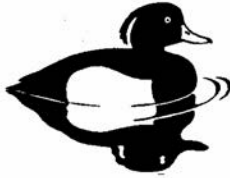


The Birds of Berkshire



Annual Report
2017

Published 2021

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, was published in 2013. More information about it, including how to purchase it, is available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/county-atlas/the-book/>.

The BOC publishes Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire, which includes site descriptions, access details, information on which birds may be found and maps for the best birdwatching sites in the county. More details, including how to obtain copies, are available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/where-to-watch-birds-in-berkshire/>.

For further details of the Club and membership visit www.berksoc.org.uk

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Annual Report for 2017

Contents

	Page
Introduction and Acknowledgements	4
Submitting Records	5
Articles	
Richard Burness 1943-2020 by Renton Righelato	6
Eastern Race Lesser Whitethroat by Sean Davies and Ginette East	8
Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest, Camberley by Andy Tomczynski	10
The Hawfinch Irruption in Winter 2017-2018 by Marek Walford	12
Birding Highlights of 2017 by Ken Moore	15
The Berkshire Bird Index by Renton Righelato	18
Weather Summary 2017 by Renton Righelato	21
Bird Report for 2017	
Report for 2017 by the Berkshire Records Committee	22
Introduction to the 2017 Systematic List by Marek Walford	25
Monthly Maximum Tables in Species Accounts – Understanding Their Limitations	27
Photographs for Future Reports	29
Systematic List by Robert Godden, Renton Righelato, Marek Walford and Andy Tomczynski	30
Escapes and Hybrids	130
First and Last Dates of Selected Migrants	132
Contributors to the Systematic List	133
County Maps	
Topographical Areas	136
Some Birdwatching Sites in Berkshire	138
County Directory	140
The Birdwatching Code	141

Robert Godden, Renton Righelato, Marek Walford and Sally Wearing.

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

The preparation of the 2017 report was started by Richard Burness, our County Recorder, who was taken ill at the end of 2019 and, sadly, died in January 2020. An appreciation of his life and contribution to ornithology in Berkshire appears on page 6.

You will appreciate that this has caused some disruption to our reporting timetable. We now have a new team in place, with Marek Walford as County Recorder, Robert Godden taking on the scientific editing of the reports and Sally Wearing managing their production. Andy Tomczynski has taken on the role of Photographic Editor and you will now find images distributed through the text. To facilitate the work of our species account writers and to provide consistency across reports, Robert Godden has automated the analysis and presentation of most of the tables. He explains how this works in an article on page 27.

The basis of these reports is the database of tens of thousands of records submitted by many hundreds of observers. The team would like to thank all who have submitted their records and encourage any others to send in their records too (see the information on page 5 about submitting records).

The main authors of the report are the Species Account Writers (SAWs), whose task it is to analyse the records and surrounding literature, and from them to create an informative and interesting read. With much of the data crunching now automated and as species accounts no longer have to contain lists of records (the records database is publicly available online at <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/bird-records-archive/>), the role of the SAWs is now more one of reviewing and contextualising the information. We would like to thank all the SAWs who have contributed to this and other reports, but we always need more help! So, if you might be interested in writing the new style of account, please contact Robert Godden.

Since the foundation of the Reading Ornithological Club, the precursor of the BOC, in 1947, the annual report covers have all been illustrated by Robert Gillmor, OBE; a truly remarkable record. Despite health struggles, he has celebrated the 2017 Hawfinch invasion for us with this report's lovely painting. Robert donates these cover pictures to raise funds for the Club. We cannot thank him enough.

Lastly, I want to thank our publisher Rob Still, who skilfully turns our drafts into the report for publication and gets it printed. Rob runs the well-known natural history publisher, WILDguides, and, I think, does this for us largely as a labour of love!

Stepping down as Managing Editor, I would like to thank all those I have enjoyed working with over the years and wish the new editorial team every success.

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 County Recorder: Marek Walford, 30 Bellingham Walk, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LS.

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 22).

Richard Burness 1943–2020 Berkshire County Bird Recorder 2016–2020

Like many birders of his generation, Richard Burness was a birdwatcher from boyhood. As a young man living in Kent, he “stomped” the north Kent marshes in all weathers, when wildfowl numbers were larger than they are now, and was a regular “shingle basher” at Dungeness where he stayed at the Bird Observatory, in the days of Bob Scott’s wardenship.

Birds were a passion that he managed to weave into his work life as a meteorologist. He served for 15 years as a meteorological observer on North Atlantic Ocean Weather Ships, from which he provided data on seabirds and cetaceans for research on their populations and he published occasional articles in *The Marine Observer*. On the *MV Quattro Venti*, he worked on a seabird and cetacean census of the Mediterranean, the islands of the British Isles and upwelling areas of the continental shelf for WWF and the Edward Grey Institute. This was important work in the years leading up to the international whaling ban in 1986. For ten years, he lived and worked in Fife, where he was a founder member of the Fife Bird Club in 1985. There he was a WeBS counter for the southern Tay Estuary and low-tide counter at Fife Ness.

Holidays were spent on birding trips across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. As a rather hippie young man in the 1960s, he was something of a pioneer of many of the areas that have since become popular destinations for British birders, like eastern Poland and Morocco. He went several times to the Middle East. One year, with a few friends and his cousin Peter, he drove overland through Europe and Turkey to northern Iran to spend a month recording spring migration along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, something that could not easily be done now. Later, he and Patricia, who he married in 1986, made a series of trips to California, which they loved, and to some of the east coast US birding sites.

The Isles of Scilly had a special place in his life. He made the autumn pilgrimage annually from 1968 to 2019. For many years he stayed on the island of St Agnes; he was part of that group of people who made Scilly the birding Mecca that it was to become in the 1980s and '90s. More recently, he and Patricia would stay on St Mary’s, along with birding friends from Berkshire and across the country.

A few years after they were married, he and Patricia moved to Berkshire, where he worked at the Meteorological Office in Bracknell. Since retiring from the Met Office (as Manager of Upper-air Observations and Thunderstorm Location) in 2003, and despite his problem with a rare anaemia, he threw himself into local ornithology, in the field and at his (not always reliable) computer. He was a prolific surveyor and meticulous record keeper. He was a long-standing WeBS counter here as he had been in Scotland and he was an important contributor to the county atlas and to our annual reports.



Richard & Patricia Burness

In 2016, he took on the job of County Recorder, a crucial role in turning the myriad observations of amateur bird watchers into good citizen science. It is a role that demands knowledge, judgement, sensitivity and, above all, the ability to command confidence and respect from the community. Richard did this wonderfully. His unassuming manner encouraged collaboration and he brought transparency to a sometimes opaque system. Quietly, he brought together an expert team and reset the county’s recording system. He built something we can be proud of and he gained the gratitude and respect of all of us who worked with him.

*Renton Righelato
February 2020*



Richard Burness died suddenly on 29th January 2020, aged 76, with complications arising from thrombocytopenia, a bone marrow disease that had required intermittent hospital treatment, but which he did not let dampen his love of birding. He leaves his wife Patricia and his sister, Susan.

Eastern Race Lesser Whitethroat South Ascot January 29th – March 30th 2017

by Sean Davies and Ginette East

Sunday 29th January 2017 was one of the designated dates of that year's RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and I set aside an hour in the morning to watch the feeders in the garden of my partner, Ginette. Siskin, Redpoll and Blackcap had been frequent visitors that winter along with a single Brambling. Therefore, I was hopeful of a half-decent list. A few minutes into the hour I was stunned to see a Lesser Whitethroat land on one of the nearest feeders at four metres' range. After showing well for about a minute, it retreated into nearby shrubbery but continued to be seen on and off for the next hour and then briefly again towards dusk.

To be honest, on the day I hadn't paid much thought to any sub-specific identification and didn't have any time to check any online resource. However, on returning home I read several identification articles on wintering Lesser Whitethroats in the UK and western Europe and this raised my curiosity.

I returned to Ascot from my home in Bristol the following week and after fleeting views on February 5th, the bird showed really well around the feeders for a prolonged period the next day, allowing some photographs to be taken. It was clear that the bird showed multiple characteristics of one of the eastern races *blythi* or *halimodendri*.

Over the following weeks we saw the bird on many more occasions until the final sighting by Ginette on March 30th. It was not always reliable in its appearances though and would often go missing for days. On March 12th we were joined by Marek Walford and Brian Bennett who had got in touch after seeing a photo I had uploaded to the Berksbirds website. Fortunately, the bird showed well that day.

Throughout its stay we never once heard it call, nor saw it shed a feather. However, by the time it left, and by now well read on the matter, I was certain that it was an eastern race bird, probably from Central Asia and either *halimodendri* or, more likely, *blythi*. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the race on sight views alone.

Description:

Though never seen in the open for longer than a few minutes at a time, the total length of observation ran into hours. The exact plumage tones were initially difficult to ascertain but over time it was clear that the bird differed from a typical nominate *curruca* in a number of respects and closely resembled photographs of known *bythi* / *halimodendri*.

The wings and tail were worn, with some missing feathers. Structurally the bird was considered close to *curruca*. However, the wings were fairly short and blunt tipped, This gave the bird a long-tailed appearance. From photographs the primary projection was measured at 50% or under of the exposed tertials. The bill was certainly not weak but maybe slightly less sturdy than a typical *curruca*. Otherwise dark in colour, there was a blue-grey base to the lower mandible. The upperparts were fairly uniformly pale to mid-brown with a distinct sandy hue. There were no grey tones in the upperparts at all. This colouration clearly extended on to the nape and hind crown and there was no great contrast with the grey-toned crown and forehead. Lighter feathering above and to the rear of the eye marked out an indistinct supercilium. The lores and cheeks were darker grey, creating a masked effect. This was fairly subtle though, and in some lights and postures was barely noticeable. There was a partial white eye ring. The wings were quite uniformly mid-brown with an

indistinct pale panel on the secondaries. The tertials (some were missing) had sandy fringes. The primaries were pale tipped. The tail was also mid-brown and contrasted little with the upperparts. There was extensive white in the outer tail feathers but the exact extent of this was not ascertained either by observation or in photographs. The throat was white and this contrasted with the rest of the underparts which were suffused buff but with a distinct peachy tone, especially on the sides of the breast.



Eastern race Lesser Whitethroat, South Ascot, Feb 6th, Sean Davies

Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest, Camberley, November 26th 2017

by Andy Tomczynski

The birding highlight of October and November 2017 in Berkshire was, no doubt, the large influx of Hawfinches across the county and I had managed to see them at numerous locations. However, a report of 16 Common Crossbills at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest on November 25th also grabbed my attention because I had not seen any in Berkshire during the year. For this reason, I went to Wishmoor Bottom at dawn on November 26th in the hope of adding Common Crossbills to my year list. I had no luck finding any Crossbills after three hours wandering around the heathland. Then, out of the blue, one flew past me and landed in a Scots Pine close by. I slowly approached the tree to see if I could find the bird without disturbing it. I found it relatively easily and saw that it was a female. I spent a while trying to photograph and video it. Whilst looking at it, and the images on the back of my camera I thought it looked rather thick-billed and noted, also, that it was tearing cones from the branches.

