

The Birds of Berkshire



**Annual Report
2016**

Published 2019

Berkshire Ornithological Club

Registered charity no. 1011776



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 monitoring for local conservation management.
- 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:

Sally Wearing, 9 Deans Farm, The Causeway, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5JZ
telephone 0118 946 3125;
e-mail berksocsecretary@gmail.com

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Edited by Richard Burness and Renton Righelato

Published in 2019 by

BERKSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

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ISBN 978-0-9553497-6-8

Price £7.50

Introduction

The 2016 report has been compiled by Richard Burness, our County Recorder, who will take over as chair of the Editorial Board later this year. As well as editing the Systematic List, a scientific record of observations, he has put together an interesting and valuable set of articles and photographs, which we hope you will enjoy.

With the county records database now available on the BOC website, there is less need to write accounts as lists of records and more opportunity for analysis and discussion, which I hope both writers and readers will find more interesting. We hope people will make use of this facility to carry out their own research and offer notes or articles for publication in these reports. One new searchable feature of the county records database that users might find helpful is the assignment of sites to topographical areas: swathes of broadly similar geology and habitat mix that can be used in analysing the distribution of records. A map showing the areas can be found on page 150.

In 2019, the Berkshire Ornithological Club published a guide to bird-watching sites in Berkshire, available from the Secretary of the Club and at Club meetings, price £6 (£5 to members). There are also just a few copies left of *The Birds of Berkshire Atlas and Avifauna* (2nd edition 2013), which can be obtained from Brian Clews (brian.clews@btinternet.com).

We hold small numbers of back copies of many of The Birds of Berkshire Annual Reports, which are available from the BOC Secretary in return for a small donation to the Club's Conservation Fund.

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.

We are particularly grateful to our County Recorder, Richard Burness, who has edited the Systematic List and to all the species account writers who are listed on page 50. Our thanks also go to Patrick Cowley and colleagues for their report on the Thames Basin Heaths, to Richard Burness, Adrian Hickman, Ken Moore, Renton Righelato, Andy Tomczynski and Mike Turton, all of whom provided articles, and to the photographers who generously provided their excellent shots. Thanks also to Robert Gillmor for his beautiful cover print of the Great Egret and, as ever, to Rachel and Rob Still of Eye on the Ball for design and production of the report.

Renton Righelato

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 the Recorder.

Records can be entered on line at www.berksbirds.co.uk or sent by email to the Recorder 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 do not use plurals. e.g. do not enter “Siskins” or “Canada Geese”, but “Siskin” or “Canada Goose”.

Site: Required. If possible, please use the site names as used in these reports. Otherwise, please enter the site as the nearest landmark on an OS map and specify the 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: 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” e.g. “01/01/2005”.

Number: Required. Whole number only. e.g. 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”,03/02/2019,,10,Feeding in Alders,,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 46).

BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016

by Ken Moore

JANUARY 2016: the first day of January had the possibly returning drake **Smew** of the past two winters at Moor Green Lakes, then a single **Brent Goose** at Lower Farm GP the following day. December's **Ferruginous Duck** remained at Dinton Pastures CP as did the **Ring-necked Duck** at Bray GPs. On the 4th, 27 **Goosander** were at Grove Lake, Moor Green Lakes, on the 5th, a **Common Scoter** at QMR and an ill **Kittiwake** there five days later on the 10th. The 15th January - quite an interesting day - 16 **Common Crossbill** seen in Swinley Forest and a 1st winter **Ring Ouzel** was skulking beside the Ridgeway at Bury Down. On the 21st, the Grove Lake **Goosanders** were up to 54. On the 28th a first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Knowl Hill, two **Jack Snipe** were found at a private site in the Kennet Valley and a group of ten **Raven** at Combe. Then on the 30th, the afternoon was enlivened at Lower Farm GP by the arrival of 14 **Pintail** and at QMR by a **Great Northern Diver**. Three **Jack Snipe** remaining at Hoton GPs from 2015, staying until April 24th. A special search of suitable sites by CDRH revealed a minimum of 15 **Water Pipits** at three sites in the east of the county in January and February. A peak count of nine at one site in January was followed by nine at another site some distance away in mid-February; at a third site there were up to six during January with three remaining into mid-February.

FEBRUARY: the first returning **Oystercatchers** arrived on the 3rd visiting both Hosehill and Main GP, Theale. Also, on the 3rd there was a **Common Scoter** at QMR. The following day a **Short-eared Owl** was seen hunting over Larks Hill and the **Great Northern Diver** remained at QMR. A **Glaucous Gull** was present at Knowl Hill from the 5th (and may have visited QMR). The first-winter **Ring Ouzel** was still on the Ridgeway on the 14th - there have not been many wintering **Ring Ouzels** in Berkshire over the years. A **Firecrest** was first seen high up in the Willows opposite the Main Entrance to Padworth Lane GP on the 25th February and stayed in the area until 14th March at least. The first **Redshank** of the year arrived at Padworth Lane on 28th.

MARCH: on the 3rd another **Glaucous Gull** was found at Knowl Hill and on the 5th a Curlew could be viewed from the swing-bridge at Bottom Lane Floods, then on the 15th, five **Redshank** were at Padworth Lane GP. A single **Ruff** at Fobney Meadows on 19th March with a pair of **Garganey**. On the same day, a male **Marsh Harrier** flew east over Woolhampton GP and two **Rock Pipits** were at QMR. On the 22nd there was a **Black Redstart** at QMR, a **Jack Snipe** at Lavell's Lake on the 23rd. On the 27th an **Osprey** flew over QMR. A **Kittiwake** was briefly on the shoreline at Hosehill on March 29th, also a drake **Common Scoter** on Theale Main GP the same day whilst the following day a **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Hosehill and two **Wheatears** were at Burnthouse Lane. At least 90 **Golden Plovers** were at Greenham Common on the 31st, a single **White Wagtail** the same day at QMR and 27 **Crossbills** at Crowthorne Wood. The first summer migrants of the year arrived during the latter half of the month.

APRIL: The second Berkshire **Yellow Wagtail** of the year, naturally a male, and a **Water Pipit** at Burnthouse Lane GP on the 6th, and a male **Common Redstart** at Combe Gibbet. Six **Brent Geese** flew over QMR on the 10th. Two pairs of **Garganey** were recorded together at the beginning of the month at Fobney, with one staying on to the end of April. On the 13th two **Sandwich Terns** were at QMR and on the same day a **Slavonian Grebe** coming into summer plumage was at Woolhampton GPs. On the 15th there as an **Avocet** at QMR. Another **Slavonian Grebe** was at Main GP, Theale on the 16th. A **Redstart** was seen at Moor Green Lakes on the 17th. On the 23rd, a **Short-eared Owl** in the Fireplane

area of Greenham Common with three **Ring Ouzels**, a **Whinchat** and two **Wheatears**. On the same day a **Great White Egret** was seen flying over Lower Farm GP. There was an **Iceland Gull** at QMR on the 29th. During the month three **Ospreys**, several **Arctic Terns** and several **Grasshopper Warblers** were noted at a number of locations.

MAY: there was a **Slavonian Grebe** at Theale Main GP on 2nd and **Greenshanks** arrived on the 5th May - two at Lea Farm and one each at New Workings, Moor Green Lakes and Hosehill Lake. Two **Black Terns** were at Fobney Island on the same day. Three days later (8th May), possibly the same two **Black Terns** were at Main GP, Theale. Also, on the 5th there was a **Jack Snipe** at Lea Farm Lake and a **Ring Ouzel** at Combe Gibbet. A **Wood Sandpiper** was at New Workings, Moor Green on the 6th, with at least six **Greenshanks**. On the 10th two **Turnstone**, four **Dunlin**, two **Sanderlings**, a **Grey Plover**, a **Common Sandpiper** and finally three **Ringed Plover** were at the New Workings too. On the next day, at the New Workings were two **Grey Plovers**, a **Whimbrel** and a **Redshank**. At Theale Main Pit, also on the 11th, there were two **Black-necked Grebes**, a **Black Tern** and six **Arctic Terns**, whilst on the 10th there had been a **Sandwich Tern** at Dinton Pastures CP. Twenty **Hobbys** were around the Rowney Predator Lake at Woolhampton GPs on the 15th. On the 17th there was a **Little Tern** at QMR, and a **Stone-Curlew** was located by the Fireplane at Greenham Common on the 20th. Then at QMR on the 21st May there were two **Whimbrel**, five **Sanderling** and four **Ringed Plovers**. On the 23rd at Main GP, Theale were a total of nine **Oystercatchers** including four adult-sized juveniles. Finally, on the 29th, there was a **Kittiwake** at QMR, and a **Montagu's Harrier** was seen flying over Colnbrook.

JUNE: on the 3rd a female **Marsh Harrier** was hunting over East Marsh, Dorney Wetlands and a **White Wagtail** seen at QMR on the 4th. A **Honey Buzzard** was photographed over the northeast of the county on the 5th. There was a **Black Tern** at Theale Main GP on the 6th and a **Grasshopper Warbler** at Kintbury the same day. There was a notably high count of **Mute Swan** at Windsor Promenade on the 8th June, a total of 251, and an interesting record of a hybrid **Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Slough Sewage Farm on the same day. On the 10th a **Great White Egret** was seen flying over Wraysbury. On the 11th a pair of **Garganey** arrived at Lower Farm GP - starting to moult into eclipse. Another **Grasshopper Warbler** was singing at Thatcham Marsh on the 11th whilst there was a late **Osprey** at QMR on the 21st. During the month **Quail** were noted as singing in their usual locations.

JULY: there was a sign of the onset of autumn return migration with **Black-tailed Godwits** being seen at five locations with **Dunlin** at four. Unusual summer records were those of a **Short-eared Owl** and a **Hen Harrier** being seen in the west of the county. (The latter a reminder not to make assumptions.) A **Marsh Harrier** was seen in Windsor Great Park on the 3rd and the 17th, there was a **Ruff** at QMR on the 13th and three **Common Scoter** at QMR on the 22nd.

AUGUST: the summering **Common Redstart** at Lower Farm was present until at least 9th August, with a **Great White Egret** arriving on the 10th and staying for quite a while. On 15th another **Honey Buzzard** was seen well, and notes and photos taken in mid-Berks. A juvenile **Garganey** arrived at Hosehill on the 20th and stayed until the 11th September at least. Twelve **Little Terns** appeared at QMR on the 19th, there was a **Black-necked Grebe** at the same location on the same date, there were **Black-tailed Godwits** at Moor Green Lakes and Burnthouse Lane between the 20th and 22nd. There was a **Caspian Gull** at Lower Farm GPs on 27th and 28th, a **Bar-tailed Godwit** flew over Woodlands Park Fields on the 28th, a **Little Stint** was present at Moor Green Lakes between 29th and 31st. Yet another **Honey Buzzard** was reported on the 27th. A form *argentatus* **Herring Gull** was seen at QMR on the 31st.

SEPTEMBER: a **Great White Egret** settled at Lower Farm GPs between 2nd and 14th, a total of 25 **Arctic Terns** were at QMR on the 5th, mostly juveniles. Also, on the 5th at QMR there was a **Bar-tailed Godwit**. The New Workings at Moor Green had a total of three **Little Stints** on the 6th. Also, on the 6th there was a well-watched **Marsh Harrier** at Englefield, there was also one present at Upper Lambourn on the 1st and 14th. Three **Black Terns** flew through QMR on the 7th. On the 8th, alternating between Main GP, Theale and Moatlands were four **Sandwich Terns**. On the 10th there was a **Knot** and an **Osprey** at QMR and perhaps the bird of the year - a **Leach's Petrel**. Moor Green Lakes did not want to be left out and held a **Curlew Sandpiper** the following day. Then it was back to QMR for the rest of the month - **Caspian Gull** between the 12th and the 16th (with another on the 24th), a **Sanderling** on the 13th, two **Avocets** very briefly on the 14th, followed by an immature **Sabine's Gull** on the 20th and finally for the month, on the 29th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper**. Elsewhere there was an **Osprey** at Wraysbury on the 15th, a **Wood Sandpiper** on the 24th at Lower Farm GP, **Garganey** at four sites and **White Wagtail** at four sites.

OCTOBER: on the 1st a hybrid **Swallow x House Martin** was seen and photographed at QMR, also on the 1st (until the 8th) there was a **Rock Pipit** also at QMR, on the 5th there was a **Great White Egret** at Horton, a **Little Stint** was at Moor Green Lakes on the 7th, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was trapped and ringed at Moor Green Lakes on the 9th, there was another at Brimpton on the 10th and yet a third at Greenham Common on the 14th, and a ringtail **Hen Harrier** was seen over Combe Gibbet the 9th. On the 12th there was another form argentatus **Herring Gull** at QMR. A late **Osprey** drifted over Lavells Lake, Dinton on the 14th, eight **Goosanders** flew into Lower Farm GP, staying for just three minutes on the 20th. Between 23rd and 25th there was a **Common Scoter** at Theale Main GPs. On the 26th **Great Grey Shrikes** arrived at both Wishmoor Bottom and Cow Down. On the last day of October seven **Water Rails** were counted at Fobney Meadows.

NOVEMBER: in Swinley Forest, between the Upper and Lower Star Posts, on the 8th were 14 **Crossbills**. There was a **Cattle Egret**, briefly, at QMR on the 4th. A **Black Redstart** put in a brief garden appearance at Shaw on the 8th. On the 9th three **Common Scoters** were on Main GP, Theale, and a **Grey Plover** at QMR. On the 11th a **Hen Harrier** was in the Lambourn area. Returning **Bitterns** were first seen at Dinton Pastures on the 18th. On the 23rd a possible drake **Scaup** was reported from Moatlands GP, seen again on the 24th - but was it a genuine SCAUP, or a hybrid? That debate continues..... However, on the 24th it was in close company with a juvenile **Scaup**. On the 25th a female/immature **Ferruginous Duck** was reported from Moatlands and on the next day, the first winter period male **Ferruginous Duck** returned to Dinton Pastures. Also, on the 25th a **Brent Goose** appeared at Lower Farm GP. On the 26th an **Iceland Gull** and a form argentatus **Herring Gull** were at QMR. **Jack Snipe** were seen at Dinton Pastures CP and Lower Farm GP.

DECEMBER: A single **Bittern** still in attendance at White Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures. On the 4th there was **Ferruginous Duck** at both Dinton Pastures CP and Moatlands, a **Marsh Harrier** at Horton GP and a **Hen Harrier** at RAF Welford. There was **Brent Goose** at QMR on the 14th (with six at Moor Green Lakes on the 18th). A **Glaucous Gull** was seen at Knowl Hill between the 16th and the 19th. **Caspian Gulls** were reported from QMR on the 18th, 19th and 26th. There was a **Hen Harrier** at Lambourn on the 21st a **Water Pipit** at Horton GP on the 24th and a **Hawfinch** in Windsor Great Park on the 28th. At the end of December, a **Jack Snipe** was at Padworth Lane GP on the 28th another at Eton Wick on the 29th, and a further two at Lea Farm GP on the 31st. There was a rare winter report of a **Whinchat** at Remenham on the 30th.

GROUND NESTING BIRD SURVEY GREENHAM AND CROOKHAM COMMON 2016

by *Adrian Hickman*

Introduction

Since 2010 I have been contracted by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) to carry out annual surveys of the ground-nesting birds on Greenham and Crookham commons under the West Berkshire Living Landscapes project.

The Living Landscapes project covers an area of 27 square kilometres of heathland, reed bed, woodland, farmland and river valleys including the Enborne and Kennet. The purpose of the project is to connect, enhance and protect fragmented areas of good wildlife habitat and the wide range of species they support. Covering about 500 ha and hosting an important assemblage of nationally and locally important species including birds, Greenham and Crookham commons form a significant and proportionately large component (BBOWT website, no date).

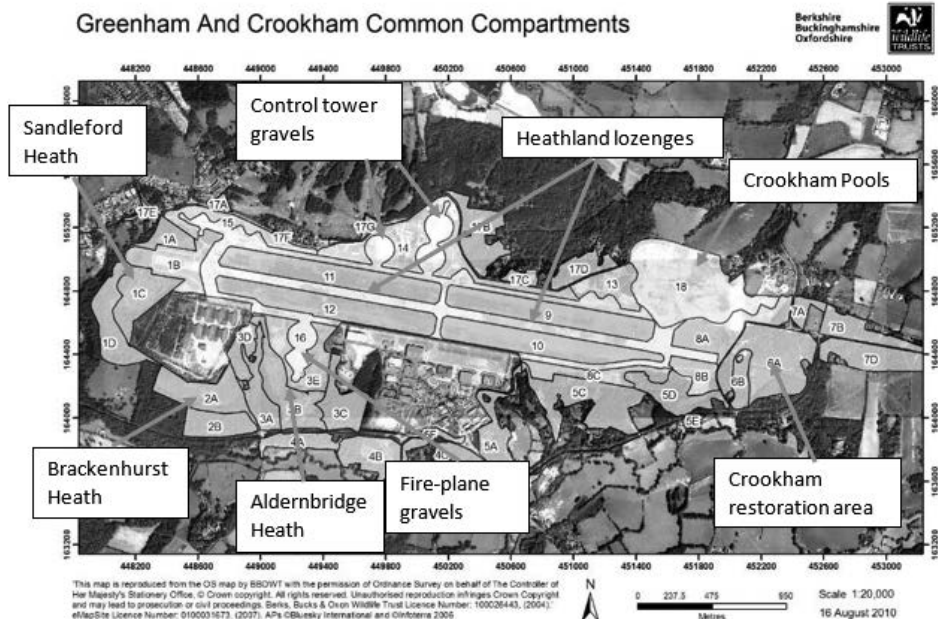
These surveys followed on from a common bird census survey carried out in 2009 by Nigel Cleere for West Berkshire Council. There was no survey in 2013 due to a break in the funding after the first three-year part of the Living Landscapes project came to an end in 2012 and the final five-year part began in summer 2013.

The aim of the surveys is to monitor trends in numbers and distribution of a selection of important ground or low nesting species likely to be vulnerable to disturbance from visitors (Table 1) and provide site managers with information to assist in habitat and visitor management.

Table 1: Ground nesting bird species and their current Birds of Conservation Concern (BOCC) status (Eaton *et al*, 2015) surveyed on Greenham and Crookham commons in 2016. Those species afforded special protection under schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are indicated.

Species		BOCC listing		WCA sch. 1
Vernacular	Scientific name	Amber	Red	
1 Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	
2 Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			✓
3 Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓	
4 Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓		
5 Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			✓
6 Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	
7 Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	✓		✓
8 Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		✓	
9 Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>			
10 Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓	
11 Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓		
12 Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓	
13 Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓		

Figure 1: Areas covered by the ground nesting bird surveys on Greenham and Crookham commons.



The areas covered by the survey include all the habitats favoured by the target species including all the open and sparsely vegetated gravel areas, heathland, gorse scrub and woodland edge (Fig 1).

Results

The results for the complete series of surveys are shown in full in table 2 and presented in three separate charts of conveniently grouped species (Figs 2–4). This is followed by individual species notes that provide more detail.

Species notes

LAPWING

Not only was 2016 the first year since 2012 that successful breeding was recorded, it was also, perhaps unexpectedly, given the failure of the other wader species, a record year for the number of young fledged. Sightings indicated the presence of up to five breeding pairs that fledged a total of six young between them: one on the fire-plane gravel fledged three young, another, east of the Estovers building (formerly 616) also fledged three young, and two or three pairs at Crookham pools which all failed.

With six young fledged from five pairs on the site in 2016, breeding productivity is 1.2 per pair, which easily exceeds the criteria for the number deemed necessary (0.6-0.8) to maintain a given population (Ausden *et al.*, 2009). However, long term the overall average for the period from 2010 to 2016 is 0.39 which falls well short of the minimum requirement (Table 3).

Table 3: Lapwing breeding productivity Greenham and Crookham Commons 2010-2016. Breeding productivity = the number of fledged young per breeding pair.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average
No. pairs	13	11	5	6	4	5	5	7.00
Fledged young	3	5	3	0	0	0	6	2.43
Productivity	0.25	0.5	0.75	0	0	0	1.2	0.39

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER

The only record was a single bird at Crookham pools on 13 April. This is the third consecutive year in which this species has not established breeding territories on the Common and the sixth year, since 2010, that it has not bred successfully. The likelihood that habitat degradation due to scrub development has contributed to the lack of breeding success has been suggested.

RINGED PLOVER

One pair took up residence on an area of gravel in late February. A third bird was seen on 29 February (leap year) but not thereafter. A male observed nest ‘scraping’ on 17 March indicated that breeding was underway but by late April the birds had, as in the previous three years, apparently failed and abandoned the site. The last record was of a single bird on 26 April. The species last bred successfully on the site in 2012.

It has been suggested that the reason for the repeated failure over recent years is linked to disturbance from the large numbers of people that attend the site for the ‘park-run’ spring event.

Note: After constructive discussions with the organisers of the park-run event the starting point was moved to a new location in 2017. Subsequently, in both 2018 and 2019 Little

Ringed Plovers returned to nest on the area, although Ringed Plover has yet to do so.

REDSHANK

Usually at least one pair of Redshank establishes a territory and exhibits breeding behaviour at Crookham pools over the spring period but the only record on the common in 2016 was of two, presumably a pair, on 25 March.

WOODLARK

Fifteen territories were located during 2016 which is similar to last year's total, indicating that the population on site is at least stable. Survey data over the long term continues to indicate a shallow upward trend. An indication that the population is doing well nationally is that record numbers were recorded on RSPB heathland reserves in 2016 with an estimated overall increase of 12 per cent (RSPB, 2016).

For the first time since the mapping surveys began there were at least as many Woodlark territories (four-five) on the open heathland lozenges as those of Skylark (four).

Breeding was confirmed in five territories either by the sighting of adults carrying food for young or by the presence of recently fledged young. A brood of four chicks was ringed by Jan Legg on 23 June.

SKYLARK

Fourteen territories were identified across the site in 2016, the same as in 2015. Consequently, this is the first year in which the species has apparently not declined since territory mapping surveys began in 2009. The area around Crookham pools, which continues to be the stronghold for the species on the site, held ten territories. The remaining four territories were along the western lozenges.

For the first time since 2009 there were insufficient sightings along the open areas of the eastern lozenges to define any territories. In keeping with most survey years, except 2011 and 2015, there was no evidence of successful breeding. Despite the apparent halt in its decline, evidence from previous surveys indicates a strong long-term downward trend.

DARTFORD WARBLER

Encouragingly the high population present in 2015 has continued into 2016. The presence of fourteen territories in 2016 is a new record for the site.

One territory was in gorse at the western end of the site, there were six along the western lozenges, five along the eastern lozenges and two at Crookham pools. Breeding was confirmed, all by adults carrying food for young, in six territories.

An indication that the high numbers on the common reflect similar success over a wider area of the country is that record numbers of territories were also recorded on the Bourley & Long Valley SSSI (Hants) which is part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). Numbers increased there from 38 to 46 territories in 2016 (John Eyre. Pers. Comm. Email 26 September 2016). Similarly, the species was recorded in unprecedented numbers this summer on RSPB heathland reserves across southern England, having increased by 34 per cent (RSPB, 2016).

It is likely that consecutive mild winters over the preceding few years have significantly contributed to the species' over-winter survival and subsequent high numbers in the breeding season. Theoretically, the long-term gorse management program currently underway on the common should be encouraging the development of short re-growth which is ideal for nest

Figure 2: Chart showing the long-term trends of Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover and Redshank derived from territory mapping surveys undertaken from 2009 to 2016.

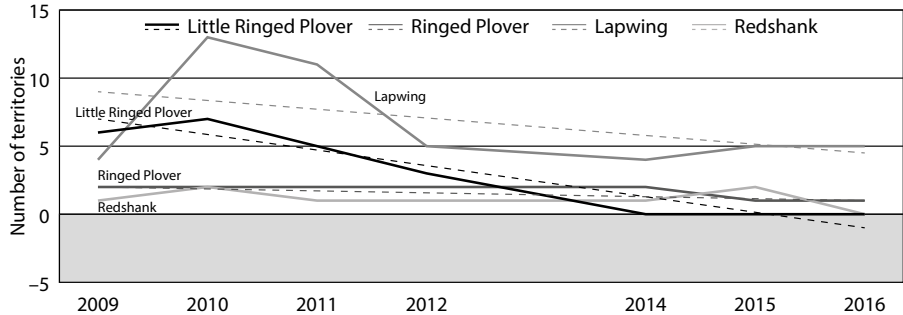
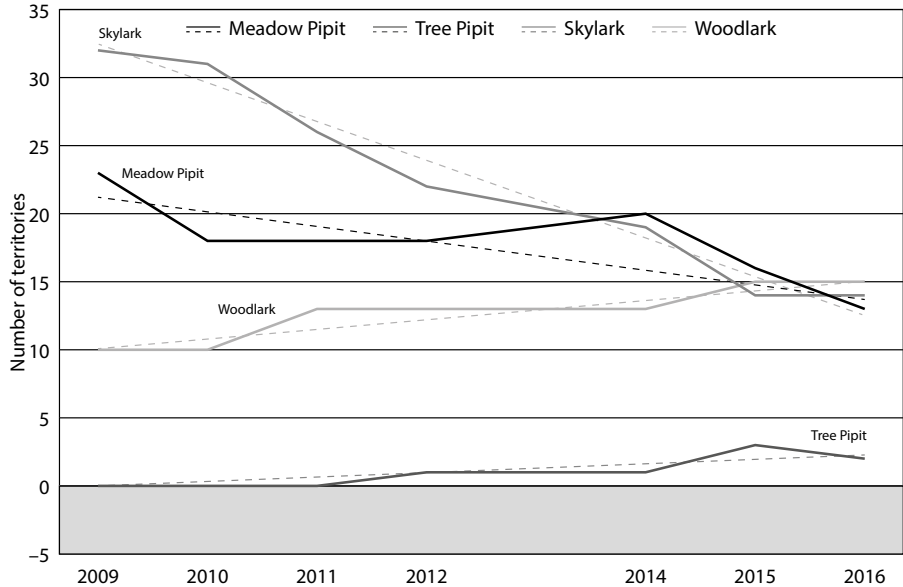


Figure 3: Chart showing the long-term trends of Woodlark, Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Tree Pipit derived from territory mapping surveys undertaken from 2009 to 2016.



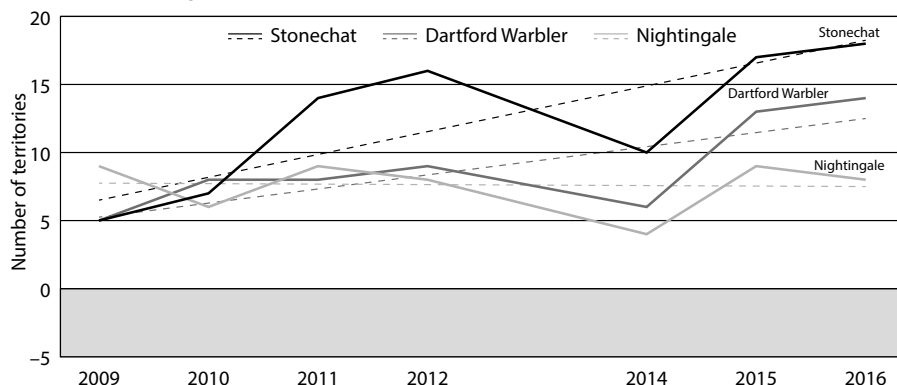
sites, therefore providing nesting opportunities for the recently increased population

NIGHTINGALE

There were eight confirmed Nightingale territories in 2016. Usually the scrub habitat to the south and east of the fire-plane gravel holds at least two territories but in 2016 only one was located. This may indicate that the habitat is gradually becoming unsuitable through natural succession.

As in 2015 the majority of pairs were in scrub/woodland edge habitat bordering the north and west side of the Crookham restoration area. Additionally, one territory was just east of the New Greenham Business park and another was south of the eastern heathland lozenges.

Figure 4: Chart showing the long-term trends of Stonechat, Nightingale and Dartford Warbler derived from territory mapping surveys undertaken from 2009 to 2016.



There was no evidence of successful breeding, but an adult repeatedly giving agitated alarm calls on 24 June in the Crookham restoration area indicated the presence of young nearby.

STONECHAT

A record eighteen territories were found on the site in 2016. One was west of the western end of the old runway, five were along the western lozenges, one was north of the fire-plane gravel, eight were along the eastern lozenges and there were three near Crookham pools.

An indication that the species had a successful season was that breeding was confirmed in eleven territories, either by observations of adults carrying food for young (six territories), or the presence of recently fledged young (five territories).

Given the high numbers present over the last two seasons and the apparent breeding success, particularly in 2016, Stonechat is currently clearly doing well on the site and the long-term data from the survey results since 2009 indicate an upward trend.

TREE PIPIT

Two territories were confirmed in 2016, both of which were at the same locations as in 2015: Sandleford heath and Brackenhurst heath. Unlike last year there was no evidence of successful breeding. Further possible territories were indicated by single records of singing males at Bishops Green heath and the Crookham restoration area. As all the records, including those of the confirmed territories, only involved single singing males, it is possible that some or all were un-paired. This is the fifth consecutive year in which territories have been established on the site.

MEADOW PIPIT

Fourteen territories were identified in 2016. This is the second consecutive year that numbers have fallen on the site, reinforcing the indication that over the long term, this species is undergoing a shallow decline.

There were seven territories along the western lozenges but only five in the eastern lozenges where the average between 2010 and 2014 was 8.3. There were two at Crookham pools. Breeding was confirmed with sightings of adults carrying food for young (five territories) or by the presence of recently fledged young (two territories). Adults giving agitated alarm calls

(probable breeding), indicating the presence of young in a nest or nearby were observed in three of the territories.

Evidence of nest predation occurred on 16 May in one territory when a pair of adults were observed repeatedly alarm calling on or near a small low gorse bush, together with a pair of Stonechats, a male Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and a male Dartford Warbler apparently all joining in to mob a predator that could not be seen. After several minutes the mobbing birds dispersed, and an empty Meadow Pipit nest was found. A brief rustling sound low in the gorse close to the nest indicated the possibility that a grass snake or adder had raided the nest.

YELLOWHAMMER

Disappointingly, after two confirmed territories in 2015, the only record in 2016 was of a singing male on 26 May at the Crookham restoration area.

REED BUNTING

There was only one record of this species during the field surveys in 2016: a single male at Crookham pools on 24 June. A female was seen by Ian Weston on 6 May, but the sighting was considered too far away (i.e. almost 400 m) to be combined with the record of the male to constitute a territory.

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Adrian Hickman
18 July 2019

BERKSHIRE BREEDING WATER RAIL SURVEY 2016-18

Renton Righelato

Introduction

Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* are secretive birds, especially in the breeding season and it is thought that the number in breeding in the UK, estimated to be only 1,100 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013), may be substantially underestimated. For this reason, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel has recently (2017) asked for evidence of their breeding to be reported to them.

In Berkshire, it is thought that Water Rails have declined substantially in the last two centuries (Standley *et al.* 1996), due to lowland drainage schemes and the loss of traditional water meadows and cress beds. Much of these land use changes had occurred by the time of the first Berkshire breeding atlas surveys in 1987–89, which detected a scattering of birds in suitable breeding habitat, mostly along the Kennet valley, though further evidence of breeding was recorded in only three of the 22 occupied tetrads. Twenty years later, atlas surveys in 2008–11 found a similar summer distribution, though breeding was recorded as probable or confirmed in eight of the 20 occupied tetrads (Bucknell *et al.* 2013). Using the national estimate of 1,100 territories and the proportion of relative abundance attributable to Berkshire in the atlas surveys (1.1%), a county population of around 12 territories was estimated. However, these surveys were not designed to detect Water Rail and largely relied on birds calling or showing themselves as observers passed.

The UK resident breeding population is augmented in winter by migrants from Europe. In the winter atlas survey carried out in 2007–11, Water Rails were recorded in four times as many Berkshire tetrads (84) as in the breeding season and at almost twice the relative abundance. Return migration begins in late February and is largely complete by the end of March. Egg-laying of UK birds starts in late March and post-breeding dispersal begins in mid-July (BWP). Hence, breeding surveys were conducted from last week of March to the first week of May, with some sites revisited later.

Methodology

The survey method is based on that of Gilbert *et al.* (1998).

Locations: survey routes or points were selected where, based on a Phase 1 habitat map provided by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre or on local knowledge, there was suitable habitat: reed-beds and other marshy areas.

Survey timing: Surveys were made from the last week of March to the end of April in quiet weather conditions. Surveying started at first light and finished by 2 hours after sunrise.

Equipment: The playback devices used were Easyacc portable rechargeable speakers with a Water Rail song (Birdguides) audible for at least 50m.

Method: When in suitable habitat, the sharming duet was played for 60 seconds; responses were noted and if none, playback was repeated for 60 seconds. This process was repeated every 50–100m. The positions of responders were noted (six figure grid reference) and the type of response: bird sharming in response to playback (R), unprovoked sharming (S), sharming duet (D), other calls (C), sighting (V). Two birds sharming together (duetting) is regarded as a territorial pair and sharming a territorial bird (probable breeder). Water Rails giving other calls (chipping, grunts etc) or visual contact only is noted as present in suitable habitat (a possible breeder).

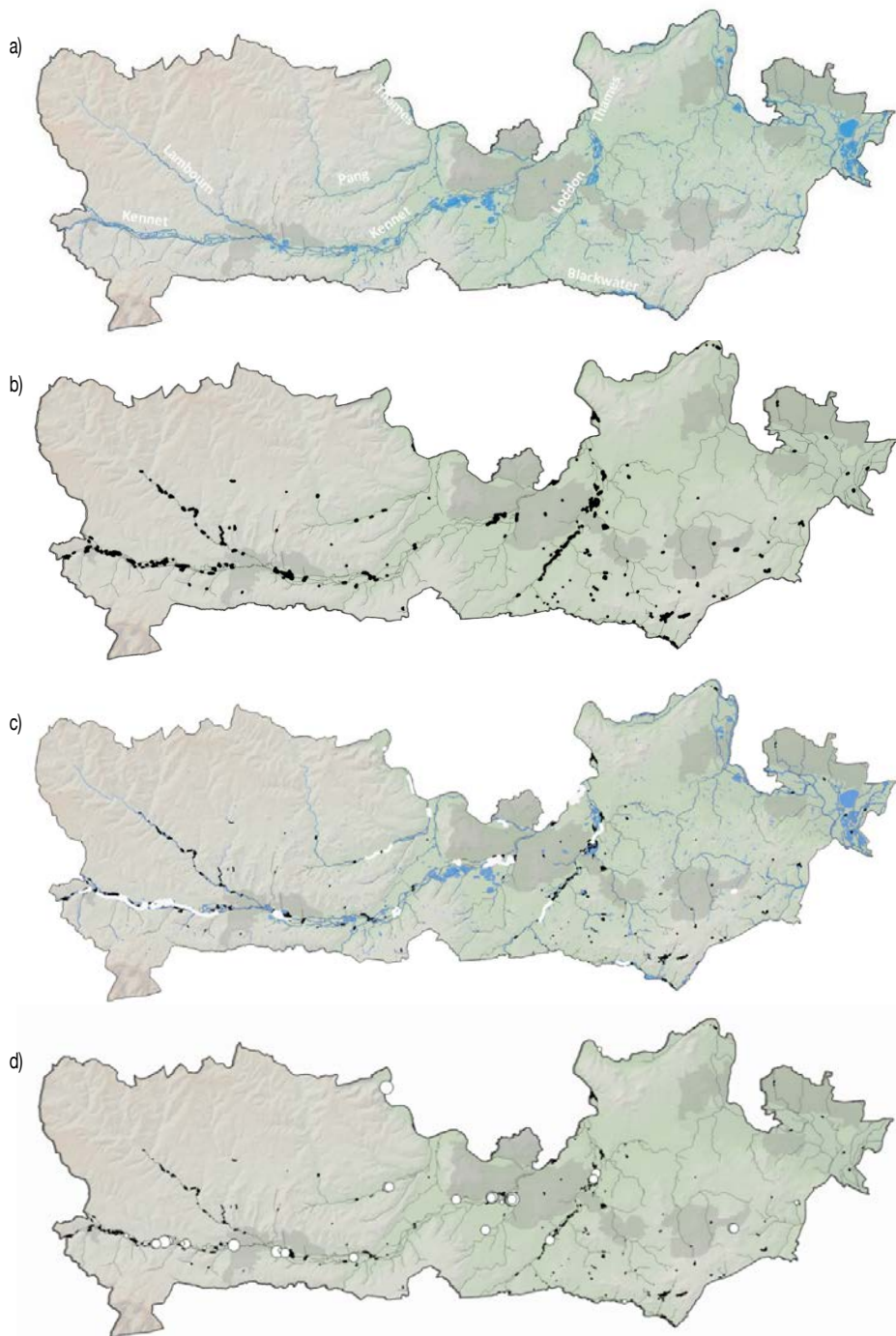


Figure 1 (a) Berkshire river valleys; (b) marsh shown in black: total area 349 ha, west Berkshire 47%; mid 33%; east 20% (source TVERC); (c) survey paths overlaid in white; (d) distribution of Water Rail records white dots.

Results and Discussion

The surveys aimed to cover suitable habitat, identified from the TVERC 2007 habitat map (Figure 1b) combined with local knowledge, in the Kennet and Loddon valleys and the Thames between Reading and Streatley plus Englemere Pond. Whilst the TVERC map was a good guide, it identifies only 349 ha of wetland (excluding water) in Berkshire; in addition, there were areas of wet, marshy ground on the floodplains, simply shown as grassland on the TVERC map, that were surveyed. Also, January–April 2017 had had very low rainfall and some areas identified as marsh on the map were found to be dry. A wet early spring in 2018, which limited surveying in the Pang Valley at Pangbourne, was followed by an unusually dry summer.

Approximately 50% of the habitat identified as marsh or known to be wet meadow along the River Kennet was surveyed; Lambourn, 0%; Pang, 50%; Loddon, c 25%; Blackwater, c 20% (Figure 1). Coverage of potential habitat along the Thames in mid Berkshire was about 30%. A lack of volunteers resulted in poor coverage of east Berkshire, which has an estimated 20% of Berkshire's marsh area: only the Eversley area of the Blackwater and Englemere Pond were surveyed. Overall, it is estimated that about 30% of the potentially suitable habitat in the county was surveyed.

Table 1 summarises the Water Rail records for the 26 areas surveyed in 2016–18. A further five records have been obtained from the Berkshire bird records database. A minimum of 43 birds were recorded at 36 locations, with sharming at 28 of the locations (a “location” being the point at which the bird(s) was recorded). There were no birds detected on ten of the surveys. Most sites were visited only once in the spring survey period. However, breeding was later confirmed at two sites when downy young were seen at Streatley Meadows and downy young of at least two pairs at Fobney Meadows. Data on each of the records are available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Water-Rail-Survey-2016-8.pdf>.

Where they were recorded, the density of Water Rails varied from one responder in several hectares of apparently suitable habitat (eg Linear Park, Calcot) to at least five in two hectares of wet sedges and grasses on the south of a regularly flooded field alongside Rose Kiln Lane in Fobney Meadows.

Berkshire distribution The distribution of Water Rails found in these surveys was similar to that found in Atlas surveys in 2008–11 for the same areas (Table 1, Figure 2), though with birds present in a few more tetrads in the areas covered in the present survey. However, the present survey found only one possible territory in the Kennet valley west of Kintbury, an area recording three occupied tetrads in the 2008–11 atlas and in 1987–89. Recent drainage work on parts of the fisheries and tree planting may have made the habitat to the east of Hungerford less suitable.

Population estimates Methodological differences preclude comparison of abundance estimates, though many more birds were detected in this targeted Water Rail survey (43) than in the Atlas abundance surveys (7). If it is assumed that each location with sharming bird(s) represents a territory and assuming a coverage of 30% of potentially suitable habitat, the county population would be in the order of 90 territories. This figure is considerably higher than the estimate of 12 territories estimated from Atlas surveys in 2008–11.

Habitat In a study of sites in Wales, Water Rails showed a preference for wet reed-beds *Phragmites* but also occupied areas of *Typha* and other marshy land and wet scrub and woodland (Jenkins and Ormerod, 2002). Such habitat is found in Berkshire in over 100 tetrads along the river valleys (Lambourn, Pang, Kennet, Loddon, Blackwater, Thames) and around some gravel pits and other lakes.

Table 1 Summary of Water Rail survey records 2016 - 18

Survey area	2016 ³	2017 ³	2018 ³	Survey path tetrad(s)	Atlas 2008-11 ²
Kennet, Freeman's Marsh				SU36J	Po
K&A Canal, Hungerford – Kintbury				SU36T, U, P	Co, Pr, Po
Kennet Avington – Barton Court				SU36T	
Kennet, Kintbury		R, D (4)		SU36Y	-
Kennet, Halfway		C, V, R (3)		SU46D	Po
Kennet, Marsh Benham				SU46I	-
Kennet, Marsh Benham-Newbury				SU46N	-
Kennet, Speen		S, D		SU46T	-
Kennet, Thatcham Marsh		R, D (3)		SU46Y, 56D	Co, Co
Kennet, Woolhampton GPs		S (1)		SU56T	Co
Padworth Lane GP, Aldermarston Wharf				SU66D	-
Kennet, Linear Park, Calcot		R (1)		SU67K, Q	-, Po
Kennet, Coley Meadows	V, R, D (4)			SU67V	Po
Kennet, Fobney Island - Burghfield				SU67V	-
Loddon, Swallowfield - Arborfield	R (1)			SU76N	-
Kennet, Fobney Meadows	R (2)	R, D, Y (5)		SU77A	-
Thames, Kings Meadow, Reading				SU77C	-
Thames, St Patrick's Stream, Charvil				SU77T	-
Thames, Lower Basildon				SU67E,I	-
Thames, Streatley Meadow	Y(2)			SU58V	-
Pang, Bradfield			R (2)	SU57W	-
Pang, Pangbourne				SU67H	-
Blackwater, Eversley GPs			V	SU86B	-
Loddon, Dinton-Lea Farm	S (1)	R (2)		SU77W	-
Loddon, Whistley Green				SU77X	-
Englemere Pond		R (2)		SU96E	-

1. Grey background indicates survey carried out in year

2. BTO breeding status recorded in Atlas for the tetrad(s) listed: = none; Po Possible; Pr Probable; Co Confirmed

3. Water Rail survey observation code (with suggested equivalent BTO breeding status in parentheses): C – call heard (Po); V – bird seen (Po); S – sharming bird (Pr); SR – sharming in response to playback (Pr); D – duetting (Pr); Y – downy young seen (Co). Minimum number of birds (n).

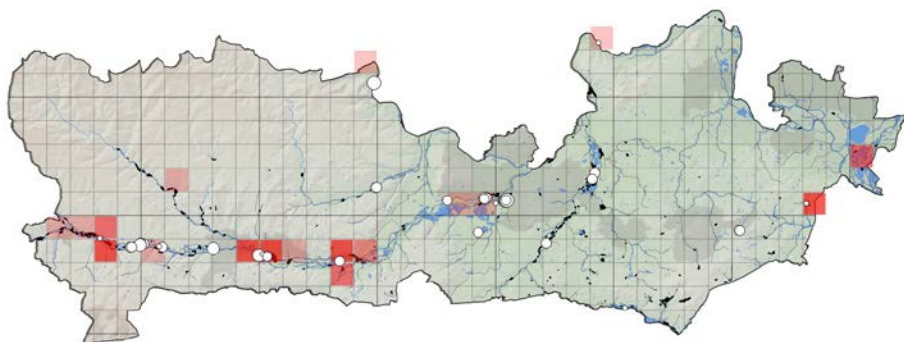
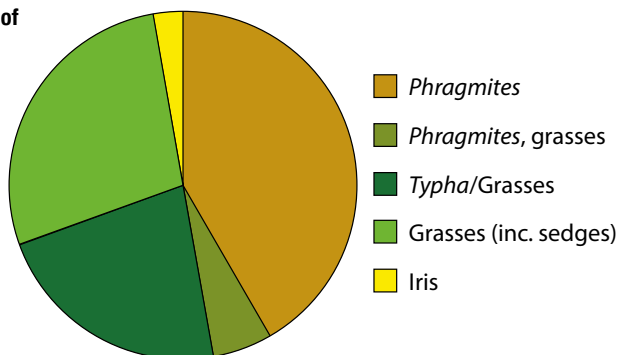


Figure 2 Comparison of Water Rail breeding season distribution in 2016 – 18 surveys (white dots) with the Berkshire Atlas 2008 – 11 distribution (red squares).

Figure 3 Main ground cover of locations with Water Rails



Common features of the habitat in which Water Rails were located (Figure 3) were (i) *Phragmites*, sedge or grass cover at least 0.5 m high, (ii) wet, usually with some standing water. Whilst it was a feature of several locations, birds were not found in homogeneous stands of *Typha*. Birds were not located in similar, but dry, vegetation. Locations were all in areas without tree or bush cover, except for two with a sparse willow scrub layer and one in a wet scrub-covered ditch adjacent to a reed-bed. Neither were birds found along river banks or ditches without adjacent open wet areas. The open areas in which the birds were located were almost all (32/36) of greater than 1 hectare.

Seasonal variation Lower Basildon, Fobney and Coley Meadows were surveyed in both 2016 and 2017. Coley Meadows, which held several Water Rails in 2016, were much dryer in 2017 and no birds were found. The flooded field alongside Rose Kiln Lane in Fobney Meadows was wetter in 2017 and more birds were recorded (>5) than in 2016 (1). Although present in the wet spring of 2018, the flooded meadow dried out in June and no birds were detected in early July. However, at least one bird was present in a wet *Phragmites* bed on the nearby Fobney Island on July 3rd (Figure 4). Given the interannual variation in spring water levels on the floodplains, Water Rails breeding sites are likely to change from year to year, as suggested by these observations.

Conclusions

Water Rail were found in the breeding season on 16 of the 26 areas surveyed because they were thought to have suitable habitat. Casual records from a further five sites are included in this report. A minimum of 43 Water Rails were found at 36 locations. Extrapolation of these results to the whole of Berkshire, based on potentially suitable habitat would suggest a county population in the order of 90 territories, many times earlier estimates.

The distribution of Water Rails found in this survey was similar to that found in the atlases based on surveys in 1987–89 and 2008–11, the marshy areas of the Kennet floodplain holding the majority of birds.

Open marshy areas with standing water, with either *Phragmites* reed-beds or tall (0.5–1m) sedge/grass cover were the preferred habitats. Such habitat can be ephemeral: depending particularly on rainfall and grazing, so the position of territories may move from year to year. There is some evidence that habitat continues to be lost due to drainage and to scrub growth. Although wetland nature reserves have been created as gravel workings close, most wetland areas have quickly become wooded and little open marshy habitat has been formed.

Figure 4 Inter-annual variation in occupancy of Coley and Fobney Meadows

a) 2016

Fobney Meadow low water level
Coley Meadows with standing water.



b) 2017

Fobney Meadow flooded
Coley Meadows dry.



c) 2018

Fobney Meadow wet in April but dry by mid-June. In a survey on 3 July no responses but at least one bird on Fobney Island (red dot) in wet reed-bed. Coley Meadows not surveyed.



Table 2 Areas surveyed with no Water Rail detected

Survey Area	Habitat notes
Kennet, Freeman's Marsh	PGT, rough meadow with ditches and some scrub, some wet areas
Kennet, Avington – Barton Court	PGT mostly well-drained
Kennet & Avon Canal, Marsh Benham – Newbury	–
Kennet & Avon Canal, Fobney – Burghfield	Mostly Willow carr, G, T, some wet areas
Kennet, Padworth Lane – Aldermarston Lock	Mostly Willow carr and river bank with trees
Thames, St Patrick's Stream, Borough Marsh	Mostly meadow with ditches. GTP. Ground cover mostly < 0.3m
Pang, Pangbourne (south)	Meadow and river bank with trees. GT. High water level in survey year (2018).
Blackwater, Grove and Colebrook Lakes, New Workings, Fleethill Farm	PGT, lake fringes with <i>Phragmites</i> and open areas with rushes and grasses with little standing water.
Thames, King's Meadow	River bank and short grass meadows with tree-lined ditches. Some fringing <i>Phragmites</i> along river bank.
Thames, Lower Basildon	River bank with short grass meadows with some <i>Typha</i> and wooded areas. Steep-sided ditches from drainage works over 20 years ago.

P – *Phragmites*; G – Grasses, rushes and sedges; T - *Typha*

Appendix: Water Rail records and site descriptions

Grid reference	Survey area	Date	Evidence	Minimum count	Ground cover	Nearest trees m	Open area	Notes
SU3905,6733	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	09/04/2017	R	1	P	60	>10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed
SU3917,6733	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	09/04/2017	R	1	P	20	>10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed
SU3990,6750	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	05/04/2017	D	2	I	2501	>10	Wet “iris bed” below willow cover, near wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed
SU3997,6767	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	05/04/2017	R	1	P	200	>10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed
SU4023,6760	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	05/04/2017	R	1	P	100	>10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed
SU4149,6739	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	27/03/2017	C, V	1	P	120	>10	Wet. <i>Phragmites</i> reed fringe by channel
SU4181,6733	Marsh Benham–Kintbury	27/03/2017	R	1	P	10	>10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed
SU461,672	Speen	20/05/2017	S,C	2	G	1501	>10	Wet. Sedge with stream, some willow carr
SU4995,6663	Thatcham Marsh	31/03/2017	D	2	P	70	>10	Damp. <i>Phragmites</i> fringed with willow and alder. No standing water
SU5025,6674	Thatcham Marsh	31/03/2017	C	1	P	50	>10	Damp. <i>Phragmites</i> fringed with willow and alder. No standing water
SU5067,6652	Thatcham Marsh	31/03/2017	R	1	P	50	>10	Damp. <i>Phragmites</i> fringed with willow and alder. No standing water
SU5970,8120	Streatley Meadows ⁵	01/04/2016	R	1	T,G	80	1 to 10	Wet. <i>Typha</i> and sedges
SU5980,7235	Pang valley	04/04/2018	R	1	T,G	100	1 to 10	Wet <i>Typha</i> and grasses
SU5995,7238	Pang valley	04/04/2018	R	1	T,G	120	1 to 10	Wet <i>Typha</i> and grasses
SU6592,7126	Calcot, Linear Park	01/04/2017	R, V	1	T,G	50	1 to 10	Damp. Sedge, no <i>Phragmites</i> . West end of settling pools.
SU6905,7140	Coley Meadows	12/04/2016	R	1	T,G	110	1 to 10	Damp but little or no standing water
SU6913,7145	Coley Meadows	12/04/2016	DR	2	T,G	90	1 to 10	Damp but little or no standing water
SU6917,7149	Coley Meadows	12/04/2016	V,R	2	T,G	50	1 to 10	Damp but little or no standing water
SU6925,7148	Coley Meadows	12/04/2016	R	1	T,G	70	1 to 10	Damp but little or no standing water
SU7067,7141	Fobney Meadows	10/03/2016	C	1	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses near wet ditch
SU7074,7126	Fobney Meadows ^{4,5}	02/04/2017	D, S,C	2	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.
SU7087,7127	Fobney Meadows ⁴	02/04/2017	S D	2	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.
SU7078,7127	Fobney Meadows ⁴	08/05/2018	R	1	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.
SU7090,7128	Fobney Meadows ⁴	23/04/2016	R	1	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.

