in this field and the last date in the “Departure date” field.

Departure date: Optional. In the format “dd/mm/yyyy” *i.e.* “01/01/2005”.

Number: Required. Whole number only. *i.e.* the following are not valid: “c10”, “10+”, “1–2”, “many”. Enter any quantifying information in the notes field.

Notes: Optional. Use the notes field to enter information on age, sex, behaviour, breeding details etc. Any reference to other species made in this field will not be recorded for that species – please make a separate entry for each species.

Breeding Status: Optional. Please use the BTO breeding evidence codes: <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/methods/breeding-evidence>.

Observer: Required. Please enter your full name and include your middle names if you have any.

CSV files should use the same eight fields separated by commas (whether or not they contain data) and note that any field containing a comma should be enclosed in double quotes. Thus, for example: Siskin,”Searles Lane, Burghfield”,03/02/2001,,100,,,MJT

Confidentiality: Confidential records should be sent separately but in the same format, and noted as confidential in the covering email. The locations of records for rare breeding species will, in any case, be held in confidence.

Species requiring a description: Records of rarer species will be reviewed by the Berkshire records Committee and may require a description or additional notes – please see the BRC report page 18.

¹Renton Righelato tel 0787 981 2564, email renton.righelato@berksoc.org.uk

INITIAL RESULTS FROM A NIGHTJAR MONITORING PROJECT

Tim Ball, Paul James and Karen Tucker, Reading and Basingstoke Ringing

In 2008 we started a fairly small Nightjar monitoring and ringing project in an area on the Berkshire – Hampshire border between Burghfield Common and Tadley. Initially the project concentrated on locating territories and ringing adults; nest monitoring was limited to those which were found without active searching. As our experience has developed, we now actively search for and monitor nests. This short paper outlines methods and documents the results from the first five years of our project.

Sites Covered

In most years so far we have covered Decoy Heath, Padworth Common and Roundoak Piece in Berkshire and 50 Acre Piece and Benyon's Inclosure in Hampshire. Silchester Common was added to our list of regular sites in 2011 and in 2009 a bird was reported to us from Wokefield Common, however, it could not be re-located and was assumed to be a passage bird that did not stay to establish a territory.

There are a number of other potential sites in the area where there are woodland clearings with heathland habitats but we have not been able to cover these comprehensively. We have the impression that these additional sites do not have many Nightjars and we believe we locate the majority of pairs in the area in most years.

Methods

Locating Territories

Each site is searched at least twice a year between mid-May and the end of June to locate displaying males and identify the main centre of activity in territories. Occupied sites are also usually checked again during July or August to look for second broods. Early in the season male Nightjars generally start calling at dusk, usually when it is still not dark. On most, if not all, of our sites concerted display generally does not last much more than an hour before many birds appear to leave the nesting area, presumably going to their feeding areas.

There is evidence from elsewhere that many Nightjars like to feed over water meadows in river valleys and we suspect, but have no real evidence, that many of our birds feed in the Kennet valley. The very wet conditions in 2012 had an effect on display – even on reasonably dry evenings the display duration was very short, sometimes little more than 10 minutes, and it seemed as though birds were desperate to get away and feed while conditions were favourable. On some occasions when ringing, we have been present on site a couple of hours after dark and calling at this time is always very much reduced.

Ringing Full Grown Birds

Full grown birds are caught for ringing using one or two mist nets in an individual territory at dusk with sound lures and a plastic decoy Nightjar. Sound luring during the breeding season is carried out under a species specific license condition which is additional to a normal ringing license. There are strict controls over the length of time and volumes that lures can be played to minimise the risk of birds deserting and we only attempt luring on a territory on one evening whilst the birds have eggs or young.

As would be expected we tend to catch more adult males than females. A few juveniles have been caught later in the summer when first brood fledglings are still present in or near their parents' territory.