I heard Crossbill calls and then it, and another Crossbill, a male, which was also in the same tree but unbeknown to me, flew off. I noted the call as not quite like that of Common Crossbill. Even then the penny had not dropped. I relocated the male on a tree top, photographed it and thought that this bird looked thick-billed too. Jerry O'Brien, who had arrived whilst I was watching the crossbills, subsequently recalls me saying something about Parrot Crossbill. However, I did not wish to linger at the site as I was keen to rush off to Staines Reservoir to see the Horned Lark before going home. I did not give the "Crossbills" much thought thereafter.

Later, in the evening at home, I saw Marek's post about "probable" Parrot Crossbills at Wishmoor Bottom. Only then did I really scrutinise my photographs and realised I had been looking at Parrot Crossbills all along! Even though I had had thoughts about Parrot Crossbill features at Wishmoor Bottom, I had somehow subconsciously dismissed the likelihood of seeing any in Berkshire; along with being distracted by thinking about going to Staines. Lesson learnt! This was all rather ironic, given that I had found, with my car group, Parrot Crossbills at Sand on Mainland Shetland less than two months earlier, confirming their identity with my photographs.

Following this realisation, I felt confident enough to post on Berksbirds that evening that there were definitely two Parrot Crossbills at Wishmoor Bottom. Over subsequent days, at least 16 Parrot Crossbills were seen at Wishmoor Bottom, tallying with the 16 "Common Crossbills" seen on November 25th. I went back to see the birds on November 27th, 28th and 30th to try to obtain better photographs. The birds stayed until March 2018. The only previous accepted record of this species was in January 1983, near Crowthorne.



Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Dec 24th 2017, Michael McKee



Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Dec 24th 2017, Michael McKee



Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Nov 27th 2017, Andy Tomczynski

Note large head with bull-necked appearance, with deep bill and the lower mandible bulging



Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Nov 27th 2017, Andy Tomczynski

Note bill powerful enough to detach cones



Common Crossbill, Crowthorne Wood, Jan 19th 2019, Andy Tomczynski

Note smaller lower mandible and tips of mandibles protrude, unlike Parrot Crossbill's



Common Crossbill, Crowthorne Wood, Mar 31st 2016, Andy Tomczynski

The Hawfinch Irruption in Winter 2017–2018

by Marek Walford

Introduction

Hawfinch used to be an uncommon and localised species in Berkshire, breeding in small numbers until the early 1990s. The record count for Berkshire was 95 at Cheapside in January 1974. The stronghold was in the east of the county and counts of up to 50 were regular from Windsor Great Park until 1994, after which numbers dwindled and become sporadic. It is now a local rarity, primarily found in winter, with most records coming from Combe Wood, in the extreme south-west of the county.

The 2017–2018 Irruption

During autumn 2017, a large irruption of Hawfinches took place across southern Britain, involving many thousands of birds. Hawfinches are specialist eaters, feeding on the hard seeds from trees such as Hornbeam. It is thought that the 2017 irruption was caused by a crop

Fig 1. Maximum daily counts of Hawfinches 2017/18

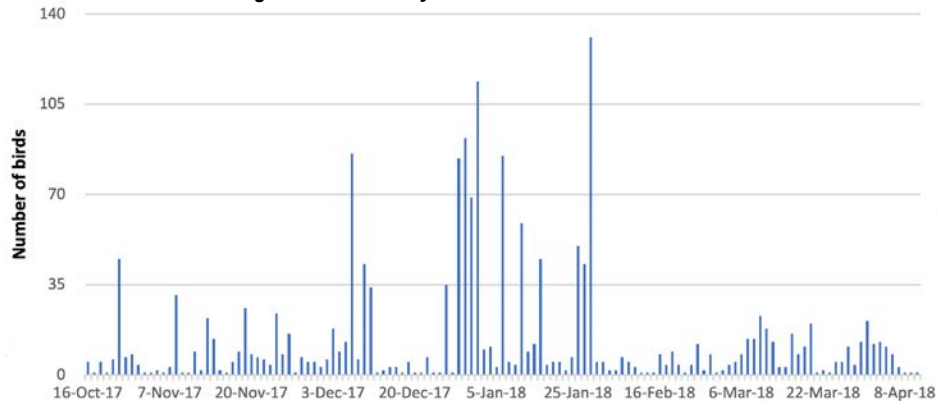
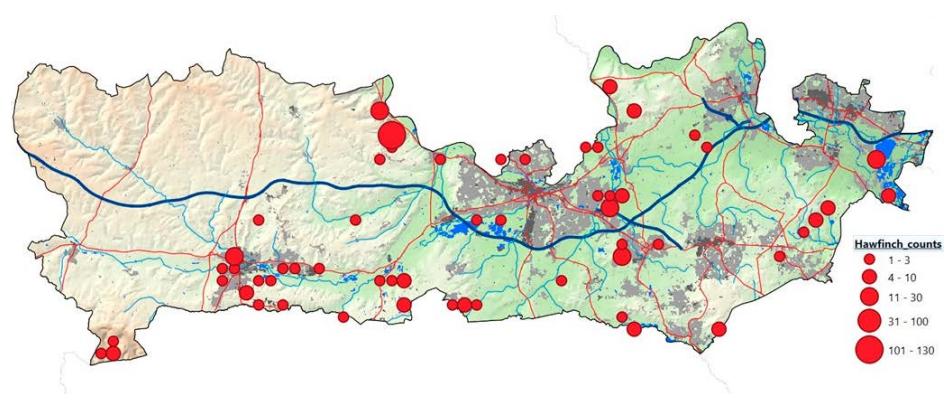


Fig 2. Distribution and maximum counts by 1 km square



failure in its usual wintering range in central and eastern Europe, especially Germany and Romania, causing large numbers of birds to move further south in search of food. This coincided with the arrival of Storm Ophelia, which was spinning anti-clockwise off the west coast of Europe at the time, pushing many of the Hawfinches towards Britain.

Records in Berkshire

The first record was of five birds over Paul Bright-Thomas' garden in Woosehill, Wokingham, on Oct 16th, followed by a single on 20th, five on 24th and one on 26th. On Oct 27th, six were seen at Wraysbury GPs but numbers really started to increase on 28th with 45 birds recorded at three locations. This was the highest day count but good counts continued to be recorded throughout November. However,



Hawfinch, Basildon Park, Dec 12th 2017, Andy Tomczynski



Hawfinch, Basildon Park, Dec 9th 2017, Andy Tomczynski



Hawfinch, Mortimer, Dec 5th 2017, Andy Tomczynski



Hawfinch, Basildon Park, Dec 9th 2017, Andy Tomczynski

the highest counts were recorded during December and January when large flocks of wintering birds were discovered.

The highest numbers were recorded at Basildon Park, where birds were present between Nov 13th 2017 and Feb 3rd 2018, peaking at 130 on Jan 28th 2018 (a new county record). Other regular sites included Shaw Dene House, Newbury (peak of 22 between Feb 16th 2018 and Apr 8th 2018), Padworth College (peak of 11 between Dec 2nd 2017 and Mar 16th 2018), Moor Green Lakes (peak of 7 between Nov 12th 2017 and Apr 2nd 2018) and Dinton Pastures CP (peak of 15 between Oct 28th 2017 and Mar 29th 2018). Elsewhere, double figure counts included 12 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 28th, 10 at Bowsey Hill on Nov 8th, 10 at Windsor Great Park on Nov 8th, and 12 at Streatley on Feb 25th 2018.

Numbers fell rapidly after a January peak, presumably as birds started to disperse. Small numbers were recorded between February and April, before the last record of one at Stanford Dingley on Apr 13th.

In total, birds were recorded in 57 1 km squares. These were scattered across the county with an apparent absence from the downland in the west. The larger counts, and the sites that held birds throughout the winter, were generally parkland estates that provided the mature deciduous trees that the species prefers. However, anywhere had the chance of recording migrating birds, and Hawfinch was added to many birder's patch and garden lists. Birds were noted feeding on Hornbeam but interestingly the birds at Lavell's Lake were seen feeding on Sloes.

Conclusions

It is difficult to estimate how many birds were involved, but by adding together the maximum count for each 1 km square a very crude figure of 366 gives a rough idea. Despite the large numbers involved and that some birds lingered into April, the irruption did not result in any breeding records. Autumn 2019 saw a return to form for Berkshire Hawfinches, with just one record of two birds flying over Calcot, Reading on Oct 28th. The irruption of winter 2017/2018 was a truly unique event and one of the highlights of the year!

Birding Highlights of 2017

by Ken Moore

JANUARY: An adult **Caspian Gull** at Lea Farm on January 1st started the month well. The same day confirmed that the female **Scaup** was still present at Moatlands and the **Golden Plover** flock near the Barn at Englefield had risen to 528. On January 3rd there was a drake **Pintail** at Hosehill Lake. On 4th, there were five **Crossbills** reported at Wishmoor Bottom. Three **Waxwings** were reported in the Twyford Waitrose Car Park on January 5th, seen again on 9th on Slough Trading Estate. Also on 5th, a **Brent Goose** flew onto Lea Farm GP. Up on Cow Down a ringtail **Hen Harrier** was reported and down on White Swan Lake the now regular drake **Ferruginous Duck**. On 6th, a redhead **Smew** was at Searles Farm Lane with a pair of **Pintails**. The same day, the wintering **Great Grey Shrike** was seen on the Berkshire side of the border for a change, at Wishmoor Bottom, where many **Crossbills** were pairing up. Single **Shelduck** were at both Moor Green Lake and Lea Farm GP on 7th. There was a third winter **Caspian Gull** in the gull roost at Main Pit, Theale, on January 13th. The second **Great Grey Shrike** of the year was seen at Cow Down. Eight **Smews** were at Sunnyside GP, Wraysbury, on 26th and five **Waxwings** appeared briefly on 28th in Bracknell. The following day, a **Great Grey Shrike** recorded in South Ascot was thought likely to have been one of the Eastern forms. During the month, **Firecrests** were reported across the centre and east of the county, and in the west, **Willow Tits** were seen in Combe Wood; there was a flock of 45 **Corn Buntings** at Wellbottom Down.

FEBRUARY: began with the first **Oystercatcher** of the Year on 3rd at Hosehill. A few days later, on 6th, a female **Long-tailed Duck** appeared at Moor Green Lakes, only staying for the day. The bird was seen again on February 28th and stayed into March. On February 21st, four **Water Pipits** were well-watched at Queen Mother Reservoir.