SU7095,7128	Fobney Meadows ^{4,5}	02/04/2017	S,C	1	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.
SU7102,7129	Fobney Meadows ⁴	08/05/2018	R	1	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.
SU7103,7130	Fobney Meadows ⁴	02/04/2017	S,C	1	G	200	>10	Wet. Sedges and grasses with standing water.
SU7428,6765	Loddon, Arborfield	08/05/2016	SR	1	P,G	20	<1	Wet. River bank with some <i>Phragmites</i>
SU7818,7306	Teal Hide, Dinton	01/04/2016 ³	S	1	P	30	<1	Wet <i>Phragmites</i>
SU7840,7358	Lea Farm Lake	22/04/2017	S	1	P	301	<1	Wet ditch with scrub cover adjacent <i>Phragmites</i>
SU9059,6873	Englemere Pond	25/03/2017	S	1	P	30	1 to 10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reedbed and swamp with some Willow scrub
SU9070,6870	Englemere Pond	25/03/2017	S	1	P	100	1 to 10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reedbed and swamp with some Willow scrub
Casual records	Site name	Date	Evidence	Minimum count	Ground cover	Nearest trees m	Open area	Notes
SU3676,6800	Avington Estate	21/03/2018	R	1	P, G	100	>10	Wet pond edge with <i>Phragmites</i> (no response in survey 25/04/2018)
SU5678,6612	Woolhampton GPs	Apr-17	S	1	P	300	<1	Wet. <i>Phragmites</i> reed bed on lake edge
SU6853,6855	Burnthouse Lane GPs	2016–2018	C	1	G	301	>10	Damp. Heard calling in sparse willow scrub several springs.
SU787,846	Aston	03/04/2017		1				No habitat information. Reported from 18/3 to 3/4.
SU7008,7113	Fobney Island ²	03/07/2018	R	1	P	100	1 to 10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> . (no response in surveys April 2017 and May 2018)
SU809,622	Manor Lake	02/04/2018	V	1	P	30	>10	Wet <i>Phragmites</i> reed-bed (no response in survey 13/04/2017)
SU934,793	Dorney Wetlands	07/04/2017	V	1				No habitat information
SU963,710	Great Meadow Pond	02/04/2016	C	1	P		1 to 10	Wet. <i>Phragmites</i>

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Acknowledgements

This survey has been done by a dedicated team of surveyors who got up early to walk the marshes: Neil Bucknell, Jane Campbell, Fraser Cottingham, Phil Dunk, Chris Foster, Roger Frankum, Robert Godden, Ellie Green, Adrian Hickman, Adrian Lawson, Alan Lindsay, Bob Lyle, Ken Moore, Roger Murfitt, Lauren Richards, Renton Righelato, Lesley Staves, Des Sussex, John Swallow, Andy Tomczynski, Bill Warracker.



Brent Goose, Lower Farm GP, Jan 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.



Spotted Redshank, Lea Farm Aug 22nd, Marek Walford.



Pectoral Sandpiper, Queen Mother Reservoir, Oct 1st, Dave Rimes.



Pectoral Sandpiper, Queen Mother Reservoir, Oct 1st, Marek Walford.



Knot, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 10th, Andy Tomczynski.



Jack Snipe, Lea Farm May 5th, Marek Walford.



Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, Jan 5th, Andy Tomczynski.



Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, Jan 25th, Andy Tomczynski.



Mediterranean Gull, Queen Mother Reservoir, Oct 1st, Dave Rimes.



Glaucous Gull, Knowl Hill, Jan 28th, Andy Tomczynski.



Nightjar, Lavell's Lake, Aug 30th, Marek Walford.



Nuthatch, Moor Green Lakes, Mar 31st, Dave Rimes.



Yellow Wagtail, Queen Mother Reservoir, Oct 1st, Dave Rimes.



Firecrest, Wishmoor Bottom, Apr 15th, Jerry O'Brien.



*Crossbill, Swinley Forest, Feb 24th,
Jerry O'Brien.*



*Swallow x House Martin hybrid, Queen
Mother Reservoir, Oct 1st, Marek Walford.*



Brambling, Maidenhead, Mar 13th, Dave Rimes.



Dartford Warbler, Wishmoor Bottom, Aug 31st, Jerry O'Brien.



Woodlark, Wishmoor Bottom, May 15th, Jerry O'Brien.



Stonechat, Wishmoor Bottom, May 15th, Jerry O'Brien.



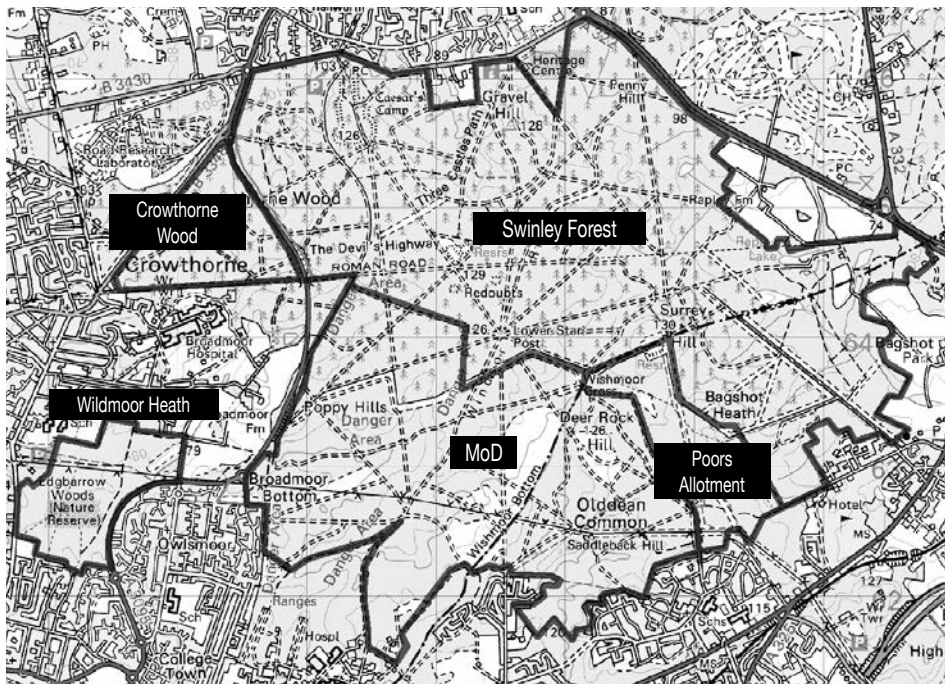
Wishmoor Bottom from Saddleback Hill by Jerry O'Brien.

MONITORING OF ANNEX 1 HEATHLAND SPECIES IN THE THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA BETWEEN BRACKNELL AND CAMBERLEY: 2016 UPDATE

By Patrick Crowley, Chris Gent, Bill Nicoll, Ted Rogers and Des Sussex

In the 2012 Annual Report we wrote an article about monitoring the Annex 1 Heathland species in the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) between Bracknell and Camberley, and we thought that four years on, it would be useful to give an update.

The background to the Thames Basin Heaths (TBH) SPA and the monitoring of the Annex 1 bird species was described fully in 2012, so we will only give a brief outline in this article. The TBH SPA is designated on the basis of its populations of Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*), Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) and Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), and it comprises 13 SSSI's around the Berks/Hants/Surrey borders. Two of these SSSI's are contained in the forest and heathland between the B3430 (Nine Mile Ride, Bracknell), the A322 (Bracknell to Bagshot), the B3348 (Bracknell to Crowthorne) and the A30 in Camberley. Over 90% of this area forms the Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI. The rest forms the Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI, (jointly owned by Bracknell Forest Council, and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust), which is known as Wildmoor Heath (see map).



Map of Broadmoor to Bagshot, and Sandhurst to Owlsmoor SSSI's, part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA

It should be noted that the Berkshire/Surrey county boundary runs through Wishmoor Bottom, so that Old Dean Common, Poors Allotment and Bagshot Heath are in Surrey. This Surrey section is included, as it was in 2012, as it forms an integral part of the SPA.

Poors Allotment is a small area directly adjoining the eastern edge of the MoD, owned by Windlesham United Charities and Poors Allotments.

MoD and Poors Allotment

The MoD land is used for military training by the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst (RMAS). Most of it is open to the general public at all times, and this area is known as Barossa. The Range Danger Area (RDA) is securely fenced and is not accessible without special permission, which is arranged for us by the RMAS Conservation Group. Access is generally only possible on Sundays.

The balance between forestry, scrub, heather and gorse, and open areas, is determined by the requirements of military training, but within those constraints, the area is managed for conservation. Since 2012, Surrey Wildlife Trust have managed the area, which is now entirely fenced, (including Poors Allotment), for grazing by cattle to help manage the vegetation. Most of the grazing has been in the RDA, and it has had some beneficial effect in Broadmoor Bottom. There has been very limited grazing on Barossa so far. The bulk of the management, both on Barossa and in the RDA, has been clearance of birch and pine saplings by machine or by hand. Clearance by machine results in most of the vegetation being removed, but enables large areas to be dealt with. The cleared ground with some bare patches can provide good Woodlark habitat. Clearance of scrub by hand (usually by volunteers) is much more time consuming, but leaves valuable vegetation (such as heathers) mainly undamaged.

Swinley Forest

Swinley Forest mainly consists of commercial forestry run by the Crown Estate, with a small section in the north-west owned by the Forestry Commission. The distribution of large clearings that can potentially hold Woodlarks or Nightjars, and occasionally Dartford Warbler, varies mainly with the rotational cycle of clear fell forestry, or fires. The only area with significant permanent heather is in Caesar's Camp.

Wildmoor Heath

Wildmoor Heath has a relatively small area of heather and gorse, with areas of bog, and has been managed for conservation for many years. It has areas of good heather and gorse which usually hold several pairs of Dartford Warblers and a few pairs of Nightjars, but has not had any significant Woodlark habitat since the last major fire created suitable conditions. There have not been any Woodlark territories at Wildmoor since 2012.

Recording

The methodology for the surveys is based on the RSPB's Bird Monitoring Methods. For all three species the estimated number of territories is used as the measure of population. Key observations are singing males, pairs seen, birds nest building or carrying food, or family parties.

Woodlark Surveys: Woodlarks like reasonably large open areas, with plenty of bare ground and low vegetation for nesting, and a few trees for song perches, all of which are found on lowland heath and areas of clear fell in forestry. They quickly move onto recently burnt ground. They are present from mid-February to October. They usually have their first broods in April and often have a second. Surveyors make a minimum of four visits between mid-February and late June, between 06:00 and 11:00.

Dartford Warbler Surveys: Dartford Warblers are resident and are almost exclusively found on areas with heather and/or gorse in an open habitat, with some birch or pine saplings as song posts. They usually have their first broods in late April or early May, and often have a second brood. Surveyors make at least three visits between early April and late June.

Nightjar Surveys: Nightjars like open lowland heath with scrubby vegetation, and clear fell areas in forestry plantations, with some tall trees to churr from and feed around. Males arrive from late April, and females from early to mid-May, when the males start churring. Most birds stop churring by mid-July. Surveyors make visits between half an hour before dusk and 1.5 hours after dusk, counting churring males. The MoD is surveyed by a group of 20 or more people together on one evening, organised by Surrey Wildlife Trust, while Swinley Forest and Wildmoor Heath are surveyed by individuals.

Results

The table below contains estimates of numbers of territories for the three key species from 2008 to 2016. Note that error bars are likely to be high, due to variables such as weather, disturbance, and observer effort, so the table only gives general trends. Detailed results are not given for Wildmoor Heath, as the numbers were generally quite low – in 2016 there were 4 Nightjar and 3 Dartford Warbler territories.

Table: Estimated Numbers of Territories of Annex 1 Heathland Species

MoD and Poors Allotment				Swinley Forest		
Year	Woodlark	Nightjar	Dartford Warbler	Woodlark	Nightjar	Dartford Warbler
2008	45 (21)	--	51 (24)	4	--	2
2009	37 (16)	37 (18)	1 (0)	5	14	0
2010	25 (12)	39 (12)	1 (0)	0	7	0
2011	25 (13)	37 (14)	2 (0)	0	16	0
2012	30 (13)	33 (17)	3 (1)	7	11	0
2013	22 (10)	32 (17)	4 (1)	9	20 (4)	0
2014	23 (12)	32 (16)	19 (8)	8 (2)	28 (4)	0
2015	20 (8)	22 (10)	18 (9)	13 (3)	32 (5)	0
2016	14 (5)	28 (14)	18 (10)	11 (1)	28 (5)	2

Figures in brackets indicate the number of territories, out of the total, that are in Surrey; -- indicates no results available

Woodlark Population

The long-term average number of Woodlark territories in the MoD and Poors Allotment (since 1997) is around 30, and this was the figure in 2012. By 2016 this number has more than halved to 14 territories, the lowest figure since surveys began in the later 1990's. This is primarily due to a decline in breeding habitat, especially bare ground, in Wishmoor Bottom, Old Dean Common and Poors Allotment. Numbers in Swinley Forest have risen from 7 to 11 between 2012 and 2016, where there has been new clear felling between Surrey Hill and the Caesar's Camp area.

Nightjar Population

Numbers of Nightjars in the MoD have been relatively stable, with a slight decline since 2012, much of which has happened on Old Dean Common and Poors Allotment, which could be due to an increase in visitor disturbance and military training.

The numbers in Swinley Forest have shown a big increase between 2012 and 2016 (11 to 28 territories). A significant part of this is due to clear felling of new areas around Vicarage Lane in the south-east, and between Surrey Hill and the Caesar's Camp area.

The Nightjar is a long-distance migrant, which recent studies by the BTO have shown to winter in the southern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Unlike many other long-distance migrants, Nightjar numbers have not declined recently.

Dartford Warbler Population

The table shows quite dramatically how the winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, which were extremely cold with significant falls of snow lasting several weeks, reduced the population from a high of 51 territories in 2008, to 1 in 2009. Since then, after a run of relatively mild winters, there has been a recovery to 18 territories in 2016. The initial re-population is assumed to come from post-breeding dispersal from other populations in the area, followed by good breeding seasons in subsequent years, enabling a rapid recovery.

The table also shows that almost the entire population of Dartford Warblers in these parts of the TBH SPA is in the MoD and Poors Allotment part of the forest, which contains the heather dominated heathland with patches of gorse, which is vital for the birds. There is very little suitable habitat in Swinley Forest, except at Caesar's Camp.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the support and help from the RMAS Conservation Group for arranging access for our surveys, and for support in the MoD and Poors Allotment from Ben Habgood, Conservation Manager of Surrey Wildlife trust.

Most of the survey work over the period covered in this article was carried out by the authors, with Patrick Crowley, Bill Nicoll and Ted Rogers concentrating on the MoD, while Des Sussex and Chris Gent surveyed Swinley Forest and Wildmoor Heath. The combined age of this group is 300+ years (!), and although we enjoy carrying out these important surveys, it would be excellent if some younger members of the local birdwatching community would like to join us.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

Richard Burness

“It was 40 years ago today...” Well, more or less. It was August 1976 when the birding spotlight shone brightly on Reading, before moving on. On Thursday August 5th a North London birder found himself in Reading too early for a business appointment. He decided to make good use of his unexpected spare time to visit Reading Sewage Farm, as you would. There was nothing too exciting to be seen; a few Lapwings, a Little Ringed Plover and a couple of Green Sandpipers. However, his interest sharpened when he realised that what he had at first taken to be a Green Sandpiper was behaving in a rather uncharacteristic manner. It was hawking erratically up and down, occasionally soaring to snap insects on the wing. Closer inspection showed it to be larger than a Green Sandpiper with long pointed wings, general chocolate brown colouration above, pale undersides, a mottled pectoral band and a light throat patch. He suddenly realised that he was looking at a Pratincole! Panic stations, he hadn’t seen enough to identify it to species. What to do – business or birds? Birds, obviously. He rang round for reinforcements and finally found someone free on a weekday afternoon who hurried along, and with a bit of effort they saw the necessary to specifically identify it as a Black-winged Pratincole. Fifteenth record for Britain.

In the early hours of the Saturday morning I joined a reasonably sized throng waiting for first light and a sight of the bird. After a stomach-clenching wait (but probably only an hour or so) it was finally seen in flight heading towards what I now know to be Smallmead GP. Belying its original flightiness, it settled down happily on a spit in the gravel pit to offer splendid views to all. A picnic atmosphere settled over the crowd. People sat dangling their legs over the edge of the pit, chatting about foreign trips and enjoying both the Pratincole and the sunshine.

This idyll was rudely interrupted by the arrival of a farmer, incandescent with rage, at what was unbeknown to us a mass trespass. Here I played my own small part in the ensuing drama. With a couple of others, I spent forty minutes trying to reason with him and persuade him that no harm was being done. We achieved nothing, other than buy time to allow more birders to come in and see the Pratincole. Our dialogue ended when he announced his intention of hitching his tractor to a tanker of liquid pig manure and spraying the interlopers. At this point I walked back to the pit to warn the crowd of their impending fate (to some disbelief) then made my escape.

I have to say this for the farmer, it was no empty threat! Laggards, stragglers and latecomers walked straight into a hail of flying pig muck. One group of birders, including some now respected and respectable members of society, tried to take shelter in a ditch. This was the worst thing they could have done as it made them an easy target for the noxious mixture, and several of them received a soaking. It couldn’t last, and eventually the tanker was empty. After a lull a few intrepid birders ventured forth only to run into the farmer’s next deterrent. Fire! With wilful abandon he set fire to the scrub and surrounding undergrowth. The pall of acrid smoke drifting across the gravel pit and its surrounds added to the already pungent atmosphere.

Birders are a determined bunch. Despite this assault by manure and fire they kept coming. One arrival, later in the day, was Bill Oddie who somehow managed to avoid these deterrents and at least get some views of the bird. Although the story that he avoided detection by crawling along a ditch is, I am assured, apocryphal. What of the Pratincole? It seemed not in the least put out by all this activity around it and stayed for another couple of days.

But I was away by then, the spotlight had already turned to the east and I was off to Norfolk to look for a Fan-tailed Warbler. Which I didn’t see. You win some, you lose some.

FINDERS REPORT: LEACH'S PETREL 10TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Andy Tomczynski

I arrived at Queen Mother reservoir at 07:00hrs. There was a light south/south-westerly breeze with rain and mizzle. I started my walk in a clockwise direction around the reservoir from the car park in the north east corner. I came across a juvenile Knot on the east side of the reservoir, which was rather exciting. I spent some time trying to get reasonable photographs before continuing my walk. I later learnt that the Knot was present the previous day, unbeknown to me, but that did not spoil the fun of seeing it myself. The Knot had grabbed my attention for some while so, after moving on, I stopped at the South East corner to scan the reservoir margins with my scope.

Whilst doing so I saw a small blackish "object" at 08:08hrs, on the water on the far west side which grabbed my attention. Closer scrutiny revealed a petrel sitting on the water facing me so I could not see it side on. A petrel; blimey! But which species? As it was distant, and just sitting on the water doing nothing, I hurried on to the south shore and scoped again. At that point I thought it probably a Leach's Petrel and put it out on Berksbirds as probable. I continued to the white railings in the south west corner where it was much closer to me, although still out some way from the shore. I then noted its dark grey head and body with a slightly paler grey around the face. The grey body contrasted with the dark blackish wings and black tail. The tertials had thin white tips, which I thought was odd, and the greater coverts were edged creamy buff. It flew briefly showing long pointed wings which were dark on the underside, and a white rump patch wrapping round the side a little. The tail appeared forked. I was then happy to confirm in my mind that it was a Leach's Petrel and updated Berksbirds.

I was totally absorbed in the bird trying to get distant record shots when I was joined by Roger Stansfield. The bird continued to just sit on the water not moving at all, whilst we both wished it would fly again, so we could see it at its best. After two hours it suddenly lifted off the water and flew a few hundred metres, giving excellent flight views, showing the upper parts extremely well. The pale buffish long covert bar was very obvious, as was the bright white rump patch. I was happy to have photographed and videoed the bird while it sat on the water but unfortunately missed out on flight shots because I wanted to see it through my binoculars. It's great to get good photographs but, in doing so, one can miss the live action of the moment, which can't be replicated by seeing a photograph or video later when the bird has gone. Later, I did see some impressive flight shots taken by another birder. Whilst Roger and I were absorbed in the petrel, we learnt from other birders who joined us that they had seen an Osprey fly south on the east side of the reservoir as they walked round. If we had simply looked up from scoping the petrel, we would have seen it too! Although having seen two good birds for the county, during the morning, one a rarity, one could not feel frustrated by missing the Osprey; but that's birding for you.

FINDER'S REPORT: SABINE'S GULL 20TH SEPT 2016

Andy Tomczynski

September had been a reasonable birding month for me at Queen Mother Reservoir, having seen Knot, Leach's Petrel and Avocet. Today, 20th September, was my 5th visit for the month and unusually on this occasion, did not walk the circumference, which is the probably the best way to find birds at this site. It was an overcast morning with mizzle and a light north-easterly breeze. At 10:35 hrs I walked to the pier on the east side of the reservoir and spent an hour there scanning the reservoir and its embankments with little reward. The best I could do was a count of 30 Meadow Pipits. I returned to the car park in the northeast corner of the reservoir and before packing my scope away decided to have one last scan. Whilst scanning systematically the shoreline I noted a group of Black-headed Gulls on the far south west bank of the reservoir. I was at x60mag on the scope as the distance is some 1700m away. At this range in the relatively gloomy conditions I noted a distinctly smaller gull than the Black-headed Gulls adjacent to it, about a metre above the shoreline. I could discern that it had a dark grey back, nape, neck and crown. Odd I thought? Whilst thinking about what it could be it was disturbed by an adjacent Black-headed Gull and flew a short distance down the bank to the water's edge. In doing so it revealed bright white triangles on the inner wing boarded by black outer primaries. The back, nape, crown and coverts were a concolorous dark greyish. The under parts were white. I was somewhat taken aback and elated to be seeing a juvenile Sabine's Gull through my scope at Queen Mother Reservoir! And I was the only one watching it!

It stood on the shoreline for a few minutes when a Lesser-black Backed Gull higher up the bank took a disliking to it, walked down the bank to see the Sabine's Gull off. The Sabine's Gull then flew a short distance, revealing its very distinctive wing pattern again, and landed on the water. I noted the time then at 11:47hrs. I then immediately put it out on Berksbirds website and began walking around the reservoir down the east side to get closer views. I stopped a few times to check with the scope but to my intense disappointment could not relocate it and assumed it must have flown off whilst I walked around the reservoir and naturally taken my eyes off it whilst walking and it being so distant.

I subsequently learnt that another local birder had seen a Sabine's Gull briefly fly over the embankment in the same locality at about 09:30hrs but had not put the news out. I was totally unaware of this earlier sighting when I found the bird independently, by good fortune, in having one last check before leaving the reservoir!

THE BERKSHIRE BIRD INDEX

Renton Righelato

The Berkshire Bird Index (BBI) is a measure of the change in abundance of commoner species in the county, derived from the BTO's annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). BBS surveyors record all birds seen or heard along two 1 km transects within randomly selected 1km squares during visits early and late in the breeding season. Visits are made in the early morning and take approximately two hours. The data are collected by the BTO, which publishes the regional and national trends. To take part in BTO surveys, contact the Berkshire BTO Rep: Sean Murphy: seantmurphy8@gmail.com. The BTO have provided us with the data for the analysis shown here. In Berkshire at least 72 squares were covered annually in the years since 2000, which is used here as the reference year for the index.

The index is a snapshot for the year of the ratio of a year's abundance to the reference year. The index is shown as the range within the 95% confidence limits. However, year on year changes can be large: in addition to actual changes in abundance, weather conditions during surveys, their timing and observer changes etc can introduce fluctuations in apparent abundance, so statistically significant index changes do not necessarily reflect long term trends, which may better be estimated by combining several years of data. So, in addition to the index, the average trend in abundance is shown, calculated as the slope of the least squares linear regression of the annual indices from 2000 to 2016. Statistically significant trends at $p < 0.05$ are shown with a grey background (decreasing trend) or black background (increasing trend).

In general, the Berkshire results reflect the national trends for those species that are sufficiently abundant to calculate statistically valid changes. Species increasing significantly in abundance nationally and in Berkshire over the period 2000 to 2016 include Red Kite, Buzzard, Jackdaw, Blackcap, Goldfinch. Species in decline nationally and in Berkshire include Lapwing, Cuckoo, Swift, House Martin, Mistle Thrush, Pied Wagtail, Willow Warbler, Starling, Greenfinch, Linnet and Chaffinch, which has shown a rapid decline in the last few years that is thought to be due to trichomonosis. The significant downward trend in Green Woodpecker abundance is new: national data show increasing abundance in south east England, though a recent decline in the south west.

Few species show local trends that differ markedly from the national (BTO Birdtrends), though Collared Dove, which is still increasing significantly nationally, shows a highly significant decline in Berkshire.

Thanks are due to Sarah Harris at the BTO for providing the Berkshire data and index analysis.

¹ Data shown are for 2000-2016. Five year trends to 2016 were c 18%/year for Red Kite and c 5% for Buzzard

Trends in commoner species in Berkshire, 2000–2015

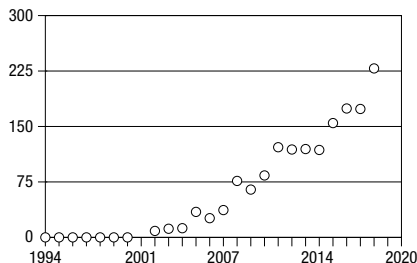
Species	Trend % / year	Index 2016/2000
Canada Goose	–1.65	0.53–0.21
Mallard	–1.97	1.27–0.71
Red–legged Partridge	–1.20	1.61–0.72
Pheasant	0.82	1.57–1.13
Red Kite¹	c 40	155
Buzzard¹	19	5.01–1.79
Kestrel	–0.11	2.01–0.85
Moorhen	–1.79	0.8–0.39
Lapwing	–1.77	0.82–0.35
Stock Dove	14.94	2.27–0.85
Woodpigeon	–0.47	1.11–0.82
Collared Dove	–3.85	0.61–0.33
Cuckoo	–2.52	0.33–0.12
Swift	–3.61	0.69–0.27
Green Woodpecker	–1.88	0.65–0.34
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0.80	1.07–0.62
Magpie	–0.23	1.01–0.68
Jay	–1.99	1.4–0.73
Jackdaw	8.2	2.49–1.43
Rook	4.95	4.72–1.8
Carrion Crow	–3.15	1.26–0.81
Goldcrest	–0.49	1.71–0.9
Blue Tit	–0.06	1.33–1.01
Great Tit	–1.04	0.81–0.58
Coal Tit	–1.19	1.88–0.88
Skylark	–1.43	1.12–0.8
Swallow	0.64	1.1–0.57
House Martin	–3.33	0.96–0.52
Long–tailed Tit	–1.51	0.89–0.5
Chiffchaff	3.91	2.84–1.82
Willow Warbler	–2.35	0.53–0.31
Blackcap	5.09	1.58–1.04
Whitethroat	2.68	2.16–1.19
Nuthatch	2.18	1.22–0.63
Wren	0.27	1.29–0.99
Starling	–2.83	0.6–0.33
Blackbird	–0.49	1.02–0.82
Song Thrush	–0.44	1.43–0.93
Mistle Thrush	–2.77	1.01–0.52
Robin	0.58	1.42–1.12
Duncock	–0.88	1.35–0.95
House Sparrow	–3.02	1.15–0.63
Pied Wagtail	–4.74	0.72–0.34
Chaffinch	–3.68	0.5–0.37
Greenfinch	–5.71	0.54–0.31
Goldfinch	12.44	5.72–3.18
Linnet	–3.09	0.75–0.4
Bullfinch	–1.69	0.7–0.31
Yellowhammer	–1.87	0.57–0.36

25 YEARS OF THE BERKSHIRE BIRD INDEX

With the 2018 results, we now have twenty five years of BBI data going back to 1994. The following figures illustrate some interesting points that come from the data.

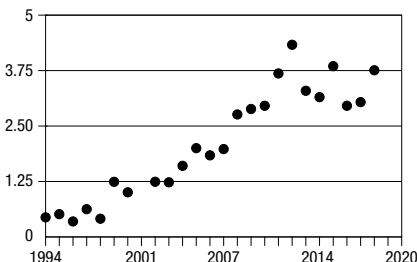
Red Kite: Relative abundance in Berkshire 1994–2018 (reference year 2000)

Before 2000, Red Kites were encountered too infrequently in breeding bird surveys to provide meaningful data; since then their abundance has increased almost exponentially, doubling every five years or so.



Buzzard: Relative abundance in Berkshire 1994–2018 (reference year 2000)

Atlas surveys over the summers of 2008-11 found equal numbers of Kites and Buzzards spread widely across the county. However, the Buzzard population recorded through BBS surveys, which had grown steadily from 1994 to 2008, appears to have grown more slowly than that of Kites in the last ten years.

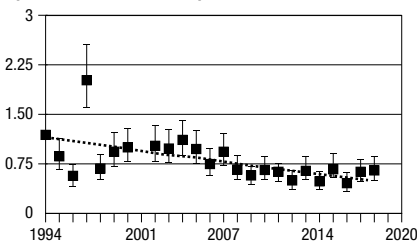


Collared Dove: Relative abundance in Berkshire 1994–2018 (reference year 1994)

Collared Dove abundance is still increasing significantly nationally, shows a significant decline in Berkshire.

Bars show 95% confidence limits.

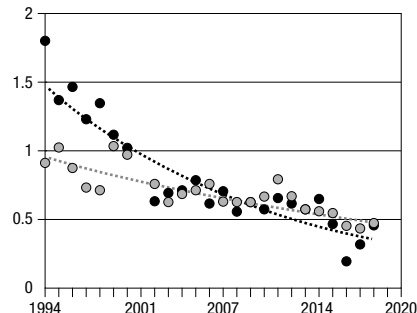
Linear regression (dashed line) - 2.3%/year (or -1.6%/year with the 1997 outlier removed).



Cuckoo and Yellowhammer: Relative abundance in Berkshire 1994–2018

The decline in Cuckoo abundance recorded here (5%/year) is similar to the national average over the period (BTO Birdtrends). Whereas the decline in Yellowhammer abundance (2%/year) has been about twice the national average.

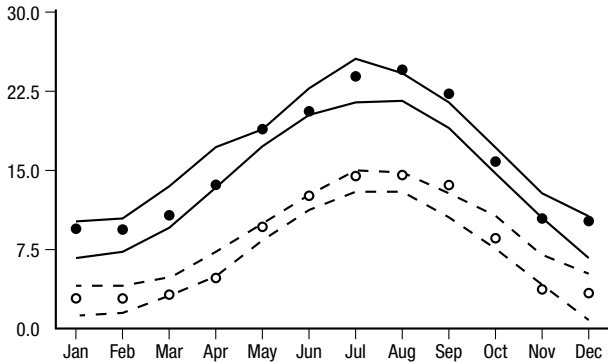
Logarithmic regression fit (dashed line) Cuckoo, black, Yellowhammer, grey.



WEATHER SUMMARY 2016

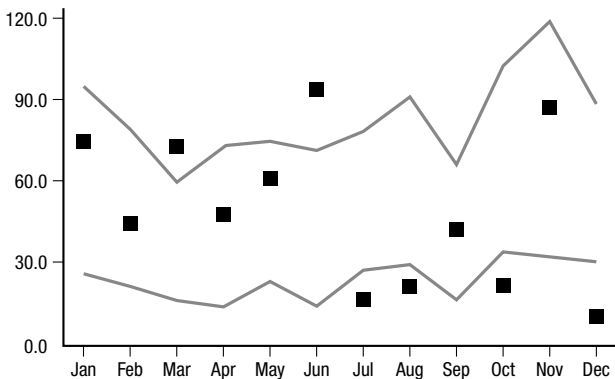
Renton Righelato

2016 was fairly typical of recent years. The 2015/6 winter was warmer than average; March and April were a little cooler and August-September warmer. There was a little more rainfall than average in the first half of the year, followed by a drier than average summer and winter. There were no extended freezing periods (Met Office data for Heathrow).



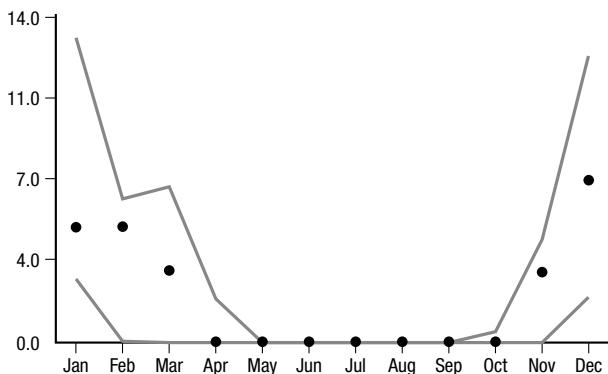
Temperature °C

Closed circles: average of daily maxima; open circles: average of daily minima. The lines show the 67% confidence limits of the period 2000–2015.



Rainfall

Monthly rainfall (mm). The lines show the 67% confidence limits of the period 2000–2015.



Days air frost

The number of days in which the air temperature fell below 0°C. Lines are the 67% confidence limits if the period 2000–2015.

DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES IN BERKSHIRE – 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

It appears that most species had a poor year in 2016 with maximum counts lower than in recent years, probably due to the indifferent weather. The season got off to a slow start with many species emerging later than average. One of the exceptions was **Large Red Damselfly** with 10 being recorded at Sonning on 20th April. **Beautiful Demoiselle** was the next species to be recorded with one being spotted on Fobney Island on the R. Kennet on 3rd May. This species continues to spread across Berkshire, with records from a number of locations away from the preferred habitat of fast-flowing streams and rivers.

A number of the species which emerge in Spring appear to have had fairly short flight seasons, emerging later and finishing earlier than normal. This was particularly noticeable for **Broad-bodied Chaser** (often found in company with **Four-spotted Chaser** around ponds and lakes) and **Downy Emerald**, which prefers the shaded edges of old gravel pits.

The flight season for the late summer and autumn species, notably **Southern Hawker** and **Migrant Hawker** also finished early (mid-October), although **Common Darter** fared better and was on the wing into November.

There were records of **Common Hawker** from Wildmoor and the Aldermaston area. The alternative name of Moorland Hawker is probably more appropriate for this species as it is certainly not common in Berkshire. It is sometimes confused with Migrant Hawker, which is much more widespread and often occurs in groups.

The **Common Clubtail** population on the R. Thames continues to cause concern with just six reports from the Berkshire side of the river. Numbers were up on 2015, although still half what they were in 2011. A single adult was recorded from Theale, again raising the possibility of a population being present on the R. Kennet.

There were two reports of **Lesser Emperor**, a scarce visitor to the county, in the Kennet valley in July; two, possibly three, were reported from old gravel pits from Woolhampton followed by another record of a single adult at Padworth Lane.

Having only arrived in Berkshire in 2008, **Hairy Dragonfly** continues to do well with 10 reported from Thames Valley Park (Reading) as well as records from 12 other sites.

There were two very late records for **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** on 12th and 17th October; the latter at Streatley is an example of how widely this species, which breeds on heathland sites, disperses.

White-legged Damselfly used to be found at a number of sites along Thames, but seems to have disappeared from many of them over recent years. The main strongholds now are on still water sites, though the population at one of these, Decoy Heath, is very small. However it continues to do well at nearby Paices Wood.

The following species were recorded in Berkshire in 2016:

Emerald Damselfly	Southern Hawker	Common Clubtail
Banded Demoiselle	Brown Hawker	Downy Emerald
Beautiful Demoiselle	Common Hawker	Four-spotted Chaser
White-legged Damselfly	Migrant Hawker	Black-tailed Skimmer
Large Red Damselfly	Emperor Dragonfly	Keeled Skimmer
Red-eyed Damselfly	Lesser Emperor	Black Darter
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	Hairy Dragonfly	Ruddy Darter
Azure Damselfly	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Common Darter

More details are given in the annual report and newsletter, available from the email address below or on the Berkshire Dragonflies Facebook group. If you wish to submit records, the best way is to use the recording pages on the British Dragonfly Society website (www.british-dragonflies.org.uk) – look under Recording and projects/Submit Records. Alternatively use the dragonfly recording forms on BirdTrack. If possible, please record all species on a visit and submit as a list, ticking the box to say that all species have been recorded.

Mike Turton

County Dragonfly Recorder

berksdragonflies@gmail.com

REPORT FOR 2016 BY THE BERKSHIRE RECORDS COMMITTEE (BRC)

Committee members for 2016; Richard Burness (Chairman), Andy Horscroft (Secretary), Adam Bassett, Adrian Hickman, Ken Moore, Hugh Netley and Marek Walford.

The BRC examines all records that involve rare species (see accompanying lists), unusual dates and unusually large counts that are accompanied by descriptive notes. Unfortunately, a substantial number of records have to be omitted from the Systematic List due to a lack of supportive notes. On the occasion when a bird has been seen by a reasonable number of observers, the BRC may accept the record without further details. However, the record then may run the risk of being attributed to the wrong observers, or it may be attributed to many observers (MO).

Species for which notes/descriptions are required, fall into three categories:

Category 1. Nationally rare species for which records first have to be accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), and any record of a species new to Berkshire. Photographs/sketches would help to support full notes etc; observers should submit their records to the BBRC through the County Recorder

Category 2. Berkshire rare species for which a full description is required (this includes all former BBRC rarities);

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

Review Species for 2016

Category 2 species

Taiga Bean Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Tundra Bean Goose, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Ferruginous Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Velvet Scoter, Storm Petrel, Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Spoonbill, Night-heron, Cattle Egret, Purple Heron, Great White Egret, Honey-buzzard, Golden Eagle, Goshawk, Black Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Rough-legged Buzzard, Corncrake, Spotted Crake, Crane, Kentish Plover, Dotterel, Purple Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Caspian Gull, Roseate Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Great Skua, Pomarine Skua, Arctic Skua, Long-tailed Skua, Little Auk, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Alpine Swift, Red-footed Falcon, Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Hooded Crow, Penduline Tit, Bearded Tit, Shore Lark, Short-toed Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Yellow-browed Warbler, Pallas's Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling, Bluethroat, Dipper, Richard's Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Olive-backed Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, Common Rosefinch, Twite, Common Redpoll, Parrot Crossbill, Serin, Lapland Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Little Bunting. All rare subspecies (e.g. Scandinavian Rock Pipit; Yellow Wagtail races and Siberian Chiffchaff) and all former national BBRC Rarity species.

Category 3 species

Brent Goose, Barnacle Goose, White-fronted Goose, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Garganey, Scaup, Eider, Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Quail, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Leach's Petrel, Red-necked Grebe, Slavonian Grebe, Black-necked Grebe, Bittern, Gannet, Shag, Osprey,

Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Avocet, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Knot, Curlew Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, Sanderling, Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Kittiwake, Little Gull (age/plumage), Mediterranean Gull (age/plumage), Yellow-legged Gull, Sandwich Tern, Little Tern, Arctic Tern, Turtle Dove, Long-eared Owl, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Merlin, Red-backed Shrike, Great Grey Shrike, Waxwing, Willow Tit, Woodlark (away from usual habitat), Wood Warbler, Ring Ouzel, Pied Flycatcher, Black Redstart, Tree Sparrow, White Wagtail (rump colour and full description required - esp., autumn records), Water Pipit, Rock Pipit, Hawfinch, Snow Bunting, Water Pipit, Eurasian Rock Pipit, Hawfinch, Snow Bunting.

The review of 2016 records

The introduction of the "Work in Progress" software has expedited the review process and made review decisions available to observers much more quickly. In addition, the BRC has met four times during a twelve-month period to discuss procedural issues and to review those records demanding closer scrutiny. As a consequence of the review process, the following records have not been included in The Birds of Berkshire Annual Report for 2016.

1. These records were deemed not proven after review.

Rough-legged Buzzard	Woolley Down	21st October.
Caspian Gull (2w)	Lower Farm GP	23rd-27th January.
Caspian Gull (1w)	Lower Farm GP	27th December.

The following records were unaccompanied by descriptive notes or photographs and have been pended awaiting further information becoming available. If any observers do have information about any of the records below please send it to records@berksoc.org.uk. The committee will keep these records open for two years to allow time for more information to be gathered.

Great White Egret	Lower Farm GP	23rd April
Great White Egret (2)	Lower Farm GP	6th October
Glossy Ibis	Maidenhead	13th April
Caspian Gull (1w)	Lower Farm GP	16th November
Yellow-browed Warbler	QMR	8th October
Marsh Harrier (2)	Dorney Wetlands	3rd June
Bar-tailed Godwit	Searle's Farm Lane	2nd June
Black-tailed Godwit (2)	Moor Green Lakes	16th September
Black-tailed Godwit	Moor Green Lakes	12th April
Black-tailed Godwit (3)	Burnthouse Lane Floods	11th April
Black-tailed Godwit (5)	Burnthouse Lane GPs	27th July
Black-tailed Godwit	Hosehill Lake	5th July
Wood Sandpiper (3)	Lavell's Lake	29th July
Yellow-legged Gull	Lea Farm Lake	18th March
Sandwich Tern (2)	Sonning	5th September
Sandwich Tern	Theale Main GP	15th September
Sandwich Tern (12)	Theale Main GP	16th September
Arctic Tern	Lea Farm Lake	19th August
Arctic Tern	QMR	5th May
Arctic Tern (5)	QMR	10th May
Arctic Tern	Theale Main GP	23rd April
Arctic Tern (2)	Theale Main GP	2nd May
Arctic Tern (2)	Theale Main GP	20th August
Bee-eater	Moss End	23rd May
Hoopoe	Woodley	18th April
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Brimpton GPs	12th April
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Paices Wood	20th March
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Sandford Farm	8th April

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Winterbourne	27th April
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Thatcham Marsh	22nd December
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Hosehill Lake	8th April
Merlin	Bradleywood Farm Welford	3rd April
Merlin	Englefield	13th January
Merlin	Lea Farm Lake	25th March
Merlin	Poors' Furze Lambourn	3rd February
Waxwing (20)	Cock Marsh	12th January
Waxwing	Hungerford	18th November
Woodlark	Hungerford Newtown	15th February
Woodlark	Lower Farm GP	11th June
Woodlark	Walbury Hill	8th July
Woodlark	West Woodhay Down	6th June
Woodlark	Whistley Green Hurst	2nd October
Wood Warbler (2)	Swinley Forest	24th April
Ring Ouzel (6)	Smith's Lawn Windsor	11th March
Ring Ouzel	Woolhampton GPs	28th April
Pied Flycatcher (2)	Reading Services M4	19th May
Pied Flycatcher	Wraysbury GPs	4th May
Black Redstart	Hatch Farm Dairies	23rd March
Black Redstart	Spencers Wood	13th May
Black Redstart	Walbury Hill	31st October
White Wagtail	QMR	2nd October
Tree Sparrow (6)	Temple Park	31st January
Tree Sparrow (9)	Cippenham	2nd April
White Wagtail	Moor Green Lakes	30th September
Hawfinch	Combe	15th January

Changes to Category 2 and Category 3 species

The Berkshire Records Committee (the BRC) recently conducted a review of the species on the Category 2 and category 3 lists. The primary aim was to recognise the changes in status of many of the species on the lists. A secondary consideration was to aid observers by reducing the number of species on the Category 3 list, those that require at least short notes to prove identity.

The new lists, tabulated below, were implemented from 1st January 2018.

Among the changes of note:

Ferruginous Duck moved back to Category 1 on 01/01/2017; sadly, Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, Tree Sparrow and Turtle Dove have been moved to Category 2 (Willow Tit remains on Category 3 pending the outcome of the national survey); Yellow-browed Warbler moves from Category 2 to Category 3; Brent Goose (Dark-bellied only), Bittern, Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Mediterranean Gull and Woodlark are removed from the categories altogether. The status of Barnacle Goose is still under discussion.

Category 2 species

Taiga Bean Goose	Green-winged Teal	Velvet Scoter
Pink-footed Goose	Ring-necked Duck	Long-tailed Duck
Tundra Bean Goose	Lesser Scaup	Ruddy Duck
American Wigeon	Eider	Red-throated Diver

Black-throated Diver	Grey Phalarope	Penduline Tit
Storm Petrel	Spotted Redshank	Bearded Tit
Leach's Petrel	Sabine's Gull	Shore Lark
Fulmar	Ring-billed Gull	Short-toed Lark
Manx Shearwater	Glaucous Gull	Red-rumped Swallow
White Stork	Iceland Gull	Wood Warbler
Glossy Ibis	Caspian Gull	Pallas's Warbler
Spoonbill	Roseate Tern	Marsh Warbler
Night-heron	White-winged Black Tern	Melodious Warbler
Cattle Egret	Great Skua	Icterine Warbler
Purple Heron	Pomarine Skua	Rose-coloured Starling
Honey-buzzard	Arctic Skua	Bluethroat
Golden Eagle	Long-tailed Skua	Black-throated Thrush
Goshawk	Little Auk	Pied Flycatcher
Montagu's Harrier	Common Guillemot	Dipper
Black Kite	Razorbill	Tree Sparrow
White-tailed Eagle	Puffin	Richard's Pipit
Rough-legged Buzzard	Turtle Dove	Olive-backed Pipit
Corncrake	Long-eared Owl	Common Rosefinch
Spotted Crake	Alpine Swift	Twite
Crane	Wryneck	Common (Mealy) Redpoll
Black-winged Stilt	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Parrot Crossbill
Kentish Plover	Red-footed Falcon	Serin
Dotterel	Red-backed Shrike	Lapland Bunting
Curlew Sandpiper	Woodchat Shrike	Snow Bunting
Purple Sandpiper	Golden Oriole	Ortolan Bunting
Pectoral Sandpiper	Hooded Crow	Cirl Bunting
Red-necked Phalarope	Waxwing	Little Bunting

Plus, all non-BBRC species not on the Berkshire list and all species identified to subspecies level (including Pale-bellied Brent Goose).

Category 3 species

Barnacle Goose	Gannet	Little Gull
White-fronted Goose	Shag	Yellow-legged Gull
Bewick's Swan	Osprey	Sandwich Tern
Whooper Swan	Marsh Harrier	Little Tern
Garganey (autumn records)	Hen Harrier	Arctic Tern
Scaup	Avocet	Hoopoe
Common Scoter	Grey Plover	Merlin
Red-breasted Merganser	Bar-tailed Godwit	Great Grey Shrike
Quail	Knot	Willow Tit
Water Pipit	Rock Pipit	Hawfinch
Great Northern Diver	Temminck's Stint	Yellow-browed Warbler
Red-necked Grebe	Sanderling	Ring Ouzel
Slavonian Grebe	Little Stint	Black Redstart
Black-necked Grebe	Wood Sandpiper	White Wagtail (autumn records)
Great White Egret	Kittiwake	

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2016 SYSTEMATIC LIST

The objective of the annual systematic list is to provide a summary of the status of each species recorded in Berkshire during the given year. I repeat, summary. As such it should be read in conjunction with the freely available on-line database at <http://berksoc.org.uk/berkshire-bird-database/>. The two complement one another and taken together will give you a complete picture.

You will notice some changes from previous reports. On 1st January 2018 The British Ornithologist's Union (BOU) adopted the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World List as a move towards a standardised world-wide avian taxonomy. Counties and regions are following suit to their own timescales. The editors of our systematic list decided to implement that decision in the 2016 report. Consequently, the order of species in the list has changed and will be unfamiliar. In addition, the renaming of some of the species may be confusing. To mitigate against these changes the editors have decided to continue to use the familiar vernacular names for all species, with the "official" name following in brackets. Another change the editors have made is to fall in line with other county and regional reports and include observers' initials for rare or scarce sightings only. However, all contributors continue to be acknowledged in the contributors list.

Our thanks go to the hundreds of observers who have submitted, and continue to submit, their records on an annual basis. The importance of your contribution cannot be over-estimated.

As usual we are indebted to our volunteer species account writers, without whom there would be no report.

Geese and Swans

Ducks

Game Birds, Divers, Grebes and Herons

Birds of Prey

Rails and Waders

Gulls and Terns

Pigeons, Owls and Nightjar

Swifts and Woodpeckers

Falcons and Crows

Waxwing and Tits

Larks, Martins, Pipits and Long-tailed Tit

Warblers

Crests and Thrushes

Flycatchers and Chats

Sparrows and Wagtails

Finches and Buntings

Hybrids, Feral species and escapes

Ken Moore

Robert Godden

Andy Horscroft

Steve Ricks

John Hobson

Andy Tomczynski

Peter Hutchins

Mark Whitaker

Jerry O'Brien

Roger Stansfield

Peter Gipson

Richard Crawford

Brian Hackett

Renton Righelato

Richard Gilham

Anne Harrison

Ken Moore

We are further indebted to Robert Godden for devising the routine that has generated many of the tables and graphs that enhance the list. For several selected species the routine produces a suite of outputs which gives monthly and weekly:

- **maximum counts at specified sites:** as far as possible, the choice of specified sites is the same for all species within a family, permitting comparisons between species and between years. Taking ducks as an example, scarcer species may not be recorded at all in a year at some selected sites, and such empty rows will not appear in the table – however it should be possible to infer such null data by comparison with commoner related species;

- **totals of maximum counts according to five habitat types:** these are the topographical classes (downs, heathlands, river valleys, the Eastern Plain and urban areas) described in *The Birds of Berkshire - Annual Report 2015* pp. 116–117;
- **totals of maximum counts within three Berkshire regions:** west Berks i.e. west of SU600nnn, east Berks i.e. east of SU800nnn and mid Berks in between.

The choice of graph or table used in the annual report depends on the species, for instance a weekly breakdown may be more appropriate to a passage migrant, while a monthly breakdown may better present the fluctuations of a duck population through a year. The routine is semi-automated requiring human assistance to associate alternative namings of a site; thus when submitting records it is most helpful to use the most descriptive site name already in use (this applies particularly to online systems such as berksbirds.co.uk), rather than a vague term such as ‘My garden’ with an accompanying grid reference.

2016 SYSTEMATIC LIST

edited by Richard Burness and Brian Hackett

BRENT GOOSE (BRANT GOOSE) *Branta bernicla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A total of 15 birds (in five sightings) was so much better than last year. All were identified as Dark-bellied, except for the group of six at Moor Green which were not assigned. The first of the year was an individual at Lower Farm GP on Jan 2nd (RJB, ABT) staying until dusk. Five days later, another (or possibly the same) arrived at QMR (CDRH). On Apr 10th a group of six Brents visited QMR (PNe), whilst a single bird was found there on the 14th (DJB/PNe). Finally on Dec 18th a small flock of six flew over Moor Green Lakes (CRG).

[Omitted in error from the 2015 report – 1st winter Brent Goose moulting into adult plumage seen and photographed at QMR on Feb 11th (CDRH). The only record of the year.]