Nest Monitoring

We were careful to learn from published literature and more experienced Nightjar workers before actively searching for and monitoring nests. Monitoring is carried out with extreme care as undue disturbance early in the nesting cycle can lead to desertion. Visits to nests with eggs are minimised as this is when they are particularly susceptible to desertion – no nest is visited more frequently than once a week and in most cases visits are closer to two weeks apart.

All nest visits are kept as brief as absolutely possible – on several occasions we have been able to photograph a female brooding young and ring the young and on all these occasions the entire visit has been no longer than 5 minutes. Nightjar young develop their legs rapidly and the tarsus is almost the same diameter as that on a full grown bird within a couple of days of hatching – this means that the young can be ringed from a very young age and typically we ring the young when they are first found. Nightjars will quite frequently move young away from the nest site – they can move them as far as 10 m or more – and this is probably why a chicks legs develop early, so they can walk some distance if necessary. We normally try to check up on young at least once after we have ringed them – again keeping visits at least a week apart, but because of their tendency to move young they can be very hard to find so it can be difficult to prove the final success or failure of a brood.

Most Nightjar pairs have two nesting attempts each year which leads to a fairly long breeding season. Sometimes, but not invariably, birds use exactly the same nest site for both broods – one Decoy Heath site was used for at least three sequential breeding attempts across two years.

Results

Locating Territories

Results are given by Site and County in Table 3. In many cases it is difficult to be sure exactly how many territories are occupied because early in the season there are probably some calling birds present that do not establish territories. Most of our sites are also relatively small clearings in woodland areas and it is often possible to hear birds calling from outside the clearing but difficult to track them down to a specific territory. The published literature suggests that in many places territories are as big as or bigger than the clearings in our area. Indeed Roundoak Piece has held up to four active nests at the same time in an area that most studies of territory size suggest is only big enough for at most two pairs. We suspect that the habitat in this area means that birds may only defend the immediate area of the nest and do not include their main feeding areas within the defended territory. Detailed radio-tracking would be required to test this possibility.

Table 1: Territories identified each year

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
BERKS	Decoy Heath	1	1	1	1	0
	Padworth Common	1	3–6	4	2–4	3
	Roundoak Piece	2+	2–3	2–3	4–6	3+
HANTS	50 Acre Piece	4+	2	4–5	2–3	2
	Benyon's Inclosure	n/a	1–2	2	2	n/a
	Silchester Common	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	3+
Total		8+	9–14	13–15	14–19	11+

Ringling

Ringling full grown birds is time-consuming, most successful sessions only result in one or two birds being caught and around a third of all attempts are unsuccessful. It seems as though some birds respond less well to the sound lures in subsequent years meaning that re-trap rates are very low and we are experimenting with our sound tracks to try and improve them. The longest gap between ringling and re-trapping to date is a male ringed at 50 Acre Piece in July 2009, which was displaced when the gravel pit was dug there and was subsequently caught at Roundoak Piece a few hundred metres away in July 2011.

Ringling pulli (chicks) is a quick process, so wherever possible we ring at the nestling stage. The female does not go far whilst we are at a nest with young and she can frequently be seen to return almost straight away when we leave.

The numbers of birds ringed are given in Table 2. Unfortunately we have not yet caught any birds ringed by other people or had any distant recoveries of our birds.

Table 2: Birds ringed each year

Year	Full Grown				Pulli	Re-trap	Total
	Male	Fem.	Juv.	Total			
2007	1			1			1
2008	4	2		6	2		8
2009	4	2		6			6
2010	2			2	4		6
2011	2		1	3	10	1	14
2012	1	2	2	5	8	1	14
Total	14	6	3	23	24	1	48

Nest Monitoring

One nest with a single egg was found after it had been deserted in 2012; the only other desertion we are aware of is a nest with 2 eggs that was found by a work party and was probably revisited by several different people in a fairly short period of time (unfortunately at the time the work party leader was not aware of how susceptible Nightjars are to disturbance and did not warn the workers not to return to the nest site). We complete BTO nest records for all nests monitored and as Table 3 demonstrates, even our small project contributes a reasonable percentage of the national annual total of records. The national totals suggest that ours is not the only Nightjar project to have started in recent years.