MARCH: A total of twelve **Stonechats** at Dorney Wetlands was a good count on March 4th, as was a minimum of seventeen **Chiffchaffs** on Dorney Common the same day. The first returning **Redshank** was noted on March 8th at Hosehill Lake. Three **Oystercatchers** visited the recently cleared islands at Rowney Predator Lake, Woolhampton, on 10th. Two of them paired up and fledged one young, the first breeding record for the lake. On March 11th, a drake **Garganey** was found at Lea Farm Lake. The first hirundines, 25 **Sand Martins**, arrived on 16th at Lower Farm GP, with three more early the next morning at Hosehill Lake. March 17th also heralded the first arrivals of **Wheatear** at Greenham Common, of **Little Ringed Plover** at Pingewood GPs, and, on the rarity front, a **Cattle Egret** on one of the cleared islands at Woolhampton. March 21st was notable for a **Water Pipit** on Bottom Lane Floods. On 29th, at Padworth Lane GP, in amongst the 200 plus flock of Greylag Geese, was an adult **Pink-footed Goose**. During the same afternoon, on the southern side of the Herons Nest Landfill, a **Stone Curlew** was disturbed. Finally, on March 31st, a bright **Sandwich Tern** early in the morning at Main Pit, Theale, was followed a few hours later by a **Common Tern**, **Swallows** were observed over Lower Farm GP and a drake **Common Scoter** at Queen Mother Reservoir.

APRIL: Early morning on April 4th at Queen Mother Reservoir, a winter **Sanderling** was seen, and at Fobney Meadow, a mating pair of **Garganeys** gave us all hope! The following day a "cracking" male **Common Redstart** was at Wishmoor Cross, Swinley Forest. The same day, two **Little Gulls** were on Hosehill Lake, with a drake **Garganey** and a **Sedge Warbler** at Padworth Lane GP. On April 10th, a male **Hen Harrier** at Bury Down flew over one of the fields to the south, a **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Fobney Meadow, a **Yellow Wagtail** called over Spencers Wood, and an **Osprey** was seen flying low over Lower Farm GP. Approximately 250 **Lesser Redpolls** were around Wishmoor Cross on April 12th. A **Ruff** was at Burnthouse

Lane GP on 15th. A single **Greenshank** was found on a BOC walk at Crookham Pools on April 20th. Later the same day, some fortunate observers who had gone over to Winter Hill, Berkshire, got to observe, at some distance, the **Black-winged Stilts** in Buckinghamshire at Little Marlow. A male **Whinchat** was at Burnthouse Lane on 21st, with nine **Green Sandpipers** on the pool edges there. There was a brief visit from a **Hobby** over Woolhampton on April 22nd, a **Black Tern** flew through Main Pit, Theale, on 24th and a fabulous **Wood Sandpiper** arrived at Fobney Meadow. Finally, on April 30th to close the month, there was a brief visit by a **Wryneck** at Fobney Meadow, two **Black Terns** at Moatlands GP and a single **Whimbrel** at Queen Mother Reservoir.

MAY: On May 2nd, a discussion between the BOC and the remediators for the centre section of Burnthouse Lane led to a large volume of graded soil being left untouched until August; c 50 pairs of **Sand Martins** colonised the heap and bred very successfully. On 5th, a diver was seen from the spit at Theale Main pit across in the far north-east corner. So as a small crowd gathered, some went round the lake for a closer view of the **Red-throated Diver**. Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, was notable for a **Little Tern** located there in the morning of May 7th, followed by a **Little Gull** in the afternoon. On May 10th, the second **Cattle Egret** of the year was found at Twyford GP and soon moved to Lea Farm Lake. On May 12th, a full summer **Black-necked Grebe** was on Main Pit, Theale. Later that day, both **Woodcock** and **Nightjar** were displaying at Roundoak Piece. The following day, a **Great White Egret** was seen distantly flying away from Lea Farm Lake. Five **Black-tailed Godwits** were on Plover Island, Moor Green Lakes, on May 18th and two **Mediterranean Gulls** were there on 26th. Another **Little Tern** was at Lea Farm Lake on May 27th.

JUNE: On June 11th, an apparent winter plumage **Arctic Tern** appeared at Main Pit, Theale. The bird turned out to be a first summer Arctic Tern, quite a rare plumage for the northern hemisphere. The following day, an adult **Red-breasted Goose** arrived at Lower Farm GP - who lost that one?

JULY: Two adult **Black Terns** were constantly dip-feeding on Main Pit, Theale, on July 4th. On 9th, some 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** were on Hosehill Lake; by late evening the next day, the party had increased to 29, but by the following morning all but three had gone. A **Great White Egret** on July 14th at Lower Farm GP had moved to Woolhampton on 15th. A **Turtle Dove** was purring at Lower Farm GP on July 19th only, one of the very few reports for the year. On July 21st at Queen Mother Reservoir, there were four **Turnstones**, three **Yellow-legged Gulls** and eight **Common Sandpipers**. Then on 24th, again at Queen Mother Reservoir, there were three **Common Scoters**, a **Whimbrel**, two **Oystercatchers**, a single **Dunlin** and a **Little Tern**

AUGUST: On 3rd, approximately 700 **Cormorants** were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir. On August 9th, an adult summer **Sabine's Gull** at Lower Farm GP unfortunately did not stay long on either of its two appearances, so very few people saw it. At the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on 13th, the second **Wood Sandpiper** of 2017 arrived and stayed for a while. Two **Avocets** appeared at Queen Mother Reservoir on August 14th, with another at Padworth Lane GP on 22nd. On August 21st, a flock of 12 **Green Sandpipers** flew in for a very short visit at Burnthouse Lane. On August 28th, three **Shags** arrived: two on Hosehill Lake and one on Main Pit, Theale; the Hosehill birds moved off within days but one stayed for a few weeks on Main Pit.

SEPTEMBER: On 1st, a juvenile **Marsh Harrier** flew north over Roden Down and a **Great White Egret** flew into the British Airways Pit at Wraybury. Four **Whinchats** were at Burnthouse Lane GP on 4th. Main Pit, Theale, was memorable for a **Manx Shearwater** on September 8th. Billingbear Golf Club near Wokingham was a new location for many birders in



Black-tailed Godwit, Hosehill Lake, Jul 9th, Andy Tomczynski.

A high count of 20 summer plumage "islandica" race birds, increasing to 29 the following day.

Berkshire and a new location too for the **Grey Phalarope** which was found on their small lake on September 12th! An **Osprey** went through Dinton Pastures CP on 13th and a **Ruff** visited Burnthouse Lane on 16th. On September 18th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** arrived at Moor Green Lakes and, at Greenham Common on 19th, a total of 18 **Woodlarks** were counted. Then on September 25th a winter plumage **Black-necked Grebe** was at Queen Mother Reservoir. Crookham Common was the place to be on 26th, when a **Yellow-browed Warbler** found early in the morning stayed all day. On the last day of September another **Grey Phalarope** was located, this time at Lower Farm GP.

OCTOBER: On 1st, a winter **Slavonian Grebe** was on Main Pit, Theale. A ringtail **Hen Harrier** reported at Wishmoor Bottom on 3rd was followed by a **Merlin** at Lower Farm GP on 5th. October 11th recorded another **Ruff** at the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, and then on 13th a **Rock Pipit** was located at Queen Mother Reservoir. Most Berkshire Birders were on the Isles of Scilly during October, so records tend to be sparser for this period. The next notable record is on October 21st, when an observer at Main Pit, Theale, found three winter plumage **Black-necked Grebes**. The following day, a female/first winter **Black Redstart** was seen on the roofline of some new-build houses in Wokingham and a male **Merlin** flew close to Streatley Farm. The UK **Hawfinch** invasion started in mid-October and Berkshire's first recorded birds were five flying south over Wokingham on October 24th. On 26th, our second **Yellow-browed Warbler** of the year was found, close to the Berkshire/Oxfordshire border in a Berkshire birder's back garden - lucky individual. We are sure that the date will forever stay in his memory. Moving to October 27th, six **Hawfinches** were seen at Wraybury GPs, then on 28th a count of 15 at Lavell's Lake and 13 more flew over Wokingham. On October 29th, there was a **White Wagtail** at Lea Farm Lake, and 30th, a **Purple Sandpiper** at Queen Mother Reservoir. The last day of October gave us another **Black-necked Grebe** and a **Brent Goose** at Queen Mother Reservoir. Lastly, two **Hawfinches** began the first of many appearances at Padworth College.

NOVEMBER: At Dinton Pastures CP, there was a **Bittern** at White Swan Lake on 3rd, which was seen on and off to the end of the year, a drake **Pintail** at Black Swan Lake on 6th and at Padworth Lane on 12th. A female/immature **Merlin** was seen over Cold Harbour on 6th and a **Bearded Tit** was seen in a reedbed at Moor Green Lakes. The **Hawfinch** invasion continued with records from across the county. From November 26th, a party of 16 **Parrot Crossbills** at Wishmoor Bottom brought great excitement - the second record for Berkshire.

DECEMBER: The **Parrot Crossbills** and **Hawfinches** stayed through into the next year and have Ken's vote as joint Birds of the Year for 2017!

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 1 km 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, 2000, except for Buzzard and Red Kite, for which it is 2010. The index is shown as the range within the 85% 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 2017. Statistically significant results at $p < 0.05$ are shown in bold.

More detail and graphs of the changes in relative abundance of 63 commoner species over the years 1994 – 2019 are available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/berkshire-bird-index/>

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 2017 include Red Kite, Buzzard, Jackdaw, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldfinch. Species in decline since 2000 both nationally and in Berkshire include Lapwing, Cuckoo, Swift, Green Woodpecker, House Martin, Skylark, Willow Warbler, Starling, Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Yellowhammer.

The national index for Greenfinch has fallen by 70% since 2007 and there has been a similar sharp decline in the Berkshire index. Trichomonosis is thought to have been a major factor in the decline. A similarly sharp decline has been observed both in Berkshire and nationally with Chaffinch since 2012, to which trichomonosis may also have contributed. The abundance of the finches and House Sparrow relative to the year 2000 is shown in the graphs overleaf for the period 1994-2017.