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE (BRANT GOOSE (*bernicla*))

Branta bernicla bernicla

See above. All those birds specifically assigned were of the Dark-bellied species. Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *Branta bernicla hrota* is rarely seen inland.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Localised feral resident, extremely rare wild vagrant (wild population Amber Listed)

Single counts in excess of 250, other than those already shown below, were 250 at Borough Marsh on Feb 3rd and at an Englefield Stubble field, where counts were 314 on Aug 10th and 400 on Aug 14th. Great Meadow Pond had a superb count of 313 on Sep 25th however this site is a ‘private site’ with no access. On the Thames, the WeBS count for October was 260 between Reading and Pangbourne. Of interest, the overall highest count was 590 on Aug 20th at Moor Green Lakes. As usual breeding was pitifully under-recorded yielding a figure of 139 goslings from 28 pairs.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	–	–	10	2	6	–	9	–	–	–	–	–
Burghfield GPs	30	78	3		–	–	–	–	50	52	2	2
Dinton Pastures CP	257	63	39	89	5	–	–	2	–	4	30	25
Dorney Wetlands	40	–	75	44	10	90	48	–	–	–	62	81
Eton Wick Floods	51	–	50	16	25	24	–	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	37	75	115	61	39	8	30	155	313	200	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	268	2	4	4	–	–	–	2	–	142	310	10
Lower Farm GP	290	63	34	24	33	27	47	102	130	36	111	62
Moatlands GPs	–	105	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	90
Moor Green Lakes NR	160	80	80	64	60	75	150	590	210	57	65	223
Padworth Lane GP	34	21	30	43	11	–	–	–	–	–	22	–
Pingewood GPs	100	60	6	–	14	–	36	62	50	–	–	40
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	66	30	7	2	–	7	360	170	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	65	29	40	60	51	124	98	60	85	19	65	140
Theale GPs	–	47	49	87	53	58	48	300	48	126	110	90
Twyford GPs	106	140	65	21	6	15	20	–	121	4	89	55
Windsor Promenade	86	83	49	32	57	316	211	131	295	86	33	136
Woolhampton GPs	5	–	12	8	14	11	11	22	18	5	–	4
Wraysbury GPs	5	8	11	29	15	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	15	17	14	26	21	13	11	11	12	9	7	7
Number of birds	822	450	120	152	543	348	791	751	718	465	565	705

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Localised and declining feral resident, extremely rare wild vagrant

The resident feral flock continues to favour the Moor Green Lakes area, the closing number of 2015 being different to the opening 2016 figure of twenty birds recorded ‘flying east’ on Jan 3rd. A week later the number was backup to the normal average for 2015- 22 birds - and this seemed to be the default count during this year with two exceptions. These were 29 on Feb 23rd and as in 2015 an occasional total of 23 for which the source of the extra bird(s) remains unknown. Additionally, away from Moor Green Lakes, there was a group of nine, which were first noted later in the year on Nov 10th at both QMR and Datchet Common and this group became ten on Nov 19th. Then on Nov 29th 17 Barnacles appeared on Datchet Common and stayed around and about the immediate area until Dec 8th. The origin or the destination of the birds remain unknown. Finally, there were odd single records; firstly, on Jan 8th at Lower Farm and again on the 25th, then on Feb 28th at Burnthouse Lane and finally on Apr 8th, at Searles Farm. On Apr 25th a Barnacle Goose was at Charvil CP, and again on May 1st whilst on the 13th, at Borough Marsh, there was another or the same? Finally, on Jun 12th at Twyford GPs, another was recorded.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common and widespread introduced resident (northern wild populations are Amber Listed)

A common sight around the county’s wetlands with the highest counts, rather surprisingly coming from Great Meadow Pond in Windsor Great Park. Breeding was noted at 16 locations but the bird is now so familiar that nest activity was probably under-reported. A

regular watcher at Great Meadow Pond recorded at least 18 pairs nesting at that one site. Of interest a leucistic bird was seen at Theale Main GP on Mar 6th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	–	6	10	–	–	–	–	–	15	2	–	–
Dinton Pastures CP	–	–	4	2	–	–	13	–	–	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	–	–	5	8	–	2	14	–	–	–	–	6
Great Meadow Pond	93	470	512	187	233	134	380	248	448	369	61	220
Horton GPs	–	–	–	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	–	–	6	5	–	–	–	–	58	96	1	–
Lower Farm GP	29	2	4	3	4	–	5	4	2	5	5	1
Moatlands GPs	–	90	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	2	12	4	7	2	–	7	98	152	–	83	33
Padworth Lane GP	126	150	80	40	13	–	–	–	–	–	180	–
Pingewood GPs	10	130	40	–	12	–	83	146	41	–	–	230
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	–	29	3	–	4	–	60	54	–	–	79
Thatcham Marsh	–	–	–	1	2	–	–	–	5	–	–	–
Theale GPs	111	80	9	76	18	38	35	100	53	285	60	120
Twyford GPs	2	130	2	15	17	5	–	–	78	–	1	4
Woolhampton GPs	–	4	13	13	9	37	26	82	80	14	5	–
Wraysbury GPs	–	7	–	5	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	5	5	9	20	14	3	5	5	7	6	4	6
Number of birds	349	140	48	80	174	20	188	576	890	411	155	548

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Locally common resident (Green Listed)

There were between 800 and 850 records received for this ubiquitous species. Wherever there are waterways or open water there are Mute Swans, even on town centre lakes. As is the norm the highest numbers were seen on the monthly counts made at Windsor Promenade with a maximum of 271 there on Apr 27th. Other counts in excess of 50 included: 60+ at Newbury Wharf between Jan 9th and Feb 9th, 54 at Wraysbury GPs on Jan 13th, 51 at Dinton CP on Jan 18th, 57 at the same location on Apr 11th and 100 at Alexandra Gardens, Windsor on Oct 9th. Breeding activity was reported from over forty locations spread throughout the county.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	3	–	1	4	–	4	3	–	–	–	–	–
Burghfield GPs	41	23	29	–	1	–	–	–	18	15	15	15
Crookham Common	2	–	1	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dinton Pastures CP	51	47	46	57	2	4	10	1	23	18	19	12
Eton Wick Floods	2	–	3	2	2	4	–	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	6	7	6	4	9	8	6	6	6	9	9	10
Horton GPs	6	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	17	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	4	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	18	5
Lower Farm GP	2	3	4	4	5	2	2	2	5	5	2	2
Moatlands GPs	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	6	5	2	6	5	3	20	20	9	10	5	15
Padworth Lane GP	2	–	17	10	6	–	–	–	–	–	9	1
Pingewood GPs	10	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Queen Mother Reservoir	4	5	3	2	2	3	11	11	9	9	4	–
Thatcham Marsh	3	6	3	7	8	8	4	2	3	3	5	2
Theale GPs	19	7	5	27	10	4	8	11	15	31	18	18
Twyford GPs	16	13	16	2	6	5	–	–	21	28	34	44
Windsor Promenade	237	248	235	271	249	251	216	231	–	156	202	215
Woolhampton GPs	4	2	6	3	4	3	6	9	2	3	3	3
Wraysbury GPs	54	48	1	17	5	–	–	–	–	16	2	2
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	20	14	14	22	24	13	17	7	9	11	6	8
Number of birds	189	100	111	112	135	71	82	24	93	191	42	101

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

A scarce passage and winter visitor, formerly a feral resident (Amber Listed)

One to two feral birds were seen in the Moss End/Warfield area through the year, probably straying from the lake in the Warfield House estate.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common introduced resident in Mid and East Berks, more local in the West

This once scarce introduction has now become a common sight throughout the county, being reported from over 100 locations. Among many high counts were 105 at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 26th, the flock at Widbrook Common during December peaked at a massive 233 on the 29th and there were 153 at Strand Water Cookham on Dec 20th. Breeding activity was reported from nearly 30 locations. Of interest a “strikingly” leucistic individual was seen with a small flock at Horton Brook Quarry/Horton Fields on Mar 28th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	–	–	–	–	26	62	78	17	–	–	–	4
Burghfield GPs	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dinton Pastures CP	–	2	2	6	–	–	–	4	2	–	6	4
Dorney Wetlands	2	–	–	4	2	10	12	15	–	–	2	2
Eton Wick Floods	–	–	–	2	2	2	27	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	10	3	8	12	16	4	7	8	–	4	9	11
Lea Farm Lake	4	17	–	–	–	–	5	–	–	2	–	–
Lower Farm GP	2	3	4	3	3	1	3	10	10	9	3	3
Moor Green Lakes NR	48	32	20	30	13	2	50	52	105	90	60	46
Padworth Lane GP	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Pingewood GPs	1	–	2	5	3	–	2	–	6	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	4	2	–	10	5	44	64	81	85	6	10	8
Thatcham Marsh	2	2	2	2	6	17	19	11	2	–	2	4
Theale GPs	4	6	6	7	7	10	25	45	5	5	1	12
Twyford GPs	–	6	1	2	3	10	4	2	5	2	4	2
Windsor Promenade	–	–	–	–	–	33	–	–	–	–	–	–
Woolhampton GPs	6	–	–	2	2	4	2	2	7	–	3	–
Wraysbury GPs	–	2	2	5	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	2
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	15	8	12	17	19	10	9	4	11	11	7	7
Number of birds	110	64	53	91	158	122	63	157	284	125	62	425

SHELDUCK (COMMON SHELDUCK) *Tadorna tadorna*

Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor, a few winter (Amber Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Shelduck are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	1	2	—	2	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dorney Wetlands	3	2	3	1	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eton Wick Floods	4	7	3	3	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Great Meadow Pond	4	6	11	8	6	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Horton GPs	1	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lea Farm Lake	1	—	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Lower Farm GP	—	—	—	4	2	2	—	—	—	—	1	—
Moatlands GPs	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moor Green Lakes NR	2	5	3	4	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Padworth Lane GP	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pingewood GPs	2	2	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Queen Mother Reservoir	3	5	13	7	8	12	—	—	—	—	1	—
Slough Sewage Farm	2	3	—	12	6	13	14	—	—	—	—	—
Theale GPs	—	1	—	2	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Twyford GPs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Woolhampton GPs	2	—	2	2	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wraysbury GPs	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	1	—	5	3	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Number of birds	2	—	10	8	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	1

Shelduck were present from the start of the year. The annual summer departure to the moulting grounds in the Wadden Sea resulted in no records at all for three months following the final departures in early July. A group of 14 at Slough SF on Jul 1st declined to five on Jul 5th and they were all gone the next day. The only report of successful breeding concerned fledged young at Woolhampton GPs on May 27th and Jun 7th. The first returning bird was at Twyford GP on Oct 24th, with around four appearing around the county in subsequent weeks and maybe just two remaining into 2017.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Locally common introduced resident

Monthly maximum counts of Mandarin Duck are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	26	—
Burghfield GPs	—	10	2	5	—	—	1	3	7	—	1	3
Dinton Pastures CP	—	—	2	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Great Meadow Pond	—	—	4	3	7	3	32	101	42	—	2	—
Lea Farm Lake	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	1	5	—	—	—
Moor Green Lakes NR	12	12	4	4	4	1	3	2	4	1	—	6
Prospect Park	5	—	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Theale GPs	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Twyford GPs	—	1	2	1	—	20	1	—	—	—	—	—
Whiteknights Park	6	8	9	—	7	—	1	—	7	—	—	—
Woolhampton GPs	—	—	—	—	6	1	—	—	—	—	—	—

Wraysbury GPs	1	–	2	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	4	10	20	22	16	8	8	4	1	2	4	3
Number of birds	29	53	54	57	54	24	26	10	1	4	7	8

There are signs that this species is extending its range beyond its stronghold in east and mid Berks, and certain favoured sites just west of Reading. Several reports were received of Mandarin Duck along the Kennet Valley west of Newbury, especially around Marsh Benham, and two were seen over Snelsmore Common on Apr 10th.

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

Regular passage migrant in small numbers, rare in summer but has bred (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

2016 was a better year than recent years with reports of possibly as many as 19 birds. **Spring:** the first report came from Fobney Meadow where a pair arrived on Mar 19th. Up to two pairs were present here and at nearby Fobney Island until May 10th. A male displaying to a female on Apr 16th constituted the only evidence of breeding activity. A pair was reported from Burnthouse Lane GP on Mar 22nd, and there was a pair at Bottom Lane GP between Apr 2nd and 10th. Two were at Marsh Benham on May 19th, a juvenile male was at Lea Farm Lake on Jun 19th, and a pair stayed at Lower Farm GP from Jun 11th to 29th. **Autumn:** a juvenile was reported from Hosehill Lake NR from Aug 20th to Sep 11th (MO), and another was at Fobney Meadow on Sep 9th and 23rd (ABT, CDRH). An adult female was reported from QMR on Sep 7th and 8th (CDRH), and two males and a female were at Searle's Farm Lane GP on Sep 25th (MO).

SHOVELER (NORTHERN SHOVELER) *Spatula clypeata*

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

Monthly maximum counts of Shoveler are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	3	–	10	2	–	–	–	–	7	–	–	–
Bray GPs	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6
Burghfield GPs	69	30	80	–	–	–	22	–	10	15	59	80
Dinton Pastures CP	14	2	10	8	–	–	3	2	58	61	151	160
Eton Wick Floods	–	–	–	–	–	–	7	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	19	1	20	15	–	–	3	10	12	20	29	46
Horton GPs	55	11	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	10	–	–	3	–	–	–	6	56	113	1	13
Lower Farm GP	67	56	43	15	–	4	6	32	80	38	24	42
Moatlands GPs	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	92
Moor Green Lakes NR	43	14	40	11	–	–	–	–	13	25	31	48
Padworth Lane GP	12	64	30	3	–	–	–	–	5	–	1	6
Pingewood GPs	4	–	48	23	–	2	–	–	6	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	1	–	3	–	1
Slough Sewage Farm	–	–	34	2	1	4	3	–	–	–	1	–
Thatcham Marsh	1	6	16	5	–	1	–	4	7	4	21	15
Theale GPs	3	2	5	7	–	2	–	27	36	10	10	21
Twyford GPs	44	28	12	1	–	–	–	–	5	30	49	30

Woolhampton GPs	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	6	4	8	–
Wraybury GPs	15	30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	9	30	10
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	3	6	3	4	1	1	–	1	–	2	3	5
Number of birds	21	18	8	13	2	2	–	2	–	24	9	37

First winter: Shoveler were present from the start of the year and were still being reported in small numbers from several sites in the last week of April. The latest report concerned a drake that was last seen at Slough SF on May 14th. **Summer:** several birds were present during the breeding season at half a dozen sites but there was no indication that breeding had occurred. **Second winter:** a number of sites reported peak counts in early autumn with numbers boosted by passage birds. Among these was a flock of 22 in eclipse plumage at Searle's Farm Lane GP on Jul 30th. Shovelers may delay the body moult phase of the eclipse moult, so their eclipse may be completed long after leaving the breeding grounds. With birds present throughout the period it is not easy to determine when the first wintering birds arrived, but this probably occurred around mid-November.

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

Common winter visitor, uncommon summer resident which breeds in small numbers (Amber Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Gadwall are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	–	–	5	2	–	5	–	5	2	–	–	–
Bray GPs	24	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	33	28
Burghfield GPs	255	126	49	–	–	–	–	–	15	73	103	118
Dinton Pastures CP	247	412	161	16	–	–	–	11	3	18	53	58
Dorney Wetlands	30	–	6	–	2	7	–	–	–	–	20	8
Eton Wick Floods	7	–	14	7	14	6	7	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	64	11	25	21	19	36	42	120	89	86	100	20
Horton GPs	31	37	–	8	–	–	–	–	–	4	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	21	4	2	8	22	28	–	6	12	53	31	11
Lower Farm GP	72	58	42	28	26	34	23	28	33	10	9	14
Moatlands GPs	–	23	–	–	–	17	–	–	–	–	–	40
Moor Green Lakes NR	35	7	9	8	10	4	3	14	11	48	52	163
Padworth Lane GP	18	5	10	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	10
Pingewood GPs	2	4	2	6	4	–	5	4	10	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	12	26	5	2	–	–	1	3	–	–	–
Slough Sewage Farm	–	–	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	11	6	2	8	5	1	4	–	3	6	1	4
Theale GPs	178	28	11	8	11	7	5	42	28	63	75	119
Twyford GPs	139	121	21	4	2	–	–	–	43	71	208	235
Woolhampton GPs	18	2	2	4	2	13	2	1	2	11	11	14
Wraybury GPs	176	145	–	3	–	–	–	–	2	8	40	5
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	6	6	7	16	10	8	–	1	5	5	2	4
Number of birds	34	38	49	70	67	29	–	5	50	34	10	42

The number of birds in the county for the first winter period was around 30% higher than the recent average, with numbers dropping away by mid-March to leave around 100 birds during the summer. Breeding was confirmed at seven sites raising at least nine broods.

Numbers in the second winter period built up gradually from August and were typical of counts in recent years. For both winter periods the sites in central Berkshire attracted the largest numbers.

WIGEON (EURASIAN WIGEON) *Mareca penelope*

Locally common winter visitor and rare summer visitor that has bred (Amber Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Wigeon are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	–
Burghfield GPs	300	138	128	3	–	–	–	–	20	58	160	200
Dinton Pastures CP	50	214	121	2	–	–	–	–	3	3	11	5
Dorney Wetlands	75	–	50	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–
Eton Wick Floods	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	9	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	88	126	92	1
Horton GPs	–	–	45	–	–	–	–	–	135	105	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	32	–	70	40	–	–	–	1	18	61	20	10
Lower Farm GP	50	29	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	5	43	36
Moatlands GPs	–	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	143	106	32	1	–	–	–	–	19	300	139	268
Padworth Lane GP	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	7	–	22	15
Pingewood GPs	60	120	170	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	70
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	17	7	2	1
Theale GPs	81	14	7	4	2	73	2	1	114	175	150	220
Twyford GPs	572	372	154	1	–	–	–	–	65	266	489	447
Woolhampton GPs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	7	–
Wraysbury GPs	30	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	4	6	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	2	2	3	–	–	–	–	–	5	2	5
Number of birds	63	16	76	74	–	–	–	–	–	253	175	202

Impressive counts during both winter periods produced totals for the county around three times the average of recent years, with Twyford GPs standing out as the most favoured site. Winter birds had mostly departed by the end of March and Wigeon were virtually absent from the county from May to August with just a pair (including an injured female) remaining at Hosehill Lake throughout. The winter influx started with a rapid build-up of numbers in the middle of September.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common (locally abundant) and widespread resident and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

The Mallard remains a common breeding resident across the county. Monthly maximum counts of Mallard are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	31	2	2	4	4	5	33	23	24	–	13	–
Bray GPs	8	–	1	7	–	–	42	–	–	–	24	–
Burghfield GPs	59	11	29	–	–	–	–	–	53	47	34	10
Dinton Pastures CP	133	53	38	63	–	–	–	–	–	91	91	159
Dorney Wetlands	40	–	29	28	23	17	20	2	–	–	–	30

Eton Wick Floods	13	–	23	21	18	22	20	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	20	25	15	25	33	27	72	47	51	47	38	58
Horton GPs	26	30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	23	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	12	9	11	11	–	–	–	–	–	4	2	2
Lower Farm GP	54	40	20	13	40	40	50	56	67	65	59	32
Moatlands GPs	–	20	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	64	34	30	33	45	20	26	46	51	29	20	53
Padworth Lane GP	39	12	16	20	12	–	–	–	–	–	29	34
Pingewood GPs	20	8	4	4	20	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	12	16	42	29	32	70	36	84	57	26	19	17
Thatcham Marsh	94	105	69	30	32	99	42	59	51	8	20	87
Theale GPs	27	37	32	35	34	28	26	15	22	26	21	70
Twyford GPs	84	21	34	7	10	15	15	6	74	73	69	29
Woolhampton GPs	36	6	4	13	7	22	12	7	10	7	35	19
Wraysbury GPs	50	54	43	50	8	–	–	–	–	76	–	2
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	27	27	17	43	35	20	20	8	15	9	13	9
Number of birds	469	247	209	438	382	284	442	146	308	174	83	118

The national trend towards a lower winter influx can be deduced, with the totals for all months close to an average number except for January which shows an excess of about 70% above the average. Likewise, there are no particularly large winter counts.

PINTAIL (NORTHERN PINTAIL) *Anas acuta*

Regular winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers (Amber Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Pintail are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	1	–	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dinton Pastures CP	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	4	–
Great Meadow Pond	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	4	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	10	1	80	–
Lower Farm GP	14	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	1
Moor Green Lakes NR	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pingewood GPs	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	2	–
Thatcham Marsh	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–
Woolhampton GPs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of birds	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

First winter: Pintail were recorded from the start of the year until Apr 16th. There was a notable count of at least 14 in flight over Lower Farm GP and later seen on the Trout Lake on Jan 30th. **Second winter:** birds were noted generally in ones or twos from Sep 17th until the end of the year. However, ten were seen to arrive in small groups at Dinton Pastures CP on Sep 22nd. On Nov 26th, two large flocks totalling 80 birds were reported flying north over Lea Farm Lake - this would represent the second largest number ever reported in the county.

TEAL (EURASIAN TEAL) *Anas crecca*

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

Monthly maximum counts of Teal are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	27	—	17	2	—	—	—	—	2	—	12	—
Bray GPs	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	3
Burghfield GPs	10	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Dinton Pastures CP	35	25	29	2	1	—	—	1	21	5	100	200
Dorney Wetlands	2	—	2	1	—	—	—	5	—	—	—	6
Eton Wick Floods	95	—	24	—	—	—	—	7	95	—	—	106
Great Meadow Pond	15	6	15	12	—	—	3	—	8	18	6	8
Horton GPs	—	3	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lea Farm Lake	146	—	50	15	—	2	—	22	65	19	18	4
Lower Farm GP	300	134	20	11	2	4	5	33	49	161	150	350
Moor Green Lakes NR	11	4	8	10	1	6	9	12	24	30	40	33
Padworth Lane GP	30	19	6	1	—	—	—	6	22	—	7	40
Pingewood GPs	60	12	12	10	—	3	1	7	12	—	—	25
Queen Mother Reservoir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	15	25	3
Slough Sewage Farm	125	165	—	50	—	2	1	10	—	—	170	232
Thatcham Marsh	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	3	—	3
Theale GPs	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	—
Twyford GPs	—	—	20	—	—	—	—	—	2	11	8	9
Woolhampton GPs	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	3	—
Wraysbury GPs	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	8	3
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	7	5	13	9	1	—	—	1	3	6	5	6
Number of birds	39	85	257	171	2	—	—	12	54	157	86	198

Large numbers were present in both winter periods; in the first the total of maximum counts was more than 50% above recent averages, and in the second more than double. Although pairs were recorded in every month at some sites, there was no evidence of successful breeding. Smaller peaks in numbers at some sites in early autumn were indicative of passage birds.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Uncommon visitor of presumed feral origin which has occasionally bred

Monthly maximum counts of Red-crested Pochard are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	—	7	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dinton Pastures CP	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Horton GPs	2	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Lea Farm Lake	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moor Green Lakes NR	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thatcham Marsh	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Theale GPs	—	—	3	4	3	1	1	3	3	—	—	—
Woolhampton GPs	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	4	—
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Number of birds	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Red-crested Pochard could be found throughout the year in the county with many long-staying individuals. However, the numbers reported at any particular site often fluctuated indicating that birds were commuting between sites. The overwhelming number of reports came from central Berkshire, in line with current trends. There were no reports of successful breeding - the only evidence observed was of a pair copulating at Searles Farm Lane GP on Apr 30th.

POCHARD (COMMON POCHARD) *Aythya ferina*

Locally common winter visitor and passage migrant, uncommon in summer but has now bred for eight consecutive years (Red Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Pochard are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	2	—	1	2	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Bray GPs	35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	58	30
Burghfield GPs	40	8	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	11	50
Dinton Pastures CP	93	156	43	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	108	84
Dorney Wetlands	3	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	8
Eton Wick Floods	2	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Great Meadow Pond	127	14	46	26	13	20	41	67	51	38	65	41
Horton GPs	21	13	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	2	—	—
Lea Farm Lake	10	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Lower Farm GP	23	7	6	13	7	24	18	17	15	10	8	21
Moatlands GPs	—	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	33	140	86
Moor Green Lakes NR	28	30	15	1	5	3	—	—	3	10	16	21
Padworth Lane GP	23	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	5	91	27	64
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	—
Thatcham Marsh	18	10	10	16	7	4	2	2	2	3	6	4
Theale GPs	27	28	24	—	1	—	1	—	1	2	12	21
Twyford GPs	47	2	17	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	8	11
Woolhampton GPs	16	21	6	5	8	4	—	—	29	8	22	4
Wraysbury GPs	38	5	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	120	—
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	—	—	—	1	1
Number of birds	10	8	2	4	5	2	1	—	—	—	1	2

Although Pochard are recorded at several sites through the breeding season, the number of broods observed remains very low. Even at Great Meadow Pond where up to 20 were present in June, there was no evidence of breeding, possibly due to higher than usual water levels. However, in the west of the county two broods (of five and six ducklings) were reported at Lower Farm GP on Jul 7th and a single duckling was seen at Thatcham NDC in the second half of June.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant

First winter: the drake that appeared in December 2015 on Dinton Pastures CP remained into 2016, visiting various lakes and was last reported on Feb 25th (MO). The metal ring that was observed traces this bird to the German re-introduction scheme near Hamburg. **Second winter:** a female was present at Moatlands GPs between Nov 25th and Dec 4th (MO). At Dinton Pastures CP, a drake that appeared on Nov 26th and was still there on Dec 24th at least, was regarded to be the same individual that was present in the first winter period (MO).

Editor's note: Ferruginous Duck was re-admitted to the list of species reviewed by the British Birds Rarities Committee from 1st January 2017.

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

Rare vagrant

The drake that arrived at Bray GPs in November 2015 continued its stay into 2016 where it was last reported on Feb 8th (MO). It is presumed that this is the same bird that first appeared in Dec 2014 as a first winter, returning for its second winter.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Common resident, numbers greatly increased in the winter (Amber Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Tufted Duck are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	6	–	16	14	8	5	2	7	4	–	2	–
Bray GPs	233	–	21	5	–	–	30	–	116	292	700	364
Burghfield GPs	353	249	235	–	–	–	7	–	95	159	364	199
Dinton Pastures CP	92	95	87	65	–	16	9	10	15	135	212	178
Dorney Wetlands	30	–	20	4	–	2	–	–	–	–	289	50
Eton Wick Floods	23	–	14	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	56	36	55	71	29	39	18	16	19	22	28	27
Horton GPs	300	407	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	112	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	51	8	4	10	–	–	–	–	–	2	3	25
Lower Farm GP	31	36	32	30	36	28	28	28	18	30	14	19
Moatlands GPs	–	120	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	200	418
Moor Green Lakes NR	193	121	132	160	46	42	58	87	66	117	60	163
Padworth Lane GP	89	62	61	37	2	–	–	–	–	84	41	64
Pingewood GPs	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	34	34	51	30	1	7	25	200	450	160	67	52
Slough Sewage Farm	–	–	–	17	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	70	36	45	36	30	7	22	26	24	3	24	47
Theale GPs	260	231	265	80	51	51	23	53	125	190	289	391
Twyford GPs	205	155	149	25	10	7	4	–	39	102	139	171
Woolhampton GPs	59	49	54	70	47	67	5	24	30	44	75	86
Wraysbury GPs	861	926	–	130	4	–	–	–	–	448	60	24
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	14	10	4	14	13	3	9	2	2	–	1	4
Number of birds	140	131	17	106	94	30	47	13	13	–	26	89

Analysis of the data reveals that total Tufted Duck numbers remained almost constant throughout the year in the west of the county, while sites as a whole in east and central Berkshire registered a huge winter influx. Breeding was confirmed at ten sites which is a typical figure for recent years, with at least 12 broods raised.

SCAUP (GREATER SCAUP) *Aythya marila*

Scarce though annual winter visitor and passage migrant (Red Listed)

After a run of poor years, 2016 showed a marked improvement, though strangely all seven individuals occurred in the second winter period. The first was a juvenile at QMR on Nov 4th (CDRH), that was regarded as different from a f/w or adult female at Horton GPs on

Nov 13th (CDRH). A f/w drake remained at Wraysbury GPs from Nov 17th to Dec 26th (CDRH). Further west, at Moatlands GPs a f/w drake was present on Nov 17th and 18th (ABT), overlapping with a f/w female present from Nov 18th to Dec 26th (ABT *et al.*). Nearby an adult drake moulting out of eclipse was at Burghfield on Nov 30th (CDRH), while a f/w drake was there between Dec 5th and 7th (KEM, DJB). A drake at Dinton Pastures CP from Dec 7th to 11th (IDP *et al.*) may have been the same as the first Burghfield bird.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Rare winter visitor (Amber Listed)

On Nov 18th a bird on Dorney Lake, Bucks was seen to depart gaining height as it flew to the south above the R. Thames and onwards over Berkshire (J Edwards).

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)

2016 saw a slightly under-average showing of this species, though a long-staying winter individual was noteworthy. **First winter/Spring:** there were many reports of a first winter at QMR and nearby sites during January and February, though it was probably just a single bird in the period Jan 1st to Feb 11th that was reported from QMR and Horton GPs (CDRH *et al.*), and a separate individual on Feb 28th (PNe). Then on Mar 21st two drakes and a female were found at QMR (CDRH). Elsewhere in spring, a male was at Moor Green Lakes NR on Mar 19th (RCM) and another male spent the day at Theale Main GP on Mar 29th (AVL, CMc, KEM). **Autumn:** three drakes were reported from QMR on Jul 22nd (CDRH). No more were reported until a female was present at Theale Main GP Oct 23rd to 25th (AVL, KEM, RHS), with three there on Nov 9th (KEM).

[Omitted in error from the 2015 report – Common Scoter juvenile at Horton GPs through December 2015 (CDRH)]

GOLDENEYE (COMMON GOLDENEYE) *Bucephala clangula*

Locally common winter visitor, scarce in the west (Amber Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Goldeneye are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–
Burghfield GPs	3	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	4
Dinton Pastures CP	3	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	4
Horton GPs	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	5	1	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Lower Farm GP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Moatlands GPs	9	15	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	6
Moor Green Lakes NR	2	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
Theale GPs	8	12	12	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	7
Twyford GPs	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	4
Wraysbury GPs	27	30	17	5	–	–	–	3	–	2	20	35
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of birds	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

First winter: Goldeneye were reported through the winter with the last female remaining at Theale Main GP until Apr 18th. Maximum counts were almost 50% down on recent average maxima, both at the favoured sites and over the county as a whole. One observer commented that the relatively high proportion of males possibly suggested poor success in the preceding breeding season. **Second winter:** returning birds first appeared on the early (but not unprecedented) date of Aug 13th when three female types were at Heron Lakes, Wraysbury before being flushed. The main arrival commenced on Oct 5th with a juvenile at Horton GPs.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

Uncommon (possibly declining?) winter visitor (Amber Listed)

First winter: the redhead that arrived at Searle's Farm Lane GP in December 2015 remained until Apr 3rd, and at Wraysbury GPs up to two drakes and a female were reported from various lakes until Feb 3rd. A drake that arrived at Moor Green Lakes NR on Jan 1st stayed until Mar 3rd, often being reported from Grove Lake at dusk with the roosting Goosanders. On Feb 22nd, a female was present at Charvil GP. **Second winter:** the first returning bird was a redhead at Padworth Lane GP on Nov 22nd, and this may be the same bird that was reported from Searle's Farm Lane GP between Nov 26th and Dec 17th. Another redhead was at Horton GPs on Dec 7th.

GOOSANDER (COMMON MERGANSER) *Mergus merganser*

Uncommon winter visitor though regular at preferred sites, has summered (Green Listed)

Monthly maximum counts of Goosander are given in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Burghfield GPs	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dinton Pastures CP	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lower Farm GP	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	—
Moatlands GPs	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	5
Moor Green Lakes NR	54	28	12	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	43
Padworth Lane GP	5	9	7	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	5
Queen Mother Reservoir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Theale GPs	7	12	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	12
Woolhampton GPs	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wraysbury GPs	13	14	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	10
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	3	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4
Number of birds	7	4	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6

The roost site at Grove Lake in the Moor Green Lakes complex continues to register the highest counts for the county. Flocks here often comprise around 50% males or more, which is unlike the situation at most sites where 'redheads' normally greatly outnumber adult males. The last report from the first winter period concerns a 'redhead' at Padworth Lane GP on Apr 10th. In the second winter period, eight touched down briefly at Lower Farm GP on Oct 20th before flying off west, but the main winter arrival started in early November with two at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 7th. **Breeding:** there was a belated report (2017) that a pair may have bred in the west of the county.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

The only report relates to a single bird at Purley on Thames on Jan 18th. However, no details or description were received. This would be the first record for almost two years for this species, whose numbers have been in decline both locally and nationally since the 1990s.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Locally common introduced resident with numbers inflated in autumn at certain sites for shooting

Records for this introduced game bird were received from over 50 locations. The higher counts would almost certainly refer to birds put down by gamekeepers for shooting. Some of the highest counts were as follows: a very impressive 150+ at Streatley Warren Sep 20th, approx. 50 birds were at Remenham Dec 16th, 62 at Lower Green Inkpen, Oct 27th, 50 were present at Cow Down, West Ilsley Oct 27th, 52 in the Compton Downs area, in coveys of 7, 8, 11, and 26 Jan 16th, 46 at Arborfield Sep 9th, 70 at Combe on Oct 9th and 52 at Bury Lane, West Ilsley on Nov 3rd. Breeding in the wild was recorded at several sites, including: an adult with four chicks in a Brimpton garden Jun 10th, and several family groups were seen during July & August at Englefield. It appears this species will continue to be a regular sight in our county, certainly while introductions persist.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Localised and declining resident (Red Listed)

Reports of this declining species came from 27 locations, 19 in the west, three in the middle area and five in the east. This is similar to recent years, so thankfully little sign of further decline is apparent. As can be seen by the high number records below, Englefield is currently a major stronghold for the species, where landowners do a good job maintaining suitable habitat. The highest numbers were received as follows: ten were at Bradley Wood Farm, Welford Oct 1st, 12 were at Bury Down, West Ilsley Oct 30th and 25 at Chaddleworth Oct 29th. The highest count at Englefield was 70 birds Aug 8th, although counts of 30 to 40 were seen regularly at this site. 15 were at Windsor Great Park on Aug 31st and Nov 6th, although it is unclear whether these were re-introduced or birds turned out for shooting. Breeding was recorded at several sites, including: well grown young at Welford Aug 24th, several records from Englefield, the most impressive being 19 well grown young observed with an adult pair, Aug 8th. These numbers are very encouraging, so let's hope the species continues to flourish in our county.

QUAIL (COMMON QUAIL) *Coturnix coturnix*

Uncommon summer visitor in varying numbers, most common on the downs (Schedule One Amber Listed)

Calling birds were recorded from five locations in the county in 2016. This is similar in numbers to the last two years, so there have been no large influxes now since 2011. Birds were recorded as follows: one was calling at Compton Downs Jun 4th, two were reported at Lambourn on two dates, Jun 19th and Jun 25th, on the second date the birds were calling at Farncombe Farm, birds were recorded on several dates at Hyde Farm, Maidenhead, with a high count of four on Jul 16th. These, and a record from Pinkneys Green, are the first singing birds recorded away from the downs for several years. Despite this it was a disappointing year for this species, we can only hope we have a classic 'Quail year' soon.

PHEASANT (COMMON PHEASANT) *Phasianus colchicus*

Widespread and locally abundant introduced resident in rural areas, large numbers are released annually for shooting

This is a very familiar species (due to the many releases by gamekeepers) and is recorded throughout the county, where any open farmland occurs. The highest count for 2016 was reported from Walbury Hill, Combe, with approximately 200 birds there on Nov 3rd. These were most likely put down previously for shooting. Other interesting records received were of an albinistic bird, beside the roadside in West Woodhay, which the observer reported had a passing resemblance to a Ptarmigan, Mar 25th. Another interesting record was of a female killing a Bank Vole under feeders in the observer's garden Jun 1st, this behaviour must be quite rare, and equally rarely witnessed.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER (COMMON LOON) *Gavia immer*

Scarce and in recent years an annual winter visitor (Amber Listed)

As in 2015, just one record of this, the most frequently seen diver in our county. A w/p adult was found at Horton GPs Jan 19th (CDRH) and remained until Jan 28th. It was subsequently re-found at QMR Jan 30th by the same observer, by now it had a well-developed summer collar. The bird was then reported regularly (MO), until it was last seen on Feb 10th, by which time it had moulted well into summer plumage.

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

(LEACH'S STORM PETREL)

Rare vagrant

Just one record of this seabird rarely seen inland. The bird was discovered at 08:08am at QMR Sep 10th (ABT) and remained until 12:30pm at least (MO). One would like to think the bird managed to find its way back to the sea, as many that stray inland succumb to attacks by gulls or raptors. The last Leach's Petrel in Berks was in 2011, when a bird was present at Theale Main GP in the spring.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common and widespread resident (Amber Listed)

Birds of this species were recorded at 43 locations throughout the county. Some of the higher counts were: sixteen at Moor Green Lakes Aug 11th, 21 at Dorney Wetlands Dec 29th, 12 birds were at Lower Farm Sep 3rd, and six at Thatcham Aug 26th. Breeding was recorded at several sites, including a pair with two chicks at Lower Farm Aug 24th, and several other reports of chicks at Lower Farm and the Moor Green Lakes complex, which appear to be the strongholds of this delightful little species, although regular reports from small lakes and ponds throughout the county were received.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

Records were received from 41 locations, 15 in east Berks, 18 in mid Berks, and 8 in the west. The monthly maxima for the most recorded sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	–	–	–	1	2	–	–	1	–	–	–	–
Bray GPs	3	–	8	8	–	–	3	8	13	28	19	12
Burghfield GPs	25	27	28	–	–	–	–	–	27	26	21	17

Dinton Pastures CP	15	9	20	12	2	2	2	–	5	12	14	10
Dorney Wetlands	12	–	19	24	8	14	5	14	–	–	7	6
Great Meadow Pond	–	1	7	5	12	13	10	10	8	6	5	1
Horton GPs	9	11	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	16	–	–
Lea Farm, Hurst	2	2	2	2	2	2	–	–	–	2	2	2
Lower Farm GP	1	3	3	2	4	4	12	17	18	8	2	–
Moatlands GPs	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	35	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	12	6	12	10	8	15	14	14	18	16	8	13
Padworth Lane GP	–	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	37	9	20	20	18	18	38	45	49	45	29	7
Thatcham Marsh	6	2	4	4	5	5	4	17	17	5	2	1
Theale GPs	8	8	10	18	24	18	28	58	85	67	2	22
Twyford GPs	29	27	40	6	8	12	3	–	33	35	46	47
Woolhampton GPs	8	5	5	8	12	21	24	31	39	17	10	7
Wraysbury GPs	42	38	2	25	3	–	–	–	–	28	5	2
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	13	6	7	11	18	7	11	5	3	6	2	3
Number of birds	37	20	29	35	58	23	36	13	16	15	7	12

Breeding was reported from several sites including: a pair with two chicks at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst May 23rd, two chicks were observed at Lower Farm GPs Jul 16th, three young were seen at Whitenights Lake on several dates, regular reports of chicks at Bray GPs were received, four family parties were seen at Jubilee River Aug 13th, and chicks were observed on several dates at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park. In general the species seems to do quite well in our county, due mainly to the abundance of open water areas we are fortunate to have, pretty much throughout the county.

SLAVONIAN GREBE (HORNED GREBE) *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

After an absence in 2015, there were two, possibly three, records in 2016. A bird in partial s/p was discovered at Lower Farm GPs on Apr 11th (NC), followed by another a few miles away at Woolhampton GPs, Apr 13th (MJD). This was believed by observers to be a different individual to the bird at Lower Farm, due to the advancement of summer plumage, (this one near complete). This bird was also present the following day Apr 14th. What was almost certainly the Woolhampton bird, was discovered at Hosehill Lake, Theale on Apr 15th (BM). This individual moved over to Main GP, Theale on Apr 17th, and remained until last reported on May 2nd (ABT). An average year for this small Grebe species, following five in 2014 and none in 2015.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Uncommon passage and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A quieter year for this species in 2016, following the bumper year in 2013 with 19 individuals, the five birds in 2014, and the four in 2015. 2016 produced just two records involving three birds, one in spring, and just one in autumn. Two probable s/p birds were observed in very bad light at Theale Main GP on May 10th (RCr), however early morning the following day, May 11th, two s/p were discovered at the same location (AVL), confirming the previous day's sighting. In the Autumn, a juv was seen at QMR on Aug 19th (CDRH) but was flushed by yachts and only seen in flight thereafter.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

Very rare vagrant

A bird probably of this species, was seen circling low over the River Kennet, beside the A4 and town centre at Hungerford, on Sep 9th (TBu). This would represent the first record since 2011, when three birds occurred within the county.

SPOONBILL (EURASIAN SPOONBILL) *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare passage migrant (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

An individual of this species was observed by four members of the NDOC, flying east over the Canal at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury on Oct 28th. The last recorded Spoonbill in Berks was in 2014, this represents the 26th record for our county.

BITTERN (EURASIAN BITTERN) *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but increasing winter visitor (Schedule One and Red Listed)

2016 proved to be a poor year for this very shy species, with just four birds recorded. Two birds were reported in the first winter period, and two in the second. As is regularly the case Dinton Pastures featured well again, with a bird first seen in 2015, seen on Jan 1st (MFW). It was then reported regularly until last seen on Jan 23rd. However, on this date two individuals were seen flying out of the reedbed at Lavell's Lake almost simultaneously (GTu). The second winter period produced two birds. A very early record at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park, on Sep 25th (DJB), then seen on two further dates in October, the 16th being the final sighting. Another arrived at Dinton Pastures on Nov 21st (SDa) and was then seen regularly until the end of the year. This is a little disappointing after seven were recorded in the county in 2015. We are lucky to have good areas of phragmites in the county. However, one does wonder how many go unrecorded in places such as Thatcham Marsh, with the extensive reedbeds there.

CATTLE EGRET (WESTERN CATTLE EGRET) *Bubulcus ibis*

Rare vagrant, all records are since 2007

Just one record of this vagrant species to Berkshire in 2016. A bird which appeared to be looking to roost, was seen at QMR on the evening of Nov 4th (CDRH). The bird circled repeatedly low over the gull roost for 40 minutes. This record is average for the county in recent times, as there has been just a single record now for the past three years.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Locally common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

This species is widespread and familiar throughout Berkshire, with records from many locations. Notably high counts were recorded from: Donnington Grove, where 14 were counted Apr 28th, 18 were present at Lower Farm GPs Sep 8th, 19 at Thatcham on Aug 26th, and 20 birds at Lands End, Twyford Mar 22nd. Breeding was confirmed at all the well-known Heronries, with the highest count of 16 occupied nests at Land's End, Twyford Feb 22nd. An unusual sighting was recorded at Lower Farm GPs on Jun 17th of an adult taking and swallowing a Mallard duckling.

GREAT WHITE EGRET (GREAT EGRET) *Ardea alba*

Rare but increasing vagrant

This beautiful heron species has become increasingly regular in Berkshire over the last five to ten years. Following the six records in 2015, four were recorded in 2016. A bird was seen on

many dates during August & September at Lower Farm GPs, occasionally making forays to Thatcham. First reported on Aug 10th (IW) and finally being seen on Sep 14th (NC, RF). Another was seen flying WNW over Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP Jan 20th (FJC), an adult in breeding plumage was photographed at Wraysbury GPs Jun 10th (CDRH), and finally a bird was seen flying low over Horton GPs, on the afternoon of Oct 6th (CDRH). The upsurge in records is encouraging, and who knows may eventually lead to breeding in the county before long.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Locally common resident that breeds in very small numbers (Amber Listed)

Records were received from 68 locations throughout the county, the species is becoming increasingly familiar in the river valleys of Berkshire in recent years. Some high counts recorded were as follows: eight were photographed at Bottom Lane, Sulhamstead Feb 2nd, 12 were noted at Fobney Meadow Apr 6th, 17 at Thatcham Aug 26th, seven birds together at Wradisbury Stream, Wraysbury Jan 5th, a high count of seven at Dinton Pastures CP was a record number for that site on Jun 7th, 15 were at Moor Green Lakes, Eversley Jan 18th, and 10 birds together at Hurst Green, Twyford GPs Jan 11th. Breeding was confirmed at two sites, one in the east of the county and one in the west. The species appears to have been successful at both sites, as two pairs at least were feeding young at the eastern site Jun 17th (CDRH). At the western site nine pairs were reported as nesting Apr 30th (ABT). Fledglings were seen at this site seen during June. Birds in breeding plumage were seen in other areas in the county but no other breeding activity was reported.

CORMORANT (GREAT CORMORANT) *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor, increasing in the summer; the continental race P.c. sinensis now breeds (Green Listed)

Records were received from many locations throughout the county, the most frequently reported sites are shown in the table below. Breeding was noted at seven sites in east, mid and west Berks.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	8	—	12	13	19	14	1	1	10	—	—	—
Bray GPs	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	27
Burghfield GPs	34	14	13	—	—	—	—	—	10	17	32	16
Dinton Pastures CP	5	13	7	3	—	—	—	—	8	16	5	12
Dorney Wetlands	10	15	12	6	6	5	3	—	—	—	12	3
Great Meadow Pond	1	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	4	12	9	7
Horton GPs	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—
Lea Farm, Hurst	1	—	1	3	—	—	—	—	—	13	48	11
Lower Farm GP	24	26	27	21	19	24	25	35	38	21	6	4
Lower Farm Trout Lake	—	5	—	17	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moatlands GPs	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moor Green Lakes NR	63	48	45	45	7	4	10	8	5	46	88	107
Padworth Lane GP	6	1	10	6	5	—	—	—	—	—	11	2
Queen Mother Reservoir	24	14	39	48	9	8	40	205	283	382	423	200
Thatcham Marsh	16	14	3	8	6	9	17	29	42	20	17	11
Theale GPs	4	6	4	2	—	2	38	40	22	80	50	53
Twyford GPs	19	8	6	4	—	3	—	—	4	12	31	25

Woolhampton GPs	9	2	4	6	2	4	15	13	16	7	6	21
Wraysbury GPs	26	28	2	1	4	–	–	–	–	46	–	–
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	24	14	9	22	12	9	14	4	7	6	9	8
Number of birds	74	32	25	94	20	26	25	7	18	23	27	35

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

The slight decline over recent years continues, with 11 records. The first of the year flew over QMR, heading north on Mar 27th (CDRH). The next was seen at Burghfield Common on Apr 2nd (VF Brown), with the same or another heading north over Greenham Common on the 3rd (DFI). The next record was on Apr 19th of a bird seen perched briefly at Searle's Farm Lane before flying off south (JA). One was reported from Woolhampton GP on Apr 25th (RF). One flew over QMR heading north on May 2nd (CDRH), with the last spring record being of a very late bird, again over QMR on Jun 21st (CDRH). Returning birds began with one over QMR on Sep 10th (the fourth record at this site for the year) (CDRH), with one close by at Wraysbury GP on the 15th (SEIJ). One was reported from Kintbury on Sep 26th (MLu), with the final record for the year being of one over Lavells Lake on Oct 14th (FJC).

HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare summer migrant

There were three confirmed records this year, plus a probable sighting. The first, an adult, was seen in the east of the county on Jun 5th (DJB), followed by two August records from mid-Berks, the first on Aug 15th (RFM), the second on Aug 27th (RCM). There was a late sighting of a probable over Lea Farm Lake on Oct 6th (FJC).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common and widespread resident

Reports are down on last year with 382 reports from over 130 different locations with birds being seen in all parts of the county, particularly from suburban gardens. All records were of singles or pairs with no actual evidence of breeding, though immature birds were noted in several areas. Clearly the species is under-reported particularly from a breeding point of view.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

A fairly low count this year with 17 reports of possibly only 5/6 birds. The first of the year was of an adult male on Mar 19th flying low over the reedbed at Woolhampton GP before carrying on through heading east (SRi). On Jun 4th a 2yr female was seen at Great Meadow Pond Windsor (CDRH); what was presumably the same bird was then seen regularly at this site from Jun 12th to Aug 22nd (DJB, CDRH). What was possibly the same bird was also viewed distantly over Wraysbury from QMR on Aug 6th (CDRH). A juvenile was seen hunting over Sheep Down on Aug 17th (ABT); two juveniles were seen hunting at Upper Lambourn on Sep 1st, with at least one still in the area until Sep 14th (CDRH). A female was seen at Englefield on Sept 6th and remained until the following day (RCr *et al.*).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Schedule One and Red Listed)

A ringtail was present in mid-January in the Cow Down/Bury Down area, first seen on Jan 12th (ABT) and subsequently seen by many observers until 19th. Another ringtail was present on Compton Downs on Feb 7th (NJB). A 1s male was seen in west Berks on the exceptional date of July 21st (CDRH). A 2W male was also seen in west Berks on Sep 1st. A ringtail was seen just north of Combe Gibbet on Oct 9th (MSFW). An adult male was seen at various sites in the Lambourn area on Nov 11th (CDRH); two adult males were also in the Lambourn area on Dec 22nd, one of which was presumed to be the bird from November. A ringtail was seen quartering the disused railway line at RAF Welford on Dec 5th (GDS).