Table 3: Completed nest records

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
This study	1	0	3	7	5
UK Total	73	74	75	106	n/a

We have sufficient data for 15 nests to estimate dates of the different stages of the nesting cycle and these are detailed in Table 4. The noticeable feature is that the dates of first and second broods almost overlap and mean that nests can be active in an area between mid-May and the end of August. Whilst not so far observed in our study, cases have been reported in which the male looks after the first brood for perhaps a week or more whilst the female lays and starts incubating her second clutch.



Nightjars at the nest: two pulli illustrating just how well camouflaged they are (ABOVE); female brooding 2 half-grown pulli – their back ends are just visible sticking out from under her wings (BELOW). Photos: Tim Ball.



Table 4: Nesting dates¹

Stage	First Brood	Second Brood
First egg laid	19 May–7 June	21 June–18 July
First egg hatched	1–26 June	8 July–6 August
Earliest likely fledging	16 June–15 July	24 July–25 August

¹ Based on data from 15 nests using 17–19 days for incubation and 16–19 days for fledging. All data are combined as there is insufficient data to distinguish differences between years.

The Future

Nightjars are charismatic and fascinating birds and we certainly have much more to learn about them, so we hope to continue this project for the foreseeable future. If we can improve our re-trap rates and secure funding we are also keen to look at high tech systems like satellite tracking and PiT tags so we can learn a lot more about their movements in the breeding season and on migration.



An adult male Nightjar: showing the white on the wings and tail (ABOVE), which can be obscured when perched (OPPOSITE). Photos: Tim Ball.

Acknowledgements

This project would not be possible without the permission and active support of the relevant landowners and agents:

West Berkshire Council Countryside Service manages Padworth Common and supports all our ringing and survey work on the site.

Decoy Heath is a Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) reserve, and the survey is carried out with their permission.

Roundoak Piece, 50 Acre Piece and Benyon's Inclosure are owned by Englefield Estates and the survey is carried out with their permission.

Silchester Common is managed by Silchester Parish Council and the survey is carried out with their permission.





Avocet, Queen Mother Reservoir, 19th March 2009. Photo: Mike McKee.



Grey-headed Wagtail, Queen Mother Reservoir, 30th May 2009. Photo: Mike McKee.



Arctic Skua, Queen Mother Reservoir, 25th August 2009. Composite photo: Mike McKee.



Little Stint, Queen Mother Reservoir, 21st July 2009. Photo: Mike McKee.



Little Stint, Queen Mother Reservoir, 10th September, Photo: Mike McKee.



*Great White Egret, Charvil, 4th December 2009.
Photo: Helen Keay.*



Arctic Tern, Dinton Pastures, 1st September 2009. Photo: Marek Walford.



Black-necked Grebe, Searles Lane GPs, 19th April 2009. Photo: Marek Walford.



Wood Warbler, Snelsmore Common, 16th May 2009. Photo: Mike McKee.



Little Ringed Plover, Queen Mother Reservoir, 2nd September 2009. Photo: Mike McKee.

WHITE-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT AT WOOLHAMPTON

Ken Moore

During the morning of Thursday 9th April 2009, I was walking along the lakeside path at Rowney Predator Lake, Woolhampton Gravel Pits. Walking West, after having gone through the 'hole in the hedge', I stopped at the small promontory in Three Island Bay to view the bay, the three islands and the small reedbed/scrub area in the south east corner.

At about 12.15 hrs, a very upright Robin-like bird with a very grey-brown mantle/wings appeared on the muddy edge of the reedbed area; the bird turned and a very blue throat and upper breast was apparent, then the well-marked pale supercilium as the bird turned its head. The blue breast was edged below with a dull red border (the gorget) and momentarily I nearly came to the wrong conclusion, almost a hallucination... All told, the bird spent maybe less than 30 seconds in open view and back into the low vegetation. A few moments later (it seemed like ages, whilst waiting), the bird was back into view for just a few seconds, quickly retreating into the vegetation. At this stage, no colour had been observed within the blue.

