

## **Constitution for the Berkshire Records Committee**

### **1. Preamble**

The Berkshire Records Committee (BRC) was set up in 1990 “to assist the County Recorder in the examination of rare or unusual species or occurrences” (*The Birds of Berkshire Annual Report 1990 p 3*). It is responsible for adjudication of reports of birds within Berkshire to ensure the scientific integrity of the County’s records database and reports. Whilst the Clubs, the Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC) and Newbury District Ornithological Club (NDOC), have a duty to ensure an effective system of adjudication is in place, the BRC will carry out its adjudication independently of them. The County Recorder will convene the BRC and be a non-voting member.

### **2. Duties of the Chair of the BRC**

- a. To manage the BRC in accordance with its constitution.
- b. To seek external expert advice as necessary.
- c. To represent the BRC in the wider bird-watching community.
- d. To scrutinise the content of the Annual Berkshire Bird Reports for accuracy.
- e. To advise the NDOC on adjudications relevant to its report, consistent with its publication timetable.

### **3. Duties of BRC members**

- a. To make judgements on reports submitted to it to the best of their ability and without fear, favour or prejudice.
- b. To treat the proceedings of the Committee confidentially.
- c. To assist the Chair in his/her duties as may be agreed.

### **4. Appointment of BRC members**

- a. The BRC will have at least five members.
- b. In the event of a vacancy the BRC will consult with the Clubs and nominate appropriately qualified candidates for approval by the committees of the BOC and NDOC.

### **5. Operation of the BRC**

- a. Lists of species requiring descriptions or other supporting information will be published in annual reports and other media.
- b. Descriptions received for species to be reviewed by the BBRC will be sent to the BBRC, whose decision will be included in the BRC report (5.h).
- c. Descriptions received for species to be reviewed by the BRC, together with photographs, sonograms or other evidence will be circulated to all BRC members, together with any external expert advice sought by the BRC.
- d. Records of species to be assessed by the BRC will normally be reviewed within 6 months of submission to it.
- e. By submitting a description or notes on a sighting the observer will be deemed to have given permission for the BRC to make an assessment based on the submission as well as circumstantial factors such as the observer profile, the species occurrence patterns *etc.* Additionally a submission may be reassessed, at any time, for the purposes of review or if further material information becomes available.
- f. BRC members will vote to ACCEPT, REJECT (not proven) or PEND for further information.
- g. Decisions will be made on a majority vote basis. In the event of a tie, the record will be considered not proven. In such cases, the BRC may seek external advice.
- h. The decisions of the BRC will be published annually on the berkbirds and BOC websites and in the Annual 'Birds of Berkshire' Reports either in the Systematic List (for accepted

records) or in the BRC Report for that year (for records not proven). If requested, the observer may be informed of that decision prior to publication of the Report.

- i. The BRC will appoint from among its number a Secretary who will be responsible for communicating with observers and keeping a record of the Committee's decisions.

## **6. Conflicts of interest**

- a. A conflict of interest exists if the member is a named observer on a record under review or the member has a prejudicial interest in the record or observer. It is the responsibility of members of the BRC to declare conflicts of interest.
- b. Where there is a conflict of interest the BRC member shall take no part in the review process and shall not be party to the record circulation.
- c. Where the Chair has a conflict of interest, the BRC shall appoint another of their number to chair the review of the record(s) concerned.

## **7. Review and appointment Panel for the BRC**

- a. Five years after the previous review or earlier if the Clubs have serious concerns about the effectiveness of the BRC, or if the BRC Chair is unwilling or unable to continue, the Clubs will establish and convene a Review Panel that will consult with other interested parties.
- b. The Review Panel will be charged with arriving at consensus recommendations to the Clubs' committees.
- c. The Panel shall consist of the chairs of the Clubs (or their nominees) and at least two other interested parties. The CR and/or another BRC representative, as appropriate, shall be invited to participate as non-voting member(s).
- d. For the purposes of 7.a and 7.c, "interested parties" would include those with responsibilities for the creation, collection, analysis, publication and use of records.