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

Three reports of two birds. The first, a ringtail, flew WNW over Colnbrook on May 29th (CDRH). The other a moulting female was seen in west Berks on Jul 14th and seen again in the same area hunting and perched on the ground on the 21st (CDRH).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Common re-introduced resident (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

Recorded on all but 30 days of the year. Easily the most reported of the birds of prey and possibly the most reported bird? Obviously, the species has now spread right across the south and so is reported from all areas of the county. There were some huge counts, with maximum numbers as follows: 85+ following a plough at Woodlands Park Fields, Twyford on Aug 6th and 33 there on Oct 27th; 80 at Aston/Remenham on May 27th and 37 there on Feb 22nd; 64 feeding on the ground in a recently ploughed field at Hurst on May 3rd; 50 on the ground in a ploughed field at Touchen End hunting for invertebrates on May 14th; 43 in the Purley-on-Thames/Mapledurham area drifted over the river after following a plough on Mar 13th; 34 flew north of the Great Meadow Pond, Windsor on Nov 20th. There were numerous other counts of between 10 and 30 birds and 1250 reports in total.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common and widespread resident and passage migrant

Of the raptor species, common buzzard is second only to Red Kite for the number of reports with just over 900, a situation we could only have dreamed of 25 years ago (in both cases). There is a slight skew towards the area west of Reading, but bizarrely the largest counts have come from the east of the county. The largest counts were of 18 circling above the railway line at Wraybury on Apr 12th; 10+ at Aston/Remenham on May 27th; 10 above Colnbrook Landfill Site on Aug 29th; nine in a freshly ploughed field at Barkham on May 24th; nine sitting around another recently ploughed field at Englefield on Oct 6th; nine including five juvs probably from two nests near Windsor on Jul 3rd. Other evidence of breeding included: mating witnessed on Apr 9th and three fledglings subsequently seen at Woolley Down; two calling fledglings and an anxious adult overhead at Boardhouse Plantation on Jul 9th; fledgling calling south of the M4 near Wyfield Manor Farm on Jul 9th; calling fledglings heard at Bradleywood Farm, Welford; on Jun 4th, one young calling at RAF Welford on Aug 6th; a fledgling calling at the wooded western flank of Boxford Common on Jul 17th; a youngster calling at near Crowthorne on Jul 30th; a fledgling heard calling at Great Park Wood, Eastbury on 16th Jul and at least one bird fledged from a nest in oak near California Farm/Liddiard's Green, Farnborough.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Uncommon winter visitor and a rare summer resident (Green Listed)

Water Rails were recorded in ca. 41 sites, 15 in west Berks, 15 in mid Berks and 11 in east Berks. Of the 261 non-duplicated records, there were seven counts of five or more, including the highest count of eight, 108 of twos and, unsurprisingly, 185 of single birds.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	2	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	4
Dorney Wetlands	3	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	7	7
Freeman's Marsh	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Thatcham Marsh	1	6	—	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	3	—
Theale GPs	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	2
Windsor Great Park	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	—	1	4	5	8
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	12	8	6	8	3	3	1	3	2	5	7	11
Number of birds	14	9	8	12	3	3	3	4	2	12	10	16

The minimum monthly totals, including those additional sites where birds were recorded on at least five dates and an estimate of numbers at other sites 'Elsewhere', with sites in alphabetical order with an estimate of numbers at other sites 'Elsewhere', were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	M	2	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	4
Dorney Wetlands	E	3	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	7	6
Moor Green Lakes*	E	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Fobney Meadow (Reading)*	M	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	6	—	1
Freeman's Marsh (Hungerford)	W	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)*	M	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	1
Lower Fm GP (Newbury)*	W	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Thatcham Marsh	W	1	6	—	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	3	—
Theale GPs	M	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	2
Windsor Great Park	E	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	—	1	4	5	8
Woolhampton GPs*	M	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	1	2
No. of sites		9	8	9	5	3	4	2	2	4	9	9	10
No. of Birds		13	16	14	8	5	4	4	3	5	21	26	30
Elsewhere													
No. of sites		8	5	2	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	6
No. of Birds		10	5	3	12	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	9
No. of birds overall (minimum)		23	21	17	20	6	5	7	4	6	23	29	39

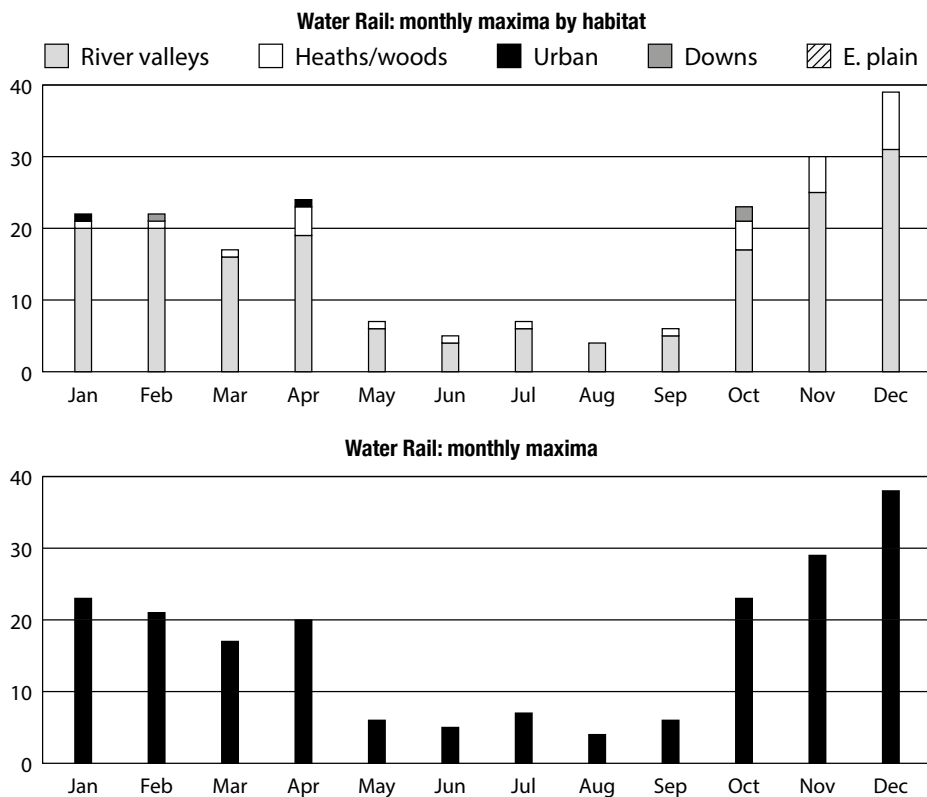
Note: * indicates the additional sites

The minimum monthly totals, including those additional sites where birds were recorded on at least five dates and an estimate of numbers at other sites 'Elsewhere', with sites in descending order west to east, were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Freeman's Marsh (Hungerford)	W	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Lower Fm GP (Newbury)	W	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Thatcham Marsh	W	1	6	—	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	3	—
Theale GPs	M	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	2

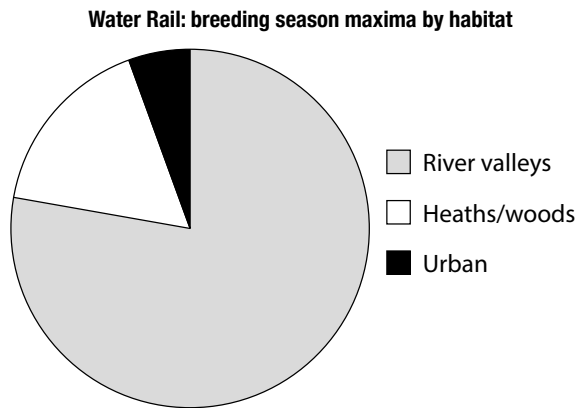
Woolhampton GPs	M	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	2	1	2
Fobney Meadow (Reading)	M	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	1	1	6	–	1
Dinton Pastures CP	M	2	1	2	1	–	–	–	–	1	1	3	4
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)	M	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	1
Moor Green Lakes	E	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	2
Dorney Wetlands	E	3	3	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	7	6
Windsor Great Park	E	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	–	1	4	5	8
No. of sites		9	8	9	5	3	4	2	2	4	9	9	10
No. of Birds		13	16	14	8	5	4	4	3	5	21	26	30
Elsewhere													
No. of sites		8	5	2	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	6
No. of Birds		10	5	3	12	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	9
No. of birds overall (minimum)		23	21	17	20	6	5	7	4	6	23	29	39

The variation in numbers through the year, with an indication of the habitats in which they were recorded, is demonstrated in the following chart:



Habitats: while essentially a water bird, Water Rails can sometimes be found in unusual habitats. One at Welford on Feb 11th and another at Woolley Down on Oct 21st were surely on passage. Similarly, they can sometimes be found in urban habitats; one at Bracknell MP on Jan 22nd and another at Slough GUC on Apr 17th, while within urban environments, were nevertheless by water bodies, the Mill Pond and Grand Union Canal respectively.

A number of records were of birds in primarily a heaths or woods category. But the vast majority were, as one would expect, in river valley habitats associated with the Thames and Kennet valleys and their tributaries, as shown in the following chart:



First winter: at least 13 birds overwintered in January. Counting this elusive species can be problematical unless, of course, it squeals (hopefully, away from a farmyard)! So, numbers in winter might have been as high as suggested by the 16 recorded in February. Records increased in March, either as birds revealed themselves more readily with warmer weather or as migrants passed through.

Spring: numbers dropped noticeably in April and continued to decline through the following months. Small numbers were detected in the summer months but there were no records of confirmed breeding apart from two downy young being reported at Streatley Meadow during a survey*. Birds were recorded at Thatcham Marsh in almost every month and being heard. Squealing was heard in other in suitable habitats.

***Editor’s note:** for an estimate of the number of potential breeding territories in 2016 see “Berkshire breeding Water Rail survey 2016–2018” R. Righelato, in this report.

Autumn: a small increase in numbers in September was followed by a fairly sudden increase in October with records on 16 days and similarly 21 days in November, as migrants arrived to winter, giving a year’s highest monthly count of 39 in December.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Downs	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–
River Valleys	20	20	16	13	6	4	6	4	5	17	25	31
Heaths/Woods	2	1	1	4	1	1	1	–	1	4	5	8
E. Plain	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Urban	1	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Downland: Welford. Urban: Bracknell MP, Slough GUC

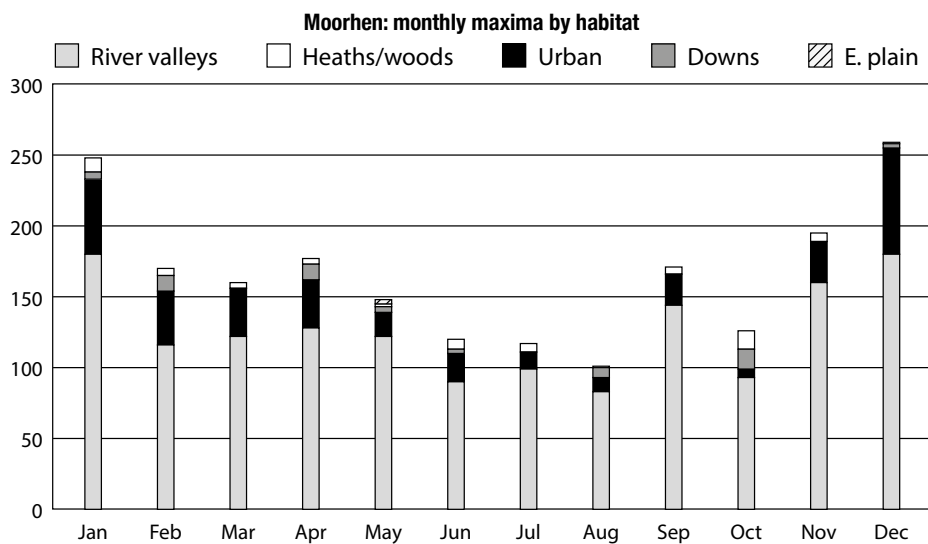
MOORHEN (COMMON MOORHEN) *Gallinula chloropus*

Common and widespread resident in wetland habitats (Green Listed)

This familiar, common and widespread species was recorded in some 101 sites, 36 in east Berks, 29 in mid Berks and 36 in west Berks.

Monthly maximum numbers by region, assuming that the highest count in each month at each site represents the maximum for that site, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	84	38	55	54	39	39	37	27	30	31	23	45
Mid	42	35	42	18	28	12	9	14	24	22	44	38
West	111	96	62	105	81	69	66	59	114	72	126	174
Total	237	169	159	177	148	120	112	100	168	125	193	257



Monthly totals by habitat type were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Downs	5	11	—	11	4	3	—	7	—	14	—	3
River Valleys	180	116	122	128	122	90	99	83	144	93	160	180
Heaths/Woods	10	5	4	4	2	7	6	1	5	13	6	1
E. Plain	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Urban	53	38	34	35	17	20	12	10	22	6	29	75

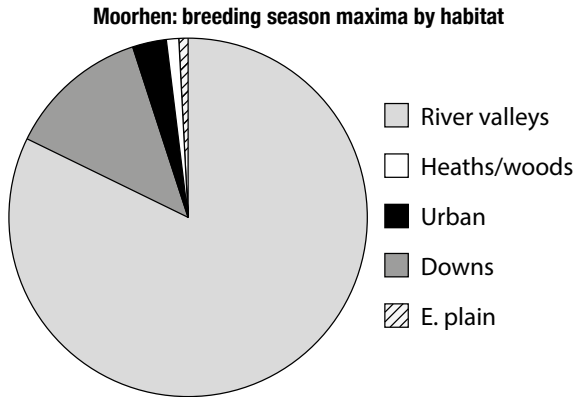
Unsurprisingly, the most favoured habitats were those found in the river valleys, particularly in west Berks. Of the ca. 650 non-duplicated counts recorded, 30 (4.6%) were of 20 or more, with the highest being 46 at Lower Farm GP (Newbury) on Nov 29th, but 280 (43%) were of only ones or twos.

WeBS counts are an important national system for monitoring numbers of wildfowl and waterbirds; although somewhat irregular in Berks these were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	3	22	3	—	—	—	—	—	8	10	9	1
Dinton Pastures	6	1	7	3	—	—	—	—	—	4	12	9
Horton GPs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Theale GPs	8	10	11	14	7	3	2	19	10	8	21	12
Twyford GPs	11	7	1	1	—	2	1	—	19	11	14	11
Woolhampton GPs	1	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	6	1	—
Wraysbury GPs	12	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	—
Other sites	7	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	4

Breeding: breeding performance is a key parameter in determining the need for conservation of a species and/or its habitat. Of the 207 records received for the three key breeding months (April – June) only 59 carried any type of breeding code, suggesting considerable under-recording of such a common breeding species. Surely Berks birders could do better? A territory was being occupied from Mar 20th at Lower Farm GP; a nest with eggs was seen at Thatcham Marsh on Apr 16th with the first chicks seen there on May 1st. Chicks were recorded at only 16 sites (ten in west Berks but only two in mid Berks) and were still being seen as late as Jul 30th at Newbury and Aug 3rd at Freeman’s Marsh, suggesting a prolonged breeding season.

The habitat in which birds were recorded in April by type was as follows:



This demonstrates the preference of Moorhens for habitats which provide adequate open fresh water with plant cover. (Data are for April)

Monthly totals, assuming that the highest count at a site in each month represented the maximum there, including sites where birds were recorded on at least six months, with an estimate of numbers at sites ‘Elsewhere’, were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wraysbury GPs	E	4	14	1	3	–	–	–	–	–	2	3	1
Windsor Great Park	E	4	–	2	–	1	6	4	–	–	11	4	–
Eton Wick Floods	E	21	–	16	4	3	8	2	–	7	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	E	3	–	6	5	3	2	10	13	–	–	–	28
Moor Green Lakes NR	E	12	19	19	16	16	10	4	14	16	16	12	16
Dinton Pastures CP	M	6	2	7	3	2	–	–	–	2	4	12	9
Twyford GPs	M	1	3	1	1	17	2	2	5	5	3	4	4
Burghfield GPs	M	3	7	3	–	–	1	–	–	6	8	7	1
Theale GPs	M	6	4	11	6	3	3	2	9	4	4	9	4
Padworth Lane GP	M	5	4	6	6	3	1	–	–	–	–	4	3
Aldermaston GPs	W	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	–	1	–
Woolhampton GPs	W	4	–	2	2	2	2	3	2	5	3	6	4
Brimpton GPs	W	–	–	1	3	5	–	2	2	1	3	3	–
Midgham GP (Quarry)	W	2	–	–	1	2	4	6	4	5	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	W	20	16	10	14	14	11	8	10	22	5	25	27
Lower Farm GP (Newbury)	W	21	19	15	11	5	8	20	15	21	23	46	43
Bagnor	W	3	3	2	5	1	2	–	–	–	–	1	5

Newbury	W	21	14	13	10	2	8	9	–	–	10	–	32
Marsh Benham	W	6	11	–	4	6	9	–	–	8	–	12	–
Freeman's Marsh	W	3	8	–	5	7	–	7	7	7	4	7	4
No. of sites		19	14	17	18	18	15	14	11	14	12	16	15
No. of birds		146	125	117	101	93	78	80	82	109	99	175	193
Elsewhere													
No. of sites		15	13	9	16	12	6	8	3	5	4	5	6
No. of birds		57	36	25	40	21	13	20	9	14	18	10	19
No. of birds overall		203	161	142	141	114	91	100	91	123	117	185	212

COOT (EURASIAN COOT) *Fulica atra*

Common resident and winter visitor generally to more open water (Green listed)

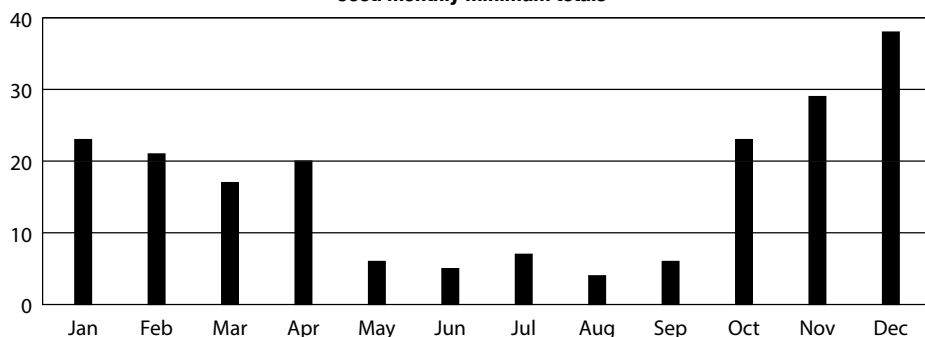
Coots were recorded at some 70 sites, 29 in east Berks, 20 in mid Berks and 21 in west Berks. Included in the 710 non-duplicated records were 93 (13%) counts of 100 or more (eight in excess of 400), the highest being 835 at Theale main GP on Dec 18th, 335 (47%) double-figure counts and 132 (19%) of ones or twos.

The highest monthly counts at the principal sites, where birds were recorded in at least five months, and numbers at sites 'Elsewhere', were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Res	E	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	7	172	327	375	19
Wraysbury GPs	E	477	503	1	60	10	–	–	–	–	106	–	16
Windsor Great Park	E	30	26	46	46	72	151	268	260	245	145	106	42
Eton Wick Floods	E	–	–	5	13	2	10	1	–	–	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	E	11	–	14	16	10	21	3	–	–	–	84	10
Bray GPs	E	33	–	29	9	–	–	21	–	–	–	115	108
Moor Green Lakes	E	35	31	29	24	28	22	–	18	74	119	160	337
Twyford GPs	M	52	47	33	16	12	11	9	–	37	45	56	50
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)	M	15	6	16	13	–	–	–	–	–	80	51	48
Dinton Pastures CP	M	336	125	86	57	7	–	–	–	–	39	56	98
Burghfield GPs	M	269	177	152	–	8	–	–	–	122	131	156	58
Theale GPs	M	439	157	87	34	34	54	220	104	342	562	710	835
Padworth Lane GP	M	29	18	20	15	5	–	–	–	–	–	50	40
Aldermaston GPs	W	3	–	9	8	6	–	5	10	3	–	3	–
Woolhampton GPs	M	95	53	20	27	28	88	120	112	110	63	100	55
Brimpton GPs	M	–	18	1	12	8	–	8	–	–	–	1	–
Midgham GP (Quarry)	W	2	–	–	10	6	9	5	5	5	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	W	55	31	25	16	17	30	25	33	34	3	35	32
Lower Fm GP (Newbury)	W	112	115	93	65	41	50	35	30	20	29	38	38
Donnington Grove CC	W	23	24	12	15	18	6	–	–	–	–	–	18
Elsewhere		397	335	14	147	78	37	93	–	16	93	35	65
No. of sites		20	25	23	27	34	22	26	10	12	14	17	17
No. of birds		2413	1667	690	603	391	489	813	579	1180	1742	2131	1851

The monthly minimum totals are illustrated below:

Coot: monthly minimum totals



Hidden amongst the ‘Elsewhere’ sites above were 254 at Horton GPs on Jan 13th, 75 there on Feb 2nd and Oct 28th, 115 at Moatlands GP (Theale) on Feb 27th. The April total of 147 demonstrates how significant numbers can also be found in minor sites of suitable habitats.

The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) is an important national survey for monitoring the numbers of wildfowl and waders and takes place on nominated dates each month. Counts from the principal sites (in descending order west to east) were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Res	E	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	221	–
Wraysbury GPs	E	414	210	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	106	–	–
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)	M	15	6	16	13	–	–	–	–	–	80	51	48
Twyford GPs	M	153	111	88	16	22	20	9	–	106	161	158	154
Dinton Pastures	M	336	125	86	57	–	–	–	–	–	39	56	98
Burghfield GPs	M	334	222	197	–	–	–	–	–	141	150	174	73
Burghfield GPs	M	334	222	197	–	–	–	–	–	141	150	174	73
Theale GPs	M	559	203	87	66	64	69	135	194	527	671	826	935
Woolhampton GPs	W	95	53	–	–	15	50	–	–	–	63	79	–

The most regularly counted WeBS sites were the Theale and Twyford GPs complexes; the highest count of the year was 933 at Theale GPs on Dec 18th. It should be noted that WeBS counts being on set dates, higher counts may be recorded on other dates and be shown in the first table.

First winter and spring: the year’s highest overall total was recorded in January but thereafter numbers reduced steadily through to a nadir in May. The highest count during the first winter was 503 at Wraysbury GPs on Feb 18th but as many birds returned whence they came during the spring months the highest was only 151 at Great Meadows Pond on Jun 26th.

Breeding: unlike 2015 a goodly number of breeding records were submitted. Records were received for some 36 sites, large and small, including birds seen in suitable nesting habitat. The first indication of successful breeding was of a nest with eggs at Odney Club Sports Ground on Mar 30th, there were then reports of occupied nests at some 18 sites from that date. The first fledged young were noted at Thames Valley Business Park on Apr 20th and were recorded at some 17 other sites. The largest count of youngsters was four at Thatcham Marsh on May 4th and six at Burghfield GPs on May 7th although regrettably such records were scarce!

Second half-year & second winter: numbers began to increase from late July as birds returned from the breeding grounds with 268 counted at Great Meadow Pond on Jul 24th.

Thereafter, there was a steady increase in both records and numbers; the highest autumn count was 562 at Theale Main GP on Oct 11th. In the second winter period, the highest count was a WeBS count of 835 at Theale GPs on Dec 18th.

The highest minimum monthly totals, excluding those recorded at sites 'Elsewhere' were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	3	–	9	8	6	–	5	10	3	–	3	–
Bray GPs	33	–	29	9	–	–	21	–	–	–	115	108
Burghfield GPs	269	177	152	–	8	–	–	–	122	131	156	58
Dinton Pastures CP	336	125	86	57	7	–	–	–	–	39	56	98
Dorney Wetlands	11	–	14	16	10	21	3	–	–	–	84	10
Great Meadow Pond	30	26	46	46	72	151	268	260	245	145	106	42
Horton GPs	254	75	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	75	–	–
Lower Farm GP	112	115	93	65	41	50	35	30	20	29	38	38
Moatlands GPs	–	115	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	35	31	29	24	28	22	–	18	74	119	160	337
Padworth Lane GP	29	18	20	15	5	–	–	–	–	–	50	40
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	7	172	327	375	19
Thatcham Marsh	55	31	25	16	17	30	25	33	34	3	35	32
Theale GPs	439	157	87	34	34	54	220	104	342	562	710	835
Twyford GPs	52	47	33	16	15	11	9	–	37	45	56	50
Woolhampton GPs	95	53	20	27	28	88	120	112	110	63	100	55
Wraysbury GPs	477	503	1	60	10	–	–	–	–	106	–	16
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	17	11	11	20	23	15	20	2	4	3	5	5
Number of birds	213	183	56	218	135	73	136	6	29	98	90	111

WeBS:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
WEST TO EAST													
Woolhampton GPs	W	95	53	–	–	15	50	–	–	–	63	79	–
Theale GPs	M	559	203	87	66	64	69	135	194	527	671	826	933
Burghfield GPs	M	334	222	197	–	–	–	–	–	141	150	174	73
Dinton Pastures	M	336	125	86	57	–	–	–	–	–	39	56	98
Twyford GPs	M	153	111	88	16	22	20	9	–	106	161	158	154
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)	M	15	6	16	13	–	–	–	–	–	80	51	48
Wraysbury GPs	E	414	210	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	106	–	–
Queen Mother Res	E	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	221	–

The minimum monthly totals, including those additional sites where birds were recorded on at least five dates, and an estimate of numbers at other sites 'Elsewhere', were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EAST TO WEST													
Queen Mother Res	E	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	5	170	327	375	19
Horton GPs	E	254	75	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	75	–	–
Wraysbury GPs	E	477	503	1	60	10	–	–	–	–	106	–	16
Windsor Great Park	E	30	26	46	46	72	151	268	260	245	145	106	42
Eton Wick Floods	E	–	–	5	13	2	10	1	–	–	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	E	11	–	14	16	10	21	3	–	–	–	84	10

Bray GPs	E	33	–	29	9	–	–	21	–	–	–	115	108
Moor Green Lakes NR	E	35	31	29	24	28	22	–	18	74	119	160	337
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)	M	15	6	16	13	–	–	–	–	–	80	51	48
Dinton Pastures CP	M	336	125	86	57	7	–	–	–	–	39	56	98
Twyford GPs	M	52	47	20	16	12	11	9	–	37	45	56	50
Burghfield GPs	M	269	177	152	–	8	–	–	–	122	131	156	58
Moatlands GPs	M	–	115	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Theale GPs	M	439	157	87	34	34	54	220	104	342	562	710	835
Padworth Lane GP	M	29	18	20	15	5	–	–	–	–	–	50	40
Woolhampton GPs	M	95	53	20	27	28	88	120	112	110	63	100	55
Brimpton GPs	M	–	18	1	12	8	–	8	–	–	–	1	–
Aldermaston GPs	W	3	–	9	8	6	–	5	10	3	–	3	–
Midgham GP (Quarry)	W	2	–	–	10	6	9	5	5	5	–	–	–
Crookham Common	W	–	–	–	15	8	5	4	–	–	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	W	55	31	25	16	17	30	25	31	34	3	35	32
Lower Fm GP (Newbury)	W	112	115	93	65	41	50	35	30	20	29	38	38
Donnington Grove CC	W	23	24	12	15	18	–	–	–	–	–	–	18
Marsh Benham	W	2	–	–	4	2	2	–	–	–	–	2	–
No. of sites		19	16	18	21	20	11	13	9	11	13	17	16
No. of birds		2272	1406	665	480	323	453	724	576	1162	1724	2097	1804
Elsewhere													
No. of sites		11	9	5	12	13	9	13	–	2	2	1	3
No. of birds		143	137	14	128	69	35	90	–	16	18	33	57
No. of birds overall		2415	1543	679	608	392	488	814	576	1178	1742	2130	1861

STONE-CURLEW (EURASIAN STONE-CURLEW) *Burhinus oedicnemus*

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

All records were of Spring sightings involving at least eight birds, mostly at three downland sites in the NW of the county. The first to arrive were two on Apr 12th (BTB), six days later than in 2015 and ten days later than the average for the ten previous years (April 2nd). These were followed by another on the 16th at a different site and two there on the 19th (ABT); one more on the 27th might have been the same as the bird of the 12th. In May one to two birds were seen at one of the above sites on the 1st, 7th, 17th and 28th with a well advanced juv there on Jun 4th (ABT) being the only indication of successful breeding. Elsewhere, a probable migrant was noted at Greenham Common on May 20th (S J Gough). At a third downland site an adult was noted on both Jun 11th (NJB) and the 26th (RJB). There were no records for any later dates. The average last date for the previous nine years is September 23rd.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

(EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER)

Scarce but increasing summer visitor, passage migrant and scarce winter visitor, now breeds (Amber Listed)

Many Oystercatchers desert their shoreline habitats to breed at inland sites and Berkshire, with its range of lakeside, riverside and marsh sites, again hosted breeding pairs. They were recorded at 28 sites across the county, seven in east Berks, 13 in mid Berks and eight in west Berks with possibly a peak total of 50 birds in May. It was recorded in all months from February to

September. The first of the year was one at Theale GPs on Feb 3rd. Over the past ten years, while their Berkshire numbers have been increasing, Oystercatchers have arrived fairly early in the year, February 3rd being about average for the period, but once the breeding season is over they quickly depart and 2016 was no exception; almost all had gone by Jul 28th leaving single stragglers at Pingewood GPs on Aug 9th and 15th and the last on Sep 5th at Newbury.

The vast majority of 367 non-duplicated records (312 (85%)) were of ones or twos ; only 13 were of five or more with the highest counts being nine at Theale GPs on May 23rd and eight there on Jun 27th; there were only 15 records (4%) from the whole of west Berks!

The highest monthly counts at the principal sites were as follows:

		Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Queen Mother Res	E	—	1	2	5	1	3	—	—
Summerleaze GPs	E	—	2	2	2	3	2	—	—
Moor Green Lakes	E	2	2	3	5	3	3	—	—
Twyford GPs	M	1	2	2	2	3	—	—	—
Dinton Pastures	M	1	3	2	2	3	2	—	—
Lea Farm Lake (Hurst)	M	5	3	1	4	3	—	—	—
Burghfield GPs	M	1	3	4	2	5	4	—	—
Pingewood GPs	M	—	2	4	3	2	7	1	—
Theale GPs	M	3	5	6	9	8	5	—	—
Lower Farm GP (Newbury)	W	—	—	3	2	—	—	—	1
Elsewhere		—	6	6	19	6	1	—	—
No. of sites		5	12	16	18	12	9	1	1
No. of birds		13	29	35	55	37	27	1	1

Breeding: a pair was seen ‘practicing mating’ at Moor Green Lakes as early as Mar 7th and birds were nesting at Theale Main GP Apr 8th and Moor Green Lakes on the 14th. Some were still sitting at Burghfield GPs on Jun 6th. The first chicks seen were three at Theale Main GP and two at Moor Green Lakes on May 5th; chicks ‘just out of the nest’ were seen at Twyford GPs on May 16th; a pair with three young was seen at Heron’s Nest on May 29th, an adult was shielding chicks under its wings at Searle’s Farm Lane GP (Burghfield GPs) on Jun 4th which is a new breeding species for this site. An adult with five chicks at Theale Main GP on May 8th was the highest count recorded; chicks were still being recorded as late as Jul 16th at Summerleaze GPs (Maidenhead) (and possibly on the 23rd). Successful breeding was recorded at six sites: Summerleaze GPs, Moor Green Lakes, Twyford GPs, Lea Farm Lake (Hurst), Burghfield GPs, Theale Main GP and Heron’s Nest, i.e. a minimum of seven pairs.

AVOCET (PIED AVOCET) *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Scarce but now a regular passage migrant (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

Following a year with a single record*, there were three records involving 14 birds, all at Queen Mother Res. The first was a flock of 11, the largest such flock recorded this century, on Jan 2nd (CDRH) on the water during heavy afternoon rain. Another was seen at 11:30 hr on Apr 15th (CDRH) which flew off SE at 11:37. Ignoring the occasional winter record, the average spring arrival date during the previous ten years (eight records) has been March 26th (earliest March 9th). The final record was of two on Sep 14th (ABT). These records raise the total for this century to 70 at an average of 4 per year, although there have been three blank years. For annual totals see *The Birds of Berkshire* 2014, p74.

*[Omitted in error from the 2015 report – One photographed at Slough Sewage Farm late afternoon on May 11th 2015 (CDRH)]

LAPWING (NORTHERN LAPWING) *Vanellus vanellus*

Locally common summer resident, common winter visitor and passage migrant but in long-term decline (Red Listed)

Lapwings are still widespread in Berks despite its decline nationally. It was recorded in every month of the year and more than once at some 94 sites away from urbanised and heavily wooded areas, 30 in east Berks, 26 in mid Berks and 38 in west Berks. There were 588 non-duplicated records of which 51 (8.7%) were counts of 100 or more and 140 (24%) were of ones or twos.

The highest monthly counts at the principal sites, including sites where birds were recorded on at least five dates, and a total for sites 'Elsewhere', were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Res	E	14	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	11	—	—	260
Great Meadow Pond	E	37	120	2	2	5	9	7	—	2	—	—	30
Eton Wick Floods	E	30	—	3	—	2	9	7	7	40	—	—	—
Dorney Wetlands	E	100	—	2	6	3	20	51	—	—	—	—	—
Moor Green Lakes NR	E	100	186	4	5	5	10	91	85	18	5	280	340
Lea Farm Lake (Hurst)	M	440	240	—	2	4	31	20	79	130	210	375	300
Dinton Pastures	M	400	420	5	—	—	6	28	37	—	2	12	28
Borough Marsh (Wargrave)	M	280	242	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	205	—
Fobney Meadows	M	80	24	48	6	2	—	2	—	—	—	40	100
Pingewood GPs	M	—	—	20	—	7	6	28	8	—	—	—	—
Theale GPs	M	—	40	8	10	3	7	2	21	—	34	182	55
Englefield	M	223	110	26	17	21	126	14	—	206	280	403	603
Padworth Lane GP	M	1	41	12	6	2	3	—	—	—	—	200	—
Streatley Farm & Downs	W	270	510	—	16	24	25	—	—	—	—	550	635
Woolhampton GPs	W	—	2	8	8	2	4	—	2	1	—	100	40
Brimpton GPs	W	—	—	12	1	6	—	—	6	30	—	30	—
Compton Downs	W	150	—	—	6	6	3	52	—	—	—	90	—
Thatcham	W	70	86	10	2	—	4	—	7	2	83	—	53
Crookham Common	W	—	—	5	3	4	6	23	12	—	—	—	—
Lower Farm GP	W	204	130	35	2	2	16	84	150	119	161	134	195
Greenham Common	W	7	—	5	3	6	4	5	1	—	—	—	—
West Islay Downs	W	60	—	—	4	4	—	—	—	—	200	—	12
No. of sites above		17	13	16	17	19	17	15	12	10	8	13	13
No. of birds above		2466	2151	205	99	112	289	415	415	559	975	2401	2651
Elsewhere													
No. of sites		6	13	8	20	20	10	—	5	1	2	3	5
No. of birds		1622	536	32	86	47	80	—	52	17	305	591	331
No. of birds overall		4088	2687	237	185	159	369	415	467	576	1280	2992	2982

First winter: some significant counts were recorded at sites 'Elsewhere': 400 at Sheepdrove (Lambourn) on Jan 19th, 650 at Bottom Barn (Clapton) on Jan 18th and 200 at J14 on the M4 on Feb 15th. Some principal sites were counted fairly consistently to Mar 20th: in east Berks, Moor Green Lakes NR on 14 dates, in mid Berks, Dinton Pastures on 11 days and in west Berks, Lower Farm GP on 21 days. Numbers declined markedly during March following the last treble-figure count of 100 at Lavell's Lake on Feb 29th.

Spring: all but 11 of 187 counts in April and May were single figures. The highest were 24 (18 ad, 6 juv) at Thurle Down (Streatley) on May 15th, 21 (including one chick) at Englefield on May 3rd, 15 (10 ad, 5 juv) at Holme Grange (Wokingham) on Apr 30th, 12 at Enborne on Apr 28th and ten at Fobney Meadow (Reading) and Theale Main GP. Numbers increased through June post-breeding; 15 of 61 counts were in double figures, the highest a post-breeding flock of 126 at Englefield on Jun 28th. Elsewhere, the highest count was 21 at Clapton on Jun 8th.

Summer: in July and August there were 16 counts of 50 or more with a maximum of 150 at Lower Farm Lakes on Aug 3rd and up to 150 at Moor Green Lakes on five dates in July.

Breeding: breeding was confirmed at 11 sites, somewhat fewer than in 2015, although display only was recorded at 17 sites from Walbury Hill in the west to Windsor Great Park in the east. Birds were visiting a probable nest site at Waltham St Lawrence on Feb 17th, were first seen displaying at seen Padworth Common on Feb 26th and were holding a territory at Crookham Common on Mar 25th. The first fledged young were noted at Greenham Common on Mar 25th; the largest single clutch was three at three separate sites. Two pulli were ringed at Greenham Common on Jun 30th and two juvs there on Jul 22nd.

Autumn: there were ten counts of >100; the highest 'Elsewhere' were 300 at RAF Welford on Oct 9th. **Second winter:** there were 45 counts of 100+ (including 26 of 200+); the highest counts, at the three sites where the highest numbers were counted, were 635 at Streatley on Dec 26th, 603 at Englefield on the 22nd and 375 at Lea Farm Lake on Nov 11th. Elsewhere the highest counts were 200 just west of M4 J14 on Nov 14th and 100 at Lowbury Hill (Compton) on Dec 3rd.

GOLDEN PLOVER (EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER) *Pluvialis apricaria*

Locally common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Records were received from 28 locations, five in east Berks, nine in mid Berks and 14 in west Berks. In the first half of the year (Jan 1st to Apr 12th) of 59 non-duplicated records, 14 (24%) were in treble figures with a highest of 455 at Bottom Barn (Clapton) on Jan 18th; only ten were less than ten. In the second half of the year (September 8th to December 31st) of 49 non-duplicated records, 19 (39%) were in treble figures with a highest of 664 at Englefield on Dec 22nd; only 15 (31%) were in single figures.

The highest monthly counts at the principal sites where birds were recorded on at least five dates with at least one count of >100, were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Res	E	120	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	60	–
Woodlands Park Fields	E	65	1	170	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	16	–
Englefield	M	11	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	370	664
Greenham Common	W	200	400	150	80	–	–	–	–	–	70	–	50
Walbury Hill	W	115	20	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	21
Elsewhere		929	60	280	1	–	–	–	–	14	286	585	245
Number of sites overall		13	6	7	2	–	–	–	–	3	6	9	7
Number of birds overall		1440	481	600	81	–	–	–	–	16	357	1031	980

First winter into spring: the first record was of 60 landing on stubbles at Bradleywood Farm (Welford) on Jan 1st. The highest counts for the period came from **west Berks:** included in the totals for 'Elsewhere' sites were 455 at Bottom Barn (Clapton) on Jan 18th, 280 at Sheepdrove (Lambourn) on Jan 15th and 150 at Sheepdrove on the Mar 7th. The last record for the period was of at least 30 in s/p at Greenham Common on Apr 12th.

Autumn and second winter: the first returning visitor was a night-time migrant flying over the observer's house in Tilehurst at 04:05 hr on Sep 8th. During the period, contrary to the first half-year, there were more records and birds in mid Berks; the majority came from Englefield: of 13 counts between Nov 26th and Dec 31st the lowest was 130, the average was 337 and the maximum 664 on Dec 22nd. Included in the totals for 'Elsewhere' sites were 140 at RAF Welford on Oct 9th, 130 at Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) on Oct 20th, 350 there on Nov 19th and 140 at Streatley on Nov 26th, 122 at Langley on Dec 23rd.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Uncommon but regular passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Grey Plovers continue to be almost annual in Berkshire, albeit in small numbers. The first Spring record was of one in partial s/p at QMR on May 8th (CDRH *et al.*), equalling the average arrival date for six of the previous ten years; this was followed by another, in full s/p, at Moor Green Lakes NR on May 10th (DWH) which was joined by another, also in s/p, next day (CRG). In the Autumn, returning migrants included one flying S over Woodlands Park with other waders on Aug 28th (DJB), a juv at QMR on Sep 16th (CDRH) which flew off N at 08:00, and finally another at QMR on Nov 9th (CDRH) which flew off W calling ahead of an outward-bound jet from Heathrow. These records raise this century's total to 58 at an annual average of 3.4, although there have been two blank years. For annual total see *The Birds of Berkshire* 2014, p76.

RINGED PLOVER (COMMON RINGED PLOVER) *Charadrius hiaticula*

Declining summer visitor, uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Ringed Plovers were recorded at only nine sites, three in east Berks, two in mid Berks and four in west Berks. The highest monthly counts at the principal sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Queen Mother Res	E	—	—	—	3	4	1	—	1	4	—
Moor Green Lakes	E	—	1	2	4	5	—	—	1	2	—
Lea Farm Lake (Hurst)	M	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	—
Lower Farm GP (Newbury)	W	1	3	2	1	—	—	—	1	5	1
Greenham Common	W	—	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Elsewhere		—	—	1	—	5	—	2	1	3	1
No. of sites		1	3	4	4	4	2	1	5	4	2
No. of birds		1	7	6	9	14	2	2	6	14	2

First winter: records from three sites involved ca. 10 birds; the first was one at Lower Farm GP (Newbury) on Jan 28th to 30th and ones at Moor Green Lakes NR on Feb 7th, Lower Farm GP on Feb 21st (but three there next day) and one at Greenham Common on the 25th (but three there next day).

Spring: migration may have started as early as Mar 8th when one was at Greenham Common followed by a dribble of ones or twos at three west Berks sites on six dates through to two at Moor Green Lakes in east Berks on Mar 29th. In April there were 12 records: ones were seen at Greenham Common on six dates between Apr 5th and 29th and at Lower Farm GP on the 4th and 7th; two at Brimpton Road on May 12th, four at QMR on the 25th reducing to two on the 28th and one on the 30th when there were four at Moor Green Lakes NR. In May there was a minimum of 22 recorded at five sites from two on the 8th at Theale Main GP in the west via a maximum of five at Moor Green Lakes NR on the 10th to one at Slough SF on the 7th and 10th, one at Brimpton Road east on 12th and four at QMR on

the 25th, the last spring record.

Summer: a minimum of 15 recorded at six sites from QMR in the east to Hosehill Lake LNR (Theale) in the west. Whether the one at QMR on Jun 25th and the two at Theale Main GP were summering birds or early returning migrants is unclear. In August, the highest count was four at Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) on Aug 22nd otherwise all other sightings were of singles. **Breeding:** the only indication of possible breeding was of an ad with one juv at Theale Main GP on Jul 2nd, a very poor showing!

Autumn: records for September and October came from only four sites; of 22 records no less than 15 (68%) were from Lower Farm GP where the highest count was five, including three juvs, on Sep 10th. At Moor Green Lakes NR, where birds were noted on only three dates, the maximum was two. The last record for the year was one 'still present' at Lower Farm GP on Oct 20th.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant (Schedule One and Green Listed)

This species was recorded at 16 sites, four in east Berks, nine in mid Berks and three in west Berks. Of 140 records, 115 (82%) were of only ones or twos.

The approximate monthly totals for the sites where the species was recorded on at least five dates, were as follows:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Queen Mother Res	E	2	6	2	1	4	1	–
Moor Green Lakes	E	–	4	4	3	3	–	–
Lea Farm Lake (Hurst)	M	–	–	1	3	–	2	1
Pingewood GPs	M	2	4	2	3	–	–	–
Theale GPs	M	–	2	–	–	1	–	–
Padworth Lane GP	M	–	3	2	–	–	–	–
Lower Farm GP	W	–	2	2	1	2	1	–
Elsewhere		4	10	1	4	–	–	–
No. of sites		4	10	6	6	4	3	1
No. of birds		8	31	13	15	10	4	1

The first record was of one at QMR on Mar 19th to 20th, some five days later than the average for the previous ten years (March 14th).

Spring: two at Eton Wick on Mar 23rd, two at Pingewood GPs on the 24th, another two at QMR on the 25th in display flight and two at Bray GPs on the 28th. There was a noticeable passage through the county in April; some stayed to breed. Of the 58 records 41% were ones and 43% twos. The 'Elsewhere' sites where the species was recorded in April were Eton Wick, Whistley Green, Wargrave, Fobney Meadow, Crookham Common.

Of 23 May records, 15 were from Moor Green Lakes NR where the highest count was four on May 2nd. The highest count in June was four at Green Park (Reading) on the 2nd and in July four at QMR on the 4th.

Breeding: regrettably, there were few records of successful breeding. Display was noted at QMR on Mar 25th, at Padworth Lane GP on Apr 1st, at Moor Green Lakes NR on the 4th and Hosehill Lake LNR (Theale) on the 14th. Pairs were seen in suitable nesting habitat at Padworth Lane GP on Apr 9th and Lower Farm GP (Newbury) on May 9th. Nest scraping (and mating) was noted at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 14th on in-fill 'west of bridge' and

possibly a second on a new island there on May 13th. The only records marked as ‘fledged young’ were of two juvs at Green Park (Reading) on Jun 2nd and one at Moor Green Lakes NR on Jul 2nd. All 11 records of juvs were during Jul 30th to Sep 7th and were most probably migrants; all, bar one, were at Lea Farm Lake (Hurst).

Autumn: return passage appeared to commence with four ads at QMR on Jul 4th followed another one there on the 29th and a procession of ones and twos on 13 days in August. The last three records were of single birds at Lea Farm Lake on Sep 5th, 6th and 7th.

The overall status of this species was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	–	–	4	13	7	6	4	3	1	–	–	–
Number of birds	–	–	8	31	14	15	10	4	1	–	–	–

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Uncommon passage migrant (Schedule One and Red Listed)

There were nine accepted records (excluding duplicates) for a total of 19 individuals. In Spring the first record was of five at Horton Brook on Apr 16th (CDRH) which flew in from the N and settled in the fields. One at Moatlands GPs on May 5th (JA) seen flying NW was followed by another at Queen Mother Res on May 7th also flying N. The next one was seen three days later (CDRH) descending towards Horton fields. The following day, May 11th, another one at Moor Green Lakes NR at 15:15 (ABT) took off N at 17:19. On May 14th one flew over QMR calling continuously at 07:20 (PNe). The final spring record was of two at QMR on May 21st (CDRH), eight days later than the average for the previous ten years (May 13th).

Autumn: there were only two records: six at Woodlands Park fields on Aug 28th were flying S with other waders (DJB), some 38 days later than the average date for the previous ten years (July 20th), while the last for the year was one heard only at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Sep 18th (RJB).

CURLEW (EURASIAN CURLEW) *Numenius arquata*

Uncommon to scarce passage migrant and winter visitor also a summer visitor in small numbers (Amber Listed)

First winter: the year’s first record was a very early one at Bury Down (West Ilsley) on Jan 28th which flew NE. **Spring:** the first migrant was one at Bottom Lane Floods, Theale on Mar 5th, six days earlier than the average arrival date for the previous ten years. Then two more arrived on the 11th at Wargrave and Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) and another in west Berks on Mar 26th. Thereafter, between April 1st and June 19th records increased noticeably as spring migration took off but was spread widely. Single Curlews were recorded on seven dates at six sites in west Berks with twos at Compton Downs on May 27th and Jun 4th and Lambourn Downs on Jun 19th. The most important site for Curlews in Berks was undoubtedly Wellbottom Down (Lambourn); here up to four were counted on eight dates between Apr 18th and Jun 6th but on Jun 9th three pairs were recorded one of which had three small chicks, the only breeding record for the year; the last record here was of four on Jun 21st. In east Berks single birds were noted at Wishmoor Bottom (Swinley Forest) and Buttersteep Hill (Ascot) on Apr 17th and Moor Green Lakes NR on May 30th. At Queen Mother Res single birds were noted on May 7th and Jun 18th.

Autumn: passage was unremarkable: single birds were noted at Lee Farm Lake (Hurst) and Spencer’s Wood on Oct 29th and at QMR on Nov 7th.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Following a blank year, there were two Autumn records: the first was one flying S with other waders at Woodland Park fields on Aug 28th (DJB), the second was a single juv at Queen Mother Res on Sep 5th (CDRH) which flew over NW. These records raise the total for this century to 302 at an average of just under 18 per year, although there have been five blank years. For annual totals see *The Birds of Berkshire* 2014, p83. This irregular spring migrant was recorded in only seven of the previous ten years; the average arrival date was May 1st, the earliest was April 21st (2014).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce passage migrant (Schedule One and Red Listed)

The first Spring record was of two at Moor Green Lakes NR on Mar 21st (RFM) five days earlier than the average for the previous ten years during which the earliest was March 10th (2007). The next arrival was one in w/p at Theale Main GP on the 30th (ABT, AVL). What was most probably the same w/p bird was recorded at Hosehill Lake LNR (Theale) from Mar 30th to Apr 12th (MO) while one seen at Bottom Lane Floods (Theale) on Apr 3rd (RCr) may have been different.

There was then a gap in sightings until Jun 29th when what were presumably four early returning migrants were recorded at Lower Farm GP (Newbury) (JLS, IW). Three s/p birds which flew SE over Horton Brook Quarry on Jul 4th at 04:54 hr (CDRH) were followed by one in s/p at Lower Fm GP on Jul 9th (ABT). There was then a gap of a fortnight before a bird of the *islandica* subspecies was found at Hosehill Lake LNR (KEM) followed by seven at Eton Wick on the 25th (DCI). The last of the year were single birds at Moor Green Lakes NR on Aug 20th (NS) and Burnthouse Lakes GP on the 21st and 22nd (MO). In all, some 23 birds were recorded during the year.

TURNSTONE (RUDDY TURNSTONE) *Arenaria interpres*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

A better year than the two previous years with a total of at least 12 birds, recorded at just four sites. **Spring:** the first birds were two at Moor Green Lakes NR on May 10th (DWH), followed by one at Hosehill Lake LNR (Theale) on May 22nd (PD), six days later than the average for the previous ten years (May 16th). **Autumn:** at least nine birds were recorded: two separate ads at Queen Mother Res on Aug 20th (CDRH) one of which was lame; this date is 11 days earlier than the average for the previous ten years (August 31st). Three were seen flying across the north end of QMR then SE on Aug 27th (PNe, ABT, DJB). One heard calling overhead at Moor Green Lakes NR 10 mins later (RCM) was probably one of those; two juvs or w/p adults were noted at Theale Main GP heading west on Sep 6th (DJB), a moulting adult flew in to QMR on Sep 24th at 08:18 (CDRH) while a juvenile there from Sep 25th to 27th (CDRH) was the final record for the year.

KNOT (RED KNOT) *Calidris canutus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

There were only two records, all from Queen Mother Res in the Autumn. The first was a juv (with a Ruff) on Sep 5th (CDRH). This was followed by another juv found on Sep 9th (CDRH) which was still there next day (CDRH, ABT). This species is less than annual having been recorded in only seven of the past ten years and then usually in very small

numbers. However, occasionally significant flocks are recorded in Berkshire migrating along the Thames-Severn flyway as was shown by 33 in 2008 and 90 in 2007.