Anyway, some decisions had to be made. The bird was in a small area of dense willow/reed scrub with a shoreline of short vegetation and a muddy edge, probably 15–20 feet (sorry, 5 maybe 7 metres) in length and maybe 2 feet in depth; this was the area where it would best be seen. From an observer's point of view, the permissive footpath was on private land, but well used by dog walkers and very narrow. The footpath came even closer to the bird's location further down the path, so it would have heard, but may not have seen, people walking or running up and down the footpath. Because of the location and considering the welfare of the bird, I decided not to broadcast the news widely without first seeking opinions from some of the County's more active birders - this was, after all, the afternoon prior to Good Friday. I also realised that the correct decision would not necessarily be the most popular one and, no doubt, the word "suppression" would be banded about. Considering the advice received, I released the news onto Marek's website.

Back to the important part of this article: the bird. The bird had not shown again and gradually people, who had begun to arrive, drifted off and I had to go as well, - the day job needed my attention. Two fellow birders, Roger Stansfield and Andy Johnson certainly showed their commitment, and stayed. Their perseverance paid off and at about 15.30 hrs, the bird re-appeared. Personally, I managed to get back to the site and saw it again, albeit briefly. On this occasion I could see a small white 'blob', perhaps just a single feather tip, in the blue.

As the light began to fade, the bird seemed to retreat deeper into the willowy scrub, showing only occasionally. However two birders heard a strident 'chaking' call from the area the bird had last been seen. Sure enough, they watched as the bird crept up a willow stem, calling as it did so, then after a few minutes it dropped down into the scrub, never to be seen or heard again. It seems that Steve Ricks was the last person to see the bird. There was no sign at dawn the next morning.



White-spotted Bluethroat, Robert Gillmor

Damselflies & Dragonflies in Berkshire

2009 Highlights

This is the first of what I hope will be a regular feature in Birds of Berkshire giving an update on the status of Damselflies & Dragonflies across the county.

2009 was not a great year for dragonflies, mainly due to the weather with an exceptionally wet July (the peak of the flying season). Despite this, water levels were slightly lower than in 2007 and 2008 by the end of the flying season.

Records were received for 31 out of the total Berkshire list of 32 species. A summary from the year is given below; species not mentioned are generally the ones which can be seen anywhere in the county such as **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* and **Emperor Dragonfly** *Anax imperator*. More details are available in the annual report and newsletter, available from the County Recorder.

Beautiful Demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo* was mainly recorded along Kennet Valley and at Moor Copse (Tidmarsh), but there were also scattered records from other sites in the south of the county.

Both **Variable Damselfly** *Coenagrion pulchellum* and **White-legged Damselfly** *Platycnemis pennipes* have a very scattered distribution around the county. The former was only recorded from two sites – Burghfield and Cookham – and the latter from Butter Bottom Ponds near Bracknell (the main Berkshire population), Wasing Woods, Decoy Heath and Pangbourne.

Small Red Damselfly *Ceriagrion tenellum*, a heathland specialist, was recorded at 11 sites in the Bracknell area as well as at Decoy Heath. Other heathland specialists in the county recorded in the same areas include **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** *Cordulegaster boltonii* (Bracknell area only), **Keeled Skimmer** *Orthetrum coerulescens* and **Black Darter** *Sympetrum danae*.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* was first recorded in Berkshire in 2005, but now occurs right across the southern part of the county as far as Newbury.

Two records of **Hairy Dragonfly** *Brachytron pratense* in 2009 – one on the R. Loddon near Arborfield and one near Crowthorne – are the first known records of this species in Berkshire since 1999.

