

Minutes of meeting of the Berkshire Records Committee

Meeting held on 18th September 2018 at 20.00.

Those present: Richard Burness (Chair), Andy Horscroft (Secretary), Adam Bassett, Ken Moore, Hugh Netley and Marek Walford.

Apologies received from Adrian Hickman.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2018 were accepted without comment.

2. Actions outstanding

There was an action on the Chairman to notify observers that after the validation of 2016 records, we would not be accepting any Category 2 or Category 3 records that are submitted without supporting evidence. This action was not completed because the Chairman first wished to advise the BRC members of feedback from the NDOC committee. The chairman of the NDOC committee was concerned that this action could send out a negative message, and that there was a danger that observers would cease submitting records altogether. The action will be completed but with the emphasis now on the need to provide quality assurance to the clients who receive our data by prior agreement or by casual enquiry. The notification will also emphasise the fact that multi-observer records and records accompanied by reasonable quality photographs are still acceptable. **Action RJB**

3. Constitution and protocols

Members were reminded of the governing constitution and the committee protocols. In particular that the adjudication process should be fair and unbiased. The constitution is now posted on the BOC web site and available to all.

4. Negative feedback

It was decided that the best way to counter recent, ill-informed, negative feedback was to continue to complete our responsibilities within the terms of our constitution. Transparency of our operations could be improved by making our minutes available on the BOC website. **Action RJB**

5. Review of records for 2016

AEDH's comments had been sent to the secretary prior to the meeting and were incorporated into the review process.

Category 2 records.

The committee reviewed those Category 2 records in the 2016 dataset that had been submitted without supporting evidence. Other records had previously been accepted or deemed not proven by email circulation of the committee. Approximately 25 records were reviewed, and a consensus reached on most. However, some records were pended whilst attempts are made to gather more information. **Action AH**

Category 3 records

Over 800 Category 3 records had been submitted in 2016, most without supporting evidence. Application of multi-observer criteria (a technical solution by MFW) and review of photographs sourced from several on-line sites had reduced these to a much more manageable number. The committee made a number of adjudication decisions, but efforts will be made to secure more information on the border-line cases. **Action RJB, AH, AB**

6. Methodology of dealing with unsupported records

The review of the 2016 Category 2 and Category 3 records lead to a wide-ranging discussion on a strategy for dealing with these records in the future. The committee must continue to be as inclusive as possible. However, this proves difficult (especially with records sourced from *BirdTrack*) when the observers submit poor supporting evidence or no evidence at all. We will continue to accept multi-observer records, and those records accompanied by reasonable quality photographs. It is proving too time-consuming, however, for committee members to have to search for images through observers' personal blogs. The Chairman will issue a note explaining why the validation criteria are necessary. See Paragraph 2, above **Action RJB**

The committee were concerned that keeping a record of an observer's contact details, and the adjudication decisions made on their records, could contravene recent data protection legislation. The Chairman will make enquiries. **Action RJB**

7. Review of species listed on the Category 2 and 3 lists

The categorised species are under constant review. The committee had a brief discussion about moving some species from Category 3 to Category 2 and *vice versa*. We also considered additions to, and removals from, the species list. MFW has researched this issue and will circulate his suggestions to the committee. **Action MFW**

8. The BRC report for *The Birds of Berkshire Annual Report for 2016*

The Chairman suggested simplifying the BRC report for the next annual review. No conclusion was reached but the following headings will be circulated for discussion.

Introduction

Definition of Categories 1, 2 and 3

List of Category 2 species

List of Category 3 species

Records considered Not Proven pending more evidence

Category 2 records received without a description

Category 3 records received without supporting notes

Summary

Action all members

9. Breeding Goosanders

Photographs have been received of a pair of Goosanders that bred in Berkshire in 2017. In a note accompanying the photographs the observer comments that they also bred the previous year. The Chairman reported that in his contacts with the observer the latter had re-iterated tis

statement but provided no evidence. It was decided to include the record in the 2017 annual report with a comment that they may also have bred in 2016. (The observer reports no sign of them in 2018.)

10. Rare Breeding Birds in Berkshire

KEM has raised the question of rare or scarce birds that breed in the county that are local rarities but not on the Rare Breeding Birds Panel list. Would a county database of our own scarce breeders be of use in developing conservation strategy? The Chairman will investigate the viability of this and will research methods for determining the criteria required.

Action RJB

The Chairman thanked the members, and the meeting closed at 22.30.