RUFF *Calidris pugnax*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)

Spring passage: there were two records of single birds, one at Borough Marsh (Wargrave) on Mar 17th and another at Fobney Meadow (Reading) on Mar 19th and 20th. **Autumn:** the first returning bird, an ad male, was seen at Queen Mother Res on Jul 13th, one month earlier than the average arrival date for the previous ten years (August 13th). The next arrival was not until Sep 5th, also at QMR, of two single juvs. Thereafter, an ad was at Moor Green Lakes NR from Sep 13th to 15th, another one was at QMR on the 15th, one was at Eton Wick on Sep 25th and singles were at Englefield on the 21st and finally the 27th and 28th. In all, probably only ten birds were recorded.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Scarce passage migrant (Green Listed)

All records were in the Autumn and probably involved only one juv at Moor Green Lakes NR from Sep 11th to 17th (RCM *et al.*). A total of 25 has been recorded this century, but in only ten of the 17 years, at an annual average of 1.5. The highest yearly total was of nine in 2007. It remains an infrequent migrant in Berkshire. The status of this species was tabulated in *The Birds of Berkshire* 2014, p79.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce but regular passage migrant (Green Listed)

All records bar one were from Queen Mother Res and all bar one were Spring records. The first two appeared at QMR on May 5th but flew straight through at 08:05 (ABT) followed by three on the 9th (CDRH) which similarly flew in from the SW, circled and flew off NE at 10:43. One in s/p was seen there on May 10th (ABT) on which day two 'were still present' at Moor Green Lakes NR at 17:00 (MO). Two more in s/p were noted at QMR on the 11th (CDRH) and a different bird in mostly w/p was seen there on the 12th (CDRH). Three days later a single bird was recorded there in the morning followed on the 19th by another in fresh s/p (CDRH). On the 21st five were at the W end of QMR in the afternoon of which three were still present next day (CDRH). In all some 18 birds were recorded during the spring passage period May 5th to 22nd, some six days earlier than the average for the previous ten years of May 28th. The only Autumn record was of four at QMR on Sep 13th (CDRH), rather later than the average date for the previous ten years of July 15th.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

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

Records were received for 12 sites, three of which applied only to the second half of the year. **Spring:** a minimum of 55 individual birds was recorded passing through during the spring migration. The two most favoured sites were Queen Mother Res and Moor Green Lakes NR (but this might reflect observer activity rather than the attractiveness of the habitat). At QMR Dunlins were recorded on 12 dates between Mar 13th, when one in w/p was the first of the year for the county (some five days later than the average arrival date for the previous ten years) and Jun 4th. Most records were of single birds, the exceptions being two in s/p on Apr 15th and four on May 11th. At Moor Green Lakes NR Dunlins were recorded on nine dates between Apr 17th and May 21st mostly in s/p with highest counts of five on May 2nd

and four on the 10th. Elsewhere, counts were chiefly of ones or twos but five (three in s/p) were seen at Theale Main GP on Apr 28th.

Autumn: ca. 60 individuals were recorded during the second half of the year. Return passage commenced on Jul 14th with the sighting of an ad in worn s/p at QMR but the next to be recorded was one still in s/p on the 26th at Hosehill Lake (Theale). QMR and Moor Green Lakes were joined by Lower Farm GP (Newbury) as the predominant sites. At QMR records involved mostly single birds on 17 dates between Jul 14th and Nov 22nd; the highest counts were a flock of ten on Sep 13th and a total of eight on Nov 9th. At Moor Green Lakes NR records were mostly of single birds between Sep 10th and 28th with a highest count of three on the 10th. At Lower Farm GP Dunlins were recorded on 11 dates between Jul 27th and Nov 27th mostly as single birds but with five on Sep 16th. Only single birds were noted at the other three sites. The latest record for the year was of one in w/p at Lower Farm GP on Nov 27th.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Scarce passage migrant, principally in autumn (Green Listed)

This year's records suggest that the comments on the decline of this species in Berkshire this century, as stated in *The Birds of Berkshire* 2014, p78, are still relevant. All records conformed to the status of 'principally in autumn'. **Autumn:** the first record was of a juv at Moor Green Lakes NR on Aug 29th (MO) which apparently stayed until at least Sep 9th. This arrival date is three days earlier than the average for eight of the past ten years of September 1st. One was then seen skulking at Eton Wick on Sep 11th (CDRH) and the last for the year was another juv at Moor Green Lakes NR again on Oct 7th. (RCM, RFM). In all, only three birds for the year. The autumn total for the ten years 2007-2016 was 24 at an annual average of 2.4 with only two blank years (2013 and 2015). The similar spring total was only two (singles in 2007 and 2008).

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

Rare vagrant

After two blank years, one at Queen Mother Res from Sep 28th to Oct 6th (CDRH *et al.*) was the 19th record for Berkshire. The only other records during the past ten years have also been single birds in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

WOODCOCK (EURASIAN WOODCOCK) *Scolopax rusticola*

Localised and declining resident, widespread winter visitor (Amber Listed)

First winter: recorded, usually as single birds, from 15 different sites across the county. One was seen in a Binfield garden feeding along a stream on Jan 4th, four were seen flying off to roost at Gorricks Plantation (Wokingham) on Jan 28th.

Spring: recorded, usually as ones or twos, from 12 different sites between Mar 25th and Jun 30th. **East Berks:** eight records between Apr 1st and May 17th of usually two or three; roding was noted in Swinley Park on May 15th, Sunninghill Park on May 23rd, in Swinley Forest on the 29th and territorial behaviour at the latter site on Jun 9th. **Mid Berks:** the Padworth Common/Roundoak Piece (Padworth) area produced 18 records between Mar 25th and Jun 15th usually of ones or twos but with threes on May 23rd and Jun 13th; roding was recorded at the latter site on May 6th and 15th and Jun 13th while birds chasing and calling were seen there on May 29th and at Padworth on the 28th. **West Berks:** two to three were noted in Greenham Common on five dates between May 27th and Jun 30th; one to two were noted on five dates on Bucklebury Common between May 7th and Jun 10th; elsewhere, one was at Paices Wood (Wasing) on Jun 6th and being territorial there on the 20th, and there were two at Snelsmore Common CP on Jun 24th.

Summer and breeding: although there were records for eight dates between Jul 1st and Aug 6th roding was recorded only twice and the only confirmed breeding record was of two juvs with ads at Crookham/Greenham Common on Jul 7th.

Autumn: the only autumn record was of one at Wildmoor Heath on Sep 24th. **Second winter:** records came from seven sites across the county from Nov 13th lastly at Lambourn on Dec 22nd.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

The most favoured sites for Jack Snipe were Lea Farm Lake (Hurst), and the nearby Dinton Pastures CP, most particularly in the second half of the year. **First winter:** ten records between Jan 1st and 28th involved 17 birds; three were near Horton GPs from the 1st (remaining from 2015) which remained there through the period with the last record being on Apr 24th. Most other records were of singles but with threes at Dorney Wetlands on Jan 23rd and Borough Marsh (Wargrave) on the 25th and two at a private site near Theale on the 28th. There was then a gap of nearly two months before the next record on Mar 23rd at Dinton Pastures.

Spring: there were only three records of singles from three sites between Mar 23rd and Apr 5th with one staying at Lea Farm Lake until May 5th. The average last spring date during eight of the previous ten years is April 8th (latest April 23rd) so just one of these birds stayed unusually longer.

Autumn: the earliest sighting was of one at Lea Farm Lake on Oct 6th, a date comparable with the average for the previous ten years of Oct 5th. At this site birds were recorded on 16 dates between Oct 6th and Dec 31st in either singles to Oct 27th, twos to Nov 11th and singles again thereafter. At Dinton Pastures birds were recorded on 12 dates between Oct 21st and Dec 9th, usually as singles but with two on Oct 31st, Nov 2nd and 30th. At six other sites single birds were located on nine dates between Oct 8th and Dec 29th.

SNIPE (COMMON SNIPE) *Gallinago gallinago*

Locally common but declining winter visitor and passage migrant formally bred (Amber Listed)

Snipe were recorded at 45 sites, 11 east Berks, 21 mid berks and 13 in west Berks. In the 513 non-duplicated records there were 41 counts of 20 or more (8%) and 228 (44%) of ones or twos. The highest count was 55 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 20th.

The highest monthly counts at the principal sites, including those additional sites where birds were recorded on at least five dates, and totals at sites 'Elsewhere', were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Slough SF	E	20	—	—	—	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	32
Eton Wick Floods	E	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	4	25	—	10	—
Dorney Wetlands	E	5	—	1	1	—	—	—	3	—	1	1	5
Moor Green Lakes NR	E	12	10	11	6	—	—	—	3	11	11	12	55
Lea Fm Lake (Hurst)	M	5	4	4	4	—	—	—	2	4	22	10	33
Dinton Pastures CP	M	7	16	13	4	—	—	1	—	4	32	38	40
Fobney Meadow	M	—	1	20	6	—	—	2	3	17	6	15	—
Pingewood GPs	M	1	—	—	3	—	—	—	2	4	3	—	—
Theale GPs	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	2
Padworth Lane GP	M	—	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	4	2
Streatley	W	27	7	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	12	18	27
Woolhampton GPs	W	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	2

Thatcham Marsh	W	–	25	–	1	–	–	–	–	4	1	2	–
Lower Fm GP	W	3	5	3	1	1	2	2	9	12	6	4	6
Greenham Common	W	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	3	3	1	1
Elsewhere		52	10	45	30	–	–	–	1	8	5	11	26
No. of sites		12	11	13	15	3	3	5	9	15	18	20	20
No. of birds		128	83	99	47	3	5	8	22	99	105	119	221

First winter and spring: during the first three months, Snipe were recorded at 24 sites across the county (six east, nine mid, nine west). The highest counts were 46 at Borough Marsh (Wargrave) on Jan 25th and 33 there on Mar 31st. There was a marked reduction in both sites and numbers during April as birds returned to breeding grounds elsewhere. The highest count was 11 at Southcote Meadows on Apr 12th. Snipe were recorded on only three dates in May and seven in June. The final record for the first half of the year was of two at Lower Farm GP (Newbury) on Jul 9th.

Breeding: the only breeding activity recorded was of brief drumming at dusk at Southcote Meadows on Apr 24th.

Summer and autumn: there was a noticeable increase in records from Jul 27th of returning migrants. Birds were recorded on 21 days in August at nine sites with a highest count of nine at Lower Farm GP on Aug 31st. There was a further increase in September with records from 15 sites on an almost daily basis (29/30) with a highest count of 27 at Eton Wick on the 21st. A similar pattern was noticeable in October with records for 28/31 dates from 18 sites with an increase in numbers and a highest count of 32 at Dinton Pastures on the 31st.

Second winter: numbers continued to increase during this period with birds recorded in increasing numbers on an almost daily basis, reaching a peak in December with a highest count of 55 at Moor Green Lakes NR on Dec 20th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

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

Common Sandpipers were recorded at ca. 28 sites in the county, seven in east Berks, 12 in mid Berks and nine in west Berks. Of the 318 non-duplicated records, 18 (5.7%) were of five or more, with a maximum of nine at Queen Mother Res on Sep 1st, but 257 (81%) were of ones or twos. However, 84% of these 318 records came from the six principal sites shown below:

The highest monthly counts at the six principal sites and totals 'Elsewhere' were as follows:

		No. of records	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Queen Mother Res	E	46	4	6	3	6	8	9	2
Moor Green Lakes	E	43	5	2	–	2	1	2	–
Lea Farm Lakes (Hurst)	M	70	2	6	1	4	5	5	–
Dinton Pastures	M	26	3	2	–	2	4	1	1
Theale GPs	M	41	2	2	–	1	1	1	–
Lower Farm GP (Newbury)	W	42	5	3	–	2	4	3	–
Elsewhere			6	4	–	8	6	7	1
No. of sites			16	12	2	15	12	12	3
No. of birds (minimum)			27	25	4	25	29	28	3

The average number during the six months April to September (excepting June) was 27 with a maximum of 29 in August. The most favoured site was undoubtedly QMR, holding the highest monthly maxima and the highest total for the year. But the number of records from Lea Farm Lakes suggests more consistent recording. The reduction in records in June was probably due to birds having departed to breeding sites.

Spring: the first was one at Moor Green Lakes NR on Apr 10th, over three weeks later than the average arrival date for the previous ten years (March 19th). Thereafter, records were almost daily but increased from the 24th when there were seven, averaging five per day to the 30th when there were six. Records were daily from May 1st to 14th; there were then only two single birds on 19th and 20th. The five records in June from the 17th, at Lea Farm Lakes and QMR, suggested summering non-breeders but one at Theale GPs on Jul 1st was possibly the first returning migrant and from the 7th records became almost daily.

Summer: the species was recorded almost daily in July (26/31), averaging 2.2 records per day, and in August averaging three per day. In east Berks the principal sites were Moor Green Lakes NR (Eversley GPs) and QMR. Although at the former site records were of ones or twos, at QMR the species was recorded on 17 dates during the period with highest counts of eight on Aug 31st, six on Jul 12th, Aug 20th and 29th. In mid Berks birds were recorded on 51 (82%) of the 62 days between Jul 1st and Aug 31st; 57% of records were from Lea Farm Lake and 14% from Dinton Pastures. At the former site fives were counted on four dates between Aug 21st and 29th and fours on four other dates. At Dinton Pastures the highest count was three on Aug 1st. In west Berks the vast majority were recorded at Lower Farm GP where the highest count was four between Aug 21st and 27th. Elsewhere, there were three birds at Woolhampton GPs on Aug 3rd.

Breeding: there were not even any hints of breeding!

Autumn: as earlier in the year, the most favoured sites were Lower Farm GP (highest count of four on Sep 10th), Lea Farm Lake (highest counts of four on Sep 5th and five next day) and QMR (highest count of nine on Sep 1st declining to five on the 3rd). Elsewhere, three were at a site near Thatcham on Sep 7th. The last record for the year was one at QMR on Oct 17th, three days later than in 2015.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Green Sandpipers were recorded at 24 sites: nine in east Berks, eight in mid Berks and seven in west Berks. Of the 455 non-duplicated records, only 11 (2.4%) were of five or more with a maximum of seven at three sites; 238 (52%) were single birds and 125 (27%) twos; the highest counts were three groups of seven.

The highest monthly counts at the principal sites, where birds were recorded on not less than five dates, and totals for those 'Elsewhere' were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Res	E	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	4	4	1
Eton Wick Floods	E	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
Dorney Wetlands	E	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moor Green Lakes	E	1	1	2	2	1	—	4	4	7	4	—	1
Lea Farm Lake (Hurst)	M	1	—	1	1	—	2	3	7	7	1	1	
Dinton Pastures CP	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	3	1	—	—
Fobney Meadow	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3	3	1	1	1
Pingewood GPs	M	2	—	1	2	—	—	1	5	3	2	—	1
Padworth Lane GP	M	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	—	1
Woolhampton GPs	W	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	2
Thatcham Marsh	W	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	1	—	—
Lower Farm GP (Newbury)	W	2	2	1	—	—	2	5	5	4	2	1	2

Hungerford Marshes	W	1	1	–	2	–	–	3	5	2	2	1	1
Elsewhere*		2	1	2	–	1	1	8	1	7	5	2	3
No. of sites		10	7	9	5	2	3	11	12	13	14	8	10
No. of birds*		13	9	11	8	2	5	31	41	46	24	11	13

Note 1: * Numbers 'Elsewhere' are the sum of counts at the various sites in this category.

The sites where this species was recorded most frequently were Lower Farm GP (Newbury) on 95 dates and both Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) and Moor Green Lakes NR both on 72 dates during the year.

First winter: birds obviously over-wintering from 2015 were present in January from the 1st across the county in ones or twos. In January, there were seven records from east Berks, three mid and seven west Berks.

Distribution was similar in February although there were only ten records; an increase to 16 in March was presumably due to passage migrants although this was not strongly apparent.

Spring: there was a marked fall in numbers in April as birds returned to breeding grounds; only two remained in May, one until the 21st. **Summer:** recorded from three locations during June but records increased significantly from Jul 1st as birds returned; the first record of three was from Midgham GP on the 3rd. Birds were recorded on every day of July (except the 28th) mostly as ones or twos although there were five at Slough SF on the 22nd and Lower Farm GP on the 31st. The pattern in August was similar (the only blank day was the 8th) but with many new arrivals; of 103 records the highest count was seven at Lea Farm Lake on the 24th.

Autumn: there was a small reduction in records in September; the highest counts were sevens at Lea Farm Lake on the 6th and Moor Green Lakes NR on the 18th. The decline in records continued in October, the highest counts were fours at Moor Green Lakes and QMR.

Second winter: numbers continued to decline through November with four at QMR on the 7th and 8th being the highest. In December 14 apparently wintering; birds were found in east Berks at two sites, Moor Green Lakes NR and QMR, in mid Berks at seven sites and in west Berks at only two.

A bird seen at Moor Green Lakes NR on both February 4th and July 16th was a Dutch ringed bird that has been around for several years.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brimpton GPs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–
Dinton Pastures CP	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	3	3	1	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	–	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Eton Wick Floods	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–
Lower Farm GP	2	2	1	–	–	2	5	5	4	2	1	2
Moor Green Lakes NR	1	1	2	2	1	–	4	4	7	4	–	1
Padworth Lane GP	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	1	3	1	–	1
Pingewood GPs	2	–	1	2	–	–	1	5	4	2	–	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	5	3	3	2	1	2	7	8	8	8	7	6
Number of birds	5	4	3	3	1	3	18	25	27	12	10	8

REDSHANK (COMMON REDSHANK) *Tringa totanus*

Uncommon and declining passage migrant and summer visitor which now only breeds in very small numbers, scarce in winter (Amber Listed)

Redshank were recorded at 17 sites with five in east Berks, nine in mid Berks and three in west Berks; the majority were recorded at only seven principal sites in east or mid Berks; there were only three records from west Berks!

Of 179 non-duplicated records, there were only four records of five or more but 145 (81%) of ones or twos.

First winter: the earliest records were of one at Padworth Lane GP on Feb 28th, a slightly later date than usual, followed ten days later by another at Fobney Meadows (Reading). By Mar 20th at least 17 had been recorded at six sites with a maximum of nine at Padworth on Mar 19th.

Spring: during the rest of March, the highest count was of three at Moor Green Lakes on the 24th, 28th and 29th from whence the majority of records came. The highest count in April was four at both Moor Green Lakes on the 3rd, 13th, 14th and 18th and at Padworth Lane GPs on the 28th while in May it was again four but in June there were five at Hosehill Lake on the 7th.

The highest monthly counts, and the number of records from each site, were as follows:

		No. of records	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Queen Mother Res	E	9	1	2	–	1	1	2	1	–	–	1
Moor Green Lakes	E	57	–	3	4	5	3	3	–	–	–	–
Lea Farm Lake (Hurst)	M	12	–	2	1	2	1	1	–	2	–	–
Fobney Meadow (Reading)	M	14	–	1	2	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pingewood GPs	M	7	–	–	3	1	–	–	–	–	1	–
Theale GPs	M	48	–	3	2	4	5	1	–	–	–	–
Padworth Lane GPs	M	19	–	9	4	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Elsewhere		13	–	2	6	3	3	2	2	–	–	–
No. of sites			1	7	10	9	5	5	3	1	1	1
No. of birds			1	22	22	21	13	9	3	2	1	–

These figures demonstrate that Moor Green Lakes and Theale GPs were the most favoured sites for Redshank, albeit that they are also probably well watched.

Breeding: a probable pair was seen at Crookham Common on Mar 25th. Display was first noticed on Apr 30th at Fobney Meadow (Reading) and copulation at Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) on May 1st. The only sites where breeding could be confirmed were Moor Green Lakes and Hosehill Lake NR (Theale GPs) where unaged chicks were seen at the former site on May 29th and at the latter next day.

Summer and autumn: records and numbers declined markedly both through July and into the autumn, as shown in the above table. The last sighting in July was on the 29th and the final bird for the year was of three at QMR on Nov 12th.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

There were four records, three in spring, one in autumn. **Spring:** one briefly at Burnthouse Lane GP on May 2nd (PD), one at Slough SF from May 5th to 6th (CDRH) and another at Moor Green Lakes (Eversley GPs) on May 9th (MO). This species has been recorded

in only 11 of 17 years this century for an annual average of 1.6. The average latest date this century for these 11 years is May 15th (range 3rd to 30th).

Autumn: one at Lower Farm GP (Newbury) on Sep 24th (NC, IW) was remarkably later than the previous latest arrival date this century of August 29th, 2015. It caused the average arrival date this century to move from August 2nd to August 5th (range June 27th to September 24th). This species has been recorded in 16 of the 17 years this century for an annual average of 2.5 (range 0 to 5). Annual numbers this century are as follows:

	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No. Spring Records	0	2	2	1	0	1	3	2	3	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	3
No. Spring Birds	0	2	2	1	0	4	4	3	3	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	3
No. Autumn Records	4	5	1	2	2	3	2	1	0	3	2	4	1	5	2	1	1
No. Autumn Birds	3	5	1	2	2	3	2	1	0	4	3	4	1	5	3	2	1

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

The first record of this rare species since 2014 was of a juv at Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) on Aug 22nd (G. Emmett *et al.*). Seventeen individuals have been recorded in only 12 of the 17 years this century at an annual average of 1.2. The status of this species this century was tabulated in *The Birds of Berkshire* 2014, p85.

GREENSHANK (COMMON GREENSHANK) *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant, rare in winter (Schedule One and Green Listed)

The majority of records came from Burnthouse Lane GP (Pingewood), Lower Farm GP (Newbury) and Moor Green Lakes NR (Eversley GPs). **Spring:** some 30 individuals were recorded, with the first being one in a flooded field at Whistley Green (Hurst) on Apr 19th, eight days later than the average arrival date for the previous ten years, typical of their rather later arrival than some other spring migrants. At Moor Green Lakes NR Greenshank were recorded on seven dates between Apr 24th and Jun 16th, mostly as single birds but with two on May 8th and six on the 9th. At Burnthouse Lake GP single birds were noted on five dates between May 6th and 12th. The highest count of the period was seven at Fobney Meadow (Reading) on May 5th.

Autumn: the first autumn passage bird was one at Burnthouse Lane GP on Aug 12th. At this site records spanned Aug 12th to Sep 13th mostly as singles but with twos on Aug 19th, 21st, 24th, Sep 8th and 12th and three on the 13th. At Lower Farm GP Greenshank were recorded on 16 dates between Aug 18th and Sep 16th mostly as singles but with four on Aug 24th and five on the 25th. Records at Lea Farm Lake (Hurst) involved five on Aug 19th and two from the 20th to 22nd. At Moor Green Lakes a count of eight on Aug 16th was the highest of four records to Sep 16th. Elsewhere records were of only ones or twos. Autumn passage may have involved as many as a conservative 69 individuals. The latest record was of one at Moor Green Lakes NR on Sep 16th, a not untypical date but earlier than the average latest date of October 9th for the previous ten years.

KITTIWAKE (BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE) *Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

An unexceptional year for this species with just five birds seen. The first for the year was an adult seen circling QMR for 20 minutes on the morning of Jan 10th (CDRH) at 09:00, and assumed to fly off, but was relocated roosting on the embankment at 14:00 (PNe). An adult summer plumage bird was seen in the QMR pre-roost gull flock on the north east embankment on Mar 20th (CDRH). On Mar 29th an adult briefly alighted on Hosehill Lake LNR before flying off (KEM). On May 29th an adult was found resting on the water then circling QMR for some minutes before departing north (CDRH). The last bird of the year was an adult seen on Dec 23rd (CDRH) for 40 minutes on the north east bank before flying west.

Year	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No of records	0	4	6	5	6	11	6	9	4	3	4	4	1	4	7	6	5
Year Total	0	6	6	15	9	102	8	72	4	3	14	5	1	4	12	6	5

SABINE'S GULL *Xema sabini*

Rare vagrant (not listed)

At about 09:30 on Sep 20th a juvenile was seen circling the centre of the reservoir at QMR for seven minutes before flying over the north bank and not seen again by the observer (CDRH). Subsequently, at 11:47 unbeknown to the observer of the earlier sighting, and consequently found independently, a juvenile was seen for several minutes at some distance, on the south west embankment before it flew a short distance to land on the water. It was not relocated (ABT). This is the sixth record of this species, all individual birds apart from the storm driven flock in Oct 1987.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

A total of 855 records were received on to the database from 131 locations of which 117 counts were of greater than 100 birds and only eight greater than 1,000 birds. The highest count was 3,100 at Dinton Pastures CP on Mar 15th. At Theale Main GP, 3,000 birds were counted on Dec 16th and 2,000 at QMR in the early roost on Oct 12th.

Breeding was confirmed at four locations. At Moor Green Lakes the total number of nests comprised of eight on the raft, six on tern island, one on plover island and two on East Fen, bringing a total of 17 nests. Most nests on tern island appear to have failed. The best estimate from the available data is that at least 20 juveniles were produced but this is probably an underestimate. At Lodden Lake NR at Twyford, 12 occupied nests were recorded on May 16th, but no further data is available as to the breeding outcome. At Wraybury GP 12 chicks were noted from five nests on Jun 21st. By far the largest county colony was at Hosehill Lake LNR. The total number of nests on the island is unknown, but a count of 300 plus chicks was made on Jun 20th. No breeding records were received from Lea Farm Lakes or Sandford lakes.

Of interest was a foreign recovery: a bird ringed on June 11th 2015 aged as 2yr at Wejdyki, Warninsko-Mazurskie, Poland seen at Eton Wick on March 6th, 1,791km from its ringing site.

On Jul 16th a bird with a BTO ring returned for its fifth autumn on the River Thames being originally ringed at Pitsea Landfill Site on March 10th, 2012. Twenty-two colour-ring numbers were recorded of birds ringed from the Hosehill Lake LNR ringing project.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

A below average number of records and total number of birds based on averages since the year 2000. Although normally scarce in winter there were three records this year. A f/w was seen flying around the roost at QMR on Jan 2nd (CDRH). At the same location a flock of four w/p adults flew straight though the next day, Jan 3rd (CDRH) at 09:48. On Jan 6th a flock of eight (seven ad, one f/w) alighted in the gull roost for a few minutes before flying south east (CDRH). These were thought to be part of a wider regional movement of Little Gulls.

The spring passage occurred over four days in mid-April with no May records. (Note that in 2013 and 2014 there were also no records in May, and in 2012 and 2015 only one May record each year). On Apr 11th a total of 11 birds comprising of two flocks of adults of six and five, flew north east over QMR (CDRH). A single adult was also present on the same day at Moor Green Lakes (NS, RFM). At Theale Main GP three birds (two ad, one f/w) were found in the late afternoon of Apr 12th (RHS, AA, KEM). An adult was present at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, early morning of Apr 13th (MFW, FJC). On Apr 14th, early morning only, an immature was at Moor Green Lakes (RCM).

The autumn passage comprised of two records only. A single bird was seen at QMR at 14:45 on Aug 18th (RHS, KEM). On Sep 25th a juvenile was seen with Black-headed Gulls at 12:45 at Streatley (NJB).

Year	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No of records	6	5	21	31	27	36	17	23	20	10	15	22	18	6	21	17	10
Year Total	12	11	41	113	81	108	40	45	33	20	22	57	35	7	56	58	32

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant and winter visitor, less frequent in summer (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

The database records for the year suggest at least 43 individual birds were seen at eight locations on 30 dates. Birds were seen during every month of the year with most in winter through to spring. Over half the records were from QMR. There was no evidence of breeding attempts although adult pairs in summer plumage were seen displaying early in the year.

The largest single count of the year was of six birds (four ad, 1f/w, 1s/w) in the roost at QMR between Jan 1st and 6th (CDRH). An ad w/p bird was seen at Colnbrook on Jan 27th then again at QMR on Feb 2nd (CDRH). On Feb 21st a s/p adult was seen at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst (BTB, ABT).

The first record for March was of an unaged bird on the island at Hosehill Lake LNR, on Mar 19th (KEM), that was possibly the same bird, an adult, seen the following day at the same location at 17:20 (RHS), whilst at 17.53 three birds were seen in the roost on Theale Main GP (RHS). On Mar 21st and again Mar 23rd, five birds were seen at QMR (CDRH). These birds included a pair of full s/p birds displaying to each other, a pair of s/s birds behaving as a pair, and a single s/s bird. The last sighting for March (27th) was of a bird at Hosehill Lake LNR that was also probably the same bird seen in the Theale Main GP roost later (AVL).

In early April a s/s flew east over QMR on Apr 2nd (CDRH). A pair of s/p birds was seen at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 4th (JMC) and Apr 11th (NS). Also, on Apr 11th a pair of s/p birds was seen at Theale Main GP at 15:30 (KEM). These sightings probably relate to the same pair. On May 12th a f/w bird was discovered on Padworth Lane floods (ABT), which had a green ring on its left leg and a metal ring on the right leg. A f/w was found later the

same day at 12:00 at Moatlands GP (JA) and was possibly the same bird. On May 27th a s/p ad was seen on the Hosehill Lake LNR island at 16:00 (KEM). At the same location, but a few weeks later on Jun 22nd two birds (one ad s/p and one f/s) were present (KEM). A s/s was seen just south east of Upton Court Park, Slough, on the morning of Jun 26th (CDRH).

During July, two birds (ad s/p and 2/w) flew east over QMR Jul 11th (CDRH), an adult settled on the water at QMR after circling over Horton Road GP on Jul 18th (CDRH) and a juvenile was seen flying over Theale Main GP before flying north east over the M4 on Jul 21st (CDRH). There were two records during August at QMR, with an ad w/p on Aug 15th (CDRH) and a juvenile on Aug 20th and 26th (CDRH). A juvenile was also seen at QMR on Sep 21st and 24th (CDRH). There was only one record for October with an ad w/p at QMR at 15:00 on Oct 1st (DNTR). A month later a w/p ad was in the roost at QMR on Nov 4th (CDRH) and at Slough STW on Nov 10th (CDRH). A f/w was in the QMR roost on Nov 26th (CDRH). On Nov 30th a f/w was in the Moatlands GP roost (ABT). During December an adult was seen in the roost, at QMR, on the 7th, 19th, and 21st (CDRH).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Moor Green Lakes NR	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GPs	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	6	1	5	1	-	-	2	1	1	1	1	1
Theale GPs	-	-	3	2	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-
Number of birds	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-

COMMON GULL (MEW GULL) *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

A total of 630 records were received from 57 locations. They were predominantly during the autumn and winter months. No records were received for May and only one in each of April and June, and less than 10 records for each of July, August and September. Of all the records, nine exceeded a count of 100, and 187 records were all less than 10. The highest count for the year was of 400 at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park on the Jan 24th. This site was the source of most of the high counts. It would appear from the database records, where the time of counts has been given, that most are daytime counts, with few gull roost counts. A count over 100 was recorded at Moatlands GP on the Dec 26th when reference was made to this being at a roost. One may surmise that the highest counts would be at the traditional gull roost sites.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Although recorded in every month of the year, most records were during the winter months. Only 88 records were received from 20 locations. There was a strong easterly bias to the records with the highest maximum counts being from QMR, Knowl Hill landfill and Borough Marsh. The highest single count was a pre-roost flock of 53 (48 ads, five juvs), in a pre-roost at Knowl Hill on Jan 14th. These birds presumably were commuting to the QMR roost, where there were 50 (46 ads/subads, three juvs, one s/w) on Jan 3rd and 40 (34 ads; two subads, four juvs) on Jan 20th. There were only seven records west of Reading, all being singles apart from two birds at Lower Farm GP on Jan 2nd (NC) and two at Eastbury Down on Mar 3rd (IW).

Great Black-backed Gull: max count per month per site

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Borough Marsh, Wargrave	25	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bury Down, West Ilsley	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	1
Colnbrook	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Eastbury Down, Lambourn	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Englefield	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–
Knowl Hill Landfill	53	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	31	37
Greenham Common	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Horton GPs	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Langley	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	10
Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Lea Farm Lake, Hurst	1	4	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Lower Farm GP, Newbury	2	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Mandeville Close, Tilehurst	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Moatlands GP, Theale	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
New Diggings, Moor Green Lakes NR	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Old Windsor	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–
Padworth Lane GP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	50	–	1	4	1	3	1	2	5	6	16	31

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare winter visitor

A f/w was seen to join a pre-roost gull flock near Knowl Hill on Jan 12th (CDRH). The same observer relocated the bird (presumed the same) on the Knowl Hill landfill site on Jan 25th where it was seen subsequently on 12 dates, with the last sighting on Mar 8th (CDRH *et al.*). A f/w seen at QMR on Feb 3rd (CDRH) may well have been the Knowl Hill bird. Remarkably another f/w was found at the end of the year, again, in a field near Knowl Hill on Dec 16th and then on the 19th Dec (CDRH).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Rare winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Two records, with the first, a f/s, briefly on Apr 29th at QMR before being relocated on Staines reservoir (Surrey) five minutes later. The second, a sub-adult, seen on the north bank at QMR on Nov 26th (both CDRH).

HERRING GULL (EUROPEAN HERRING GULL) *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant and increasing summer resident which now breeds (Red Listed)

There were 315 records from 66 locations, with 22 records being 100 or greater. The highest counts were at Knowl Hill landfill, Moor Green Lakes and QMR. There were 1,000 plus birds at Knowl Hill landfill on Dec 3rd. On Oct 12th over 500 were counted at the QMR roost. At Grove Lake, Moor Green Lakes 350 were present on Dec 28th, this being considered a very high count for this site.

Evidence of breeding is rather thin. A mating pair were observed at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Mar 22nd. A flock of 30 adults circling over Slough Trading Estate on May 23rd suggesting breeding in the area. During July and August several records of up to five juveniles with adults were noted at Moor Green Lakes. Two recently fledged juveniles were seen at QMR on Jul 9th suggesting they were raised locally.

A colour-ringed 2nd winter bird ringed at Pitsea landfill, Essex (also recorded at Dinton Pastures on Dec 23rd, 2015) was seen at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 26th.

HERRING GULL (*argentatus*) *Larus argentatus argentatus* (EUROPEAN HERRING GULL)

There were several records of this race. The first was a 2/w at Lower Farm GP on Jan 1st, followed by an adult at the same location on Jan 4th (both NC). On Mar 26th a 3/s bird was at Lea Farm Lake (ABT). In the latter half of the year an adult was present in the roost at QMR on Aug 31st. This was followed by two birds in the pre-roost on the north bank at QMR on Sep 17th (both CDRH). An adult was seen at Remenham Hill on Sep 26th (CDRH) and then another adult at QMR on Oct 12th (DJB). On Nov 26th a group of six birds (five ad, one sub-ad) were on the north east bank of QMR (CDRH). The last sighting of the year was again at Lower Farm GP where there was an unaged bird on Dec 15th (NC).

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Scarce autumn/winter visitor (Not listed)

There were 21 records from four locations comprising of at least 12 birds. All sightings, except for one, were of single birds. The first record of the year was of a f/w at Lower Farm GP on Jan 5th and 7th (NC, ABT, JLS). The first record for QMR was a s/w on Jan 8th (CDRH). Possibly the same bird was present at Knowl Hill in a pre-roost flock on Jan 12th and again on the 14th (CDRH) and at Knowl Hill landfill on Jan 25th (CDRH). A f/w was seen at QMR on the north east bank briefly on Jan 21st (CDRH). During March two birds were seen at QMR. A large f/w seen on Mar 11th and on four subsequent occasions, lastly on April 1st, was joined on Mar 18th by a s/w presumed to be the same as the Jan 8th bird. This was the only occasion when two birds were seen together (all CDRH).

The first late summer record was a juvenile at QMR on Aug 27th and 29th (CDRH), which had a yellow ring and presumed to be of Polish or east German origin. At Lower Farm GP a f/w was seen on Aug 28th (NC, IW). During September a f/w was at QMR on Sep 12th and 16th, and another much smaller f/w on Sep 24th (CDRH). Thereafter the following records were all at QMR; a f/w on Nov 6th and 27th, a near adult on Nov 8th, a s/w on Nov 24th, a f/w on Dec 18th, an adult on Dec 19th, and lastly a small f/w on Dec 26th (CDRH).

Year	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Approx. no. of birds	2	2	4	11	23	12	8	16	18	11	9	15	18	11	19	8	12

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Uncommon but increasing autumn passage migrant, a few winter (Amber Listed)

Recorded in 11 months of the year there being no records in March (although there were late reports of birds at Englefield and Fobney during March). There were 83 records in total with a typical peak in late summer into the autumn with birds remaining into the winter before moving away after February. Most records at the beginning of the year were of a few individuals at Lower farm GP, Newbury, a well watched site. The peak count was of six birds there on Jan 4th (NC, R Wyatt). A higher count than this was not recorded until July 16th with 10 birds at least at QMR (CDRH). The highest single count of the year was of 13 birds

(10 ads, one sub ad, two juvs) at QMR on Aug 27th (CDRH). This was not a particularly high count in comparison to previous years. Away from QMR, 10 birds were seen in the roost at Moor Green GPs Oct 11th (RMC). Thereafter the highest count before the year end was of three (one f/w, one s/w, one ad) at QMR on Dec 27th (CDRH). (The table below does not include the two March records received just before publication.)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Horton GPs	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lower Farm GP	6	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	1
Moatlands GPs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Moor Green Lakes NR	–	2	–	–	–	–	1	–	3	10	1	2
Queen Mother Reservoir	3	1	–	3	–	1	10	13	5	4	3	3
Thatcham Marsh	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Theale GPs	3	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	–	1	2
Wraysbury GPs	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	–	1	–	–	1	–	1	–	2	–	2	1
Number of birds	–	1	–	–	1	–	3	–	7	–	2	1

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, increasing in summer and now breeding (Amber Listed)

There were 626 records from 87 locations with 38 of the records of counts over 100 and 12 counts of over 1,000 birds. The highest count was 6,000 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 13th. However, most of the 1,000+ counts at Lower Farm GP ranged between 1,500 and 3,500 during the period November to February. The only other locations with 1,000+ birds were Moor Green Lakes (2150) on Jan 11th, Sole Farm, Boxford (1,000) on Jan 15th and Theale Main GP with 1,700 on Sep 27th and 1,200 on Oct 20th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	2	2	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5
Great Meadow Pond	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	1
Jubilee River	1	–	3	3	2	4	1	–	–	–	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	–	5	3	5	6	6	1	2	1	2	–	4
Lower Farm GP	6000	2000	7	8	7	5	28	700	13	28	3500	2500
Moatlands GPs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	120
Moor Green Lakes NR	10	200	3	2	4	8	2	13	550	2150	500	50
Padworth Lane GP	–	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pingewood GPs	–	–	–	–	–	3	1	–	–	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	5	–	8	2	1	4	20	40	12	30	–	1
Thatcham Marsh	87	23	5	3	15	4	2	5	9	5	7	3
Theale GPs	3	1	1	1	1	20	10	10	1700	1200	10	–
Woolhampton GPs	1	–	–	1	3	3	–	–	–	–	2	–
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	22	22	12	15	10	16	14	12	10	9	11	10
Number of birds	1424	652	80	35	43	164	166	560	218	318	207	224

The only direct evidence of breeding was at two locations. At QMR where this species bred for the first time on the central water tower, breeding was confirmed on Jun 18th with a bird seen sitting on a nest, then chicks were seen on Jul 16th and fledged birds on Jul 23rd. The other location was on a chimney of a Victorian house in Reading where a pair were

seeing tending to chicks in a nest on Jul 7th. Indirect evidence relates to a pair seen mating at Dinton Pastures CP at Sandford Lake on March 22nd and at Lea Farm Lake on March 24th possibly the same pair. At Fobney Meadows, Reading, a flock of 20 birds that included 10 juveniles probably of local origin was present on Jul 22nd. A few juveniles were seen at Theale Main GP on Jul 24th. Three juveniles were seen at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 15th and Sep 13th, and a juvenile was seen at Roden Down, Compton on Sep 20th.

SANDWICH TERN *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Eighteen birds occurred on eight dates, with 12 of these during the autumn passage. The first sighting of the year was of a single bird flying around Hosehill Lake LNR in the evening of Apr 4th (DFI). On Apr 12th a single bird completed one circuit of the reservoir at QMR before flying west (CDRH). The following day two birds were present in the evening of Apr 13th at QMR before flying east (CDRH). On May 10th a single bird was seen sat on a post on Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP at 11:45 (PSc). On Jun 16th a single adult flew through Horton GPs (CDRH).

On Sep 8th there was one at Hosehill Lake (AVL), on Sep 14th three birds (two ad, one imm) were at Lower Farm GP, Newbury (NC) and three birds were calling and circling over Poyle (CDRH). Lastly five birds flew in from the north east at QMR before continuing south west after 12 minutes, on Sep 16th (CDRH).

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Scarce passage migrant

Since 2000 this species has been recorded almost annually (exceptions being for 2001, 2009 and 2010) on a total of 22 dates, with most records being of single birds. During this period records of two birds together occurred on just two dates and of three birds together on two dates. In this context, this year was unusual. There was only one spring record of two birds together at QMR on May 12th (CDRH). However, on Aug 19th a total of 16 birds occurred in the county, with four at Lower farm GP and 12 at QMR. At Lower Farm GP the party of four comprised of an adult and three juveniles (NC, IW) in heavy rain. Three of these birds flew off when the rain cleared leaving a juvenile remaining for the rest of the day (ABT). At QMR, a party of six birds at 09:30 increased to 12 after heavy rain at 11:00 with all birds departing at 11:15 (CDRH). There has been only one year in which the total in a year has exceeded 16, this being 1983 when 18 birds occurred. The party of 12 at QMR was the highest ever recorded in the county for a single party.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

The first record for the year was on Apr 2nd at QMR (CDRH) which flew in and landed on a raft. The last for the year was at Rowney Predator Lake, Woolhampton GPs on Oct 10th (WeBS). Five hundred and fifty-five records were received from 66 locations although breeding was attempted at only 10 locations. The largest flock was recorded at QMR where 55 birds were seen on Jul 14th. About 50 birds were still present on Jul 27th the majority being juveniles and thereafter 40 on Jul 14th and 35 on Jul 22nd. Other notable flocks were 43 at Lower farm GP on Aug 19th which included a number of w/p adults; 32 at Theale MP on Jul 24th; 30 over Poyle on Sep 8th; 27 on May 12th at Moadlands GP; 27 on Aug 8th at Theale Main GP; 25 on BA pit, Wraysbury GPs on Apr 29th and 24 on Jun 14th at Lea Farm Lake.

Ascertaining the success of breeding at each location is fraught with difficulty because of the paucity and randomness of the data. The following summarises the level of success for each location. At Hosehill LNR two pairs were observed trying to nest on the island on Jun 1st. Thereafter a single bird was seen sitting on a nest on Jun 16th and 20th. No further data was provided. At Lea Farm Lake four birds were sitting on nests on Jun 28th. Five juveniles were seen on Aug 1st. At Loddon NR 12 occupied nests were observed on May 16th, but no data was received thereafter, although observation was difficult later due to long grass. Three pairs nested on the tern rafts at Lower Farm GP and five chicks were noted on Jul 20th. At Moor Green Lakes four pairs were nesting on the island on May 29th, only one chick was seen on Jul 8th and by Jul 16th the nests may have all failed. At QMR, three pairs were nesting on the roof of the pier tower from June 1st to Jul 3rd at least. On Jul 25th of the 50 birds seen a majority were juveniles, presumably not all resulting from breeding at QMR. At Rowney Predator Lake, Woolhampton GPs, a single pair bred with eggs visible on May 21st, chicks on June 22nd and fledged birds on Jul 9th. At Summerleaze GP, six birds were seen sitting on nest on May 22nd, 12 chicks on July 7th with six airborne juveniles on Jul 6th. Three pairs bred on rafts at Thatcham Discovery Centre but only three chicks seen on June 21st, then two fledglings on Jun 30th and one juvenile on Jul 19th. Lastly, two chicks were seen on Jul 10th and two juveniles on Sep 7th on the raft at Theale Main GP, where a pair bred.

In summary at least 37 pairs bred, with a bare minimum of 30 juveniles being fledged but quite possibly at least twice that number of juveniles.

Common Tern monthly maximum counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	–	–	–	2	–	–	6	–	–	–	–	–
Burghfield GPs	–	–	–	2	1	–	3	4	–	–	–	–
Dinton Pastures CP	–	–	–	3	10	12	6	–	–	–	–	–
Dorney Wetlands	–	–	–	5	31	7	6	2	–	–	–	–
Great Meadow Pond	–	–	–	–	1	1	5	–	–	–	–	–
Horton GPs	–	–	–	–	18	–	–	–	6	–	–	–
Lea Farm Lake	–	–	–	4	16	24	21	20	2	–	–	–
Lower Farm GP	–	–	–	1	6	8	12	43	1	1	–	–
Moatlands GPs	–	–	–	2	27	–	11	15	–	–	–	–
Moor Green Lakes NR	–	–	–	4	12	6	4	1	–	–	–	–
Padworth Lane GP	–	–	–	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Queen Mother Reservoir	–	–	–	3	34	8	50	20	11	–	–	–
Thatcham Marsh	–	–	–	3	7	6	7	3	–	–	–	–
Theale GPs	–	–	–	17	12	8	32	28	8	–	–	–
Twyford GPs	–	–	–	2	13	4	2	1	–	–	–	–
Woolhampton GPs	–	–	–	2	5	4	7	8	3	–	–	–
Wraysbury GPs	–	–	–	25	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	–	–	–	4	23	14	10	4	1	–	–	–
Number of birds	–	–	–	11	55	39	15	9	30	–	–	–

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

An above average year for total number of birds recorded, being the fourth highest count since 2000, and seen at six sites on nine dates. The first record of a single adult was on April 9th at QMR (CDRH), this being the second earliest record. The next record was of two birds again at QMR on Apr 15th (CDRH). On Apr 18th (PF) a single bird was noted flying north over Woodley. A flock of 11 birds were seen for four minutes at QMR on Apr 22nd (CDRH) before flying east. On Apr 24th a single bird was seen from Sheffield Bottom picnic site (CMB). The last April record was of two birds on the Apr 29th over Dinton Pastures CP (MC). The first May record was on May 11th (ABT) when a flock of six were seen over Theale MP at 08:35. The last record for the month was a single bird at Horton GPs on May 30th (CDRH).

The species was recorded on only one date on the return passage. This was on Sep 5th when during poor weather conditions a tight flock of 25 birds were seen at about 08:00, calling frequently, before departing south east at 08:20 (ABT, DJB). Later, a further two flocks, one of six at 09:30 staying for 15mins before departing east north east, and of 11 at 17:30 which departed south west (CDRH).

Year	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No of Spring Birds	1	1	47	21	40	122	62	12	38	6	29	19	153	35	14	21	27
No of Autumn Birds	0	5	0	17	2	2	14	5	13	8	4	19	5	5	3	8	42
Year Total	1	6	47	38	42	124	76	17	51	14	33	38	158	40	17	29	69

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

This species was recorded on 10 dates in the year comprising a total of 19 birds which appears to continue a trend of lower annual totals in recent years. The first record of the year was two birds at Fobney Island on May 5th. A single bird was present in the afternoon at Theale Main GP on May 6th, with two birds present in the evening at the same location on May 8th. On May 10th a further two birds were flying over Hosehill Lake LNR from 08:04 until 17:55 at least. The following day on May 11th a single bird was on Theale Main GP early in the morning, whilst at Dinton Pastures CP a single bird was ranging between Lea Farm, Lavell's and Sandford Lakes. The remaining May record was of two birds over Cock Marsh on May 12th. There was a single record for June, with one bird at Theale Main GP on Jun 6th.

The return passage started with a single juvenile in the afternoon at Theale Main GP on Aug 18th. Then on Aug 19th a juvenile was present at QMR and a moulting adult at Colnbrook North lake; with another single bird in the evening at Moor Green Lakes NR. On Sep 7th three birds were seen at QMR, two that flew off east at 10:14 followed by another single bird for five minutes only at 12:10.

Year	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No of Spring Birds	84	41	5	18	14	12	20	18	75	42	11	28	12	5	1	17	12
No of Autumn Birds	5	23	21	20	50	12	45	1	24	59	32	74	5	2	12	21	7
Year Total	89	64	26	38	64	24	65	19	99	101	43	102	17	7	13	38	19

ROCK DOVE/FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Common urban resident (Wild Rock Dove is Green Listed)

This species remains under-recorded with just 130 records submitted for the year. **First winter:** the maximum counts during this period were 28 on Jan 25th in Wokingham and 31 on Feb 12th at Hungerford. **Breeding:** no records of confirmed breeding were received; probable breeding only being recorded from Enborne. Peak counts during the breeding season / summer were of 20 on Jun 23rd at Woodspeen, 20 on Jul 5th at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre and 30 at Lower Farm GP on Jul 13th. **Autumn/second winter:** a flock of 400+ on Oct 18th at Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill was the largest gathering recorded since at least 600 were seen at Woodlands Park Fields, Maidenhead on September 18th, 2013. Two were seen accompanying a movement of Wood Pigeon south over Woose Hill, Wokingham early morning of Nov 11th.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common resident and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

First winter: reported widely in generally single figures with the highest counts being of 80 at Brand's Hill, Colnbrook, in a sunflower field, on Jan 10th, 100 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Jan 15th, 140 at Brand's Hill on Jan 23rd, 200 over the Colnbrook landfill site on Jan 30th and Feb 7th and at least 60 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Feb 14th. **Spring/summer:** flocks continued to be seen during the early spring, the largest being 60 on a recently re-seeded field at Penclose Wood, North Heath on Apr 3rd, 80 on Compton Downs on Apr 13th and 550 on Woodlands Park Fields on Apr 20th. During the summer a peak count of 163 on Smith's Lawn, Windsor Great Park on Jun 4th had dropped to 150 by Jun 11th. Though reported extensively through the spring / summer, albeit in diminishing numbers, evidence of possible breeding / breeding was reported from just nine sites: in song at Woodley Hill House on Apr 3rd, a juvenile in a Woose Hill, Wokingham garden on Apr 14th, displaying at Padworth Lane GP on Apr 21st, a pair inspecting a possible nest site at Mill Ride, Ascot on Apr 25th, at a nest cavity Lightlands Lane, Cookham on Apr 28th, two territories at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor on May 1st and May 15th, one still in song there on Jul 3rd, in song at Odney Club Sports Ground on May 4th, a nesting pair in an Ascot garden on May 7th and a half-grown chick, ringed, at Aldermaston GPs on Jul 12th. **Autumn/second winter:** the first notable gathering was of 36 at Boxford on Sep 30th with 28 at Englefield on Oct 2nd, 50 at Woodlands Park Fields on Oct 10th, 109 in two feeding flocks at Summerlease GPs, Maidenhead on Oct 17th, at least 450 at Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill on Oct 18th, 530 at Woodlands Park Fields on Oct 27th (this site holding 200 on August 22nd 2015 and a peak count of 560 on September 5th 2014) with a flock of c.220 on a recently-ploughed field at Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields on Nov 4th building to c.300 by Nov 7th. The only movement of birds recorded during this period was a singleton accompanying Wood Pigeon south over Woose Hill, Wokingham early morning of Nov 11th.

WOODPIGEON (COMMON WOOD PIGEON) *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

First winter: widely reported across the county with three figure counts being 700 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Jan 15th, 110 at Combe Wood, Combe on Jan 19th, 160 at Bagnor on Feb 4th, 200 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Feb 10th, 150 at Manor Farm, Crookham on Feb 12th, 170 at Waltham St. Lawrence on Feb 17th, 300 at White Waltham Airfield on Feb 22nd, 425 at Cookham and 500 at Malders Lane, Maidenhead on Feb 23rd, 100 at The Kennet & Avon Canal, Ufton on Feb 25th, 300 at Woodspeen on Mar 11th, 460 at Duke's Lane, Windsor on Mar 11th and 110 at Bisham on Mar 20th. The only movement noted

during this period was of 250 birds north, in groups of 20 – 50, early morning at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst on Mar 22nd. **Spring/summer:** the only reports of breeding received were of eggs dislodged from a nest at Cookham Rise by a storm on Mar 28th, an occupied nest at Cookham on Apr 28th, a pair building a nest within dense Hawthorn *Crataegus* sp. hedging at Cookham Rise on May 4th, a juvenile in a Cookham Rise garden on Jun 26th and at least 30 juveniles in the Great Meadow Pond Windsor area on Jun 26th. A juvenile was then recorded in a Cookham Rise garden on Jul 21st, a further eight at Strand water, Cookham on Oct 10th. **Autumn/second winter:** autumnal movement commenced on Oct 28th with birds, totalling at least 273 and with almost all moving directly south, being noted over Greenham Common, (193) and Woose Hill, Wokingham, (80). 100 then moved S / SE in two groups over Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP early morning with an additional 1566 S, between 07:30 and 08:00, over Swinley Park on Nov 2nd. 650 S early morning over Woose Hill, Wokingham on Nov 3rd, 400 S over Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP and 62 S over Moor Green Lakes NR on Nov 6th with the final movement recorded being of 200 S over Coppid Beech Roundabout, Binfield on Nov 17th. Three figure counts of settled birds during the late year were restricted to 600 on Woodlands Park Fields on Oct 10th, 440 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 28th, 150 at Bury Lane, West Ilsley on Nov 3rd with at least 500 there on Dec 1st, 125 at Welford on Dec 1st, 200 at Combe Bottom, Combe on Dec 2nd and 250 at Englefield on Dec 27th.