On the down side, there were no records of **Common Hawker** *Aeshna juncea* this year, continuing the marked decline since 2005 (10 records in 2005, five in 2006, three in 2007 and two in 2008).

Common Clubtail *Gomphus vulgatissimus* was recorded at a number of locations on the R Thames upstream of Reading. A single exuvia was also found on the Kennet & Avon Canal near Burghfield, the first record of breeding in this area for a number of years. One adult was also recorded away from the Thames.

Brilliant Emerald *Somatochlora metallica* had a particularly good year, being recorded at 9 sites in the Bracknell area. **Downy Emerald** *Cordulia aenea* also occurs in the Bracknell area, but also on some of the gravel pits in the Kennet Valley/Aldermaston areas.

A single **Red-veined Darter** *Sympetrum fonscolombii* was recorded at Greenham Common at the end of May. There had been several records from this site in 2007, but none in 2008.

If you see any damselflies or dragonflies whilst out looking at birds, please make a note of your records and ask me for a record sheet so that they can be included on the county database.

Mike Turton, County Dragonfly Recorder, berksdragonflies@gmail.com

BERKSHIRE WEATHER 2009

By Bill Nicoll

January was cold but quite sunny with average rainfall. It was a relatively calm month: the wind was predominantly from SSE after coming from the NE for the first 10 days. Daytime temperature never exceeded 10°C. Night temperature was subzero throughout the month except from 13th to 19th, but the first 10 days were coldest with snow light snow on several days. Almost the entire rainfall was in the week 15th to 22nd.

February: the first 2 weeks, when the light wind was predominantly from NNW, were cold with snow (about 10 cm on 2nd) and the rest of the month, under the influence of a moderate westerly flow, was mild and dry. Sunshine was close to average, at about 2.25 hours per day, spread fairly evenly through the month

March was very mild: daytime temperatures were mostly in the 10°C to 15°C range, and at night there was light frost on only 8 nights. It was mostly dry and clear, with an average of 6 hours of sunshine per day. The wind was from the southwest, fairly strong and gusty at times, except during 17th to 21st, when it was from the NE.

There was almost no frost at all in **April**. A predominantly light airflow from the south or southwest made for a very mild month, though it was just as mild during a short spell of north-easterlies in the third week. It was much drier than the average with only 2 fairly wet days (16th and 27th). Sunshine was well above average at about 6 hours per day.

The wind in **May** came from the WSW quadrant except for a few days in the second week when it arrived from the northeast. Temperatures were about average except in the last week when it was hot for several days, but overall sunshine was average at 6.5 hours per day. It was a dry month, with about 70% of expected rain which mostly fell on the very wet 14th.

In **June**, the daytime maxima were close to average but the nights were cold with a ground frost on 4th, rare in June. The wind was light but very variable with more airflow from the west or north-east than other directions. Sunshine was average at about 6½ hours per day but it was very dry (barely 50% of average), with the whole month's rain between 5th and 10th.

July started with 4 warm, dry days due to light NE winds but the rest of the month was dominated by a light flow from the southwest resulting in very uniform temperatures (typically 22°C by day, 13°C by night), more cloud than normal and well above average rainfall (over 60 cm spread evenly through the month).

Under the influence of a gentle southwest flow for most of the month, **August** was 'quiet' with daily temperature extremes in a narrow range, typically 12°C at night and 23°C by day, giving a monthly average temperature above the long term norm. Only 70% of the normal rain fell, almost all of it between 4th and 6th. Sunshine was average at about 6 hours per day.

September was quite windy; for the first week and the final 10 days it blew from the southwest and between 8th and 20th from the northeast. The winds approached gale force during the periods 1st to 5th and 13th to 16th. Daytime temperatures were close to 20°C throughout the month, while at night minima were never below 5°C making it a warm month. Sunshine, at 5 hours per day, was average but there was barely 25% of expected rain, almost all on 2nd when nearly 14 mm fell.