Few species show local trends that differ markedly from the national (*BTO Birdtrends*). However, whilst the indices for Pied Wagtail and Linnet have been more or less stable nationally, those for Berkshire have fallen significantly over the last decade.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Sarah Harris at the BTO for providing the Berkshire data index data and all the Breeding Bird Survey volunteers. The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey is a partnership jointly funded by the BTO, RSPB and JNCC, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers

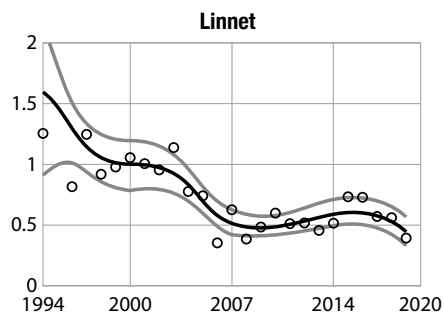
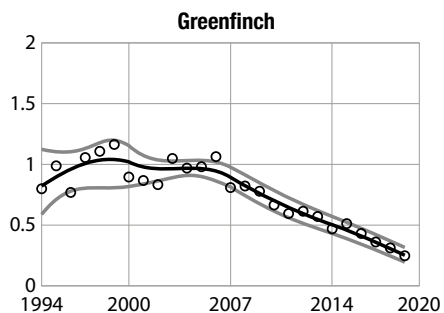
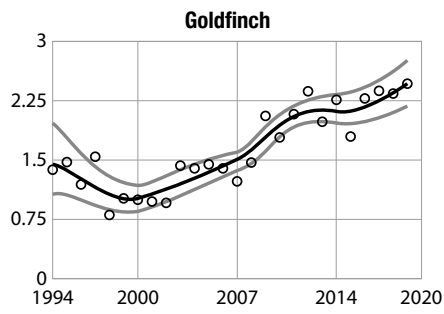
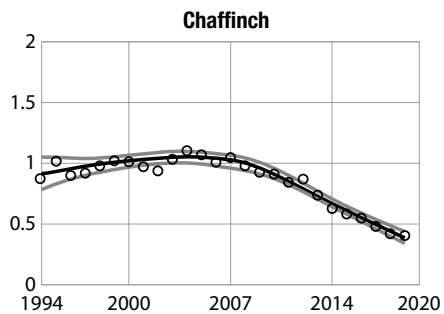
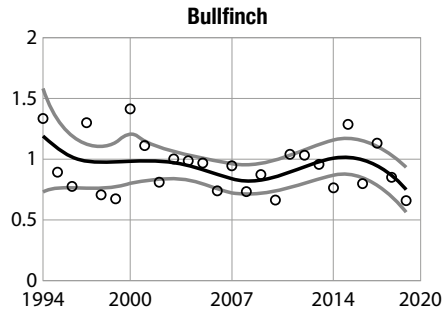
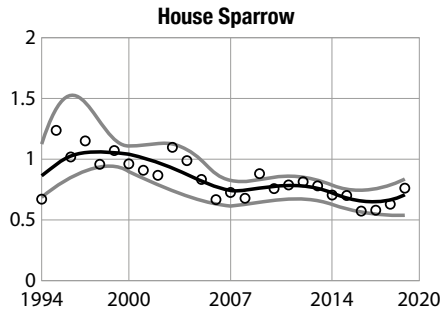
Species	Trend %/year index change	Index 2017/2000 85% confidence limits
Red-legged Partridge	-0.79	2.14-0.98
Pheasant	1.45	2.05-1.49
Canada Goose	-1.08	1.24-0.57
Mallard	-2.22*	1.16-0.67
Swift	-3.25**	0.57-0.22
Cuckoo	-2.71**	0.48-0.21
Stock Dove	14.00	4.16-1.64
Woodpigeon	-0.66	1.07-0.79
Collared Dove	-3.47**	0.83-0.47
Moorhen	-1.65	1.04-0.56
Lapwing	-1.77*	1.04-0.48
Red Kite ¹	14**	-0.4
Buzzard ¹	17**	-0.61
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0.23	1.25-0.73
Green Woodpecker	-1.69*	0.95-0.51
Kestrel	-1.09	1.25-0.49
Jay	-2.20*	1.16-0.59
Magpie	-0.51	0.85-0.57
Jackdaw	7.8**	-1.6
Rook	2.18	4.39-1.64
Carrion Crow	-2.38	1.71-1.12
Coal Tit	0.21	2.7-1.31
Blue Tit	-0.51	1.17-0.88
Great Tit	-1.25	0.87-0.63
Skylark	-1.39*	1-0.71
Swallow	0.66	1.42-0.76
House Martin	-3.18**	0.71-0.39
Long-tailed Tit	-1.45	0.88-0.49
Willow Warbler	-1.73*	0.76-0.48
Chiffchaff **	5.49	-2.26
Blackcap	5.22**	-1.44
Whitethroat	2.63	2.52-1.39
Goldcrest	0.09	1.37-0.71
Wren	0.60	1.21-0.93
Nuthatch	1.58	1.26-0.66
Starling	-2.33**	0.98-0.58
Blackbird	-0.41	1.02-0.82
Song Thrush	-0.55	1.35-0.88
Mistle Thrush	-1.66	1.58-0.89
Robin	0.53	1.24-0.98
House Sparrow	-3.13*	1.19-0.66
Duncock	-0.87	1.3-0.91
Pied Wagtail	-3.97**	1.08-0.55
Chaffinch	-4.11**	0.44-0.32
Bullfinch	-1.16	1.11-0.55
Greenfinch	-5.75**	0.49-0.28
Linnet	-2.84*	0.6-0.31
Goldfinch	12.124**	-2.64
Yellowhammer	-2.02**	0.54-0.34

Black background – increasing trend; Grey – decreasing trend

** trend significant at $p < 0.01$ and * < 0.05

¹ Index reference year 2010

Trends in Abundance of House Sparrow and Some Finches in Berkshire 1994–2017



Weather Summary 2017

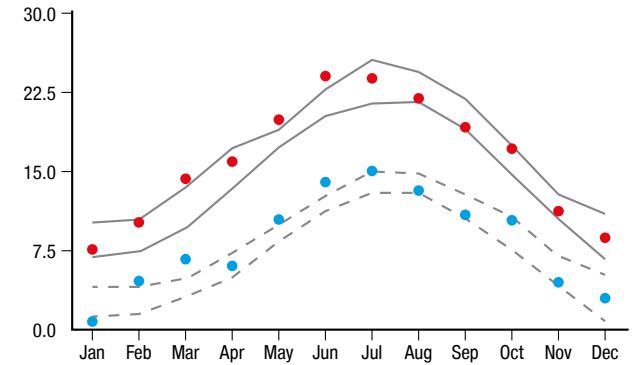
Renton Righelato

This weather summary is based on the Met Office weather reports for Heathrow. Grey lines show one standard deviation either side of the average for 2000–2016.

The year started with a colder than average January and more freezing weather than has become normal. Through the rest of the year, temperatures were unexceptional except for a very warm period in mid June. Rainfall was somewhat lower than normal in the spring, but otherwise followed a fairly typical pattern, with a total rainfall of 580 mm close to the average (620 mm).

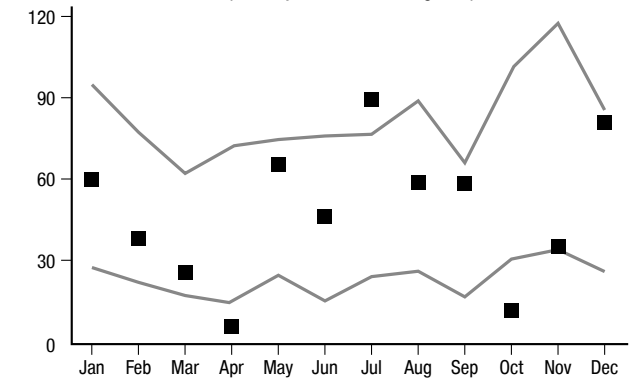
Temperature °C

Red circles: average of daily maxima.
Blue circles: average of daily minima.



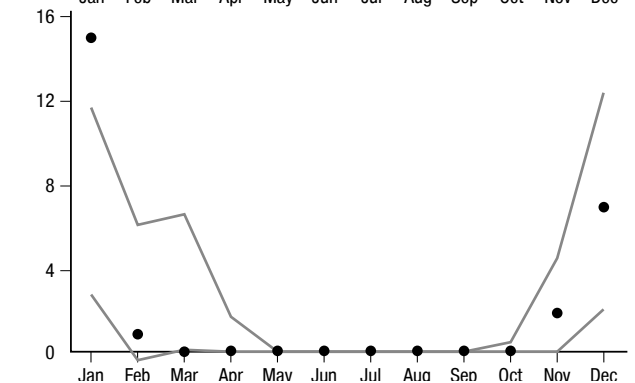
Rainfall

Monthly rainfall (mm).



Days air frost

The number of days in which the air temperature fell below 0°C.



Report for 2017 by the Berkshire Records Committee (BRC)

Committee members for 2017: 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 2017

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, Alpine Swift, 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, Storm Petrel, Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Spoonbill, Night-heron, Cattle Egret, Purple Heron, Honey-buzzard, Golden Eagle, Goshawk, Black Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Rough-legged Buzzard, 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, Turtle Dove, Red-necked Grebe, Slavonian Grebe, Black-necked Grebe, 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, Mediterranean Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Sandwich Tern, Little Tern, Arctic Tern, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Leach's Petrel, Gannet, Shag, Bittern, Great White Egret, Osprey, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, 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.

The Review of 2017 Records

The BRC reviewed 446 records. 371 (83%) were accepted. 11 (3%) were considered 'not proven'. No documentation was received for 64 (14%) records.

Records considered 'not proven' by British Birds Rarities Committee

Iberian Chiffchaff, Windsor, male, March 30th.

Records considered 'not proven' by BRC

The following records were not accepted after circulation to the Committee. In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because, in the Committee's view, the identification was not fully established. Only in a very few cases were records not accepted because, in the Committee's view, a mistake had been made.

Little Stint, Moor Green Lakes, August 21st.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, first winter, October 9th.

Great White Egret, Lea Farm GP, May 13th.

Great White Egret, Tyle Mill, December 30th.

Glossy Ibis, Avington, November 24th.

Honey-buzzard, Dinton Pastures CP, September 23rd.

Black Kite, Shurlock Row, November 20th.

Merlin, Sandford Farm, May 24th.

Wood Warbler, Moor Green Lakes, September 3rd.

Black Redstart, Moor Green Lakes, December 18th.

Twite, Englefield, two male and one female, September 22nd.

Records not supported by any documentation

The following records were either not officially submitted or have been submitted without any supporting documentation. If any observers have any information about any of the records, please send it to records@berksoc.org.uk.

Quail, Berkshire Downs, June 25th.

Brent Goose, Thatcham Station, six, January 9th.

Garganey, Thatcham Marsh, two, March 29th.

Scaup, Lower Farm GP, April 18th.

Common Scoter, Lower Farm GP, six, June 27th.
Red-breasted Merganser, Lower Farm Trout Lake, Newbury, December 12th.
Black-tailed Godwit, Crookham Common, July 23rd.
Black-tailed Godwit, Moor Green Lakes, July 27th.
Little Gull, Theale GPs, March 28th.
Mediterranean Gull, Moor Green Lakes, two, April 22nd.
Mediterranean Gull, Lea Farm GP, two, June 26th.
Caspian Gull, Theale GPs, third winter, January 24th.
Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, two third winter, February 16th.
Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, third winter, March 9th.
Yellow-legged Gull, Dinton Pastures CP, two, April 15th.
Yellow-legged Gull, Lower Earley, May 23rd.
Sandwich Tern, Dorney Wetlands, April 11th.
Arctic Tern, Dinton Pastures CP, May 3rd.
Arctic Tern, Wraysbury, May 6th.
Bittern, Twyford, February 6th.
Great White Egret, Lower Farm GP, September 30th.
Great White Egret, Lower Farm GP, October 15th.
Great White Egret, Southcote, two, October 31st.
Great White Egret, Dinton Pastures CP, October 31st.
Great White Egret, Burghfield GPs, November 18th.
Great White Egret, Jealott's Hill, December 5th.
Osprey, Burghfield GPs, April 8th.
Osprey, Kintbury, April 9th.
Osprey, Moor Green Lakes, May 8th.
Marsh Harrier, Southcote, April 19th.
Marsh Harrier, Lea Farm GP, September 26th.
Hen Harrier, Silwood Park, April 8th-10th.
Hen Harrier, Wishmoor Bottom, October 3rd.
Wryneck, Fobney Meadow, Reading, April 30th.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Sonning, February 22nd.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Wishmoor Bottom, February 26th.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Fobney Meadow, Reading, April 7th.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Remenham, April 23rd-28th.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Southcote Meadows, November 28th.
Merlin, Lilley, January 28th.
Merlin, Cow Down, West Ilsley, February 6th.
Merlin, Lambourn, February 9th.
Merlin, Lower Farm GP, March 2nd.
Merlin, Combe, April 8th.
Merlin, Winnersh, November 2nd.
Merlin, Bury Down, December 7th.
Golden Oriole, Woolhampton GPs, adult male, May 4th.
Waxwing, Twyford, three, January 5th-19th.