TURTLE DOVE (EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE) *Streptopelia turtur*

Now an uncommon and extremely local summer visitor which continues to decline (Red Listed)

The decline of this species noted in the county continued with possibly just a single bird being recorded, a maximum of two at most.

A male in song at Padworth Common was possibly a returning bird from 2015, being first noted on May 6th (KEM) and then again on May 7th (MSFW), May 8th, May 12th and Jun 5th (TGB). A bird at Padworth Lane GP during this bird's stay, on May 15th (MFW), may have been the same.

Turtle Dove has now been added to the list of species classified as "Rare Breeding Birds", those reported on by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel where the national population is believed to be close to or less than 2,000 breeding pairs. The most recent population estimate being just 1,240 pairs.

COLLARED DOVE (EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE) *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common resident (Green Listed)

As stated in previous reports, this species continues to be widely reported across the county with few double figure counts and little evidence of breeding being recorded. **First winter:** the highest counts were of 35 on the island at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre on Jan 3rd and 37 there on Feb 9th. All other double figure counts during this period were from the same site excluding 11 at Pinkneys Green on Jan 5th and 12 on Feb 1st with 13 at White Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP on Feb 2nd. **Summer:** the only breeding evidence received was of copulation at Lundy Lane, Reading on Jun 6th. During this period the largest gatherings reported were of nine at Lundy Lane, Reading on Aug 26th and seven in Speen Moor Plantation gardens on Jul 30th. **Autumn/second winter:** the first autumnal double-figure count was of 14 at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre on Sep 20th with this site having a further three before the year's end, peaking at 24 on Nov 22nd and 35 on Dec 23rd. Other gatherings noted were of 14 at Amity Street, Reading on Oct 5th, ten at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor on Oct 9th and Twyford on Oct 31st.

CUCKOO (COMMON CUCKOO) *Cuculus canorus*

Locally common though declining summer visitor (Red Listed)

Reported from a minimum of 78 sites, this comparing with 72 in 2015 and 96 in 2014. Birds were recorded within 80 1km squares, 37 being in west Berkshire (46.25%), 26 (32.5%) mid Berkshire and 17 (21.25%) east Berkshire sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of reported sites	0	0	0	37	55	18	0	1	0	0	0	0
Minimum number of birds	0	0	0	41	63	21	0	2	0	0	0	0

Spring: the first of the year was at Eling on Apr 8th, followed by birds at Slough SF on Apr 9th and Searle's Farm Lane GPs on Apr 10th. Birds were then recorded on a daily and increasing basis from Apr 12th through to May 12th and then on a near daily basis from May 14th through to Jun 22nd. The only sites / areas that held more than two were Whistley Green, Hurst on Apr 29th, Marsh Benham on May 4th, Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP on May 7th and Lea Farm Lake, Hurst on May 19th; all producing three birds. No confirmed breeding was reported with the only juveniles recorded being the last birds of the year, at Englefield on Aug 5th and Aug 6th, two being seen together on the latter date.

BARN OWL (WESTERN BARN OWL) *Tyto alba*

Uncommon but widespread resident (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

105 reports of Barn Owl were received for 2016, this down from the 180 reports in 2015 (-42%), 148 in 2014 (-29%) and 248 in 2013 (-57.6%). Birds were seen / heard within 70 1km squares, 39 (55.7%) in west Berkshire, 16 (22.9%) mid Berkshire and 15 (21.4%) east Berkshire. Sightings at Moor Green Lakes constituted 21.9% of all those received, continuing the trend noted in recent years of this being the most reliable site to encounter the species in the county e.g. 38% of sightings in 2015 and 39% in 2014. Two nest boxes there were reported as possibly occupied / occupied but no news of fledging success was received. Of nests that were reported occupied two were in west Berkshire, with a further two in mid Berkshire. Further to these records The Barn Owl Group had another successful year with 102 believed to have fledged from their 174 nest boxes in west Berkshire – this then the second best year the group has had, after 2014, a peak year for voles *Microtidae* sp. when 173 fledged, and a significant advance on the 31 of 2015 when the cyclical reduction in voles would have impacted on the breeding success of the owls. A summary of the Group's last six years recording is below:

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of Barn Owl boxes checked	111	123	119	125	136	174
No. of chicks estimated to have fledged	54	72	0	173	31	102
No. of boxes with fledged chicks	18	27	0	45	15	40
% of successful boxes	16.2	22	0	36	11	23
Average brood size	3.0	2.67	0	3.84	2.1	2.55

Two ring recoveries were brought to the attention of The Barn Owl Group: a bird on the A4 near Halfway on Jun 23rd had been ringed at Elcot on 1st September 2014. It had moved less than a mile from the ringing point in the 21 months before its demise. A partially eaten bird found at Holt Farmhouse, Kintbury on Apr 8th had been ringed at Winterbourne on 10th August 2015, this having travelled roughly eight miles in the eight months before it also came to an untimely end.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Widespread resident, common in suitable habitat including some urban areas (Green Listed)

The 145 records received of this species made it by far the most commonly recorded of the five owl species noted annually in the county, the other four accruing just 185 records between them during 2016. Reports from 96 1km squares were made up of 20 (20.8%) in west Berkshire, 29 (30.2%) mid Berkshire and 47 (49%) east Berkshire. **First winter:** the only record of multiple birds heard calling during the early year was of three at Long Down, Little Sandhurst on Jan 24th. Birds noted calling during this period were at Combe Wood, Combe on Jan 28th, Windsor Great Park on Feb 4th, Buckle Lane, Moss End on Feb 16th and Hell Corner Farm, Inkpen on Mar 13th. **Breeding:** the earliest young reported were at Padworth Common on Apr 17th where two nests both held three pulli, a further nest three eggs. This site was the only one where multiple nests were reported. Confirmed breeding was reported from a further 14 sites: Hailey Copse, Peasemore, Lambourn Woodlands, Lot Wood, Warren Row, Brimpton, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Sunninghill Park, Wargrave Marsh, Whiteknights Park and Lake, Reading, Roundoak Piece, Padworth, Snelsmore Common CP, Remenham, Sonning Lock, River Thames, Hell Corner Farm, Inkpen and Mill Ride, Ascot. **Autumn/second winter:** birds remained frequently recorded and vocal to the year's end, a high count of six at Lower Green, Inkpen on Oct 17th being most notable, three at Little Sandhurst on Sep 10th and Woolley Down on Oct 29th being the only other counts over two. A grey morph was seen in Combe Wood, Combe on Dec 22nd.

Two roadkill were reported; at Hawthorn Hill on Mar 24th a Red Kite *Milvus milvus* was trying to feed off one, and the other on the A4 at Woolhampton on Jul 8th.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Widespread resident, evidence of decline in recent years (Introduced species so not listed)

Records were received from a maximum of 31 sites and 30 1km squares, reflecting the continuing downward population trend in the county; these figures the worst, to date, in the 21st century. Squares in east Berkshire accounted for 23.3% of the sites, mid Berkshire 30% and west Berkshire 46.7%. The number of sites where birds have been found from 2000 to the present day are shown in the table.

Year	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
No. of sites	58	50	68	59	73	75	63	67	63	60	79	65	51	44	47	38*	31

* 1km squares recorded in.

The only successful breeding reported was from Whiteknights Park and Lake, Reading, where at least one juvenile was heard in a nest hole on Jun 9th and an adult was feeding young on Jun 10th, and Winterbourne on Jun 22nd where a young-occupied nest was reported. Other pairs / possibly pairings were reported from Wokingham STW, Peacocks Meadow, Bracknell, Fobney Meadow, Reading, Park View Farm, Wokingham, Enborne, Winkfield and Windsor Great Park. None of the c.12 nests monitored by The Barn Owl Group were successful, chicks in one at Severall's Barn found to have perished. One of the Barn Owl boxes monitored by the Group at Winterbourne was however used effectively, three chicks fledging. Excluding this brood, three together at Cookham on Aug 18th was the only count noted of more than two together.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

First winter: following no reports from the downland winter roost in late 2015 just one was seen in the area, the final sighting being on Feb 29th; an aerial bird in dispute with Red Kite

Milvus milvus. All other reports received were also of singletons: Woolley Down on Jan 30th, Larks Hill, Bracknell on Feb 4th and Padworth Lane GP on Mar 10th.

Spring/summer: further singletons were seen at Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields on Apr 7th, 9th and 11th, Ruscombe on Apr 18th, Greenham Common on Apr 23rd, Wellbottom Down, Lambourn on May 22nd and Moor Green Lakes, also on May 22nd. The final bird of this period was seen in ‘west Berks’ on the unusual dates of Jul 14th and 21st.

Second winter: the first bird of the late year was moving north, with a retinue of mobbing corvids, over Lowbury Hill, Compton on Nov 3rd. Two were then seen at the downland winter roost at dusk, another after dark at Compton Downs on Nov 11th. The winter roost held at least three birds to the year’s end.

NIGHTJAR (EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR) *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Regular summer visitor in small but fairly stable numbers in suitable habitat (Red Listed)

The first birds of the year were at Bucklebury Common BBOWT and Roundoak Piece, Padworth on May 7th. By the end of May birds had been recorded at a further seven sites.

	Territories (churring males)
Bucklebury Common	2 (3)
Forest Park, Bracknell	1
Greenham Common	3 (6)
North Ascot	1
Nalder Population	0 (1)
Padworth Common	3 (4)
Paices Wood, Wasing	1
Roundoak Piece	4
South Ascot	1
Sunninghill Park	2
Swinley Forest area	14 (16)
Swinley Park	3
Wellington College Heath	1
Total	36

The maximum number of birds reported for a site, where different, is shown in parenthesis.

As noted in the 2015 Annual Report, there were no reports from several sites where birds have held territory previously, these including Snelsmore Common, Windsor Forest and Sunninghill Park. Reports, negative or otherwise, from these and other formerly occupied sites would be appreciated. No confirmed case of breeding or juveniles were reported. Two birds were noted churring to Aug 6th at Roundoak Piece, Padworth with these being the penultimate birds of the year, an assumed migrant adult male in Alders by the River Loddon, Lavell’s Lake, Dinton Pastures CP / Lea Farm Lake, Hurst during the evening of Aug 30th being the last.

SWIFT (COMMON SWIFT) *Apus apus*

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

Spring: the first record was a single among over 1000 hirundines on Apr 16th at Theale Main GP, a date very much in line with recent years. The first three figure count was 150 at Moatlands GPs on Apr 28th. It is notable that such counts, during the spring months, were considerably down, both in terms of the totals seen and their frequency, compared with the last two years. This was particularly marked in the Theale GPs area (the most important in

the county for high counts in springtime) where a maximum of 1200 was observed in 2014 falling to 800 in 2015, but only 200 plus on Apr 29th at Theale Main GP in this year. This locality is always popular with observers, so a lack of coverage is unlikely to be the cause.

Summer: the tumbling count totals year on year, noted earlier in the Theale area, were not repeated at Queen Mother Reservoir where 300 plus were seen on Jun 25th, an improvement on the previous year and in line with 2014.

Breeding: a perennially difficult species from which to provide hard evidence of reproductive success with nest sites concealed, often high up, in older buildings from both urban and rural settings. Such localities tend to be less favoured for targeted regular and systematic ornithological attention and there appear to be a limited number of observers actively seeking and reporting breeding evidence. Some areas which provided confirmed records during the 2007 – 11 Atlas such as Slough/Windsor/Maidenhead and rural sites in the west, especially village churches, produced no records at all this year, so the species' current breeding status is unclear and warrants future greater attention.

Reports providing stronger evidence than birds being seen in suitable, and presumed regular, breeding habitat were predominantly from the Reading conurbation and from a single observer. Two birds were calling from two well established nest sites in Wilson Road on May 14th. Birds were also seen going under the eaves of houses at the following locations; one in Grovelands Road on Jun 25th, one at Tilehurst triangle on Jul 9th, two at a habitual site in South Street on Jul 13th and one opposite the TA Barracks in Oxford Road on Jul 20th. Outside Reading there were only two reports of this nature; four seen apparently nesting in the high school, Enborne Road, Newbury on Jun 26th and “two likely juveniles” were seen with adults at Crowthorne during July.

As usual there were reports of screaming aerial parties later in the summer suggesting possible breeding success though this is hard to quantify.

Autumn: as is invariably the case, sightings sharply declined in August with no pre-migration gatherings noted. The last record was a single seen flying south with Swallows and House Martins over Woodlands Park, Maidenhead on Sept 13th.

KINGFISHER (COMMON KINGFISHER) *Alcedo atthis*

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

This unmistakable bird is found county-wide wherever its staple diet of small fish (minnows, sticklebacks, bullheads and juvenile larger fish when available) exists. In Berkshire this could range from a relatively swift moving chalk stream to a gravel pit, lake, slow moving large river or canal.

Birds were recorded from 110 locations this year very much in line with previous years, as some of these are in adjacent grid squares, could represent some duplication in terms of individuals, again the geographical spread was county-wide wherever suitable habitat occurs.

The table below shows the monthly status based on the records received. Please note that records from the same grid square in the same month are assumed to be duplicates.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of Sites	23	20	25	29	18	16	24	30	30	34	23	12
Min Number of birds	30	22	35	39	24	17	31	43	44	47	27	14

The following list has tried to avoid duplication and includes still waters close to the rivers listed:

River	No. of Sites
River Blackwater	2
River Colne	2
The Cut	3
River Dun	2
The Emmbrook	3
River Enborne	3
Jubilee River	3
River Kennet and K. & A. Canal	30
River Lambourn	8
River Loddon*	5
Maidenhead Waterways	4
River Pang	2
River Thames	27
Other sites	16
	110

All records from Dinton Pastures are considered as one site.

Nearly all records were of one to three birds. There were two counts of four, which did not involve juveniles, both on the Thames upstream of Reading, from the same observer which occurred on Jan 10th at Streatley and Apr 24th at Lower Basildon.

Breeding evidence; there were 28 reports of two or more birds seen on the same day at the same location during the breeding season (March – July) of which eight mentioned behaviour consistent with being a definite pair. Firmer evidence was provided by two birds seen at a nest hole, regularly entering and leaving, in Dorney Wetlands on Apr 30th and two birds, one carrying a fish, seen at the Odney Club, Cookham on May 4th. In addition, one was seen entering a probable nest hole in a bank of the River Kennet at Burghfield on May 7th and an adult with two juveniles at Marsh Meadow Pool, Cookham on Aug 11th. During June and July up to two fledged young were seen at The Wilderness, Kintbury with a bird with a brood patch being trapped there on Jun 4th.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

Scarce resident whose numbers continue to decline (Red Listed)

The situation with this species has now reached critical with a disastrous decline from 12 sites producing reports in 2015 to a mere three in 2016 all in the Newbury area. The table below tells the depressing tale of a species heading for a county extinction. There was an apparent increase in the final years of the 2007-11 Atlas when observer coverage was assumed to be the chief driver. Since 2011 the decline has been marked despite a brief pause in 2014.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of Locations	25	18	18	31	29	21	15	15	12	3

The historical stronghold of Windsor Great Park and Forest where no less than seven tetrads produced confirmed breeding records in the 1987-9 Atlas, but yielding no sightings at all since 2012, is typical of this pattern countywide. Reasons are unclear but might be connected to competition from other tree hole nesters who are increasing (e.g. other woodpeckers). The most recent possible evidence of breeding was a juvenile ringed in September 2013 at Brimpton GPs which may not have been hatched in the county. The last definite record was a female feeding a juvenile in Windsor Great Park back in 2010.

This year's dismal sightings tally consisted of three reports of doubtless the same bird at Greenham Common on Jan 15th (JL) and on Mar 22nd (JL, IW). There was an apparent attempt at breeding activity with a male "in song" at Kintbury Cress Beds on Mar 25th and heard again four days later (RDW). Lastly, one flew over Shaw Church, Newbury on Aug 27th (JCh).

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common and increasing resident

This is the most common and widespread woodpecker which breeds throughout the county with the exceptions of some of the higher ground in the northwest and southwest and a few urban areas which lack suitable arboreal breeding habitat, typically deciduous or mixed woodland and copses. The increase in numbers in recent years may have adversely impacted its smaller woodpecker cousins.

The highest counts were both of six from the same observer at the same time of year from locations not very far apart. The first was at Enborne on Jun 8th and the second three days later at Thatcham Marsh. Five were also reported at Burghfield GPs on Mar 25th. There were no large counts from the forests in the east of the county – possibly a reflection of the species' increasingly common status though there were still 766 records submitted in total and a number reportedly taking peanuts at garden feeding stations.

Breeding: at least 21 pairs were noted of which 15 were confirmed to have bred at 12 sites again a comparatively modest tally though care must always be exercised in reading too much into non-survey data for species encountered frequently. The highest number of active nests at one location was four at Whiteknights Park, Reading on Jun 2nd.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Common resident (Amber Listed)

Records came from throughout the county, with the exceptions of the more open down land and the centres of some urban areas, due to the lack of suitable arboreal breeding habitat, though this species uses open areas and has a definite preference for deciduous vegetation. A number of records mention the species liking for areas of short cropped grass when feeding.

The highest three counts, two of which were higher than recent years, all came from the same location and did not reportedly involve juveniles. There were ten at Crookham Common Pools on Jul 20th with eight there six days earlier, and seven also at the same site on Sep 29th. The highest count elsewhere was six at Greenham Common on Mar 25th.

Breeding: there were eighteen records, slightly higher than the previous year and within the usual range. All of these were sightings of the distinctively marked juveniles, away from the nest sites, many being singles who had apparently departed the family group. This seems to be the easiest way to confirm breeding in this species as the occupied nests are much quieter than those of the Great Spotted Woodpecker.

KESTREL (COMMON KESTREL) *Falco tinnunculus*

Common and widespread resident (Amber Listed)

There were 620 records submitted this year, with the vast majority consisting of singles or pairs. Multiple counts, mostly family parties, were: five at Haw Farm, Ashampstead in June, four at Kintbury in June, three at Sheepdrove in February, three (a male and two young birds) in June at Leckhampstead, three well grown young in July at Kintbury, three in August at West Woodhay Down.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant which has increased in recent years (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

There were nine acceptable records: six from the new year into spring and the remainder from September onwards. There were three records from Cow Down in January, the first, a female/imm, on the 10th (ABT) then a male and a female (seen separately) on the 12th (ABT) with another reported on the same day (RCW) and on the 19th flying across the Ridgeway (L Ahlgren). In February a female type was seen stooping towards a Kestrel (PEH) on Valentine's day. Another flew through Midgham GP on Mar 1st (KEM). In the autumn there was a fem/1w at Wraysbury on Sep17th (CDRH). The remaining records were in Nov; a fem/1w at Bury Down (RRi) and two records from Lambourn. A male attacking a linnet flock on the 11th (CDRH) and fem/1w on the 22nd (CDRH).

HOBBY (EURASIAN HOBBY) *Falco subbuteo*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Schedule One)

Regularly recorded from across the county, but particularly from sites with large gatherings of hirundines, commencing with one at Kintbury on Apr 11th. Maximum counts were as follows: twenty at Woolhampton GPs on May 15th, fifteen there on the 14th, 16th and 10 on the 17th. Horton had nine hawking on May 5th and again on the 15th, seven at Woolhampton on Jun 4th, six at Jubilee River May 15th and Woolhampton May 16th. Five at Moatlands May 1st and at Wraysbury Jun 4th. The remaining records, consisting of nearly 380 submissions, were mainly of ones and twos with nine records of threes and fours. There were twenty reports including references to juveniles. The last record of the year was at Wokingham Oct 15th. **Breeding:** there were no instances of confirmed breeding, but a pair were present through the summer at a site in east Berks.

PEREGRINE (PEREGRINE FALCON) *Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon but increasing visitor which bred in the county for the first time in 2010 (Schedule One)

An increasingly typical year with several long-staying birds at traditional sites. The long stayers included a pair that was present all year on the Fujitsu building in Bracknell. There was also a pair in the Theale area all year. There were two present for the entire year at Queen Mother Reservoir and a juvenile seen there from August onwards and one or two birds around Fobney Meadows from January until May and then a report in November. There were reports of a single bird throughout the year at Lower Farm with an adult and juvenile in December. There were also, of course, many one-off sightings from across the county. **Breeding:** breeding was confirmed at one site and suspected at three others.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET (ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET)

Psittacula krameri

Common resident in the east of the county, less common but increasing elsewhere

Although still mainly prevalent in the east of the county, this established feral species continues to spread westwards. In mid-Berks the bird is now a common daily occurrence in urban areas, such as Bracknell, where up to 45 have been seen flying to roost. The two most westerly records came from Thatcham, where one was heard flying over on Mar 21st, and Hart's Hill Upper Bucklebury where one was a surprise addition to a BBS survey on May 8th. Other unexpected reports came from Frogmill Spinney, Hurley (three dates in January, March and May), between Remenham and Greenlands (two dates) and Wargrave.

Maximum counts in the east were all in the **Autumn**: the roost by the M4 near Slough peaked at 1500 on Aug 1st, there were 500+ at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park on Oct 9th, 415 were counted flying over Dorney Wetlands in 40 minutes on Oct 21st and the year's highest count of 2,000 roosted at Eltham Avenue, Slough on Oct 31st. Despite their prevalence there were no confirmed breeding records. Breeding was suspected in the Lily Hill Park area of northwest Bracknell and a pair were seen prospecting a hole in a tree at Bray GPs but were usurped by a pair of Jackdaws.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce winter visitor

Just two individuals reported, both in the second winter period. One at Cow Down, Oct 26th (NC) until Dec 1st (RR). The second individual reported at Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 26th (DJB), staying until Dec 15th (JOB) after which it was only seen over the border in Surrey!

JAY (EURASIAN JAY) *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident

First winter: no large counts, nine on Mar 31st Burgfield GPs, seven Waltham St Lawrence Feb 17th, seven on Jan 21st Windsor Great Park. **Spring/summer**: as usual, other than five on May 5th at Twyford, reported across the County, with mostly one to three birds reported. **Autumn/second winter**: nine on Sept 28th at Moor Green Lakes, six on Oct 2nd again at Moor Green Lakes. The remaining records were again of mostly one to three birds.

MAGPIE (EURASIAN MAGPIE) *Pica pica*

Abundant breeding resident

There were four roost counts above 30 this year; the highest counts coming from Wokingham STW: 78 on Jan 6th, 40 on Jan 20th, 55 on Jan 25th. 29 on Jan 24th at Streatley, 24 at Pinkney's Green on Feb 2nd, 37 at Enborne on Feb 26th, 25 on Mar 23rd at Braywick Nature Centre, 28 at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury on Apr 30th, 42 at Dorney Wetlands on Nov 6th, 60 in a roost at Sandhurst STW on Dec 27th.

JACKDAW (WESTERN JACKDAW) *Corvus monedula*

Abundant breeding resident

Widespread across the County, larger counts of three hundred on Jan 29th Warren Row, 140 on Mar 11th Windsor Great park, 150 Hambledon lock on Jul 8th, at least two hundred at Tilehurst on Nov 16th and 510 at Sandhurst STW on Dec 27th.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Abundant breeding resident especially in rural Berkshire

240 at Bury Down Jan 15th, 135 at Bury Down on Feb 10th, 160 at RAF Welford on Apr 14th. The highest count of 280 was at Leckhampstead on Jun 5th and the last high count was 197 at Sheepdrove on Jun 23rd. **Breeding**: at least 15, mainly small, Rookeries counted during the spring.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant breeding resident

High counts involved 65 at Bisham on Mar 20th, 55 at Charvil on Feb 2nd, fifty at Manor Farm, Brimpton on Jun 7th, all other records were of counts below 50 and despite a widespread distribution fewer than thirty breeding records were reported.

RAVEN (NORTHERN RAVEN) *Corvus corax*

Scarce but increasing visitor, now breeds

Records were received from over 100 locations, with 53 sites in west Berkshire, 23 in mid Berks and 27 from the east of the county. The stronghold remains around Combe and Walbury Hill, with more than 100 records received with remarkably high counts of thirty in both the Spring, Inkpen Hill Apr 3rd and in the Autumn, Walbury Hill Oct 4th. Indeed, all the double-figure counts were from these locations. A notable record from the East of the county of a family of two adults and four juveniles at Horton Fields on Jul 4th is evidence of the movement across the county. Smaller counts were widespread across the county and not just in winter periods, suggesting established breeding across the county where habitats are suitable: five at Upper Bucklebury on Mar 6th, four at Pingewood GP on Apr 14th, 30 at Walbury Hill on Oct 4th, four at Greenham Common on Nov 2nd and four at Lower Farm GP on Dec 3rd.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common and locally abundant resident (Green Listed)

Recorded this year from 97 different locations across the county, with many reports from garden feeders, more often in the winter periods. **Breeding:** a pair were seen going into a bird box on May 12th in a Lower Earley garden. One juvenile was observed at peanuts at Bradley Wood Farm, Welford on Jun 16th, with two on Jun 26th. The maximum count for the year was 25 at Snelsmore Common CP on Dec 28th. An adult male in moult was retrapped in Midgham GP quarry on Jul 24th. It had been originally ringed at Loxley, Crookham Common feeders in November 2015. Ringing records from the BTO website show that (L324297) originally ringed as a first-year bird in September 2010 at Greenham Common, has been recaptured nearly every single year at the same site, including Nov 13th this year, making it at least six years, one month and 25 days old. Ringing totals for the year were 16 pulli, 79 juveniles, 91 adults and 143 retraps. Two rings were recovered, with one from as far away as Belgium!

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

A locally common resident in West Berks and an uncommon resident in Mid and East Berks where the national decline has been more pronounced (Red Listed)

Reported from 58 locations across the county, with 40 in west Berkshire (SU60 westwards), 13 in mid Berkshire (SU60-SU80) and only five in east Berkshire (SU80 eastwards). This indicates a continuing westerly bias of populations. Below is a table of individual bird reports by month, with numbers of juveniles seen in brackets: -

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
west Berkshire	28	22	21	23	18	14 (1)	9	4	6	17	14	11
mid Berkshire	2	6	7	5	3	0	0	3 (3)	1	2	4	6
east Berkshire	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

Breeding: evidence of young came from just three sites. An adult feeding a juvenile at Marsh Benham on Jun 23rd and an adult seen with three juveniles in bushes on the west bank of Theale Main GP on Aug 2nd. Fledged juveniles were also seen at The Wilderness, Kintbury on Jun 25th and Jul 3rd. Food carrying and/or singing birds were noted at eight other locations. The maximum count was of seven in the Combe area on Jan 16th, between Combe Church and the Wood. Five were calling and two singing. After several visits to Thrift Woods, Maidenhead, one observer has come to the conclusion that this species is no longer present! (Although further visits are planned for future years.) Records from the BTO website state that no pulli, 16 juveniles, 17 adults and five unaged birds were ringed, with 40 birds retrapped. As mentioned in the 2015 report (Y881440), a first-year female ringed

in October 2012 at Harvey's Meadow, near Hungerford, was caught again at the same site on Feb 29th for its fifth time. This made it at least three years, four months and two days old. Another (L645682) full-grown bird, which was originally ringed in November 2010 at Greenham Common, was caught again on Jan 24th at the same site, making it at least five years, two months and ten days old.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

Very scarce and declining resident now confined to West Berkshire (Red Listed)

As in the recent past the only reliable sightings were from the Combe Wood and Walbury Hill area in the far west of the county. The maximum count was of three at Walbury Hill, Combe on Aug 15th (IW). The only sighting away from the core area of Combe Wood, was from Thatcham Marsh on Nov 29th (DJB). This involved a single bird heard and seen for ten minutes on the south bank of the Kennet and Avon canal. It was continually calling with a nasal "erz erz erz", with no other calls heard. The same bird or another was reported the next day, Nov 30th in woodland by Widmead Lock (NC). **Breeding:** sadly, no reports of breeding activity this year apart from a bird heard singing at Walbury Hill on Apr 12th (IW). There were no ringing records from the BTO website this year.

BLUE TIT (EURASIAN BLUE TIT) *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident (Green Listed)

Records from 166 locations across the county, many from garden feeders. The maximum count was 40 at Snelsmore Common CP on Dec 28th. **Breeding:** a pair were seen feeding young in a garden nest box in Maidenhead on May 17th and a pair with very vocal young in a life buoy holder at Mill Pond, Bracknell on May 25th. At least four fledglings calling in a hedge north of Bradley Wood, Welford on Jun 4th. Fledged young were seen at Hell Corner Farm, Inkpen and five were being fed by their parents at feeders in Ascot on Jun 16th. Ringing records from the BTO website included (X653374) ringed as a juvenile in July 2009 at Crookham, near Thatcham and recaptured on Mar 21st at the same site, making it at least six years and eight months old. 1163 pulli, 607 juveniles, 962 adults and one unaged bird were ringed. 1109 were retrapped and 18 recovered.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident (Green Listed)

Reported from 145 different locations this year. Very much a garden feeder visitor but seen in many suitable habitats. **Breeding:** four chicks hatched on May 9th in an Ascot garden being fed by their parents and then two fledglings seen on May 29th. Two adults feeding four young in a Furze Platt, Maidenhead garden on May 11th, with one adult feeding two young at Dorney Wetlands on May 22nd. A family party of seven were seen in Calcot, on Jun 2nd and two fledglings were seen in an oak tree at Bradley Wood Farm, Welford on Jun 12th. The maximum count was of 25 at Snelsmore Common CP on Dec 6th. Ringing reports from the BTO website stated that the longest surviving bird this year was of five years, ten months and thirty days. This was (TP63367) a nestling male originally ringed on May 2010 at Hosehill Lake, Theale and was recaptured on Apr 23rd this year at the same site. 629 pulli, 341 juveniles, 366 adults and one unaged bird were ringed. 588 were retrapped and seven recovered.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

Locally common summer visitor in areas of suitable habitat, uncommon in winter (Schedule One and Green Listed)

This recovering species was moved to the UK green list in 2015. Of concern, however, it was only reported in about 18 territories, in comparison with 36 in 2013. It is not clear whether this halving of territories is due to less assiduous surveying or a real decline in Berkshire.

Jan-Mar: the first bird was seen at Greenham Common on Jan 12th. Numbers at this stronghold rose to four in song on Feb 19th then eight on Mar 17th. Maxima at the other sites were two in Bowdown Woods on Mar 8th, two at Poor's Allotment, Ufton Nervet on Mar 20th, at least three in song at Swinley Forest on Feb 11th, and two in song at Buttersteep Hill, South Ascot on Feb 14th. **Spring/summer:** the information for breeding haunts is summarised in the table (for details of Swinley Forest Special Protection Area, see Crowley *et al.*, 2012, The Birds of Berkshire 2012, 9-16). Elsewhere, one at Colnbrook on May 15th was rare for this locality.

Locality	No. territories	Max count (incl. young)	Notes
Snelsmore Common	?	1	Based on single report in Apr.
Greenham/Crookham Common	5+	9	4+ territories Greenham, 1 Crookham Nest found with 4 young
Paices Wood, Wasing			No reports, status not clear
Decoy Heath, Aldermaston			No reports, status not clear
Padworth			No reports, status not clear
Padworth Common	1	1	
Ufton Nervet	1?	2	Based on single report in Mar.
Swinley Forest SPA:			Decreasing in reports
Crowthorne Woods	1	1	
Swinley Forest	?	?	Status not clear
MOD Heathland/Wishmoor B	3	6	
Sandhurst Royal Military Academy	?	?	Status not clear
Swinley Park	4	4	An increase noted
Swinley Brickpits, South Ascot	1	1	
Buttersteep, South Ascot	2+	3	

Sep-Dec: as per recent years, nearly all the records were for Greenham Common, where it stayed until Oct 13th, having reached a maximum of ten on Sep 14th. There remained five at Wishmoor Bottom on Sep 1st, then just one at Paices Wood, Wasing on Dec 26th.

SKYLARK (EURASIAN SKYLARK) *Alauda arvensis*

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

The reports yielded little of distinction, and no breeding was confirmed. The Skylark was seen and heard singing in many open places, perhaps favouring the west of the county.

Localities	west Berkshire	mid Berkshire	east Berkshire	Total
January-March	27	8	22	57
April-August	36	14	28	78
September-December	20	12	6	37

First winter: there were no large flocks; four of 30-60 birds were observed at sites to the west of Reading between Jan 12th and Feb 11th. **Spring/summer:** although birds in song were widely reported, no breeding was confirmed. A series of high counts for this period was made at Englefield, reaching 100 on Apr 27th (many singing) and 150 on May 3rd. **Autumn/second winter:** a few single-figure movements were witnessed in October and November. The highest counts again featured Englefield, with 50-60 in October and November, as well as 50+ at Woodlands Park Fields, Maidenhead on Oct 10th, 45 over Hosehill Lake LNR on Nov 1st and a conservative 150 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Dec 9th.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Numbers were below average, and breeding was reported from only six sites.

Spring: passage (see table) commenced with two at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre on Mar 15th, a week later than normal, followed by two at Padworth Lane GP on Mar 19th. A surge occurred a week later, which included 80+ at Lower Farm GP, 80+ at Theale Main GP, and 20 at Moor Green Lakes, all on Mar 26th, and 200 at Searle's Farm Lane GPs the following day. Passage fluctuated in April, when the peak counts consisted of 200 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 9th, 100 there on Apr 16th, 200 there on Apr 23rd, 400 at Theale Main GP on Apr 24th, and 150+ at QMR on Apr 25th. Throughout May, little passage was evident, although 100+ appeared at QMR on Jun 1.

Week	Mar 15-21	Mar 22-28	Mar 29 -Apr 4	Apr 5-11	Apr 12-18	Apr 19-25	Apr 26- May 2	May 3-9	May 10-16	May 17-23
No birds	11	388	219	345	174	1178	108	36	14	20
No sites	4	11	14	11	12	15	13	4	2	1

Bird totals are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

Breeding: the information received was sparse, without any counts of the holes in use. Nesting took place at Woodspeen (young noted), Bagnor (holes occupied), Hosehill Lake (young noted), Lea Farm Lake, Cookham, and Dorney Wetlands. **Autumn:** one or two early gatherings preceded a weak passage (see table). There were 60 at Hosehill Lake on Jul 10th, 100 at Lea Farm Lake on Jul 15th, 60 at Hosehill Lake on Aug 2nd, when many were feeding young, and c.40 at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 21st. Counts in September struggled to reach 20, and petered out with two at QMR on Oct 1st, a very early departure.

Week	Aug 1-7	Aug 8-14	Aug 15-21	Aug 22-28	Aug 29- Sep 4	Sep 5-11	Sep 12-18	Sep 19-26	Sep 26- Oct 2
No birds	82	46	66	26	17	33	32	0	2
No sites	5	5	3	4	5	4	5	0	1

Bird totals are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

SWALLOW (BARN SWALLOW) *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Spring: the season started with one returning to a nesting site at Winkfield on Mar 23nd, close to the median arrival date. Passage (see table) was modest, peaking in the middle of April and tailing off in May, with only three counts of over 100: 150 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 16th, 300 at Searle's Farm Lane GPs the same day, and 250 at Theale Main GP on Apr 24th.

Week	Mar 22–28	Mar 29– Apr 4	Apr 5–11	Apr 12–18	Apr 19–25	Apr 26– May 2	May 3–9	May 10–16	May 17–23
No birds	31	39	168	858	625	230	57	84	60
No sites	17	19	21	32	32	28	16	17	12

Bird totals are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

Breeding: the following localities showed indications of nesting, with an asterisk added if breeding was confirmed (west to east): Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford; Sheepdrove, Lambourn*; Inkpen*; Welford*; Enborne; Boxford*; Bagnor; Leckhampstead; Upper Bucklebury*; Woolhampton GP; Woodlands Park Fields, Maidenhead; Winkfield; and Wraybury GPs.

Autumn: passage (see table) was evident from early August and rose to heights of 100-200 birds during the four periods of Aug 19th-20th, Aug 30th-Sep 5th, Sep 15th -17th, and Sep 28th-Oct 1st. The last bird was recorded at Lea Farm Lake on the early date of Oct 18th.

Week	Aug 1–7	Aug 8–14	Aug 15–21	Aug 22–28	Aug 29– Sep 4	Sep 5–11	Sep 12–18	Sep 19–26	Sep 26– Oct 2	Oct 3–9	Oct 10–16	Oct 17–23
No birds	217	130	287	250	641	283	598	233	549	72	10	1
No sites	15	12	9	13	10	12	14	12	22	10	8	1

Bird totals are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

HOUSE MARTIN (COMMON HOUSE MARTIN) *Delichon urbicum*

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

Spring: a lone forerunner at Theale Main GP on Mar 20th was about a week earlier than the median arrival date; the next bird did not appear until ten days later at the same site. The main passage (see table) was depressed through April and May, with only six counts reaching between 50 and 100. However, there was a late showing of over 200 at QMR on Jun 1st and 60 at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 3rd.

Week	Mar 15–21	Mar 22–28	Mar 29– Apr 4	Apr 5–11	Apr 12–18	Apr 19–25	Apr 26– May 2	May 3–9	May 10–16	May 17–23
No birds	1	0	42	14	341	271	273	61	103	100
No sites	1	0	3	3	19	18	18	9	12	7

Bird totals are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

Breeding: the following localities showed indications of nesting, with an asterisk added if breeding was confirmed (west to east): Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford; Kintbury; Enborne*; Beedon*; Beedon Manor*; Greenham Common; Lea Farm Lake; Twyford*; Hambledon Lock; Moor Green Lakes; Waltham St Lawrence; Hurley*; Holme Grange Fishery, Finchampstead* (chicks still in nest on Sep 17th); Eton Wick*; and Old Windsor*.

Autumn: flocks of 90 at Old Windsor on Jul 2nd and 70 at East Shefford on Jul 9th perhaps represented local dispersal rather than incoming passage birds. Passage is assumed from the first week in August (see table), when over 200 birds included c.100 at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 5th. Ten high counts of between 150 and c.340 spanned the five weeks between Aug 28th and Oct 1st. Additionally, a very large flock of 750 was concentrated over the S part of Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures on Sep 10th. Following 100 at QMR on Oct 2nd, numbers plummeted to single figures until the last one at Englefield on Oct 15th, an early final departure, like the Sand Martin and Swallow.

Week	Aug 1–7	Aug 8–14	Aug 15–21	Aug 22–28	Aug 29 –Sep 4	Sep 5–11	Sep 12–18	Sep 19–26	Sep 26 –Oct 2	Oct 3–9	Oct 10–16
No birds	265	143	234	311	489	1406	762	234	1229	8	9
No sites	11	10	6	8	11	11	19	7	16	2	6

Bird totals are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Locally common resident (Schedule One and Green listed)

Reported from 49 sites across the county, 12 in east Berks, 15 in mid Berks and 22 in west Berks. The majority of records were of singing birds during Mar – Oct though song was heard in every month. Most records were of one to four birds with higher counts of five Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford Apr 23rd and May 3rd, also Marsh Benham Apr 28th and Barton Court, Kintbury June 5th, six Woolhampton GP Apr 14th, Moatlands GP May 7th and The Wilderness, Kintbury May 14th, eight Burghfield GPs Mar 31st & Apr 5th, 10 Hungerford Marsh May 6th, 12 Dorney Wetlands Jun 6th and Nov 23rd, but once again Thatcham Marsh produced the largest counts with 26 Apr 16th, 28 May 1st and 30 Jun 11th. The only breeding records submitted were fledged young seen at Thatcham Marsh in June & July and at The Wilderness on Jun 25th but presumably took place at many other sites where the birds were heard singing.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)

There were numerous records for about 152 sites. The highest counts were for Thatcham Marsh, where 50 on Oct 23rd and 50+ on Nov 29th, and Woolhampton GPs, where 35 on Dec 15th. Flocks above 20 were noted at Donnington Grove, Newbury, Great Meadow Pond, Virginia Water and QMR. The first nest building was observed on Mar 13th at Great Meadow Pond and Moor Green Lakes. **Breeding:** breeding was confirmed at ten sites, mainly in the west of the county, with breeding possible or probable at several other sites.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

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

The table below shows the monthly status based on site high counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	5	68	36	15	10	28	15	1	–	–
No of birds	–	–	9	214	93	50	27	117	57	1	–	–

A very early bird was reported from Bracknell Mar 17th with the next arrival being one at Lavell's Lake on 27th. Other March records came from Fobney Meadows on 29th, Fobney Island on 31st and five at Burghfield GPs on 31st. During the first week of April singing birds were reported from 22 sites across the county with double-figure counts during the month coming from Thatcham Marsh where 10 were present on 16th, Padworth Common with 10 on 17th, 10 Swinley Forest on 26th, but after 10 Burghfield GPs on 5th and 9th no less than 28 were singing on 10th, most of these at this site being passage birds as few were recorded here during the summer months. Far fewer records were submitted May – July, the only count of note being 11 at Enborne Jun 8th. By August it was evident that passage birds were moving through the county with high counts of 20 at Wraysbury on 5th and also at Moor Green Lakes on 14th, 9th and 16th with 12 there on 17th and 22nd. Numbers continued to pass through during September with single figures reported from 16 sites and a high count of 20 at Whistley Green on 18th. Last records were three Swinley Forest Sep 23rd, two Jubilee River on 24th, one Whistley Park on 30th and one Whistley Green Oct 2nd.

CHIFFCHAFF (COMMON CHIFFCHAFF) *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common summer visitor and scarce but increasing winter visitor (Green Listed)

Jan-Feb: reported from 30 sites involving at least 58 birds, mostly in mid and east Berks. Most records were of one or two birds but five were at Dorney Wetlands on Jan 17th, three were at Padworth Lane Feb 26th, four at Moor Green Lakes Jan 23rd, up to 10 Eton Wick Jan 21st and 11 Sandhurst STW Jan 5th.

Mar-Oct: although a trickle of newly-arrived birds appeared during March the main arrival came during April and May culminating in counts of 10-15 birds at 16 locations. Higher counts consist of 16 Hungerford Marsh Apr 10th, 16 Enborne Apr 28th with 18 there on 30th and 20 June 8th, 20 Grand Union Canal, Slough Apr 17th, 21 Wraybury GPs Apr 5th, 27 Thatcham Marsh May 1st with 25 Jun 11th, and 32 Burghfield GPs Mar 31st with 35 Apr 10th.

Proof of breeding was obtained at Brimpton GP, Freeman's Marsh, Midgham Quarry, The Wilderness, Marsh Benham, Old Windsor, Donnington Grove, Aldermaston GP, Greenham Common, Thatcham Marsh, Great Meadow Pond and Woolhampton GP but is likely at most other sites. Autumn passage was strongest from mid-August into September with 30 Moor Green Lakes Aug 14th, 20 Brimpton GP Aug 29th, 25 Greenham Common Sep 7th and 17 Great Meadow Pond Sep 25th whilst at Thatcham Marsh 39 were ringed in just three hours Sep 4th and 45 were recorded Sep 18th.

Nov-Dec: at least 95 birds were reported from 29 sites, highest counts being seven Twyford GPs Nov 30th, seven Shepherds Meadow Dec 30th, six Brimpton GP Nov 10th, six Thatcham Marsh Nov 29th with five there Dec 22nd, and five Padworth Lane Dec 24th.

CHIFFCHAFF (*tristis*) *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

(COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*tristis*))

Very scarce winter visitor

Two, possibly three records this year: one Eton Wick Jan 25th (CDRH), one Lower Farm GP Oct 8th (NC) and possibly one Sandhurst STW Jan 5th (PJC).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Rare but increasingly recorded vagrant (Not listed)

After a blank year in 2015 three birds were reported this year, the 10th, 11th and 12th records for Berkshire and all arrived in a six-day period in October. The first to appear was one caught and ringed at Moor Green Lakes on 9th (TGB), the second was at Brimpton GP the following day (JPM) and the third was found at Greenham Common on 14th (IW, JL).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant which may be declining locally (Green listed)

The table below shows the monthly status based on site high counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	–	30	44	11	5	11	7	–	–	–
No of birds	–	–	–	43	59	14	8	13	10	–	–	–

First arrivals were reported Apr 8th when singles were at Marsh Benham and Wraybury GPs. These were soon followed by one at Woolhampton GP and two at Dorney Wetlands on 9th, two at Lower Farm on 11th and singles at Burghfield GPs, Burghfield Mill and

Burghfield Taxi Pit all on 12th. The following day six were at Fobney Meadows where numbers increased to 10 on 26th and 16 on 30th. Other sites to hold high numbers in spring were 10 Southcote Meadows Apr 27th, 10 Dorney Wetlands Apr 30th, 13 Freeman's Marsh May 3rd, 15 Hosehill Lake Apr 23rd, 17 Hungerford Marsh May 6th, 18 The Wilderness, Kintbury Apr 19th, and at Thatcham Marsh 35 were singing May 1st and 31 were present Jun 11th. It is likely that some of these birds at some sites were migrants passing through, for example, far fewer were present at Hosehill during the summer than the 15 reported earlier and at Great Meadow Pond where four were singing at the beginning of May only one was present a week later. Breeding was reported from Thatcham Marsh where six fledged young were seen Jun 18th and 10 Jun 26th, also from The Wilderness where up to nine fledged young were present in July, and at Woolhampton GP where one fledged young was seen Jul 9th and 25th.

In autumn it became clear that the majority of birds had departed by mid-August, the only count of note being 15 Wraybury GPs Aug 5th. Eleven birds were recorded in September, the last of which were singles at Great Meadow Pond on 25th and Marsh Benham on 28th, but four were still present at Thatcham Marsh Oct 2nd.

REED WARBLER (EURASIAN REED WARBLER) *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green listed)

The table below shows the monthly status based on site high counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	–	19	25	20	17	12	10	1	–	–
No of birds	–	–	–	47	140	129	90	54	30	2	–	–

First appeared at Hosehill Lake Apr 11th followed by birds at Dinton Pastures on 13th, Lower Farm GP on 14th and Moor Green Lakes, Thatcham Marsh and Burghfield Taxi Pit all on 16th. Subsequently this species was reported from 46 locations, 16 in east Berks, nine in mid- Berks and 21 in west Berks. The highest counts came from two sites; Great Meadow Pond and Thatcham Marsh. At Great Meadow Pond 27 were present May 8th and 15th, 39 May 22nd and 29 Jun 19th whilst Thatcham Marsh held double-figure counts on 13 dates, the largest of which were 30 Jun 4th, 25 on 18th and 20 on 26th and Jul 3rd. Good numbers of young were reported from both these sites and others were noted at Midgham Quarry, Padworth Lane, The Wilderness, Dorney Wetlands, Marsh Benham, Woolhampton GP and Hosehill Lake.

Although primarily associated with wetland habitat some passage birds briefly take up territory in some unlikely locations; one was singing in a hedgerow along the Ridgeway at Roden Down May 28th, single singing birds were in gardens in Newbury, one by the railway station May 3rd and one in Monks Lane May 16th, and one was singing at Lambourn Jun 6th.

Most birds had departed by mid-September, late records consist of singles Midgham Quarry on 17th, Colnbrook on 18th, Great Meadow Pond on 25th, Lavell's Lake on 27th with two Thatcham Marsh Oct 2nd.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia* **(COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER)**

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant that has declined in recent years (Red Listed)

Spring passage consisted of 13 birds at 10 sites beginning with one Burghfield GPs and two Southcote Meadows Apr 12th (where one was reported Apr 21st and 23rd with two on

24th). Thereafter singles were at Thatcham Marsh Apr 16th, Apr 23rd, May 1st with two Apr 24th and May 4th. Singles were at Grand Union Canal, Slough Apr 17th, Hungerford Marsh on 18th, The Wilderness, Kintbury on 19th, Marsh Benham on 20th and May 4th, Moor Green Lakes Apr 22nd, Woolhampton GP Apr 25th and Main GP, Theale on 26th. The only summer records were of one at Kintbury on Jun 6th and one Thatcham Marsh Jun 11th. There were just two autumn records; singles at Greenham Common Jul 31st and Lambourn Sep 1st.

BLACKCAP (EURASIAN BLACKCAP) *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant, uncommon but increasing in winter (Green listed)

Jan/mid Mar: reported from 43 locations, 16 in east Berks, 16 in mid berks and 11 in west Berks. These sites held 59 birds, 20 in east Berks, 27 in mid Berks and 12 in the west, most records coming from gardens and consisting of one to three birds, the exception being five (four males) in AVL's Southcote garden.

Spring/summer: ignoring long-staying garden visitors the first presumed spring arrival was one at Burghfield GPs Mar 19th where subsequently singles were also seen on 26th and 28th with three on 29th and nine on 31st. Other early migrants were reported from Wishmoor on 25th, Moor Green Lakes on 27th with three on 29th, Main GP, Theale on 28th, Dinton Pastures (two) on 29th, Bray GP on 30th and Twyford GPs on 31st. The trickle of new arrivals turned into a deluge during April with Burghfield GPs hosting 38 on 5th, 76 on 10th and 56 on 14th.

During spring and summer counts of 10-20 birds were received from 28 locations with higher counts as follows: 21 Thatcham Marsh Apr 16th with 22 there Apr 24th, 45 May 1st and 37 Jun 11th, 26 Enborne Jun 8th, 34 Moatlands GP May 24th, 25 Hosehill Lake Jun 26th and 43 Main GP, Theale Apr 30th. Confirmed breeding records came from Boxford, Welford, Enborne, Lower Farm GP, Thatcham Marsh, Brimpton GP, Midgham Quarry, Marsh Benham, Windsor, Aldermaston GP, Thatcham Marsh, Hosehill Lake, The Wilderness, Kintbury and Great Meadow Pond but presumably took place at most other sites.

Autumn: passage was most noticeable during Aug/Sep with 25 Wraybury GPs Aug 5th and 23 Thatcham Marsh Sep 4th, 25 there on 11th and 30 on 18th.

