

## Berkshire County Bird Database - Confidentiality Policy

Reports of observations are collected by the County Recorder to maintain as complete a record as possible of birds in Berkshire in order that they may be used for:

- *Bona fide* ornithological research
- National reporting, such as to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP)
- support for conservation in planning decisions by local authorities *etc.*
- informing the bird-watching community about the occurrence and status of birds in Berkshire.

Although the general policy of the BOC is that records submitted may be used for all of these purposes, there are some situations in which (a) it is in the interests of the birds concerned that some records (or details of them) should not be divulged publicly; or (b) the observer has, for good reason, requested confidentiality.

### A Confidentiality to protect the interests of the bird

1. Records (or details of them) of unusual breeding birds or unusual species liable to suffer from disturbance or persecution at any time of year, or if birdwatching access is likely to disturb other breeding species, may be withheld at the discretion of the Recorder, who may seek advice from the RBBP or the BRC.
2. In some circumstances, records may be published at a reduced location resolution, *eg* 1km, 2km or 10km square level, or after a period of time has elapsed, such that the risk to the bird is negligible.
3. Where relevant, records will be provided in confidence to the RBBP.
4. Records may be provided to local authorities, developers or others, subject to confidentiality constraints required by the Recorder.

### B. Confidentiality requested by the observer

1. Observers who wish confidentiality for their records may be contacted by the Recorder to ascertain their reasons.
2. Where confidentiality has been requested by the owner of private land or by an observer who has been granted access, the Recorder may propose publication at a low-resolution site location or after a suitable period of time has elapsed.
3. Where confidentiality has been requested by the observer to avoid disturbance of the bird or the site, the record may be suppressed until the bird(s) has gone, then published.
4. The Recorder may release information for sound environmental reasons (see A3, A4).
5. Records from observers demanding absolute confidentiality for other reasons will be retained on file at the discretion of the Recorder and not disclosed for a period of time to be agreed between the observer and Recorder (but see paragraphs 2 and 4).
6. Records of species requiring adjudication by the BBRC or the BRC should be submitted to the Recorder who will liaise with the observer to determine an appropriate level of confidentiality on a case by case basis.

## **C Confidentiality assurance mechanisms**

1. All records are held in an offline database, access to which is password restricted to the database manager and Recorder.
2. Confidential records are assigned codes indicating a level of confidentiality:
  - a. Recorder only (for records that are only accessible to the Recorder)
  - b. Site resolution (specifying the site resolution restriction, *eg* 1 km, tetrad, west, mid, east Berkshire)
  - c. Date of release (specifying the date after which the record may be made public)
3. Records of scarce breeding species in the breeding season and certain other records submitted via [berksbirds.co.uk](http://berksbirds.co.uk) are not visible on the sightings page (see Schedule).
4. Observers who distrust electronic media with confidential material may submit hard copy records to the Recorder.

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