Waxwing, Wokingham, 12, February 27th.
Waxwing, Marsh Meadow, Cookham, 20, March 31st.
Willow Tit, Englefield, December 24th.
Yellow-browed Warbler, Slough, two, October 18th.
Ring Ouzel, Cow Down, West Ilsley, September 22nd.
White Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, March 12th.
White Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, April 17th.
White Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, May 7th.
White Wagtail, Lower Farm GP, August 29th.
White Wagtail, Lower Farm GP, October 1st.
Water Pipit, Fobney Meadow, Reading, March 11th.
Water Pipit, Queen Mother Reservoir, March 16th.
Rock Pipit, Lower Farm GP, September 27th.
Ortolan Bunting, Lower Farm GP, September 9th.

Introduction to the 2017 Systematic List

Marek Walford, County Recorder

Our thanks go to the hundreds of observers who submit records every year. Although we have not got to the position we would like to be in, whereby we can publish a report in the following year, it is important that we receive your records in a timely manner, preferably by the end of January. Records have to be imported into the database, de-duplicated, and validated before we can provide them to other organisations, and this takes time. Moor Green Lakes Group and Newbury District Ornithological Club would like records early in the year so they can start writing their reports. British Birds and The Rare Breeding Birds Panel need records by November for them to be included in the Scarce Birds report and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel report. If you submit your records via berksbirds.co.uk or Bird Track, you do not need to submit them again, so maybe consider doing so throughout the year to save you a big job in January.

Compiling the systematic list is a huge task, involving a large team of volunteers. Our thanks go to the species writers: Val Brown, Richard Gilham, Peter Gipson, Robert Godden, Brian Hackett, Anne Harrison, John Hobson, Andy Horscroft, Katie Jenks, Cathy McEwan, Ken Moore, Steve Ricks, Renton Righelato, Roger Stansfield and Andy Tomczynski. We must also thank Robert Godden, Andy Horscroft, Ken Moore, Renton Righelato and Andy Tomczynski for editing the draft.

Thanks go to Robert Godden, whose Excel macros make the task of generating the tables and charts considerably easier.

Species Account Writers for 2017

Red-legged Partridge to Pheasant Red-throated Diver to Little Egret Little Grebe to Black-necked Grebe Kingfisher to Green Woodpecker	Andy Horscroft
Kittiwake to Arctic Skua	Andy Tomczynski
Chaffinch to Reed Bunting	Anne Harrison
Firecrest to Mistle Thrush	Brian Hackett
Wood Warbler to Dartford Warbler	Cathy McEwan
Nightjar to Coot Stone-curlew to Greenshank	John Hobson
Kestrel to Peregrine Ring-necked Parakeet to Raven	Katie Jenks
Wood Lark to Long-tailed Tit Meadow Pipit to Rock Pipit	Peter Gipson
Spotted Flycatcher to Wheatear	Renton Righelato
House Sparrow to Pied Wagtail	Richard Gilham
Egyptian Goose to Red-breasted Merganser	Robert Godden
Waxwing to Bearded Tit	Roger Stansfield
Osprey to Buzzard	Steve Ricks
Brent Goose to Mute Swan	Val Brown
Escapes	Ken Moore
Hybrids	Marek Walford

Place Names

Difficulties arise where there are several names for the same sites, including where, for example, a gravel pit complex is named but not the individual pit. A map of the main sites is included on page 138 to assist with identification. Further details can be found at www.berksbirds.co.uk/pits.asp.

Places/Localities

CP	Country Park
GC	Golf course
GP(s)	Gravel Pit(s)
R.	River
SF	Sewage Farm
STW	Sewage Treatment Works
SPA	Specially Protected Area

Monthly Maximum Tables in Species Accounts – Understanding their Limitations

For many years, the species accounts for some species in the annual reports have been accompanied by tables of monthly maximum counts at certain sites. This has typically been done for ducks and waders. Producing these tables manually was a very time-consuming process on account of the large quantity of data (there could be 700+ records for one species) and various characteristics or problems with the data, as will be covered later. I have been writing the species accounts for ducks in recent years and realised the possibility for automating some of the process of creating these tables. Subsequently the process has been applied more widely and 65 species have been treated in this annual report.

The information used by species account writers (SAWs) is a dataset of bird records, provided in the form of a large number of records in an Excel spreadsheet. Each record comprises details of the form:

<Species> <Count> <Date From> <Date To> <Location> <Observer> <Notes>

The records originate from various sources, such as berksbirds.co.uk, BirdTrack and personal format spreadsheets, and these differences can have an effect on the record.

A program (MM) was written using Excel to take the records one species at a time and create a formatted table of monthly maximum counts using the salient details for each record, though not using the <Observer> and <Notes> fields. An example of the resulting table is shown below.

EXAMPLE – Monthly Maximum Counts for Golden Plover

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Englefield	528	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	24	-	313
Greenham Common	-	95	71	22	-	-	-	-	-	101	50	23
Lower Farm GP	60	64	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	2	-
Remenham Hill	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-
Woodlands Park Fields	3	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	300
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	8	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	7	8	5
Number of birds	533	33	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	237	1131	1060

Total of peak counts of Golden Plover at these eight additional sites (not necessarily on the same date).

Number of sites apart from the five above where Golden Plover where recorded in January.

Peak December count of Golden Plover at Greenham Common.

The first obstacle to overcome was to deal with the multiple representations of the same location, for example Moor Green Lakes vs Eversley GPs or Twyford vs Twyford GP. So, a semi-automatic process was incorporated in which the MM operator guides the program by saying, for example, that records for Twyford and for Twyford GP should be regarded as referring to the same location for this species – a computer cannot make that judgment without some help! A record of Gadwall in Twyford probably refers to the gravel pits rather than the High Street, but what about a record of House Martins – they could equally be in the town. The operator also identifies those sites to be specifically included in the tables rather than lumped with other lesser sites under ‘elsewhere’. The human involvement with this stage of the process is a potential source of error especially when dealing with less well-known sites, but even if the monthly maximum tables were to be generated entirely manually, the same judgments need to be made.

There are other issues around locations. The records do not distinguish between, say, a count of Stonechats at a point within Swinley Forest and an assessment of the population size across the entire forest. This is a limitation of the basic data rather than the analysis carried out on it, but it introduces an extra stage of processing that optionally can be performed to help. There are a number of sites that comprise several smaller sites, typically gravel pit complexes, so for example Theale GPs is declared a master site comprising child sites Hosehill Lake, Theale Main Pit etc. Where there are counts of a species at several child sites on the same day, a synthesised record is created for the master site with the total count, and this can be added to the dataset to be processed by the MM program. This pre-processing stage is particularly applicable to the WeBS Count records where accurate counts at the various water bodies at a master site are made on the same day. However if applied more generally, it is recommended that the resulting synthesised records are checked; thus records of Ferruginous Duck or Cuckoo from multiple lakes at Dinton Pastures probably relate to the same mobile individual, so a synthesised record in these cases shouldn't be used further.

It has already been stated that no use is made of the <Notes> field in a record. Sometimes this field conceals a wealth of information. For example, many waders pass through Queen Mother Reservoir on spring passage and their stays are generally brief. The <Notes> field may give details of the time when a wader arrives and departs, and by examining these details carefully, a SAW can create an accurate picture of the number of waders actually involved, often quite different to that obtained by a glance at the <Count> column in the spreadsheet. A Sanderling reported there in the morning may or may not be still present when two are counted in the afternoon, and two seen the next day may or may not be new birds, but sometimes the quality of the detail in the <Notes> field provides discernment. Obviously, it is not possible for the MM program to make sense of the information in the <Notes> field and consequently it is not used at all – it simply gives the maximum instantaneous count of the species at each location within a monthly time period. For that reason, the figures should be regarded as the minimum number of birds occurring at the site within the monthly period.

With that proviso, we can identify the kinds of species that benefit most from such analysis. Birds that occur in good numbers, that are fairly restricted in their choice of sites frequented and that are well reported result in the most reliable and useful tables, i.e. wildfowl, some waders and gulls. On the other hand, common widespread birds are likely to be under reported and while the MM gives an accurate analysis of the data, the data gives a misleading picture of the species' status. For passage birds that occur in small numbers, the tables may give an incorrect picture of actual numbers involved owing to the movements of individuals. It is also less effective for common small passerines that are widely distributed across sites because, unless a careful survey is conducted and the sub-counts amalgamated, the species tend to be under-reported.

A few extensions to the original monthly maximum tables have been incorporated. The shape of Berkshire is convenient since by looking at the easting component of a site's grid reference, a site can be characterised as lying in east, mid or west Berkshire. Also, known sites have been characterised based on their topography, i.e. river valley, heathland etc. Alternative graphics related to region or topography are created by the MM program, as well as weekly analyses which can be more revealing than monthly versions for some passage migrants.

When submitting bird records, it is appreciated if an existing name for a site is used (if such exists in a drop-down list) rather than a new or misspelt version.

Finally, if anyone is interested, here are some technical details. If it were not for the problems with multiple names for the same sites, Excel control arrays would have efficiently provided much of the functionality to implement the program. As it is, a considerable quantity of VBA

code has been written (as that is my area of familiarity) to provide the database operations and operator interaction, though proper database software would have been a better option. In any case, MM offers a considerable time saving over the completely manual method of generating the tables, taking for instance five to ten minutes to process a dataset of 700 records, most of the time requiring operator interaction.

Robert Godden

Photographs for Future Reports

The Annual Bird Report is enhanced by the inclusion of photographs of birds contributed by birdwatchers. The editors would welcome digital photographs taken in the county for future annual reports. Published photos will be acknowledged and credited to the photographer.

We will seek to publish photos of rare and scarce birds recorded during the year, and hopefully of a good quality. However, good quality photos of common species are also welcome so that the diversity of birds recorded across the county are represented in the report. Photos do not necessarily have to be of single birds. Flocks of birds or birds set in the landscape will also be considered for inclusion.