Nov/Dec: reported from 18 sites with a distinct bias towards the mid and east of the county. In east Berks eight birds were noted at seven sites, in mid Berks 16 birds were present at nine sites but west Berks records consist of two sites holding just three birds.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green listed)

The table below shows the monthly status based on site high counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	–	12	43	18	7	9	4	–	–	–
No of birds	–	–	–	25	152	41	18	63	5	–	–	–

First recorded at Burghfield GPs Apr 19th where five were singing on 28th. Other early arrivals appeared at Lavell's Lake Apr 20th, Wraybury GPs also on 20th, Moor Green Lakes on 21st, Hosehill Lake on 23rd (three), and Woolhampton GP, Main GP, Theale, Padworth Lane and Braywick NR all on 24th. During spring and summer double-figure counts came from five sites; 16 Hosehill Lake May 6th with 10 there Jun 26th, 10 between Fobney and Moatlands May 7th, 10 Moor Green Lakes May 8th with 12 May 16th, 12 Main Pit, Theale May 14th

and 10 Moatlands GP May 24th. Very few records were received for July and even fewer breeding records were submitted, the only confirmed breeding reports came from Lower Farm GP, Moor Green Lakes, Burghfield GPs, Woolhampton GP and Greenham Common,

Autumn passage was hardly discernible; apart from a high count at Wraybury GPs Aug 5th the only other count of note was 10 at Moor Green Lakes Aug 14th. Several September records consisted of two Midgham Quarry on 1st, one Theale Main GP on 2nd, one Brimpton GP on 2nd and 11th and one Greenham Common on 13th.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Thinly but widely distributed summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

The table below shows the monthly status based on site high counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	–	30	44	11	5	11	7	–	–	–
No of birds	–	–	–	43	59	14	8	13	10	–	–	–

A welcome increase in numbers of birds seen from an increased number of locations, 92 individuals were reported from 66 sites. First arrival was one Lavell's Lake Apr 13th closely followed by singles at Burnthouse Lane GP on 15th, Woolhampton GP on 16th, Hungerford Marsh on 18th and Fobney Island and Field Farm on 19th. Most records were of one or two birds with three Fobney Meadows Apr 27th, three Fifield May 17th, four Burnthouse Lane GP Apr 17th and four Dorney Wetlands Apr 30th with five there May 2nd. Proof of breeding was confirmed at Lower Farm GP where a pair was feeding young Jun 4th, a pair was at a nest at Beedon Common Jun 24th, food was seen taken to a nest at Fifield Jun 3rd, a family party of four was seen at Burghfield GPs Jul 3rd and a fledged young was located at Brimpton GP Jul 26th. Most birds had departed by the end of August, but September records consist of two Lavell's Lake on 2nd and singles at Great Meadow Pond on 4th, Compton Downs on 6th, Lowbury Hill on 7th, Greenham Common on 14th, Woolhampton GP on 18th and finally Brimpton on 25th.

WHITETHROAT (COMMON WHITETHROAT) *Sylvia communis*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Widely reported from more than 100 locations, the following table shows the monthly status based on site high counts.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	–	47	54	35	26	21	17	2	–	–
No of birds	–	–	–	121	191	123	75	90	35	2	–	–

First of the year was one at Dinton Pastures Apr 8th but no more were reported until 13th when individuals appeared at Burghfield Bridge, Southcote Meadows, Crookham Common, Dorney Wetlands and Greenham Common. The following day additional birds appeared at Fobney Island, Fobney Meadows, Lower Farm GP, Moor Green Lakes and Horton GP. Highest counts in spring and summer consist of 10 Moor Green Lakes Apr 30th and four other dates, with 14 May 7th and 13 the next day, 10 Burnthouse Lane GP Jul 3rd, 11 Compton Downs May 28th, 12 Clapton Jun 8th, 15 Greenham Common Aug 5th and 18 Enborne Apr 30th. Eleven at Englefield Jul 19th with 17 on 22nd and 18 on 31st consisted mostly of juveniles. Breeding was also confirmed at 13 further sites: Moor Green Lakes, Burnthouse Lane, Wargrave Marsh, Beedon, Brimpton GP, Midgham Quarry, Wellbottom

Down, Greenham Common, Strand Water, Lea Farm Lake, Fobney Meadows, Compton Downs and Brightwalton Common. Small numbers were reported throughout September, the latest dates being one Widbrook Common on 20th, two Greenham Common on 21st, one Whistley Green on 30th, then two October records, singles at Lower Farm GP on 1st and Dinton Pastures on 9th.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

Localised resident in small numbers, rare away from breeding habitat (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

Once again nearly all records came from the traditional sites of east Berks heaths and Crookham and Greenham Commons.

East Berks: at Wishmoor Bottom this species was present all year with a maximum of 10 noted in May and juveniles and immatures reported in August and September. Wildmoor Heath held three pairs during the summer, up to four were present at Crowthorne Woods Jan-Mar and singles were noted at Buttersteep Hill, S. Ascot Apr 17th and Nov 8th, Caesar's Camp Oct 16th, Swinley Park Nov 30th and Wellington College Heath Feb 17th and Dec 14th.

West Berks: at Greenham Common up to four were reported throughout the year with five Feb 24th and Apr 13th and also Aug 24th and 25th with seven Mar 27th and 11 Oct 4th. Survey work by AEDH at this site revealed seven breeding pairs with four juveniles noted Sep 15th. Records from Crookham Common include four Mar 25th, Jun 11th and Sep 17th with five Aug 28th. This site was also surveyed by AEDH who found a similar number of breeding pairs to Greenham Common – seven. The only other report was of one at Decoy Heath, Aldermaston Dec 1st.

FIRECREST (COMMON FIRECREST) *Regulus ignicapilla*

A scarce visitor to Berkshire in all seasons, also a locally common summer visitor to suitable woodlands throughout the county (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

Reports of Firecrest sightings continued their recent increase across the county, with over 90 reports from more than 30 different locations, an increase of over 50% over 2015, in addition to the east Berks heathlands. Seasonal variations may reflect migratory behaviour or different habitat preferences at different time of year.

First winter: three males at Whiteknights Park on Jan 10th (DFI) were the maximum for this location, although sightings continued here throughout the year. A maximum of two birds at Finchampstead Ridges from Jan 15th (RJG, RFM *et al.*), single birds at Upper Bucklebury on Jan 15th (BL), Temple Park on Jan 31st (S Brooker), Moor Green Lakes on Feb 11th (PNe), Caversham on Feb 19th (RCW), Padworth Lane GP from Feb 25th (KEM) illustrate widespread distribution.

Spring: twenty-nine territories located in six woodland blocks in East Berks (DJB), down on 2015 (but so were the number of visits). Display and mated pairs noted at several sites but breeding was not confirmed. Maximum four birds at Swinley Park on Apr 10th (RJD), singles or pairs at 20 other locations.

Summer/autumn: only six reports from five locations, all of single birds: Greenham Common on Jul 6th (JL) and Jul 13th (IW), Speen Church on Aug 28th (I A Ashworth), Swinley Forest on Sep 11th (MHu), and Whitenights Park on Sep 18th (DFI).

Second winter: reporting starts again from Whiteknights Park in November and December, as well as Thatcham Marsh on Nov 29th (DJB), the Wilderness, Kintbury on Dec 4th (LBM), and Wishmoor Bottom on Dec 18th (CJ).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

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

More than 750 reports of Goldcrests were made from over 150 sites in Berkshire, a slight increase in sites on 2015. The reports were spread fairly evenly throughout the year, reflecting the resident status. The maximum number in a single report was 18 at Swinley Park on May 3rd closely followed by 15 at Whitenights Park on Jan 10th and on Oct 15th at Padworth Common. In all there were 16 reports of 10 or more birds. There were just six reports of clear indications of breeding, three juveniles being identified with adults at each of Moatlands GPs on Aug 14th and Moor Green Lakes on Aug 21st.

WREN (EURASIAN WREN) *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident (Green listed)

Recent milder winters have been kind to Berkshire's Wren population, and in 2016 there were over 1000 reports submitted from 166 locations. Major counts were 102 around Burghfield GPs on Mar 31st and another 50 singing males at Thatcham Marsh on Jun 11th. There were another 19 reports of over 20 birds, from across the county but predominantly in the west. As might be expected, singing males were frequently reported, with 14 confirmed cases of breeding, and over 40 cases of probable nesting. Reports were received of birds all year round, with breeding activity into mid-July.

NUTHATCH (EURASIAN NUTHATCH) *Sitta europaea*

Common and widespread woodland resident (Green Listed)

Nuthatch reports indicate a healthy population across the county, predominantly in the west, and present all year round. In all reports were received from 136 different locations. 21 were reported at Prospect Park on Dec 8th, while up to 10 birds reported in other woodland areas – nine at each of Virginia Water on Jan 21st, Greenham Common on Mar 22nd and Winterbourne on Apr 27th. There were 11 confirmed reports of breeding, and another three of probable breeding.

TREECREEPER (EURASIAN TREECREEPER) *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident (Green Listed)

Reports of Treecreepers were received throughout the year from 99 different locations, mainly from the west of the county, but from a variety of habitats, including gardens. For a common resident, the number of reports was quite low, at 264. Major groupings were seven in Bowdon Woods Nature Reserve on Jul 2nd, five in Whiteknights Park on Feb 15th and five at Greenham Common on May 12th. Breeding was confirmed from 10 locations.

STARLING (COMMON STARLING) *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common resident and winter visitor, formerly abundant (Red Listed)

Some spectacular reports of Starlings, with a murmuration of 6000 at Speen Moor plantations on Mar 20th, 2000 feeding at Cow Down on Dec 9th, 900 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 15th, and 800 at Welford on Mar 20th. There were nine other reports of over 400 birds, and another 23 reports of over 100 birds. Most reports including those of larger flocks were from the west of the county, although there were significant reports from central Berks (the Moor Green report mentioned above) and others of over 100, 500 at Englefield on Jan 28th and 500 at Lea Farm Lake on Jan 3rd, and one report of 500 in east Berkshire, at Slough, on Jun 26th. Considering the large numbers observed, there were relatively few reports of breeding, 14 cases of confirmed success.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce passage migrant (Red Listed)

Following the influx in 2015, 2016 reverted to more typical numbers for Berkshire. The maximum reported were six at Greenham Common on Apr 25th. In all, birds were reported from 10 sites. The year started with one bird (a 1w male) continuing its winter stay at Bury Down first reported on Jan 15th, and then from the same site regularly until Feb 14th (MO)

Normal spring sightings started with one bird on Apr 3rd at Broadmoor Farm (RJG), then for stays of a few days at Greenham Common and Inkpen Hill, and brief visits to Dinton Pastures, Crookham Common, Whistley Green and QMR. Most sightings were single birds, with Greenham Common and Inkpen Hill featuring repeated sightings of multiple birds (MO).

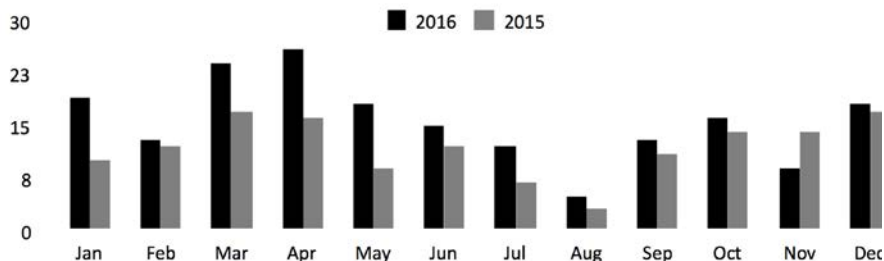
No autumn sightings were reported.

BLACKBIRD (COMMON BLACKBIRD) *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident and winter visitor (Green listed)

The Birds of Berkshire reports Blackbirds being found in all but one of the tetrads of Berkshire, and this is reflected in the over 1300 sighting reports. As a widespread and common sight in town and country, reporting of this common bird does not reflect its true occurrence. Instead, interest spreads to the fluctuations in numbers, particularly those attributable to weather, and the occasional large groups of birds.

Although usually thought of as territorial, there are reports of significant groups across the county, at various times of the year. The largest groups reported in 2016 were 41 at Waltham St Lawrence on Feb 17th and two groups of 20 close together at Stanmore on Mar 21st. There were 27 reports of 20 or more birds, including 20 with a group of winter thrushes at West Woodhay on Jan 14th, and 32 reports of groups of 10 or more. These larger groups were predominantly, but not exclusively, in the west of the county. And while most larger groups were reported in winter and spring, there were several reports of over 20 birds in the summer months. The graph below shows the maximum birds reported each month at Greenham Common in 2015 and 2016 (JL, IW), showing consistent maxima over the two years.

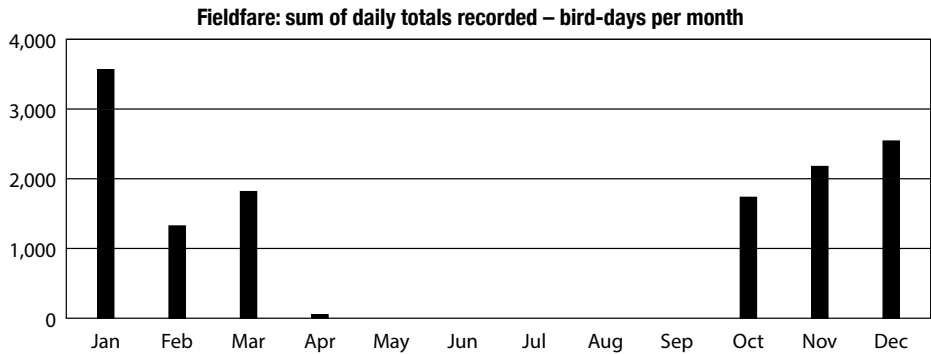


FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant has bred (British breeding population is Schedule One and Red Listed)

First winter: while most reports were from the more open country in the west, there were significant sightings of major flocks throughout the county. 712 birds were reported at Englefield on Jan 22nd and over 400 at Wellbottom Down on Jan 7th. The number of birds reported was up significantly from 2015 in January, but down in February. A flock of over 20 birds stayed in Windsor Great Park into April, the last report, of seven birds, coming from Windsor Great Park on Apr 14th.

Second winter: there was a steady increase in the number of birds reported from October onwards, and the size of flocks was greater than at the start of the year. The first reports were one bird flying over Cold Ash on Oct 10th and three at Walbury Hill on the same date. At least 1072 reported at Compton Downs on Nov 3rd and at least 732 at Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 26th were the largest counts, although flocks of 200, 300 and 400 were also reported.



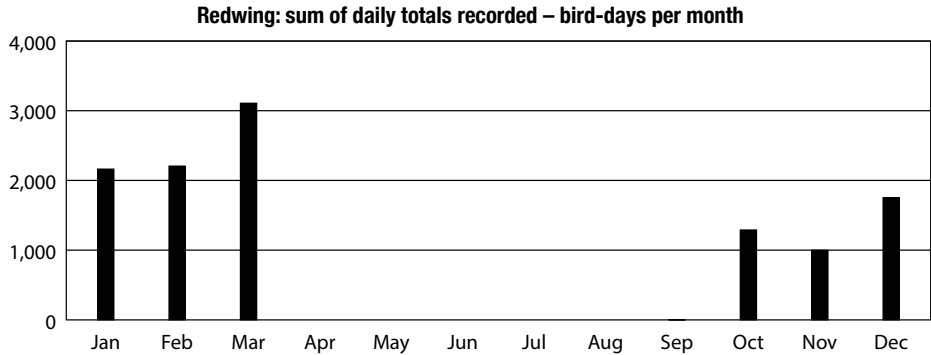
REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, very rare in summer (British breeding population is Schedule One and Red Listed)

Total numbers of birds reported, from nearly 170 locations were higher than in the past two years.

First winter: flocks of 300 or more birds were reported throughout January and February and into March; 300 to 400 at Sandford Farm on Jan 23rd , at least 300 at Hosehill Lake on Jan 25th , 360 at Waltham St Lawrence on Feb 17th , at least 300 at Burghfield on Feb 28th, 300 at Borough Marsh on Mar 10th, 300 at Fobney Meadow on Mar 21st and 315 at Sandhurst on Mar 22nd. Reports dropped off quickly at the end of March, there being only six reports of single birds in April, one at Crookham Common on Apr 21st seemingly sick or injured, and the final straggler at Twyford GPs on Apr 24th.

Second winter: the first report was of two birds flying over Sandford Farm on Sep 30th, and the first significant number of the winter was 156 at Greenham Common on Oct 4th. Thereafter the reports were of smaller groups in general, compared with the first winter. This is reflected in the graph of total numbers for the two seasons, below.



SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)

Song Thrushes are found across the county, with reports from 166 locations, although evidence indicates larger numbers in the west, and the continued relative absence as a garden bird, possibly reflecting the modern popularity of smaller gardens. Singing thrushes occurred on nearly 200 occasions, except during the months August to October. There were over 30 instances of confirmed breeding, and another 20+ probable breeding sites. The maximum counts were 25 at Theale GP on Apr 30th, 21 at Burghfield GPs on Mar 31st, and 20 at Great Meadow Pond on Oct 23rd. There were nine other counts of more than 10 birds, encouragingly from all parts of the county.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common though declining resident (Amber Listed)

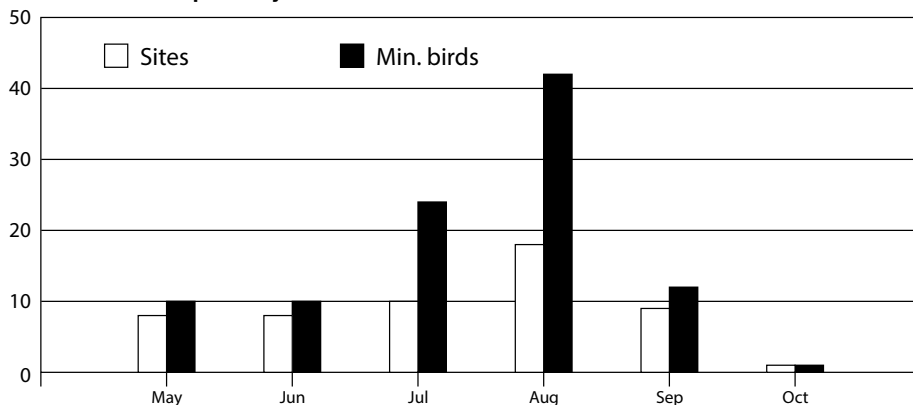
Mistle Thrushes were seen and heard across the county at all times of the year, although there were few reports during the summer months of July, August and September. The west of the county provided three times as many reports as either the centre or east, although encouragingly the increase in reports in 2015 was maintained and slightly improved in 2016, with over 400 reports from 130 different locations. There were over 20 reports of confirmed breeding, and another dozen cases of probable breeding. Significant counts, which include some summer gatherings, were 12 at Streatley Warren on Aug 11th and 10 at each of Combe Gibbet on Jun 16th, Stanmore on Mar 12th and Ashley Hill, Warren Row on Jun 15th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red Listed)

Spring arrival: the first confirmed record of the year was of a bird along the River Kennet at Burghfield on May 7th, followed by arrivals at Swallowfield Church, Moor Green Lakes and Windsor Great Park over the next week. **Breeding:** from mid-May to the end of August, there were records from 27 sites (west Berkshire 17, mid Berkshire three, east Berkshire seven). Probable or confirmed breeding evidence was submitted for ten sites, six in west Berkshire, one in mid Berkshire and three in east Berkshire. Family parties were reported from Freeman's Marsh, Inkpen, Greenham Common, Swallowfield Church and Wishmoor Bottom. There were, however, no records for a regular breeding site at Streatley. Parties totalling at least nine

Spotted Flycatcher: number of sites and minimum birds recorded



birds found in Basildon Park on Aug 31st may have been local breeders or passage birds. The general picture is similar to that observed in most recent years, with records coming largely from better watched areas across the county. Spotted Flycatchers can be unobtrusive in woodland and may be considerably underestimated from the records received. **Post-Breeding:** birds were present during late August and September at many of the breeding sites. In addition, there were records at sites in the Reading and Maidenhead area where there had been no evidence of breeding: Prospect Park, Reading; Dinton Pastures; Strand Water, Cookham; Widbrook Common, Maidenhead; Woodlands Park, Maidenhead and at Moor Green Lakes. The last record was of one or two birds at Dinton Pastures on Sept 17th

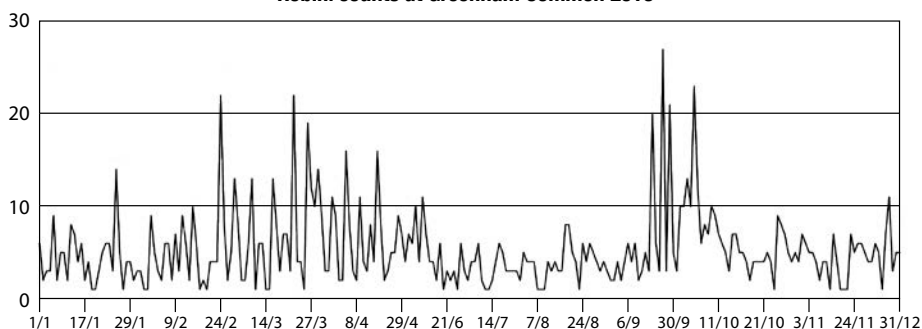
ROBIN (EUROPEAN ROBIN) *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident (Green listed)

A conspicuous and vociferous bird, the Robin generates nearly twice as many records as the similarly distributed Dunnock. As in previous years, there were around 1,300 records, over half from three observers in the west of the county. Although the records collected here are not based on systematic surveys, it is noteworthy that there has been a substantial increase in the number of sites with counts of more than 20 birds reported: 19 in 2016 compared to five in 2006, and in peak counts. The highest counts of singing birds in February-April were 77 at Burghfield GPs, 43 at Wraysbury GPs, 38 at Pinkneys Green and 36 at Thatcham Marsh.

Breeding: the foregoing counts may represent birds holding breeding territory. Nest-building was reported as early as Jan 30th at Ascot, birds were feeding young in Maidenhead on Apr 5th (these adults went on to fledge three broods) and fledged young were being fed in a garden in Cookham Rise on Apr 30th. The BTO's Breeding Bird Survey data show a significant (14%) increase in the south east region over the previous two decades. **Autumn:** it is not clear the extent to which the Berkshire population is augmented by migrants in autumn; however, between mid-September and mid-October there were several counts of more than 20 birds on Greenham Common, where numbers before and after that period were fewer than 10, perhaps suggesting an influx of passage birds.

Robin: counts at Greenham Common 2016



NIGHTINGALE (COMMON NIGHTINGALE) *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Uncommon and local summer visitor rarely encountered on passage (Amber Listed)

In common with recent years, the first Nightingales arrived in the second week of April, quickly occupying the main sites at Burghfield (8th), Brimpton (13th), Greenham/Crookham (13th), Dinton Pastures (14th) and Theale (15th). The total number of territorial males reported was 64 – 75, a little higher than the 53 – 56 recorded in 2015 and had a similar

site distribution. Although a full survey was not done in 2016, the 44 – 55 singing males at the Lower Kennet sites demonstrate the national significance of this population. West of Newbury, however, only two birds were recorded. There were single records of singing birds from Slough Sewage Farm, Reading M4 Services and Winkfield that may have been passage birds, included in the table under “Elsewhere”. Records for Whitley Wood in Reading and Pingewood GPs, also under “Elsewhere”, may represent new breeding sites.

After the males have stopped singing, little is seen of these secretive birds. There are, however, several records of croaking from the main sites in June and July, a few of adult birds carrying food and one of an adult feeding four fledged young on Jul 3rd. There were no records after Jul 6th.

Nightingale: Singing males	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Brimpton GPs	2	3	3	–
Burghfield GPs	16	13	0	1
Dinton Pastures CP	1	3	1	–
Greenham/Crookham Common	5	5	1	–
Moatlands GPs	4	6	–	–
Theale GPs	19	8	1	
Kennet & Avon Canal – Hungerford - Newbury		2		
Kennet & Avon Canal Newbury – Theale		3		
Elsewhere				
Number of sites	3	5	2	–
Number of birds	3	7	3	–

* excludes 11 birds reported between Fobney Meadow and Moatlands GP which may overlap with birds recorded at Burghfield and Moatlands GPs

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

Spring: two records, a female at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 22nd and a bird at the New Diggings, Moor Green Lakes on Apr 17th. **Breeding:** at the usual site in Reading town centre, breeding was confirmed when a female was observed feeding two fledged young on Jun 7th. **Autumn:** a late passage bird was reported in a garden in Shaw, Newbury on Nov 8th.

REDSTART (COMMON REDSTART) *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Localised summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Spring: this year's arrival started in the first week of April with birds at Lower Farm (5th), Combe Gibbet (6th) and Greenham Common (7th). During April and the first week of May, approximately 27 presumptively passage birds were recorded from 16 sites in addition to their known breeding areas in and around Swinley Forest. Of the 18 birds whose sex was reported, 13 were male; except for one early record on Apr 6th, the females arrived in the last week of April and first week of May. **Breeding:** no surveys of the breeding areas were reported, though singing males were heard at Wishmoor Bottom and South Ascot. A lone male was reported to have been present at Lower Farm all summer to the end of July. **Autumn:** in August and September, approximately 27 birds were reported from 17 sites away from their known breeding areas. The latest report was of a single bird at Brimpton GPs on Sept 30th.

In both spring and autumn, records came from a range of habitats, mostly at well-watched sites, though a scattering of records from gardens and less visited sites suggests that movement occurs on a broad front across the county. One observer (ABT) found Redstarts in his garden

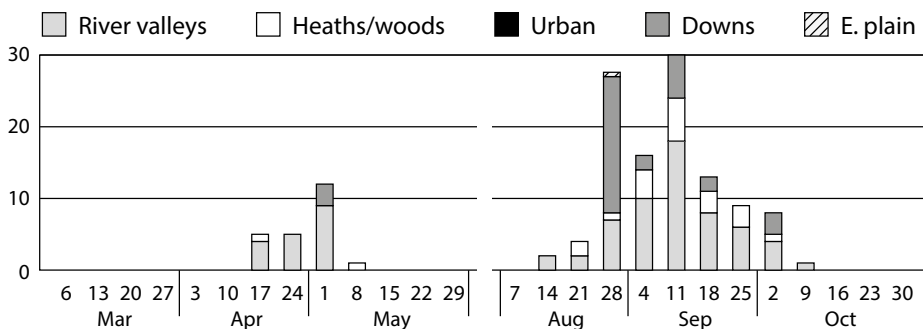
at Emmer Green, Reading, at Reading Crematorium and at Fobney Meadows, as well as several downland sites. A particular hotspot, in this and other years, is the North Hampshire Downs (Walbury Hill, Coombe Gibbet, West Woodhay), where there were one to four birds present during August. Other sites from which reports are regularly received are Greenham/Crookham Common, Dinton Pastures, Brimpton GPs.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Uncommon and declining passage migrant which formerly bred (Amber Listed)

Spring: the spring passage started in mid-April, with birds at Fobney Meadow (17th), Burnthouse Lane (18th) and Horton GPs (21st), followed by reports from eight further sites during the spring period, the last at Greenham Common on May 11th. Some 25 – 30 birds were probably involved. Most records were of single birds, though there were three records of two or three seen together. **Autumn:** passage started in mid-August with single birds at Lower Farm, Newbury (16th), Lea Farm, Hurst, (17th) and Greenham Common (21st). Passage peaked in the last week of August to mid-September and continued to early October, the last record being at Colnbrook on Oct 9th. Records at 23 sites probably involved about 90, mostly single, birds, but included several small parties of 2 – 5 birds, a group of eight at Wellbottom Down on Sep 1st and one of seven at Walbury Hill on Sep 3rd. Unsurprisingly, for a bird of open country, after correction for recording intensity, which is highest in the well-watched river valley sites, Whinchat records show a strong bias towards downs sites.

Whinchat: weekly maxima



Winter: perhaps the most notable record of the year was of a bird on Dec 30th feeding on Viburnum (Guelder-rose) berries in a new ‘shelter belt’ at Remenham and nearly taken by a passing Peregrine (CDRH). The bird was still present, and photographed, in January 2017. Only three earlier records of wintering Whinchat in Berkshire are listed in The Birds of Berkshire (2013): in 1967, 1971 and 1975.

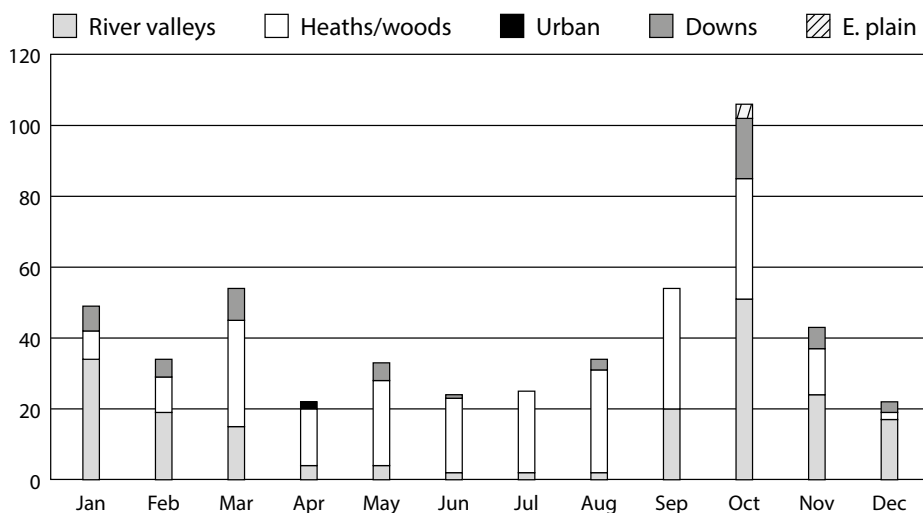
STONECHAT (EUROPEAN STONECHAT) *Saxicola rubicola*

Locally common summer resident, uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Green listed)

In general, the numbers of Stonechats reported in 2016 were somewhat higher than the previous year and notably higher at the end of the breeding season. The county distribution was little changed: the winter periods characterised by birds widely spread in the lower river valley areas which are largely vacated by the end of March when the heaths are occupied by breeding birds.

First winter: after a mild early winter, Stonechat numbers in 2016 were a little higher than in 2015 **Breeding:** although there were no survey data for the Thames basin heaths, a total of

at least ten pairs were reported from Crowthorne Woods, Broadmoor, Wishmoor Bottom and South Ascot. A survey of Greenham and Crookham Commons found 18 territories (AEDH). Away from the heath sites, there were two territories at the New Diggings, Moor Green Lakes and a pair fledged young on the Lambourn Downs. **Autumn:** birds were recorded at 22 valley sites and six other sites away from known breeding areas. Counts peaked in September at 63 and October at 106, compared to 39 and 29 the previous year. As through the rest of the year, birds were mostly in twos or small groups. Whether these Stonechats arriving in the river valleys in September – October were bred locally is not known. Nor is it known whether the sharp fall in numbers in November results from emigration, attrition or less observer activity. **Second winter:** almost all records were away from the heathland breeding areas, in river valleys and the total count fell to a similar level to that at the end of 2015.



Stonechat: monthly maxima

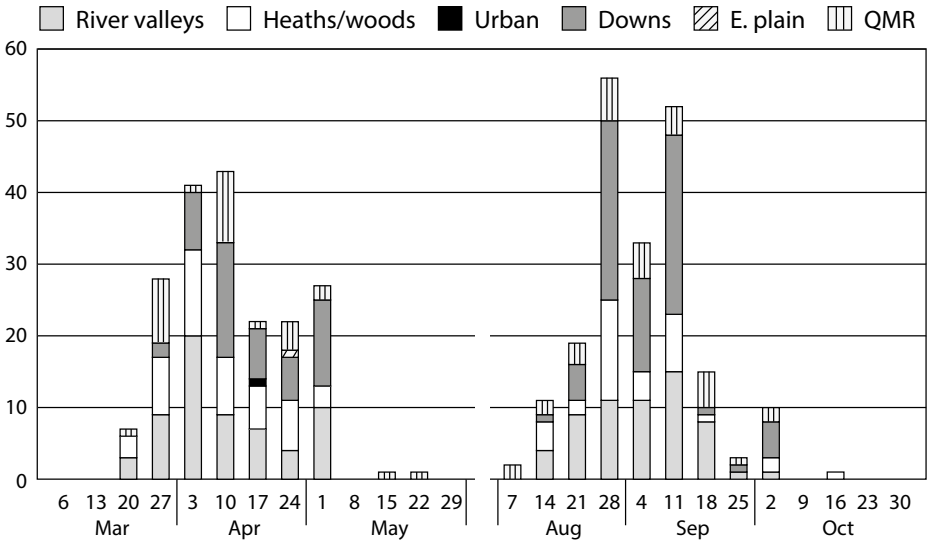
WHEATEAR (NORTHERN WHEATEAR) *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant (Amber Listed)

This was a fairly typical year for Wheatear in the county. Both spring and autumn passage involved around 200 birds, spread widely across the county with no obvious east-west bias. Although they were reported from many bare or grassy areas, they were most likely to be found on large open sites, particularly on the Downs and Queen Mother Reservoir. **Spring:** the first arrivals were on typical dates towards the end of March: Sonning Farm (22nd), Queen Mother Reservoir (24th), Crookham Common (25th), Burnthouse Lane (26th).

A fall in the first week of April brought nine birds to Queen Mother Reservoir on the 2nd and 15 to Burnthouse Lane on the 3rd. In all, Wheatear were reported from 30 sites across the county, the last being a single male at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 22nd. **Autumn:** return passage started on Aug 12th, with most records between the middle of August and the middle of September, the last being on Oct 16th at Ascot Heath. Reports came from 31 sites, largely the same locations as in the spring passage. The only report of a large group was of eight birds on a ploughed field at Upper Lambourn on Sep 14th.

Wheatear: weekly maxima



O. o. leucorhoa A fall of ten Wheatears at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 12th included two large “rangy” males with extensive cinnamon-buff on the underparts that the observer (CDRH) considered may have been early *leucorhoa*. A group of five birds at the same site on Sep 5th included two adult males, one an “obvious *leucorhoa* in direct comparison with an adult *oenanthe*” (CDRH).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common but declining resident (Red Listed)

This species was reported by a total of 40 observers who submitted 222 records from 89 locations across the county. On a positive note, this is an increase in locations compared to 2015’s reporting but generally the numbers of birds seen are in line with those in recent years.

The bulk of sightings came from urban areas, farms and rural village locations. The Maidenhead region showed comparatively high numbers of records received, with 17 locations, whilst in the Reading area there were a number of garden sightings where the birds had not been seen in recent years.

The regional breakdown of the records being: 83 records from 32 sites in west Berkshire, 48 records from 20 sites in mid Berkshire and 91 records from 37 sites in east Berkshire.

There was a total of 13 locations where counts of 20 or more birds were reported. A high of 35 birds were reported at East Ilsley on May 17th. The highest year count was 60 at Hyde Farm in Bisham Civil Parish on Jul 13th with good numbers also being reported from this site throughout late winter into the spring: other sightings of note were of 40+ birds at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury on Jul 30th; 58 birds at Bradleywood Farm, Welford on Aug 13th, 25 birds were reported at Arkle Avenue, Thatcham on Nov 29th and 28 birds at Purley on Thames on Dec 8th.

Breeding: there was an improvement in the number of breeding records. Recently fledged young being reported on five occasions; in Caversham, Sheepdrove Farm Lambourn,

Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford, Bradleywood Farm, Welford and Frogmill Spinney, Hurley. There were also a number of reports of nest building and juvenile birds, mainly from urban areas. With plenty of suitable habitat, it is likely that breeding has occurred widely throughout the county.

The monthly status of recorded sightings is given below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	22	27	13	26	28	20	21	9	3	6	4	9
Minimum no. of birds	150	209	69	153	180	172	208	106	15	28	32	88

From the data above it can be seen that there is a significant reduction in locations and numbers of birds seen after August. This is very similar to the results from the 2014 report where there was a significant decline in both counts that continued over the same period. It may be related to lack of reporting and coverage or more worrying an indicator that the populations are suffering. A clearer picture will, hopefully, emerge over the coming years as more data is recorded.

TREE SPARROW (EURASIAN TREE SPARROW) *Passer montanus*

Formerly a not uncommon resident, now a rare visitor (Red Listed)

There were no confirmed sightings of this once familiar bird again this year. (The last confirmed record was in 2012.)

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Common though possibly declining resident (Amber Listed)

A relatively common species in the county, there has been a welcome increase in records received for the year with 910 reports of which most refer to small counts below 10 birds. A surprising 97% of these records (884) coming via the Bird Track database, which should help provide a clearer picture of the distribution of this species over the coming years. It is likely, however, that the bird is still under reported especially relating to breeding records.

Counts above 10 birds being recorded on 19 occasions during the year, among these being: 11 at Wraybury GPs on Feb 15th; 19 at Waltham St. Lawrence on Feb 17th; 16 at Thatcham Marsh on Feb 24th; 15 at Enborne Feb 26th; 15 at Greenham Common on Mar 25th with the same count on Apr 8th; There was a high of 15 at Crookham Pools on Mar 19th where larger than average numbers were reported until May. A county year high of 36 birds at Burghfield GPs on Mar 31st, 22 at Wraybury GPs on Apr 5th and 11 at Welford on Apr 19th.

Breeding: there were around 98 reports of singing males on territory from 43 locations across the county. In terms of confirmed breeding, it is likely to be significantly under-recorded, especially when compared with the numbers of birds reported on territory. There were two locations where nest building was reported, these being Greenham Common and at Lower Green, Inkpen. At Aldermaston, a nest with young was reported on Apr 15th. A brood patch, from incubating birds, was recorded during May and June on seven birds at the following locations: Thatcham Marshes, Midgham GPs, Aldermaston GPs and at The Wilderness, Kintbury. Around 50 juvenile birds were reported between April and July most of which are likely to have been bred within the county, due to the sedentary nature of the species.

YELLOW WAGTAIL (WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL) *Motacilla flava*

Common but declining passage migrant uncommon and local summer resident (Red Listed)

During the year, a total of 163 records were received across the county from 40 locations, 21 in west Berkshire, eight in mid Berkshire and 11 in east Berkshire. The majority of the sightings involved birds on passage with a significant reduction during the summer months (June/July). The yearly status for 2016 is shown in the table below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	–	–	1	15	14	5	7	16	16	3	–	–
No of birds	–	–	1	52	23	7	10	63	101	3	–	–

Spring passage: the spring passage began with an early first sighting of a male at QMR on Mar 30th. After a slight delay the next report was from Burnthouse Lane GPs on Apr 6th also being seen the following day. A steady stream of sightings of individual birds and the occasional pair then followed between Apr 13th and 18th at Sheep Down, Greenham Common, Crookham Common Pools, QMR, Lower Farm GP and Burnthouse Lane GPs. The numbers started increasing with a pair of birds at Brightwalton Common on Apr 18th and on the same day a pair being reported at QMR these still being present, but separate, the following day. The highest spring count of 11 birds was at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Apr 19th with eight birds still being present until Apr 24/25th. Single sightings were also noted at Warfield, Streatley and a pair seen at Wistley Green, Hurst. A location high of three birds was reported at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 19th with between one and three birds being seen at the site until Apr 28th. Other notable sightings were of eight birds on the Downs above West Ilsley on Apr 24th; three at Padworth Lane GPs on the same date. The count at QMR increased to eight birds on Apr 22nd and reached a maximum of 10 on Apr 25th with numbers reducing to three birds by the end of the month. Finally, for April, four birds (two m and two f) were reported on the airstrip at Englefield on Apr 29th. A marked downturn in numbers then followed in May with single birds and the occasional pair being seen throughout the month from locations across the county (Arborfield, Ashampstead, Brightwalton Common, Burnthouse Lane, Cock Marsh, Compton Down, East/West Ilsley Downs, East Garston, Englefield, Greenham Common, Lambourn and at QMR). A monthly high of five birds, at least four males, was recorded on the Lamborn Downs on May 28th.

Summer: in a continuation to a worrying decline in recent years, 2016 appears to have had no confirmed sightings of breeding and very few reports of possible breeding. There is the possibility of reduced coverage and under reporting during the summer months, but the lack of a single confirmed breeding attempt is of great concern. Males were seen singing at only three locations; Lambourn, Waltham St. Lawrence and at Bury Down. A pair was seen in suitable habitat at Waltham St. Lawrence on Jun 5th. The first of only two juveniles, reported in July, was seen at QMR on Jul 18th, the other bird being at Theale Main GP on Jul 25th. Both of these birds are likely to have been early migrants.

Autumn passage: the autumn passage offered an upturn in numbers with a minimum of 63 birds being reported from 16 sites during August, increasing to at least 101 birds from the same number of sites during September. The numbers then falling away rapidly to just single birds at three sites during October. The first sign of autumn migration was of six birds at Freeman's Marsh on Aug 3rd increasing to 11 birds by Sep 8th. There were sightings of single birds, plus the occasional two, throughout August except for the following reports; three birds (two juv) at QMR on Aug 18th increasing to four birds on Aug 27th. A notable count of eight birds were reported feeding amongst cattle at Greenham Common on Aug 25th. The same day a flock of seven f/w birds were seen around horses at Colnbrook. The final reports during August were of four birds on Dorney Common and nine birds on the Compton Downs on Aug 29th,

eight birds still being present on Sep 6th. The September counts were generally higher than in August with numbers ranging between one and six birds however, a passage high of 29 birds were seen feeding amongst the ponies at Colnbrook on Sep 5th. Another significant count of 24 birds were reported at Port Down, Hungerford on Sep 15th reducing to 15 by Sep 27th. During October there were only single reports of birds at Lower Farm, Streatley and QMR. The final sighting of the year being a single bird at QMR on Oct 5th.

There were two records involving a European race, both being a Channel type (*M. f. flava/flavissima*) hybrid. The first being seen with four *Motacilla flava*, at QMR on Apr 28th (MMc). A female type was reported at the same location on May 4th (CDRH).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Locally common resident and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Records were received for a large number of locations, totalling 109, from across the county. 38 sites in west Berkshire, 35 sites in mid Berkshire and 36 sites in east Berkshire.

Although this count is not as high as the 135 locations from 2015, it is in line with numbers from 2013 (107) and 2014 (110). Rivers and wetland areas provided the habitat for the vast majority of reports received.

The monthly status of recorded sightings is given below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	23	29	22	36	27	25	17	18	29	25	29	22
Minimum no. of birds	36	44	43	66	54	46	25	41	57	54	44	25

The monthly figures are relatively stable except for July and December, which may be the result of reduced coverage.

High counts: recorded numbers of birds were generally between one and four, however a few higher counts were recorded throughout the year.

There was a peak of five birds at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 20th, with three being reported as singing on territory along the river Blackwater. Elsewhere there was a high of six birds at Barton Court, Kintbury on Apr 17th The joint highest count of the year being eight birds at Marsh Benham on May 19th; five recorded on Jun 5th at Streatley being made up of two family groups; five also at The New Mill, Farley Hill on Aug 1st being a single family party. The other joint high for the year were eight birds recorded at Wokingham STW on Aug 3rd, including five juvs, this was recorded as likely to have been from two family parties.

Autumn passage: a notable high count of seven birds were reported at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures on Sep 20th. A total of eight birds were seen at QMR on Oct 3rd some of which are likely to have been passage birds as the normal count for this location hadn't previously exceeded four birds throughout the year. Elsewhere, the autumn period provided for consistent sightings peaking at five birds at both Greenham Common on Nov 1st and at Dorney Wetlands on Nov 23rd.

Breeding: between April and July birds were reported from a total of 67 locations. There were reports of attempted breeding at 15 locations, with fledged young recorded at the following 12 sites across the county. Midgham GP, Moor Green Lakes, Barton Court, Kintbury, 3's HQ, Maidenhead, Padworth Lane GP, Pangbourne Meadow STW, Reading town centre, Streatley, The New Mill, Farley Hill, Westbrook, Broxford, Great Meadow Pond, Windsor and at Wokingham STW.

The sightings of fledged birds are in line with numbers recorded between 2011 and 2014 where the count varied between 13 and 15 locations.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Uncommon passage migrant

There was a total of 27 sightings reported from five locations across the county through the spring and autumn passage periods. Site locations were: one in west Berkshire, two in mid Berkshire and two in east Berkshire. As with recent years, there was a significant contrast between the spring and autumn counts. The totals being 18 records for spring, two during summer and autumn having only seven reports.

Spring passage: a strong spring passage ran between Mar 26th and May 12th and involved 18 records totalling around 30 birds. The first report being of a male bird at Lower Farm GP on Mar 26th (NC). A single bird was reported at QMR on Mar 29th (PNe) increasing to two male birds on Mar 30th (CDRH) which were still present until Apr 2nd (CDRH). At QMR a pair were reported on Apr 3rd (CDRH), the female notable as having a deformed foot. A single bird was reported again at Lower Farm GP on Apr 4th (IW). The string of sightings at QMR (all CDRH) continued with two birds being seen on Apr 8th, neither with a deformed foot and a f/s female (possibly two) was seen on Apr 9th. The count increased to four birds on Apr 11th consisting of two males, one ad female and one f/s female. A noteworthy year high count of 11 birds were seen at QMR on Apr 12th (CDRH), these being five males on the east bank and six birds on the N/NE bank including one ad female. The year high count had reduced to five birds by Apr 13th (CDRH) including a new f/s female. Elsewhere in the county, at Moor Green Lakes two birds were reported on Apr 14th (NS). A female bird was reported at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Apr 15-16th (RJB); two at QMR on Apr 17-18th (CDRH); one at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 18th (RFM); four birds (two pairs) at QMR Apr 19th (CDRH); one at Moor Green Lakes Apr 21st (RCM); two birds (ad male and female) at QMR Apr 25-27th (CDRH) plus a probable f/s female on Apr 25th. The final location, during the spring passage, to have any reports was at Moor Green Lakes with a single bird being reported on Apr 25th and on May 12th (RFM).

Summer: interestingly, there was a report of this continental species during the summer period. There was a “classic female” at QMR on Jun 4th (CDRH), this bird was possibly part of a family group of four birds and may have bred nearby.

Autumn passage: eight birds were reported during the autumn period, which started later than in recent years. The first report was a w/p female at QMR on Sep 21st (CDRH). An apparent f/w bird was seen at Colnbrook, on the landfill site, on Sep 25th (CDRH). A single male was seen at Lower Farm on Sep 26th (NC); one at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 28th (MHu). The autumn high count of two birds were reported at QMR on Sep 29th (LGRE); one at Lower Farm Oct 1st (NC) and the final sighting of the passage being of a f/w bird on Oct 6th at QMR (CDRH).

PIED WAGTAIL (WHITE WAGTAIL (*yarrellii*)) *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green listed)

A widespread species that was reported by 65 different observers recording a total of 479 sightings from 114 locations across the county. The Pied Wagtail is a species that is both adapted to live in urban areas and is quite vocal which should lead to it having high levels of reporting. The majority of the counts were in single figures, though there were a number of notable high counts from the beginning of the year to March and from October until the end of the year. Records of 50 or more birds being: 100+ on Jan 13th at Pangbourne STW; 100 at Wokingham STW on Jan 25th, 92 feeding on the loose earth created by grazing sheep at Brimpton GPs on Feb 21st; 55+ on the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes on Feb 28th and 100+ at Sandhurst STW on Mar 4th. The largest count of the year being of 150

birds recorded on Oct 3rd at QMR with high numbers being reported for around a week at the reservoir. Also, 57 were reported on a ploughed field at Strand Water, Cookham on Oct 10th; 60+ birds seen gathering on the roof of the Asda store at Lower Early, Reading on Oct 11th. Elsewhere, the numbers were much reduced with significant counts mainly appearing on various arable fields, Gravel Pits and Sewage Treatment Works.

The monthly status of recorded sightings is given below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	29	32	25	27	28	17	20	10	10	22	17	17
Minimum no. of birds	307	315	212	83	73	46	69	89	108	397	75	135

The data confirms that the numbers of birds reported increase greatly during the winter months, these are likely to be as a result of migration from further north. A possible indicator of any southerly migration was highlighted when small numbers of birds were consistently reported flying south over Woose Hill, Wokingham during the latter two weeks of October. During the summer months, the numbers of birds reported were lower with a corresponding reduction in the number of sites where the birds were present. This may indicate that reduced coverage could be a significant factor during this period.

Breeding: there were very few confirmed breeding reports for such a widespread species. In fact, Waltham St. Lawrence provided the only confirmed nest site to produce a fledged juvenile. An adult was seen carrying food at Winnersh Cricket Club. A pair nest building was also reported at Thatcham. Recently fledged young were also reported at four sites, these being Burnthouse Lane GPs, Moor Green Lakes, Lea Farm Lake, Hurst and Lower Farm GP. Given the suitable habitat and large numbers present there must be significant under reporting of breeding for this species.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, locally common summer resident but declining (Amber Listed)

This declining species was encountered across the county, especially on downland and other open areas, with breeding happily confirmed at four sites (following no confirmations in 2015) and a substantial influx in September and October.

Localities	west Berkshire	mid Berkshire	east Berkshire	Total
January-March		11	5	16
April-August		11	2	3
September-December		20	13	11
				44

First winter: little of note happened. The majority of reports were limited to single-figure counts, with only three reaching 30, which were 30 at QMR on Jan 10th, 30 at Combe on Mar 22nd, and 40+ migrating N over QMR on Mar 18th. A few further observations of small numbers flying N or NW were made in March and April-May: all records were in single figures, apart from 20 at Greenham Common on Apr 8th, and little movement was reported. **Summer/breeding:** breeding was confirmed at Greenham Common and Crookham Common (three territories held?), Walbury Hill and Wellbottom Down, Lambourn. A used nest found at Crookham Common had probably been predated by a snake. In addition, breeding probably occurred at Combe Gibbet. **Autumn/second winter:** a large influx took place after Sep 17th, resulting in three-figure counts of 250 west of Roden Down, Aldworth, on Sep 17th, 130 at QMR on Oct 1st, increasing to 200+ on Oct 3rd, and 105+ at Streatley on Oct 8th. There were many further flocks of 30-80 on the ground in

September and October, plus smaller numbers moving over, generally S. Numbers generally settled down to below 25 in November and December, other than four counts of 30 to 50.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

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

After years of decline, 2016 signalled a welcome upturn in the fortunes of this species.

Spring/summer: as usual, most returning birds appeared straight in their breeding haunts, starting with one at Crowthorne Wood on Apr 8th. Single migrants turned up at the Grand Union Canal, Slough on Apr 17th and Colnbrook on May 2nd. Although around 30 territories may have been held, well above the 17 territories in 2015, breeding could only be confirmed at two sites. However, DJB remarked he had his best year ever for Swinley Park, due to large scale woodland clearance and the planting of new plantations. Numbers were better at Buttersteep as well. The information is summarised in the table (for details of Swinley Forest Special Protection Area, see Crowley *et al.*, 2012, *The Birds of Berkshire* 2012, 9-16).