The mild, dry weather continued in **October**. Winds were generally moderate and variable, with a southerly bias. There was a brief frost on the 18th under a light, northerly influence

but otherwise it was usually above 5°C by night and around 16°C by day. Sunshine was slightly below average at about 3 hours per day. Rainfall was about 60% of normal, with most of it (about 30mm) falling between 5th and 7th.

November was dominated by weather from the SW. A succession of Atlantic storms brought strong to gale force winds and heavy rain on many days. It was very mild with night temperatures above 5°C except on the frosty 9th when a light breeze came briefly from the north. Rainfall was more than double the norm with very wet spells on 12th/13th and 28th/29th with over 30mm in both periods. Sunshine, at about 2.5 hours per day, was normal.

In **December** the mild Atlantic weather continued until 10th. From then until the end of the month the wind direction was variable, but with an easterly bias so it was cold, with temperatures down to -8°C on 23rd. Snow fell on most days between 17th and 25th with falls of up to 5 cm. Precipitation (including snow) was 150% of normal. Sunshine was slightly above average at 2.3 hours per day.

Siskins, Robert Still



REPORT FOR 2009 BY THE BERKSHIRE RECORDS COMMITTEE (BRC)

By Chris Heard

Committee for 2009: Chris Heard (Chairman), Ken Moore, Peter Standley

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

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

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

Category 2 Locally rare species for which a full description is required.

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

The species in categories 2 and 3 are as follows:

Category 2

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

Category 3

Bewick's Swan; Whooper Swan (unless feral); White-fronted Goose; Brent Goose; Barnacle Goose (unless feral); Garganey; Scaup; Eider; Long-tailed Duck; Common Scoter; Red-breasted Merganser; Quail; Red-throated Diver; Black-throated Diver; Great Northern Diver; Red-necked Grebe; Slavonian Grebe; Black-necked Grebe; Leach's Storm Petrel; Gannet; Shag; Bittern; Marsh Harrier; Hen Harrier; Montagu's Harrier; Osprey; Merlin; Avocet; Grey Plover; Knot; Sanderling; Little Stint; Temminck's Stint; Curlew Sandpiper; Black-tailed Godwit; Bar-tailed Godwit; Whimbrel; Spotted Redshank; Wood Sandpiper; Mediterranean Gull; Little Gull; Yellow-legged Gull (spring records); Kittiwake; Little Tern; Sandwich Tern; Arctic Tern; Long-eared Owl; Hoopoe; Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (where i.d. is based on drumming only); Wryneck; Woodlark (away from usual habitat); Rock

Pipit; Water Pipit; White Wagtail (rump colour needed and full details for autumn records); Waxwing; Black Redstart; Ring Ouzel; Wood Warbler: Pied Flycatcher; Willow Tit; Red-backed Shrike; Great Grey Shrike; Raven; Tree Sparrow; Hawfinch; Snow Bunting.

Review of records for 2009: Records that the Committee has not been able to accept are listed below; although as comprehensive as possible, some of the unaccepted records may not have been included. Note that * indicates that no evidence (description, photos or sound recording) was received; 'date' indicates an unexpected sighting; and 'count' indicates a highly unusual number.