If you wish to submit your photographs, please send them to the Photographic Editor: **andy.tomczynski@btinternet.com**. In the first instance, please submit medium quality images for consideration, with the following details: photographer's name, species name, date when the photograph was taken and location.

Andy Tomczynski



Waxwing, Bracknell, Feb 5th, Marek Walford.

One of five birds at this location seen during the course of 23 days.

2017 SYSTEMATIC LIST

Edited by Robert Godden, Renton Righelato, Marek Walford and Andy Tomczynski

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

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

Records were received from 49 locations throughout the county. As always, it appears the highest counts for this introduced game bird were from areas where birds are put down by gamekeepers for shooting. The highest of these were as follows: 33 at Arborfield on Jan 2nd; 25 birds were at Cow Down on Feb 12th; 24 were reported at Englefield on Sep 26th; 36 at Arborfield on Oct 1st; 40 at Combe on Oct 1st; and, on the same day, an impressive 80 birds in seven coveys were along the Ridgeway between Aldworth and Compton. Breeding in the wild was recorded from several sites, e.g. at Englefield young were observed on several dates and an adult was seen with four half-grown young at RAF Welford on Jul 30th. Records from unusual locations were also received, including a bird perched on a garden fence in Whitley Wood, Reading, for ten minutes on Mar 9th. Overall, it appears the species continues to do well in the county, helped along by the frequent introductions. This is confirmed by the Berkshire Bird Index which shows the local population remaining stable since 2000.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Localised and declining resident (Red Listed)

Records for this nationally declining species were received from 20 locations in the county. Most were reported in the middle and western areas, although there were a couple in the east. As has been apparent in recent years, Englefield is the mainstay in the county. Surveys by Richard Crawford at the site produced the following high counts: 57 birds on Jan 27th, most of which appeared to be paired up, even at this early date; 58 birds on Jul 23rd included some young; and 61 in seven coveys on Oct 6th was an impressive number. Other good counts away from Englefield were: ten at Streatley on Jan 14th; 16 plus at Windsor Great Park on Oct 22nd; and 20 at this site on Oct 23rd. Encouragingly, breeding was reported from a couple of sites. Young birds were seen at Englefield on several dates, and six nearly fully-grown young were observed at Woodlands Park, Maidenhead, on Oct 12th. The species continues to flourish in our county, aided by an unknown number of introduced birds.

QUAIL COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

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

Calling males of this delightful little species were reported from only four sites in 2017. Two or possibly three birds were calling at Sheep Down, West Ilsley, on Jul 14th, with singles recorded at this site on several dates in June and July (ABT, RRI). One or two calling males were near Fognam Farm, Lambourn, on Jun 26th and 29th (DJB, CDRH), and a male was calling at Wellbottom Down, Lambourn, on various dates in June (JCMo, ABT, DJB). Once again, a poor year considering the ideal habitat our county offers. Hopefully a good year for this species will occur soon.

PHEASANT COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

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

The Berkshire Bird Index shows that the local Pheasant population has remained relatively stable since 2000. Although Pheasant rearing for game shoots is widely practised across the county, few large counts were recorded in 2017; this is undoubtedly a species very under-reported by birdwatchers. However, a couple of high counts were reported: 80 birds at Combe Church on Feb 14th; and 80 nearby at Walbury Hill on Nov 9th. Both counts would have been from birds put down by local gamekeepers for shooting. An interesting report was of a single bird seeing off seven birders, apparently pecking at their boots and chasing them away, at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes.

BRENT GOOSE BRANT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A maximum of five birds in 34 sightings were reported this year. The first was a dark-bellied first winter bird at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, on Jan 1st (EN, APT, MFW). Further sightings of the same bird in the Dinton Pastures and Hurst area were reported at regular intervals until Mar 28th. An adult dark-bellied bird was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 28th (DJB). In the autumn, a single dark-bellied adult was seen at Horton Brook Quarry on Oct 31st (CDRH), and on the same day a dark-bellied first winter juvenile was reported from Queen Mother Reservoir (DJB, PNe). The last sighting of the year (unidentified race and status) was at Lea Farm Lake on Nov 13th (RD).



Brent Goose, Lea Farm Lake, Jan 1st, Andy Tomczynski.

One of five individuals reported in the year. This first winter bird, a long stayer in the area, was last reported on Mar 28th.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

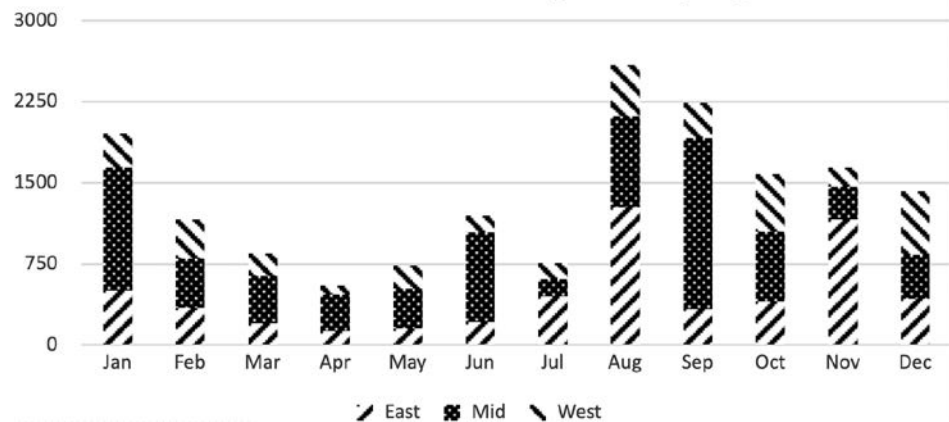
Common and widespread introduced resident

Having increased dramatically during the 1980s and 90s, the Canada Goose population has remained relatively stable since 2000 (Berkshire Bird Index), reflecting the national population trend for this species (BTO Birdtrends). The table shows the maximum monthly counts for the main locations from which sightings were reported. Canada Geese are widely distributed across the county's wetlands, as shown in the bar chart. Notable single counts from areas not in the table included: 347 at Mapledurham Lock on Jan 17th; 389 on the R. Thames at Aston on Jan 23rd; and 911 feeding in stubble fields at Englefield on Sep 1st. Breeding information remains under-reported; this can be difficult to assess due to predation of nests and young, and the habit of goslings of clustering in creches. The reports received showed 138 goslings from approximately 42 pairs, though the breeding season abundance estimate for the county based on Atlas surveys was 1,900 adult birds (The Birds of Berkshire, 2013).

Monthly Maximum Counts for Canada Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	6	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	26	57	36	-	-	-	-	-	74	40	60	27
Dinton Pastures CP	50	24	-	5	-	600	-	-	-	90	16	34
Great Meadow Pond	120	122	87	54	67	88	40	94	134	275	300	-
Horton GPs	13	10	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	116	52	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	91
Lower Farm GP	173	275	84	10	64	35	20	300	258	250	137	350
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	5	5	5	-
Moor Green Lakes	210	40	47	45	18	74	147	160	160	49	200	135
Padworth Lane GP	21	-	18	12	14	1	9	-	-	-	2	15
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	6	-	-	-	63	818	40	32	66	-
Thatcham Marsh	96	65	22	34	68	71	75	35	57	164	20	44
Theale GPs	10	35	65	73	20	58	47	87	95	38	26	15
Windsor Promenade	2	-	58	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	13	6	12	12	37	11	-	5	12	20
Wraysbury GPs	19	12	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	39	1	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	11	13	15	17	23	8	5	9	9	9	15	11
Number of birds	1335	571	383	281	472	230	321	1090	1819	619	1134	854

Canada Goose: Monthly Totals by Region



BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

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

As in previous years, the resident feral population remained at Moor Green Lakes. Generally, the flock consisted of 22 individuals, although a record of only three birds there on Mar 4th, which then flew east, suggested the rest of the flock had temporarily left the area. They had returned by Apr 3rd, and numbers remained more or less the same until December, during which the flock increased to 30 birds on Dec 24th. Elsewhere, sightings of no more than three birds at a time were reported from: Aston (Jan and Oct); Charvil (Jan-Apr); Wargrave (Mar-Apr); Pingewood (Apr); Great Meadow Pond, Windsor (Jun); Bray (Aug); Queen Mother

Reservoir (Aug); Twyford (Aug-Sep); Datchet area (Aug and Nov-Dec); and Borough Marsh (Sep and Dec).

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

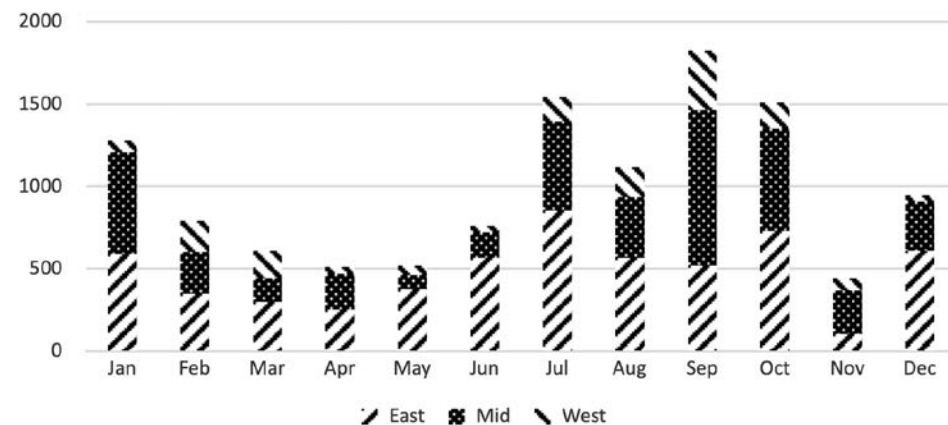
Common and widespread introduced resident (northern wild populations are Amber Listed)

A familiar sight throughout the year on rivers, wetlands and lowland fields throughout the county. Once again, the highest number, 481 adults and juveniles, was recorded on Windsor's Great Meadow Pond, on Jun 11th. Of interest was a count of 330 in Englefield stubble fields on Sep 1st. Breeding was noted at 11 sites, with an approximate total of 64 pairs and 266 goslings. Of these, at least 40 breeding pairs and 200 goslings were at Great Meadow Pond.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Greylag Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	134	19	5	-	-	-	-	-	2	30	4	4
Dinton Pastures CP	-	2	10	7	-	4	-	-	-	56	60	2
Great Meadow Pond	445	338	228	212	315	481	461	315	411	200	99	297
Horton GPs	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	5	13	7	13	7	3	21	17	17	35	37	22
Moatlands GPs	60	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	59	1	6	2	8	6	6	49	70	51	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	110	130	53	12	7	47	72	-	212	-	110	118
Pingewood GPs	-	-	10	22	-	-	68	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	20	-	-	5	6	-	47	190	35	145	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	4	2	6	2	2	1	-	3	2	-	3
Theale GPs	4	-	16	24	42	30	9	1	13	236	-	71
Woolhampton GPs	2	1	8	11	13	31	7	4	90	120	40	17
Wraysbury GPs	2	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	6	6	10	18	8	5	7	7	9	9	4	5
Number of birds	438	274	264	173	119	158	853	540	972	634	94	413