Locality	No. territories	Max count (incl. young)	Notes
Walbury Hill/Combe	2?	3	
Snelsmore Common	2?	3	
Greenham/Crookham Common	2	1	No breeding confirmed.
Bucklebury Common	3?	4	
Padworth Common	1	1	
Swinley Forest SPA:			
Crowthorne Woods	2	2	Fledged juv seen.
Swinley Forest	?	1	
Wildmoor Heath	2	2	
MOD Heathland/Wishmoor Bottom	2	4	
Sandhurst Royal Mil Academy	?	?	Status not clear.
Swinley Park	6	8	1 pair nesting, 5 singing.
Buttersteep, South Ascot	6+?	8	All 8 in song.
Swinley Brickpits, South Ascot	2?	2	

Autumn: passage consisted of four sightings made over ten days: three at Colnbrook on Aug 29th, one at Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures the same day, one at Walbury Hill, Combe on Aug 30th, and the final departure of two at Wraybury GPs on Sep 7th.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Winter: an unprecedented period. A special search of suitable sites by CDRH revealed a minimum of 15 birds at three sites in the east of the county in January and February. A peak count of nine at one site in January was followed by nine at another site some distance away in mid-February; at a third site there were up to six during January, with three remaining into mid-February. **Spring passage:** a bird coming into summer plumage was seen around a pool at Burnthouse Lane GP on Apr 6th and 7th (RGi *et al.*). **Autumn passage:** A typical showing, with one at QMR on Nov 3rd, then two at Horton on Nov 27th, followed by one there on Dec 24th (all CDRH).

ROCK PIPIT (EURASIAN ROCK PIPIT) *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce passage migrant and a rare winter visitor (Green Listed)

Observations were confined to Queen Mother Reservoir and conformed to the normal pattern.

Spring passage: a minimum of four birds were distinguished, all within two weeks of March. One on Mar 11th (CDRH), then one to two between Mar 18th and 23rd, with three on Mar 20th (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** apart from one on Sep 24th (CDRH), all fell in October. One to two occurred between Oct 1st and 8th, while three were observed on Oct 4th, 6th, and 7th (CDRH). Regular visits produced no more sightings until one on Oct 19th (DJB).

ROCK PIPIT (EURASIAN ROCK PIPIT (*littoralis*)) *Anthus petrosus littoralis*

The only clear identification made of this Scandinavian race was one at QMR on Mar 23rd (CDRH), a typical date.

CHAFFINCH (COMMON CHAFFINCH) *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

This species is a common sight throughout the county, and 987 records were submitted. The highest counts were seen during the winter months, however only nine counts exceeded 30 birds as follows: 65 at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor on Jan 10th, 34 at Eastbury Down, Lambourn on Jan 20th, 33 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Jan 25th, 40 at Greenham Common on Feb 22nd, 62 at Mount Hill, Bagnor on Mar 2nd, 35 at Duke's Lane, Windsor on Mar 11th, 100 plus at Starveall Farm, Farnborough on Oct 27th, the highest count of 130 at Bury Lane, East Ilsley on Nov 3rd and 51 at Welford on Dec 1st.

There was only one report of **Breeding:** a female was seen feeding a juvenile on the patio at Hell Corner Farm, Inkpen on Jun 18th. As this bird is a familiar sight throughout Berkshire and may be under reported, this does not accurately reflect the breeding status.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Winter visitor and passage migrant in varying numbers (Schedule One and Green Listed)

Bramblings were reported at 34 locations across the county, and as for previous years, this finch was mostly seen in gardens on feeders and in mixed finch flocks. No large numbers were reported, the highest single sighting being ten birds at Hyde End Mill on Feb 8th amongst a flock of chaffinches. The most sightings were during the first winter period, with 34 sightings in January, 42 sightings in February and peaking at 49 for March. The last sighting for the first winter period was one bird at Swinley Park on 3rd May. This finch species was not seen again until late October with a single bird at Shinfield Park on Oct 25th. Thereafter only four birds were seen in November and three in December. These results are not unexpected as it is only when there is poor availability of beech mast that bramblings winter south of their breeding range and good numbers are seen feeding in British gardens.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce and declining visitor, formerly an uncommon resident (Red Listed)

There was only one record in Berkshire for this handsome and elusive finch. A male hawfinch was observed feeding on hornbeam seeds in Windsor Great Park on Dec 28th (CDRH).

BULLFINCH (EURASIAN BULLFINCH) *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Uncommon but widespread resident, the long-term decline appears to have stabilised (Amber Listed)

Records for this attractive finch came from sites right across the county as follows: east Berks 37 sites, mid Berks 43 sites and west Berks 57 sites. High counts of five or more came from 20 locations. Counts of ten were reported at Hosehill Lake LNR on Jan 6th and Combe Wood on Mar 18th. The highest count of 11 was recorded at Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford on Nov 18th and at Twyford GPs on Dec 19th. Groups of eight birds were recorded from four locations in west Berks, counts of seven were observed in one location in mid Berks and three locations in west Berks. Counts of six were noted in four sites in west Berks and five sites in mid Berks. Counts of five were recorded in six sites in west Berks, three sites in mid Berks and one site in east Berks (Wraysbury GPs on Nov 13th) this being the highest count for the eastern part of the county.

Breeding reports were few, with only six sightings of young as follows: one juv with four adults on garden feeders at Emmer Green on Jul 3rd, one juv at Englefield on Jul 19th, one juv with adult male and female at Aldermaston GPs on Jul 29th, two juvs and an adult at Marsh Meadow, Cookham on Aug 29th, one juv at Combe Hill on Aug 30th and three juvs at Walbury Hill, Combe on Aug 30th.

GREENFINCH (EUROPEAN GREENFINCH) *Chloris chloris*

Common and widespread resident and winter visitor, has shown signs of a decline in recent years (Green Listed)

Greenfinches were recorded at 116 sites throughout the county. Large flocks were not seen during 2016, although there were 39 reports of groups of between 10 and 15. The highest count of 70 was seen roosting in gardens along Milestone Drive, Sonning on Jan 12th. Twenty were seen at Crookham Common Pools on Jan 16th, 18 and 25 were sighted by two observers at Greenham Common on Feb 7th, 25 at Greenham Common on Feb 8th, followed by 20 here on Feb 9th, 16 at Hungerford Marsh on Apr 29th and 19 at Greenham Common on Dec 9th.

There were not many reports of breeding. Juveniles were seen on five occasions as follows: one at Ascot on May 18th, one at Brimpton on May 29th, one at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst on Jul 2nd, two at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 9th and two at Hell Corner Farm, Inkpen on Jul 25th. A pair of adults was seen collecting nest material at Bray GPs on Jul 31st.

LINNET (COMMON LINNET) *Linaria cannabina*

Still a widespread but thinly distributed breeding resident which unfortunately continues to decline, also a locally common winter visitor (Red Listed)

Records were submitted for 94 locations (44 in west Berks, 21 in mid Berks and 29 in east Berks). Some impressive large flocks were seen mainly on the downland sites. There were over 60 reports of flocks of between 30 and 100. The first part of the year saw 250 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Feb 11th, and 300-400 at Shottesbrooke Park, White Waltham on Apr 9th. High counts from August onwards were as follows: 109 at Crookham Common Pools on Aug 10th, 100 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Aug 31st, 132 at Englefield on Oct 9th, 350 at Compton Downs on Oct 11th, 100 at Englefield on Oct 23rd, a very impressive 550 at Cow Down, West Ilsley on Oct 27th, 100 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Oct 29th, 220 at Englefield on Nov 2nd, 275 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Nov 3rd, then at this location 400 on Nov 6th, 300 plus at Roden Downs, Compton on Nov 7th, 130 at Englefield on Nov 8th, 100 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Dec 1st, 300-500 at Cow Down, West Ilsley on Dec 4th, 100 at Manor Farm, Crookham on Dec 16th followed by 150 at this site on Dec 24th.

There were only two reports of juveniles being seen, and two reports of mating/courting pairs.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

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

Sightings across the county were recorded until May 30th and then again from Sep 3rd. There were many more sightings during the first winter period and counts of 50 and over were more numerous than for the previous two years.

This species was monitored at a standard set of sites. The table below shows the number of those standard sites which were occupied in that month, and the number of birds at those occupied sites.

High counts of 50 or more were mainly seen at Moor Green Lakes and Englefield but also observed at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest later in the year, as follows: 50 at Moor Green Lakes NR on four dates from Jan 1st to Jan 24th, 60 at Brimpton GPs on Jan 4th, 100+ at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 4th, then also at this location were 50 on Jan 5th, 80 on Jan 9th and 50 on Jan 11th. Fifty were at Englefield on Jan 15th, also at this location were 65 and 60 on Jan 19th and 61 on Jan 22nd. Fifty were at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 24th, followed by 100 at this location on Jan 25th. Fifty-three were seen at Englefield on Jan 28th followed by 60 on Jan 30th.

Fewer high counts were seen in February as follows: 60 at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 2nd, followed by 100 at this location on Feb 4th, 60 on Feb 11th and 70 on Feb 17th. 74 at Englefield on Feb 17th was followed by 70 at this site on Feb 26th. 60 were seen at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 26th and 50 on Feb 27th. March saw some of the highest counts as follows: 200 at Englefield on Mar 5th and at this site 250 were recorded on Mar 10th followed by 50 on Mar 19th. Fifty were seen at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Mar 24th, 104 at Englefield on Mar 26th, 50 at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 26th and 80 at Englefield on Mar 30th.

In October, 100 were seen at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Oct 26th. In November, the high counts were as follows: 100 at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Nov 5th, followed by 60 here on Nov 6th, and 60 plus on Nov 8th, 60 at Padworth Lane GP on Nov 13th, 150 at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Nov 15th, and 100 here on Nov 19th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	31	20	24	26	7	-	-	-	1	9	13	8
No. of birds	432	341	475	192	56	-	-	-	3	135	328	77

CROSSBILL (RED CROSSBILL) *Loxia curvirostra*

Regular (irruptive) visitor in variable numbers (depending on cone crop), occasionally breeds (Schedule One and Green Listed)

Fifty-two records were submitted for this species from 14 locations, which were mainly forested sites in south east Berks. High counts of ten or over from Swinley Forest were as follows: 16 on Jan 15th, 18 on Jan 16th, 14 on Jan 20th, 18 on Jan 22nd, 19 on Mar 27th, 17 and 27 by two observers on Mar 31st, at least 10 on Apr 8th, 32 on Apr 16th, 14 on Apr 26th, 12 and an impressive 51 by two observers on May 3rd, 10 on May 7th and 32 on May 20th. At other sites, a high count of 35 was recorded at Buttersteep, South Ascot on Apr 17th and at least 28 at this location on Nov 8th. Two birds were seen at Moor Green Lakes NR on Jul 9th, otherwise there were no sightings in June, August and September.

The only evidence of breeding was noted when four birds were seen carrying nesting material in Swinley Forest on Mar 19th.

Overall it was a better year than last year although it is to be expected that there will be considerable variability between years for this irruptive species.

GOLDFINCH (EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH) *Carduelis carduelis*

Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)

This common resident breeder was reported from 173 sites across the county. The largest flocks were recorded in September and October, with 166 (all juveniles) reported at Englefield on Sep 2nd, at least 160 at Snowball Hill, Woodlands Park on Sep 12th, 122 at Englefield on Sep 27th and 250 at Englefield on Sep 28th. An impressive 300 were reported at Englefield on Oct 2nd, 200 (virtually all youngsters) at Englefield on Oct 11th and 100 at Twyford GPs on Oct 24th. Nineteen reports of flocks of between 40 and 90 were also submitted in January and February and from August onwards.

The first fledglings were noted at Bray Wick on Apr 26th. Thereafter juveniles were seen in family parties from June onwards. From August increasing numbers of juveniles were seen together. In addition to the large flocks containing juveniles reported above, 80 (nearly all juveniles) were seen at Englefield on Aug 28th. This would confirm this species increase in abundance according to the Berkshire Bird Index.

SERIN *Serinus serinus* Omitted in error from the 2015 report

Rare vagrant

The fifth record for the county was a 1st winter male found at Horton GPs on Jan 13th, 2015. Despite a daily search it was not seen again until one final sighting at the same location on Jan 23rd (CDRH).

SISKIN (EURASIAN SISKIN) *Spinus spinus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce in summer (Green Listed)

Siskins were seen throughout the county, at 31 sites in west Berks, 31 sites in mid Berks and 38 sites in east Berks. July and August were the only months without sightings of this finch species, although only six were seen in June and a single bird in September.

This species was monitored at a standard set of sites. The table below shows the number of those standard sites which were occupied in that month, and the number of birds at those occupied sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	38	43	34	29	11	2	-	-	1	14	13	15
No. of birds	627	851	585	132	31	5	-	-	1	207	144	550

The numbers show an increase over the previous two years. Higher monthly totals and high counts of over 40 were more frequent during the first winter period. There were seven counts of 40 or over in January, the highest being 100+ at Dorney Wetlands on Jan 7th. Nine high counts in February included 150 at Sulham Wood on Feb 26th. March saw nine high counts which included 100 at Sulham on Mar 3rd. In October, there were three high counts, the highest being 82 at Moor Green Lakes NR on Oct 16th. In November there were 60 at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on Nov 3rd. There were five high counts in December, culminating in an impressive 300 at Sandhurst Balancing Pond on Dec 30th. There were over 100 reports of groups of between ten and forty from widespread locations, and many reports of Siskin on garden feeders.

There were not many reports of breeding. Juveniles were observed at three locations as follows: two juvs were seen on a garden feeder at Emmer Green on May 17th. Between two and four juvs were seen on garden feeders at Sulhamstead on May 17th, May 18th, May 22nd, May 24th and May 25th. A juv was seen at Ascot on Jun 12th.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Locally common resident on the downs of NW Berks, now possibly extinct elsewhere in the county (Red Listed)

Sightings were submitted from 23 locations which were all in west Berks which confirms that this species is now absent from the eastern and central regions of the county.

There were more high counts of 15 or over during the first five months of the year, the highest counts occurring in January as follows: counts of between 20 and 40 at Bury Down on five dates between Jan 1st and Jan 19th, 58 at Compton Downs on Jan 16th and an impressive 200 at Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Jan 19th. During February, there were 16 at Bury Down on Feb 10th, 30 at Bury Down on Feb 11th, 18 at Farnborough on Feb 14th and 100 at Lambourn on Feb 23rd. During early spring, there were 60 at Bury Down on Mar 23rd, 20 here on Mar 26th, 54 at Compton Downs on Apr 17th and 19 at Aldworth on Apr 29th. May found 17 at Bury Down on May 6th and 24 (at least 16 territories - pairs or singing males) at Compton Downs on May 28th. During the summer period smaller groups were seen and it was not until October when higher counts were recorded again: 39 at Cow Down, West Ilsley on Oct 27th, 23 at this location on Oct 29th, 38 at Bury Lane, West Ilsley on Nov 3rd and 20 at Cow Down, West Ilsley on Dec 1st.

There were 29 records of singing birds, but very few reports of breeding. Adults and three fledglings were seen at Farnborough on May 29th, four or more birds possibly including juveniles/fledglings at Brightwalton Common on Jul 9th and an adult carrying food at Penclose Wood, North Heath on Aug 6th.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Locally common but declining resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)

This species was reported at 51 sites in west Berks, 21 sites in mid Berks and 25 sites in east Berks. As expected, yellowhammers are more common in the west of the county where there is more farmland and downland.

High counts of 15 or more as follows: 40+ at Sheepdrove Farm, Lambourn and 30 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Jan 15th, 44 at Compton Downs on Jan 16th, 15-20 probably more at Englefield on Jan 28th, 50 at Compton Downs on Feb 7th, 34 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Feb 10th, and an impressive 77 at Manor Farm, Farnborough on Feb 14th. The following month, 20+ were seen at Woodlands Park Fields on Mar 22nd, this being the highest count for an east Berks location, 40 at Bury Down, West Ilsley on Mar 23rd and 15+ at Woodlands Park Fields on Mar 30th. Fifteen plus were seen at Walbury Hill, Combe on Apr 8th, 19 at Compton Downs on Apr 13th and 17 at Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Jun 23rd. In autumn, higher numbers were seen again: 67 were at Compton Downs on Sep 6th, 30 at Cow Down, West Ilsley on Oct 27th, 16 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Oct 31st. 39 were seen at Compton Downs, 27 at Walbury Hill, Combe, and 27 at Bury Lane, West Ilsley on Nov 3rd, 30 at Aldworth on Nov 7th, 15 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Nov 28th, 40-60 at Cow Down, West Ilsley on Dec 9th, 22 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Dec 14th and 20+ at Temple on Dec 30th.

Although there were many reports of singing birds, few juveniles were seen and breeding evidence is as follows: female carrying food at Compton Downs on May 28th, female with

crane fly in bill at Foliejon Park on Jun 7th, bird carrying food at Streatley Warren on Jul 13th, a pair feeding three fledged young at Englefield on Jul 19th, male carrying food at Woodlands Park Fields on Jul 28th, two juvs seen at Englefield on Aug 14th, six juvs at Sulham Wood on Aug 29th and a female feeding juv at Combe Hill on Aug 30th.

REED BUNTING (COMMON REED BUNTING) *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Locally common resident and winter visitor, population showing signs of stabilising after long term decline (Amber Listed)

Observers submitted 548 records for this species from 86 sites across the county. As expected during spring and summer, they were mainly seen at wetland sites. During winter months they were also seen in gardens, on arable fields and game strips with a few reports of birds in these habitats during spring and summer.

High counts of ten or over were as follows: 15 at Englefield on Jan 15th, ten at Sonning Farm on Jan 18th, 25 at Sheepdrove, Lambourn on Jan 19th, 14 at Englefield on Jan 19th, 20+ at Dorney Wetlands on Jan 22nd, 20 at Englefield on Jan 28th, 27 at Newbury Racecourse on Feb 10th, 23 and 18 at Englefield on Feb 11th and Feb 14th, 12 at The Wilderness, Kintbury on Apr 19th, at least 10 at Southcote on Apr 22nd, 10 at Fobney Meadow, Reading on Apr 30th, 11 at Dorney Wetlands on Jun 3rd, 10 at Eton Wick on Jun 3rd, 19 and 10 at Englefield on Aug 5th and Aug 14th, 15 at Remenham on Nov 1st and Nov 22nd, and an impressive 60 at this location on Dec 30th.

Although singing males were reported at appropriate breeding locations, evidence of breeding was scarce as follows: some birds in a group of ten were carrying food at Fobney Meadow, Reading on Apr 30th, a bird carrying food at Pangbourne Meadow on May 29th, a juvenile with two adult birds seen at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst on Jun 2nd, a juvenile at Burnthouse Lane GPs, Pingewood on Jul 27th, and another juvenile at this location on Sep 13th.

NON-NATIVE SPECIES

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Reported in all months of the year except November. Given the peripatetic nature of the species it is difficult to determine exactly how many birds were involved; perhaps as few as one or as many as three! The first report of the year came from Widbrook Common on Jan 14th it was then reported from the same location on several more dates until the final sighting on Dec 31st. One was seen at Summerleaze GPs on many dates between Feb 23rd and Dec 14th. What was probably the same bird was seen on the River Thames at Grass Eyot during March and April. At one point it appeared to be paired with a Greylag but there was no confirmed evidence of breeding. One was seen at Charvil Meadows on April 13th and what may well have been a second bird at Lea Farm Lake on Jul 8th and Lavell's Lake between Aug 1st and Aug 12th. A long-staying individual was reported from Long Lane, Cookham between Aug 11th and Sep 3rd and finally there was one at Twyford on Oct 21st.

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

Up the three adults were seen at various points on the Thames and Kennet around Reading throughout the year, with an adult pair with three cygnets recorded at Kennet Mouth on May 15th. Away from Reading there was an adult at Summerleaze GPs on Sep 23rd, a pair on Park Lane Pit, Twyford on Nov 21st, one on Whiteknights Park and Lake on Dec 3rd and one on Sandford Lake on Dec 5th.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

A single bird was seen around the Moor Green Lakes complex on five dates between Jun 10th and Nov 24th, usually associating with Canada Geese.

RAJA SHELDUCK *Radjah radjah*

Just one record of this exotic species endemic to the north coast of Australia, Papua/New Guinea and the Moluccas. A bird associating with Egyptian Geese at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 28th.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

Just four records of this domestic species during the year, all from Thatcham Marsh, where two were reported on two dates in spring and two dates in autumn.

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL *Numida Meleagris*

One at West Meadows, Beenham on Jan 28th and another (or the same) at Woolhampton on June 6th.

REEVES'S PHEASANT *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Two females, apparently introduced for game shooting, were seen in Bannister's Wood, Brimpton on Sep 11th.

AFRICAN SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis ethiopicus*

A surprising record of four on the lawn of a large house on the southern edge of Wray's Lake, Wraybury GPs on Jan 20th.

HYBRIDS

Anser hybrid

A small grey and white goose (presumed to be part Snow Goose) was seen flying ESE with a Canada Goose at QMR on Mar 20th. A long-staying individual with a passing resemblance to a White-fronted Goose (extensive white forehead) was noted at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park on Apr 10th.

Anser × *Branta* hybrid

A hybrid Greylag Goose × Canada Goose was noted at Windsor Great Park on Oct 8th.

Aythya hybrids

A number of interesting, and sometimes confusing, *Aythya* hybrids were seen during the year. Most observers helpfully included a short informative description of the birds in their remarks columns and readers are encouraged to view the records in the database. The first of the year was a 1w Ferruginous Duck × Pochard at Horton GPs between Jan 8th and Jan 10th. This was quickly followed by a drake Pochard × Ferruginous Duck at the same location on Jan 23rd. The latter was probably the same bird as seen at Wraysbury GPs on Jan 8th. Further west a bird superficially resembling a female Scaup was noted at Padworth Lane GP on Jan 17th. At Moor Green Lakes a Pochard × Ferruginous Duck was seen on five dates between Feb 5th and Dec 29th. An unspecified bird was seen at Bray GPs on Feb 21st with a drake Tufted Duck × female Pochard at the Hotel Lake, Burghfield GPs on the same date. There were then no records until the second winter period when a female Tufted Duck × Pochard was reported at Wraysbury GPs on Nov 9th. On Nov 17th a bird described as a drake coming out of eclipse (resembling a Scaup) was present at Moatlands GP and still present on 24th. On Dec 3rd a bird (suspected earlier of being a Scaup) was on the Hotel Lake, Burghfield, on the 12th a Tufted Duck × Pochard was at Bray GPs and finally, on Dec 29th, a female or 1w Pochard × Ferruginous Duck and a male Tufted Duck × Pochard were present at Dorney Wetlands.

“Duck hybrid”

The only records of any hybrids from the west of the county were of a number of unspecified birds reported from Thatcham Marsh during the first winter period and spring. There was a similar report from Twyford on Dec 19th.

Herring Gull × Lesser Black-backed Gull

An adult flew north over Slough Sewage Farm with a group of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Jun 8th. Another, or the same, was present at QMR with two attendant juveniles on Jul 30th (both CDRH). It is worthwhile reading the observer's descriptions of the birds in the remarks column in the database.

Swallow × House Martin

On Oct 1st MFW discovered an odd looking hirundine at QMR. Quickly dismissing the possibility of it being one of the rare hirundine species he concluded that it must be a hybrid Swallow × House Martin. The head was swallow-like, with a pinkish throat but no discernible breast band. The under-tail coverts were pinky-buff and the rump was off-white with a pinkish tinge. The tail was narrowly forked, and the upper parts were dark brown with some blue. The bird was photographed.

First and last dates of selected summer migrants

Species	First Date	Last Date
Blackcap*	15th March	2nd November
Chiffchaff*	10th March	10th November
Common Sandpiper	10th April	17th October
Common Tern	2nd April	16th October
Cuckoo	8th April	6th August
Garden Warbler	19th April	13th September
Hobby	11th April	15th October
House Martin	20th March	15th October
Lesser Whitethroat	13th April	25th September
Little Ringed Plover	19th March	7th September
Nightingale	8th April	6th July
Nightjar	7th May	30th August
Quail	4th June	24th July
Redstart	5th April	30th September
Reed Warbler	11th April	21st October
Sand Martin	15th March	1st October
Sedge Warbler	15th March	2nd October
Spotted Flycatcher	7th May	17th September
Stone-curlew	12th April	
Swallow	23rd March	18th October
Swift	16th April	13th September
Tree Pipit	8th April	7th September
Turtle Dove	7th May	
Common Whitethroat	8th April	9th October
Willow Warbler	17th March	2nd October
Yellow Wagtail	30th March	5th October

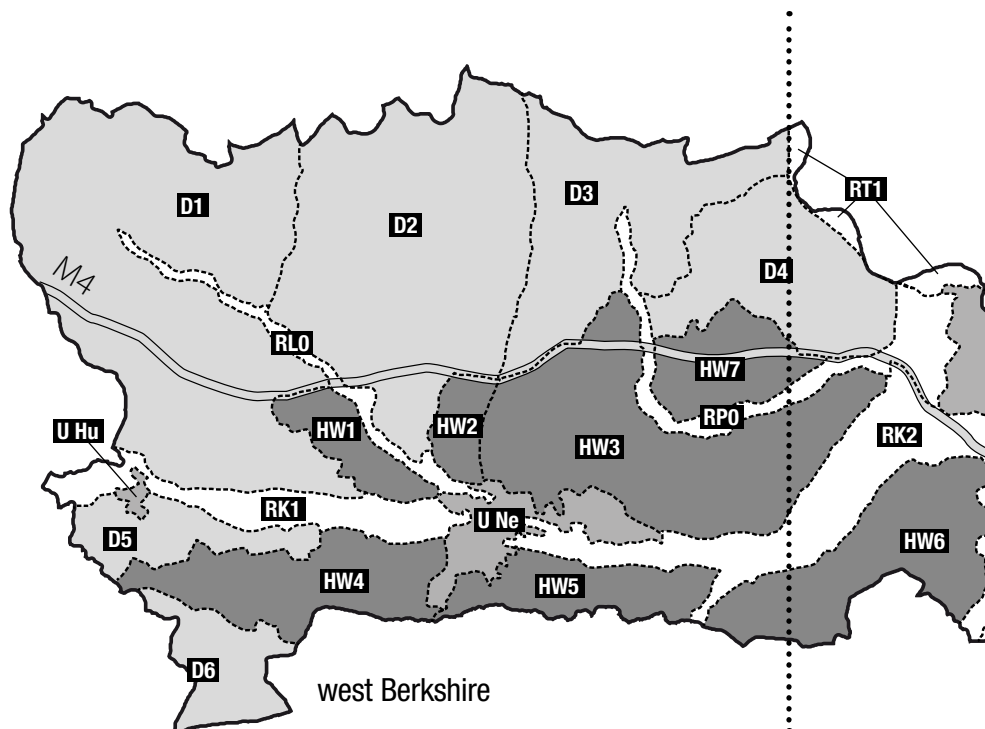
*Difficult to distinguish between early/late migrants and wintering birds

Species	Last Date	First Date
Brambling	3rd May	25th October
Fieldfare	14th April	10th October
Redwing	24th April	30th September
Golden Plover	12th April	8th September
Goldeneye	18th April	13th August
Goosander+	10th April	20th October

+ There is an unconfirmed report of Goosander breeding in the west of the county

Topographical areas – a resource for records analysis

To facilitate analysis of bird records in relation to habitat types, all sites in the bird record database have been assigned to one of 37 topographical areas grouped into five broad topographical classes (TC): Downs, heathlands, river valleys, the Eastern plain between Reading and Windsor and the urban areas. The classes relate to the underlying geology and



TC: The Downs/Chalk areas

Lambourn Downs
Farnborough Downs
Compton/Aldworth/Illesley Downs
Eastern Downs & Woods
North Hampshire Downs - S Hungerford
North Hampshire Downs - Combe/Walbury heights
Remenham/Hurley/Cookham Plateau

DC

D1
D2
D3
D4
D5
D6
D7

TC: Heaths/Heathland Woods and associated areas

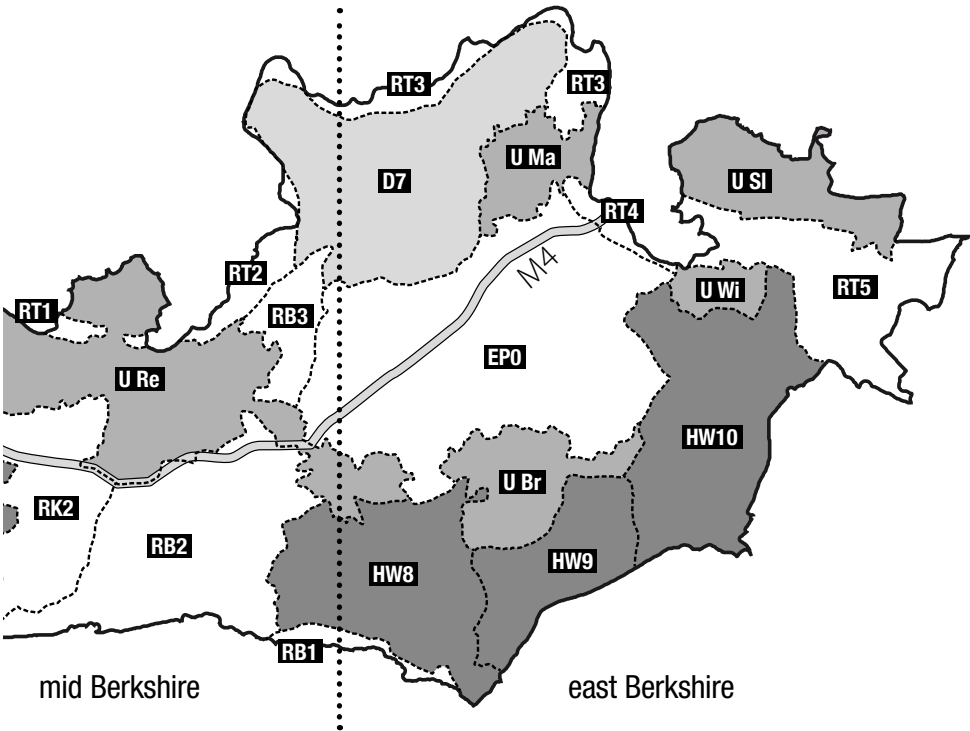
Wickham Heath
Snelsmore Common
Curridge/Hermitage & Bucklebury Plateau
Inkpen Plateau
Greenham/Crookham Plateau
Wasing/Burghfield
Yattendon/Frilsham
Crowthorne/ Finchampstead
Swinley Forest
Windsor Great Park & Forest

HW

HW1
HW2
HW3
HW4
HW5
HW6
HW7
HW8
HW9
HW10

topography, which, together with human activities, determine the types of habitat to be found. The 5,000 or so sites for which there are bird records in our database have been assigned to the appropriate area, allowing records to be analysed by these habitat-related classes.

Thanks are due to Neil Bucknell for his detailed analysis of Berkshire topography and to Robert Godden, Renton Righelato and Marek Walford, who, together with Neil, assigned the sites in the database to their topographical areas.



TC: River valleys

- Thames: Goring Gap to Reading
- Thames: Reading to Wargrave
- Thames: Wargrave to Maidenhead
- Thames: Jubilee River to Windsor
- Lower Thames & Colne
- Kennet: West of Newbury & Dun
- Lower Kennet & tributaries
- Lambourn valley
- Pang Valley and Sul Gap
- Blackwater
- Loddon Valley above Winnersh
- Lower Loddon

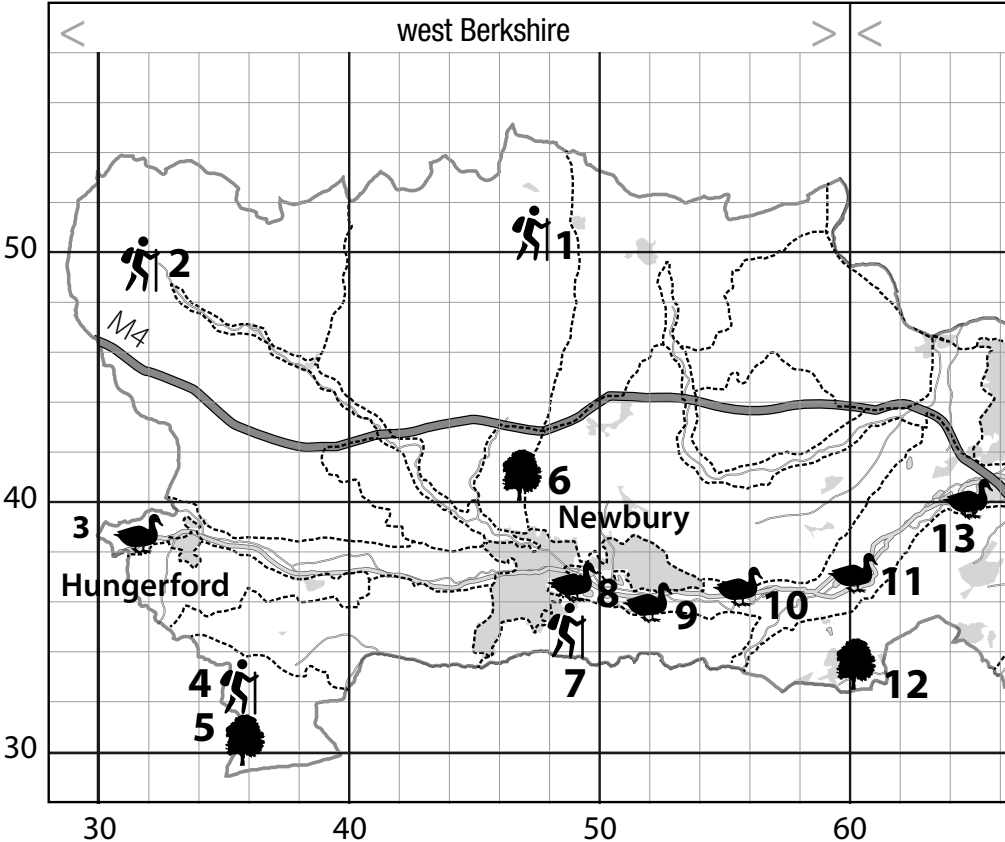
R

- RT1 Twyford/Binfield/Windsor Plain
- RT2
- RT3
- RT4
- RT5
- TC: Urban Areas
- UR
- Hungerford
- Newbury-Thatcham
- Greater Reading
- Bracknell
- Maidenhead
- Windsor
- Slough & Langley
- RB1
- RB2
- RB3

EP

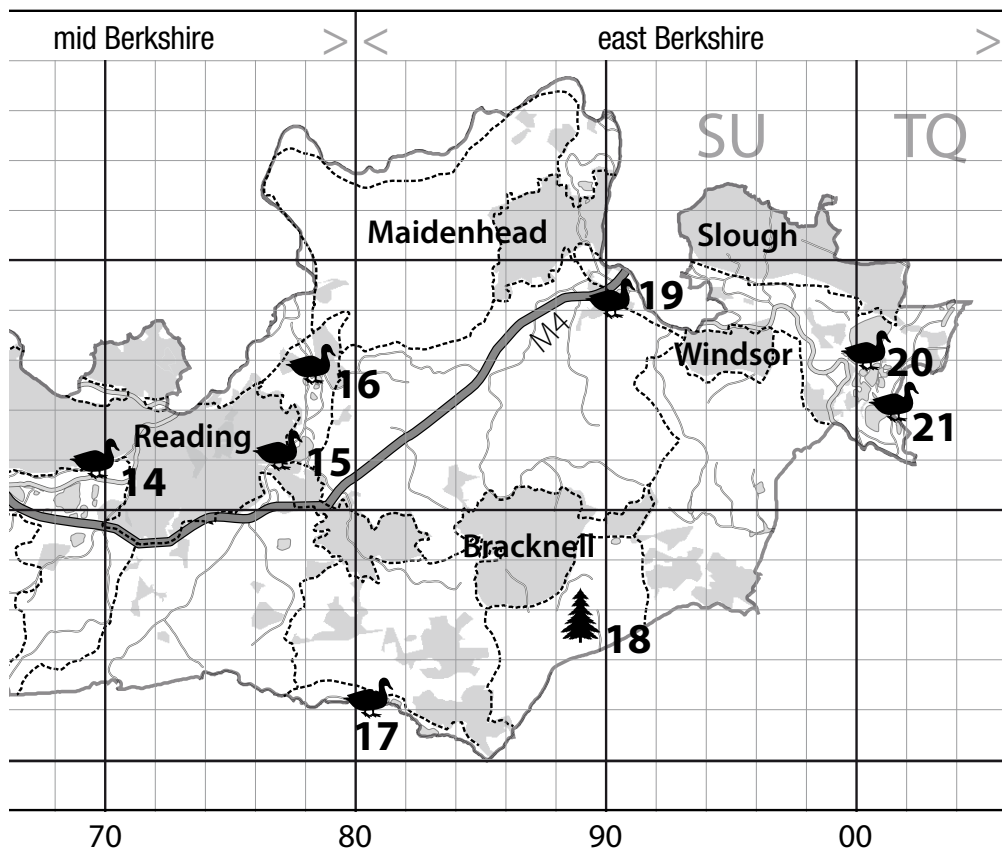
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- U Br
- U Ma
- U Wi
- U Si

Some birdwatching sites in Berkshire



- Key**
- Downland and commons
 - Wetlands
 - Mostly coniferous woodland
 - Mostly broadleaf woodland

Some of the better-known birding sites in the County are shown here.
 For access details and more information visit <http://berksoc.org.uk/countysites/>



- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Berkshire Downs: West Ilsley | 12. Padworth Common |
| 2. Berkshire Downs: Lambourn | 13. Theale & Hosehill Lakes |
| 3. Freeman's Marsh | 14. Fobney Island and Meadows |
| 4. Walbury Hill | 15. Dinton Pastures and Lea Farm Lake |
| 5. Combe Wood | 16. Twyford Lakes |
| 6. Snelsmore Common | 17. Moor Green Lakes |
| 7. Greenham & Crookham Commons | 18. Swinley Forest & Wishmoor Bottom |
| 8. Lower Farm Gravel Pit | 19. Dorney Wetlands |
| 9. Thatcham Marsh | 20. Queen Mother Reservoir |
| 10. Woolhampton Gravel Pits | 21. Wraysbury Gravel Pits |
| 11. Padworth Lane Gravel Pit | |

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Well over 400 people contributed to this year's systematic list, a magnificent effort for a small county. Please keep your records coming. Sincere apologies for any errors or omissions.

Abbott S D	Calcutt D	Fincham N
Absolom A AA	Camp A I	Fisher S L
Adams R	Campbell D K	Flack D DFI
Agombar D	Campbell J	Flanagan A W
Aldwell C C	Carpenter D	Ford J P
Alexander H	Carter D A	Forsey C J
Ahlgren L	Catell M	Foster C
Alder G	Chandler C	Foster C W
Alexander T O	Chapman P	Foulds P
Allen A E	Chick P	Frankum R RF
Amphlett M J	Chivers J L JCh	Fuller D
Andrews J E JA	Chown P K	Gale A
Ashworth I A	Claridge R J	Gardner M
Baker T	Clark F C	Garner-Langham L
Ball T G TGB	Clark J M	Garnsworthy N
Barnes D J	Cleal D DCI	Garrett C S
Barker D J DJB	Cleere N NC	Gaskin L A
Barker S R J	Clews B D	Gent C R
Bass C G	Coath M	George C M
Bassett A D	Collins R	Gibson T
Batchelor S D	Collins R E C	Gilham R RGi
Bates E	Cottingham F J FJC	Gipson P
Beglow B	Cox J	Glover D R
Bennett B T BTB	Crathorne B	Godden N
Bennett R W	Crawford R RCr	Godden R J RJG
Bennison S	Creed K	Goodey J
Birkett J	Crowley P J PJC	Goodship H M
Bishop J	Cuff M J	Gough S
Blandford D	Cumming D A	Gough S J
Blumson W G	Darrell-Lambert D G	Goriup P
Blundell L R	Davies B M	Gott C
Bolton A	Davies R C W	Graham A
Booth A	Davies S	Graham S A
Booth R	Dawson R	Grainger J
Borwnlow H	Day S Sda	Griffiths L
Boult P	Dear M J MJD	Gross R D
Boyd D A	Dickinson B	Grove C
Brant P	Dixon J N	Gurr M
Bright-Thomas P	Dodds D A M	Guyatt T A
Bristow P	Dove A	Hale J
Brooks C	Driver P W PD	Hammill S
Brooker S	Dryden R	Hampton D W DWH
Brookes C M	Duffus G	Hall T
Brown G	Duncan K P	Hapgood B J
Brown S A SAB	Dungey S M	Harden T
Brown V F	East D	Hardy R
Brown W	East T A	Harris N G
Bryant P	Edie T	Harrison A
Buchanan J	Edwards J	Hassler J
Bucknell N J NJB	Edwards N	Hastings D
Bunce S	Elliot-Moustache G	Hatton W A
Bunce T TBu	Emmett G GE	Haynes W J
Burch C	Evans H W	Heard C D R CDRH
Burden P	Evans L G R LGRE	Hemmings M
Burness R J RJB	Fairley M	Heritage J
Busby R	Farrell G R	Hickman A E D AEDH
Butler J	Fearnside J D	Hickman P

Highfield M	McEwan D	Reedman R.....RR
Hoare D	McGee C	Reeve B
Hobbs A	McIlvray K L	Reid J
Holland B J	McKee M J	Reynolds D J.....DJR
Honey G	McMahon A	Richardson R
Hook J	McSherry J E	Ricks S.....SRi
Hopkins B	Meads S M	Righelato R.....RRI
Hornby D	Milligan R F.....RFM	Rimes D N T
Housley D J	Mills D J	Rivoire J R
Hughes P	Mitchell J E	Roberts A
Humphrey P	Mitchell M J	Rose J
Hunt M.....MHu	Moran N J	Ross-Smith V H
Hutchins P E.....PEH	Moor Green Lakes Report	Ryland C
Hutchison A	MGLR	Rymer A
I'Anson M	Moore K E.....KEM	Rymer T.....
Jackson E D	Moore R C	Salt A
Jacobs R S	Moore P D	Scantlebury R L
Jinks R	Morgan J C	Scholey G DGDS
Johnson A	Morris M E	Scott S
Johnstone P W	Morrison R	Scudamore P.....PSC
Jones B	Murphy S	Seward L
Jones C.....CJ	Murfitt R C.....RCM	Seward M
Jones C M	Myerson A T	Seymour K
Jones K	Napper E	Seymour K R
Jones P.....Pjon	Needs J	Shannon J
Jones S E ISEIJ	Ness RRN	Sharp A H L
Keel R R	Netley H R	Sheils B
Kelson D W	Newbound P J.....PNe	Shelton J
Kendall P	Newbury District Ornithological	Sheridan J B
Kettell M M	ClubNDOC	Silver N.....NS
King G J	Newman M.....	Simpkin D
Kirby M	O'Brien J.....JOB	Sinclair G
Kirby A J	Ogden P J	Sketch P A
Kirkland M	Ogilvie L M	Sklar M
Knass G	Oldcorn I	Slater A
Knight D C	Orchard-Webb M A	Smith M J
Kujawa S	Orr P J	Smith R G
Lanfear J	Osbourne B A	Southam M
Langley G B	Owen G M.....	Spooner C D
Larkins S	Pang Valley Barn Owl Group	Stachnicki I A
Latham M J	Paine I D.....IDP	Stannard J
Lawson A V.....AVL	Papps P	Stansfield R H.....RHS
Lee T	Park N	Stansfield R T
Legg J	Patmore S	Staves L
Lerpiniere J	Payne D E E	Steele A J
Lerpiniere R J	Peck R	Stevens P J
Lewis B	Perrier G	Stevenson S
Long D F	Philpott M G	Stewart G J
Lund M.....Mlu	Player J	Stones A J
Lyle B.....BL	Pont S	Stoney A
Lyle R A	Pounds M D	Stow A N
Mackenzie D	Potter N	Sumner G J
Mann L BLBM	Povey R	Sussex D J
Many ObserversMO	Pratley I	Swallow J L.....JLS
Marchant J H	Price M	Sweetland A
Marriner N	Price P	Sweetland T
Marsh R	Price R	Taylor A
Martin J PJPM	Price R A G	Taylor K
Martin K	Proddow S K	Theale Area Bird Report
May B.....BM	Pyrah R J	Theobold R C
McCarthy M	Rampton N	Thomas D
McEwan C.....CMc	Reaney A	Thorn L

Thornton G	Wallace R	Wilding J
Tomczynski A B ABT	Watson M I G	Wiles I M
Toop C	Watts P J	Williams C D
Treen P	Watts R C RCW	Williams -Jones D
Trim A	Westmacott J	Williams P A
Trout N S	Weston I L G IW	Williamson C S
Turner G	Wetland Bird Survey..... WeBS	Wilson G E
Turner R M	Whitaker M S F MSFW	Wilson J
Turton M H	Whitaker P	Wilson R D RDW
Tyler D	White D J	Woodham J S
Vaughan J	White K G	Wright D
Vogel M	Whitehead G	Young M
Walford M F MFW	Why M	Youngman M
Walker B J	Wildfowl Counts	

County Directory

COUNTY BIRD RECORDER

Richard Burness, 20 Burlsdon Way,
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2PH.
Email: records@berksoc.org.uk

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

Secretary, Sally Wearing, 9 Deans Farm, The Causeway, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5JZ

Telephone 0118 946 3125

Email: berksocsecretary@berksoc.org.uk

NEWBURY DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

www.newburybirders.co.uk

NDOC was founded in 1959 with the aim of promoting study and interest in birds and all aspects of their behaviour and habitats. Today the Club has a membership of around 100 and is open to all, experts or beginners, and visitors are always welcome at our events.

Field visits are arranged throughout the year to local sites in West Berkshire and neighbouring counties, with day excursions further afield. Longer stays are arranged to more distant places, including abroad, with Club members recently visiting Georgia, Turkey and Morocco.

During the winter months, invited speakers come to talk on a variety of bird topics, and occasional social events are also held.

Members receive a copy of the Club's Annual Report based on local bird sightings within West Berkshire and small areas of adjoining counties, and also a copy of the quarterly newsletter "Field Views" containing the events programme for the coming months.

Mrs L Staves, 39 Priory Avenue, Hungerford, RG17 0BE

Tel. 01488 682301

Email: info1@ndoc.org.uk

BIRDS OF BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION FUND

Grant-giving fund managed by the Berkshire Ornithological Club for bird conservation in Berkshire.

Enquiries and applications to conservation@berksoc.org.uk or telephone Renton Righelato on 0787 981 2564.

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)

Berkshire County Representative and Wetland Bird Survey organiser: Sean Murphy
Email: SeanMurphy8@gmail.com

LAVELL'S WETLAND TRUST

Conservation volunteers managing projects in the lower Loddon valley, including Lea Farm Lake Nature Reserve and Lavell's Lake in Dinton Pastures Country Park.

Chair: Jane Campbell.

See <http://lavells.org.uk/>

MOOR GREEN LAKES GROUP

www.mglg.org.uk

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.

Cathy McEwan, Secretary,

Email: tabcgsec@yahoo.com

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/

The bird-watching code

(from the RSPB's code at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/watchingbirds/code/index.aspx>, with modifications)

The interests of the bird come first.

Birds respond to people in many ways, depending on the species, location and time of year. Disturbance can keep birds from their nests, leaving chicks hungry or enabling predators to take eggs or young. During cold weather or when migrants have just made a long flight, repeatedly flushing birds can mean they use up vital energy that they need for feeding. Intentional or reckless disturbance of some species at or near the nest is illegal in Britain.

Whether your particular interest is photography, ringing, sound-recording or birdwatching, remember that the interests of the bird must always come first.

- Avoid going too close to birds or disturbing their habitats – if a bird flies away or makes repeated alarm calls, you are too close. And if it leaves, you won't get a good view.
- Stay on roads and paths where they exist and avoid disturbing habitat used by birds.
- Think about your fieldcraft. Disturbance is not just about going too close – a flock of wading birds on the foreshore can be disturbed from a mile away if you stand on the seawall.
- Repeatedly playing a recording of birdsong or calls to encourage a bird to respond can divert a territorial bird from other important duties, such as feeding its young. Never use playback to attract a species during its breeding season, even if it isn't a normal breeder in the area as this could prevent potential colonisation.

Know the rules for visiting the countryside, and follow them.

Respect the wishes of local residents and landowners, and don't enter private land without permission unless it is open for public access on foot. Follow the codes on access and the countryside for the place you're walking in.

Irresponsible behaviour may cause a land manager to deny access to others (eg for necessary survey work). It may also disturb the bird or give birdwatching bad coverage in the media.

Legislation provides access for walkers to open country in Britain, and includes measures to protect wildlife. In England and Wales, access is to land mapped as mountain, moor, heath and down, and to registered common land. However, local restrictions may be in force, so follow the Countryside Code and plan your visit. In England, the Countryside Code and maps showing areas for public access are at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk.

Know the law

In England, Scotland and Wales, birds are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions, to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.

- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- Have in one's possession or control any wild bird, dead or alive, or any part of a wild bird, which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954.
- Have in one's possession or control any egg or part of an egg which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954.
- Use traps or similar items to kill, injure or take wild birds.
- Have in one's possession or control any bird of a species occurring on Schedule 4 of the Act unless registered, and in most cases ringed, in accordance with the Secretary of State's regulations.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird. Disturbance could include playback of songs and calls.

The government can, for particular reasons such as scientific study, issue licences to individuals that permit limited disturbance, including monitoring of nests and ringing.

It is a criminal offence to destroy or damage, intentionally or recklessly, a special interest feature of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or to disturb the wildlife for which the site was notified.

If you witness anyone who you suspect may be illegally disturbing or destroying wildlife or habitat, phone the police immediately (ideally, with a six-figure map reference) and report it to the RSPB.

If you discover a rare bird, please bear the following in mind:

Consider the potential impact of spreading the news and make an effort to inform the landowner (or, on a nature reserve, the warden) first. Think about whether the site can cope with a large number of visitors and whether sensitive species might be at risk, such as breeding terns, flocks of wading birds or rare plants.

On private land, always talk to the landowner first. With a little planning, access can often be arranged.

Rare breeding birds are at risk from egg-collectors and some birds of prey from persecution.

If you discover a rare breeding species under any circumstances report it to the County Recorder (for Berkshire: email records@berksoc.org.uk) as a matter of urgency or the RSPB if it's outside the county. The County Recorder will consider telling the landowner of the bird's presence and legal obligations in most cases, and this will help ensure that the nest is not disturbed accidentally. If you have the opportunity to see a rare bird, enjoy it, but don't let your enthusiasm override common sense. In addition to the guidelines above:

- If you go to see a rare bird, park sensibly, follow instructions and consider making a donation if requested.
- Don't get too close for a photograph – you'll earn the wrath of everyone else if you flush the bird out of sight.
- Be patient if the viewing is limited, talk quietly and give others a chance to see the bird too.
- Do not enter private areas without permission.
- Birds should never be flushed in important wildlife habitats or where there are other nesting or roosting birds nearby. Birds should not be flushed more frequently than every two hours nor within two hours of sunrise or sunset, so that the bird has chance to feed and rest. At any time in the breeding season flushing rare visitors can be very disruptive to other species that are breeding in the area and so shouldn't be done.