Pink-footed Goose	4, Englefield 4/12
White-fronted Goose	4, Moor Green Lakes 21/1*
Red-necked Grebe	1, Windsor Great Park 6/10*
Bittern	1, Woolhampton Gps 12/1*
Spoonbill	1, Theale 15/5
Honey Buzzard	1, Earley 19/4*; 1, Greenham Common 23/5*
Rough-legged Buzzard	1, Compton Downs 19/2*
Hen Harrier	2, Cake Wood 17/4*
Goshawk	1, Dinton Pastures 6/4*; 1, R. Thames at Henley 16/5
Hobby	1, Maidenhead 13/3 (date)
Grey Plover	1, Bray GP 12/3*
Wood Sandpiper	2, Lower Farm GPs 30/8*
Kumlien's Gull	1, QMR 3/2-4/2 (photo)
Sandwich Tern	1, Jubilee River 5/9*; 2, QMR 10/2*
Little Tern	1, Lower Farm GPs 18/6*
Whiskered Tern	1, Moor Green Lakes 2/5
Cuckoo	2, Lower Farm 25/9*
Swift	5, Lower Farm 25/9* (count)
Lesser spotted Woodpecker	4, Twyford GP 13/10 (count)
Waxwing	1, Englefield 7/2
Fieldfare	12, Woodley 15/9
Garden Warbler	2, Warfield 7/4*
Yellow-browed Warbler	1, Lower Farm GP 13/11*
Tree Sparrow	1 Lough Down, Streatley 3/12*
Mealy Redpoll	10, Padworth GP 1/3* (count)
Hawfinch	1, Reading 18/4*
Whimbrel	4, Windsor 17th Apr. not proven to enter Berks
Greenshank	1, River Thames 15th Aug: not proven to enter Berks
Wood Sandpiper	1, Pingewood GP 14th May*
Turnstone	1, Theale Main Pit 17th Aug: not proven
Turnstone	3, Windsor 3rd Aug. Not proven to enter Berks
Common Gull	10, Jubilee River 16th Apr. Count & date
Herring Gull	50, Lower Farm GP 29th Oct: count & location.
Caspian Gull	1, Bracknell 15th Mar*; 1, Eversley GP 8th Mar.*
Arctic Tern	5, Lea Farm GP 1st May*; 1, Dinton Pastures 25th Apr*

Cuckoo	1, Swinley Forest 21st Mar date
Barn Owl	3, Twyford Garden 6th Apr.*
Short-Eared Owl	24, Bury Down 1st Jan: count
Alpine Swift	Bracknell 23rd Sep.*
Bee-eater	1 or 2 Greenham Common 7th May Heard only
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1, Cold Harbour 27th Jan.*; 1, Cold Harbour 28th Jan. pager report*; 1, Datchet 2nd Mar.*; 1, Lea Farm GP 2nd Oct reported as a possible; 1, Wishmoor Bottom 6th Jan.*; 1, Thatcham 4th Oct: not proven
Scandinavian Rock Pipit	5, QMR 8th Oct: not proven
Yellow Wagtail	2, Swinley Forest 21st Mar: date & location
White Wagtail	1, N. Maidenhead 25th Oct*
Waxwing	1, Wokingham 1st Jun: date
Redstart	2, Combe Hill 8th Oct.*; 2, Kintbury 8th Oct.*
Wood Warbler	2, Freeman's Marsh 19th Sep*
Siberian Chiffchaff	1, Sandhurst STW 11th Dec: not proven
Willow Warbler	1, Eversley GP 17th Oct date & no notes
Willow Tit	1, Lavells Lake 27th Jan*; 1, Ceasars Camp 19th Mar: location*; 2, Swinley Forest 6th Apr: location*; 1, Swinley Forest 9th Apr: location*
Red-backed Shrike	1, Dorney Wetlands 29th Jun.*
Raven	1, Bray GP 28th Aug Pager report: not proven; 1, Dinton Pastures 2nd Apr withdrawn by observer; 1, Theale GP 11th Dec: observer not certain.
Tree Sparrow	2, Arthur Jacobs NR 24th Mar.*; 2, Newbury 28th Sep: not proven; 3, Slough garden 12th Apr: record not proven; 1, Slough garden 7th Aug: not proven
Mealy Redpoll	1, Wraysbury GPs 22nd Jan*; 1, Wraysbury 30th Dec*
Hawfinch	1, Waltham St. Lawrence 11th Dec*
Ortolan Bunting	3, Greenham Common 8th Oct
Corn Bunting	5, Combe 14th Sep: not proven

Please also note that some WEBS count figures from the Wraysbury Area have been excluded from the systematic list due to unacceptably high figures reported.