Greylag Goose: Monthly Totals by Region





Pink-footed Goose, Padworth Lane GP, Mar 30th, Andy Tomczynski.
Present for two days only.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Scarce winter visitor

A single individual was seen at Padworth Lane GP on Mar 29th and 30th (KEM *et al.*), associating with Greylag and Canada geese. This is the first report of this species since a single that frequented the Sulhampstead area in early 2013.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Uncommon but regular winter visitor, scarce passage migrant

One bird made a fleeting visit to Colebrook Lake, Moor Green Lakes, on the morning of May 7th (DFI). Again, this was the first report of this species since early 2013 when several were found in the east of the county.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Locally common resident (Green Listed)

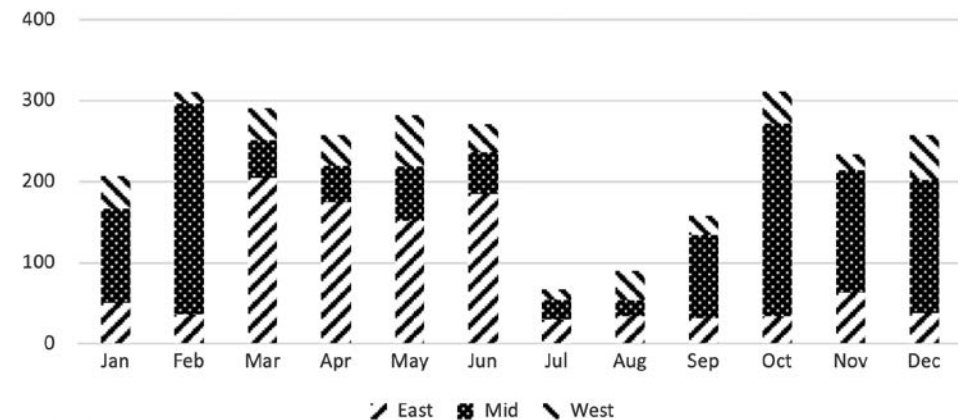
One of our most familiar birds, Mute Swans can be found wherever there is open water in rural and urban areas across the county, including on temporary lakes created by flooding. Reports of Mute Swan are summarised in the table and chart. As in previous years, the highest count of 191 birds was made on the Windsor Promenade, on Mar 28th. Groups of good size, not listed in the table, included 130 individuals recorded on the R. Kennet in Reading on Feb 19th; and up to 53 birds at Twyford GPs between Nov 29th and Dec 28th. Breeding was reported from 27 sites with 106 cygnets hatched, although predation of eggs and young was reported by several recorders; at Lower Farm GP on Jun 23rd a Cormorant took a cygnet by the neck, dragged it off the land and drowned it before leaving it floating on the water.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Mute Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	4	2	14	-	-	-	-	13	-
Burghfield GPs	11	6	8	-	-	-	-	-	18	34	21	11
Dinton Pastures CP	10	12	9	2	2	3	-	-	-	21	23	13
Great Meadow Pond	6	8	5	4	7	7	7	7	7	9	9	9
Horton GPs	3	5	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	9	2
Lea Farm Lake	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Lower Farm GP	7	4	7	6	15	8	2	2	4	24	4	2
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	8	10

Moor Green Lakes	9	7	7	7	6	5	6	8	5	11	12	13
Padworth Lane GP	4	-	6	8	12	13	6	-	-	-	12	15
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	8	2	15	6	9	17	19	19	1	4	1
Thatcham Marsh	6	3	3	9	7	7	2	6	7	4	4	5
Theale GPs	2	2	2	3	6	6	6	8	9	11	8	11
Windsor Promenade	20	-	191	78	50	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	3	-	4	2	7	-	-	6	8	6	1	5
Wraysbury GPs	12	6	-	60	72	86	-	-	-	7	11	13
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	15	11	13	21	18	13	4	7	6	11	16	13
Number of birds	117	250	47	55	94	63	29	45	115	205	122	149

Mute Swan: Monthly Totals by Region



EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common introduced resident in mid and east Berks, more local in the west

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table. Egyptian Geese are now widely distributed across the county with reports from 25 sites in east Berkshire, 23 sites in mid Berkshire and 11 sites in west Berkshire. Successful breeding occurred at 24 sites resulting in 34 broods, three of which comprised a maximum brood size of ten goslings. A female Egyptian Goose, which was ringed as an adult at Burghfield in June 2007, was observed in Mapledurham, Oxfordshire, on Jun 2nd, almost 10 years later, making it one of the oldest reported in 2017.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Egyptian Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	2	-	2	-	35	49	84	9	27	9	5	-
Burghfield GPs	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	5
Dinton Pastures CP	8	4	10	8	11	51	49	-	-	3	9	6
Great Meadow Pond	19	33	26	26	20	25	10	5	11	17	32	30
Horton GPs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	34	36	7	2
Lower Farm GP	2	4	2	3	8	9	7	6	6	8	8	8
Moor Green Lakes	4	9	3	5	7	5	7	13	57	125	16	4
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Pingewood GPs	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	-	7	20	32	128	143	122	14	16	41
Thatcham Marsh	2	4	2	2	2	13	16	10	5	6	2	2
Theale GPs	5	4	5	4	3	15	21	17	9	4	2	11
Windsor Promenade	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	3	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wraysbury GPs	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	26	2	2
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	14	12	7	19	10	6	6	7	8	9	14	8
Number of birds	252	295	45	127	68	38	173	412	283	148	112	51

SHELDUCK COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

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

Monthly regional totals are given in the chart.

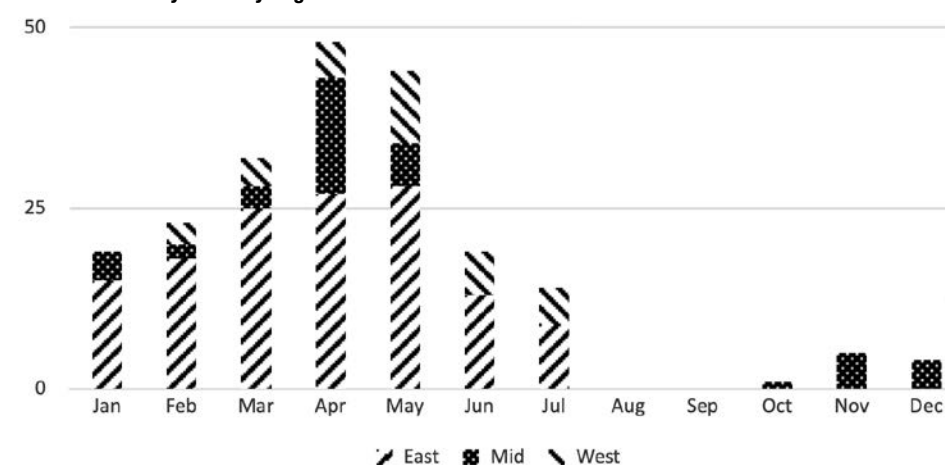
The chart shows the most obvious feature of UK Shelduck population dynamics: the mass departure to the moulting grounds in the Wadden Sea (and, increasingly, to estuaries around the UK) in summer. The departure is staggered with non-breeding birds leaving in June and successfully breeding birds leaving in July and August. Whereas Shelduck numbers reach their peak nationally in the winter, this is not the case in Berkshire where numbers continue to increase through spring. The Shelduck's partial status as a passage migrant in the county would explain the numbers in early spring. However, as only one pair of Shelduck was seen to successfully breed, the majority of birds still present in late spring are non-breeders, probably because they are under two years old, the age at which Shelduck start breeding. Monthly maximum counts at preferred localities are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Shelduck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	2	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
Dorney Wetlands	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	1	7	7	5	7	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Lower Farm GP	-	1	-	2	4	4	5	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	1	1	2	4	8	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pingewood GPs	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	1	7	7	9	8	9	-	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Woolhampton GPs	-	2	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	3	3	4	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	6	9	10	14	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

A pair with seven fledged young were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir from Jul 11th but it was considered that they bred at Wraysbury Reservoir in Surrey. The only account of successful breeding came from Moor Green Lakes where a pair with four ducklings were observed on May 18th, but one by one these were predated, probably by Herring Gulls, and none remained after May 20th. It is likely that the brood was raised in a tunnel nest chamber that had been installed on Plover Island (MGLR).

Shelduck: Monthly Totals by Region



MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Locally common introduced resident

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Mandarin Duck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	2	4	2	1	-	8	3	11	2	-	1
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	-
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	1	-	-	5	1	3	3	3	-	-
Maiden Erleigh Lake	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Moor Green Lakes	4	3	5	2	4	3	3	1	8	2	11	34
Prospect Park	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	2	17	5	2	-	1	-	-	1	3	2	-
Whiteknights Park	3	4	-	-	19	18	6	-	-	23	4	-
Windsor Great Park	-	3	7	4	3	1	8	84	62	2	-	10
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
Wraysbury GPs	3	1	2	2	2	-	1	3	-	-	-	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	4	6	18	19	17	7	4	3	2	3	1	5
Number of birds	24	25	77	59	85	47	12	12	3	7	1	15

Mandarin Ducks continued to be widely reported across the county. The variability of counts is due to their elusive nature and preference for secluded waters in wooded surroundings. They were confirmed to have bred at 14 sites, raising 20 broods. Pairs were noted at a further 14 sites. At Moor Green Lakes, a female was found nesting in a Barn Owl box (MGLR). There were two ringing recoveries in 2017: a female ringed in 2013 at Lower Basildon still had not moved away, whereas a drake ringed at Lower Basildon in 2016 was found dead at Hambridge Lake, Newbury, 16km away.

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

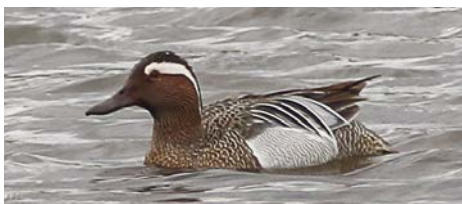
Regular passage migrant in small numbers, rare in summer but has bred (Schedule One and Amber Listed)

2017 was a poor year for this species with possibly as few as 11 birds reported, though several were long-staying. Monthly maximum counts in east, mid and west Berkshire are given in the table; however, the high count in mid Berkshire in April may be due to the same drakes visiting several nearby sites in the area, with just seven birds in spring and four in autumn accounting for all of the records.

Monthly Regional Maximum Counts for Garganey

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-
Mid	-	-	4	7	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
West	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

Spring: the first reports were of a drake at Lea Farm Lake between Mar 11th and Mar 17th (FJC *et al.*), followed by a female at Lavell's Lake from Mar 24th to Mar 29th (SDa *et al.*). Single drakes were reported from: Padworth Lane GP on Apr 5th (KEM); Thatcham Marsh from Apr 8th to 13th (PEH *et al.*); and Lower Farm GP from Apr 9th to 23rd (ILGW, JL, NC). It is possible that the same bird accounted for all of these records, and indeed for a later isolated report of a drake from Lower Farm GP on May 23rd. A long-staying drake was at Dinton Pastures CP from Apr 12th to 26th (MFW *et al.*) and a female was at Lea Farm Lake on Apr 18th (AR). There were also single day reports of drakes at: Searles Farm Lane GP on Apr 23rd (JA); Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 30th (ABT); and at Moor Green Lakes on May 7th (RCM *et al.*). **Summer:** six weeks after the last report of a drake at Lower Farm GP, a pair was seen there on Jun 18th (NC); this is the only report suggesting possible breeding in 2017. **Autumn:** a long-staying first winter drake was at Queen Mother Reservoir from Aug 24th to Sep 6th (DJB *et al.*); a different eclipse drake was at Heron Lake, Wraysbury, on Aug 31st (CDRH); one was present at Lavell's Lake on Sep 18th (SDa, KSeY); and there was a juvenile at Lea Farm Lake from Sep 26th to Oct 8th (MFW *et al.*).



Garganey, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Apr 14th, Marek Walford.
This drake was present at Dinton Pastures CP from Apr 12th to 26th.

SHOVELER NORTHERN SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Shoveler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	6	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	-
Bray GPs	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	8	7
Brimpton GPs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Burghfield GPs	15	5	4	2	-	-	-	-	23	25	52	59
Dinton Pastures CP	60	36	55	8	2	-	-	9	18	63	46	63
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	5	8	-
Great Meadow Pond	93	39	16	8	2	6	8	2	3	8	88	180

Horton GPs	-	7	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	-	3	7	-	2	1	6	57	17	4	4
Lower Farm GP	90	88	46	21	3	3	13	30	36	35	49	101
Moatlands GPs	168	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	3	3	30
Moor Green Lakes	22	67	52	-	-	-	-	2	10	24	100	73
Padworth Lane GP	5	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	-	12	1
Pingewood GPs	-	-	66	1	1	-	-	2	13	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	5	-	-	4	-	-	-	4	6	6	5	10
Theale GPs	97	9	12	3	2	-	9	11	46	19	9	22
Twyford GPs	76	85	69	-	-	-	1	1	12	23	8	15
Woolhampton GPs	1	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	6	6	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	5	36	13
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	3	5	3	4	1	1	1	1	4	5	7
Number of birds	106	139	27	6	8	1	1	1	3	32	122	237

Numbers in both winter periods were roughly double the average of recent years. The majority of the birds in the first winter period had departed by the start of April and a widespread return in the second winter period started at the beginning of September. There was a continuous presence through the summer at Lower Farm GP and Great Meadow Pond. A pair seen on several dates at the latter site was the only indication of possible breeding.

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Gadwall

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	1	2	4	4	8	-	3	-	-
Bray GPs	58	52	4	2	2	-	-	-	2	-	49	54
Burghfield GPs	177	124	20	-	-	-	-	-	69	62	87	140
Dinton Pastures CP	26	34	14	3	14	16	-	30	26	84	59	78
Dorney Wetlands	7	7	-	-	1	-	-	10	26	5	44	-
Great Meadow Pond	7	15	20	16	8	50	85	126	82	17	102	29
Horton GPs	71	68	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	22	69
Lea Farm Lake	6	8	14	-	11	3	8	30	-	-	4	14
Lower Farm GP	26	82	100	34	46	58	20	41	30	13	10	8
Moatlands GPs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	14	18	82	38
Moor Green Lakes	249	138	97	23	9	2	-	5	23	10	55	160
Padworth Lane GP	8	4	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	20
Pingewood GPs	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	3	2	4	2	-	-	5	5	1	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	8	8	15	8	7	4	-	6	5	1	-	-
Theale GPs	25	4	12	6	10	6	3	5	13	75	54	50
Twyford GPs	228	138	16	-	5	25	38	25	24	101	210	175
Woolhampton GPs	30	25	21	3	6	-	-	-	-	2	3	7
Wraysbury GPs	39	26	19	2	-	-	-	-	-	43	36	26
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	9	5	8	17	10	2	4	3	3	2	7	6
Number of birds	45	19	53	53	34	11	19	52	17	5	82	152

Monthly totals of Gadwall were slightly above the average numbers from recent years. In the summer, breeding was confirmed at six sites with single broods at: Fobney Meadow; R. Kennet in Reading; Hosehill Lake, Theale; Main Pit, Theale; The Wilderness in Kintbury; and two broods at Lower Farm GP. In addition, a nest with five eggs at Great Meadow Pond was found later to have been predated. Elsewhere pairs were present in early summer at: Aldermaston GPs; Thatcham Marsh; and Woolhampton GPs.

WIGEON EURASIANWIGEON *Mareca penelope*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

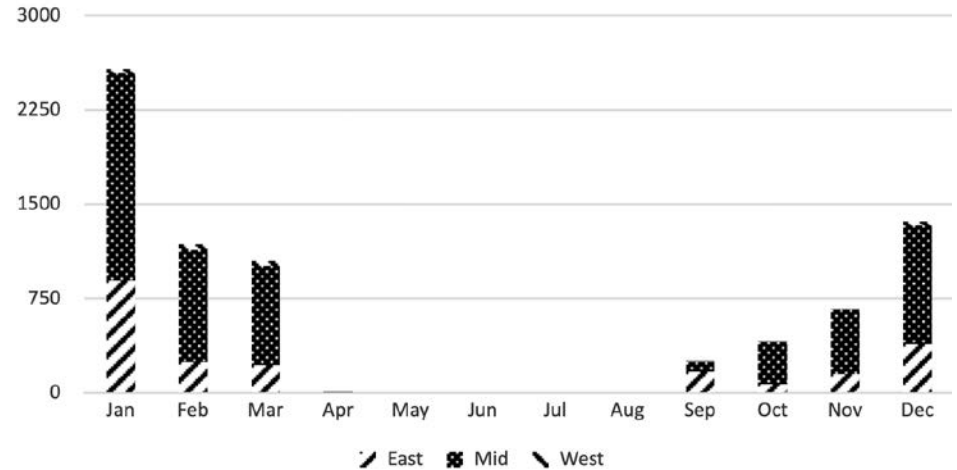
Monthly Maximum Counts for Wigeon

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Burghfield GPs	250	524	6	1	-	-	-	-	6	106	159	145
Dinton Pastures CP	19	28	30	2	-	-	-	1	13	133	91	105
Dorney Wetlands	160	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	3	17	2
Horton GPs	14	12	100	-	-	-	-	-	20	4	16	21
Lea Farm Lake	260	240	194	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	4	115
Lower Farm GP	26	38	40	-	-	-	-	-	14	8	7	21
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	32	-
Moor Green Lakes	673	188	115	5	-	-	-	-	40	30	100	322
Padworth Lane GP	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	52
Pingewood GPs	180	-	250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Queen Mother Reservoir	13	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	9	6	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-
Theale GPs	340	-	250	-	-	-	-	-	58	22	22	35
Twyford GPs	413	33	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	76	154	161
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Wraysbury GPs	7	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	90	23	6	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	8	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	8
Number of birds	221	113	40	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	381

Very large numbers of Wigeon were reported in the winter periods of 2017, but no birds remained into late spring to give any suspicion of breeding. Compared to east and mid Berkshire, very few birds were recorded from west Berkshire at any time of year as is apparent from the chart.

First winter: counts were somewhat higher than in the previous three years. There was a rapid departure at the onset of spring and most birds had left by mid-March. **Second winter:** numbers of returning birds started to build up in mid-September. Again, maximum counts were above the average from recent years.

Wigeon: Monthly Totals by Region



MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

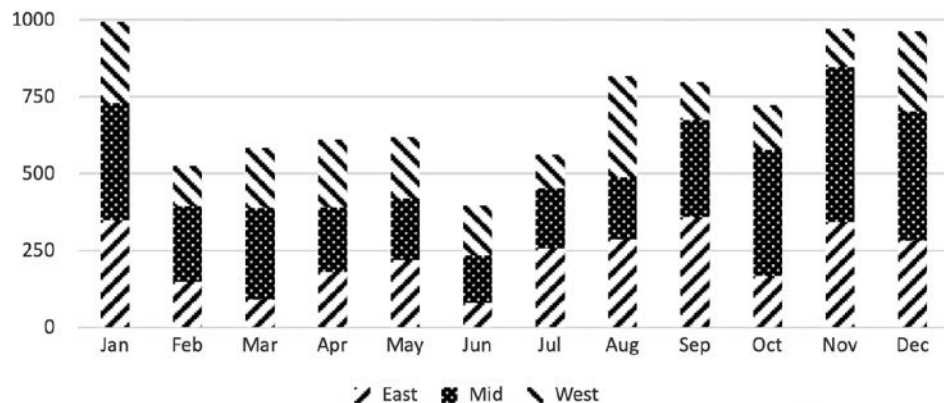
Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Mallard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	12	-	-	8	5	10	52	73	-	8	24	-
Bray GPs	39	-	-	9	20	3	-	-	-	-	56	-
Burghfield GPs	39	30	76	-	-	-	-	-	107	91	88	25
Dinton Pastures CP	47	73	90	12	-	12	-	-	-	29	68	89
Dorney Wetlands	4	-	-	-	35	-	-	34	78	-	30	-
Great Meadow Pond	60	22	30	30	46	30	53	73	103	44	65	34
Horton GPs	23	15	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	8	15	32
Lea Farm Lake	14	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	2	20
Lower Farm GP	20	24	14	13	34	26	31	70	42	13	34	36
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	26	15	14	17
Moor Green Lakes	108	20	29	38	1	1	68	34	50	40	55	106
Padworth Lane GP	30	15	20	16	19	26	25	-	-	-	16	16
Pingewood GPs	-	-	-	11	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	12	29	14	51	37	130	147	120	46	42	10
Thatcham Marsh	92	27	73	71	34	58	3	48	33	72	17	97
Theale GPs	25	19	19	11	20	13	37	18	45	24	40	30
Twyford GPs	7	9	24	8	16	20	35	66	24	70	64	28
Woolhampton GPs	4	-	12	8	10	10	4	7	4	10	2	-
Wraysbury GPs	30	41	-	44	-	-	-	-	-	30	22	52
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	22	21	21	32	24	18	9	6	10	10	17	13
Number of birds	441	217	164	307	319	151	124	249	168	204	318	372

Mallard remains a common breeding species, whose abundance has changed little this century (Berkshire Bird Index). Broods were reported from 35 sites across the county, though this must be a great under-estimate. The chart showing monthly maximum counts

Mallard: Monthly Totals by Region



from east, mid and west Berkshire also shows a smaller winter influx, relatively speaking, compared to most other duck species.

At Moor Green Lakes a drake was seen to eat a perch on Jan 4th (IDP).

PINTAIL NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Pintail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Horton GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Most reports were of short-staying birds, typically remaining just one day. Two relatively large counts were received. One was a flock of 13 including seven drakes circled Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 10th before touching down (CDRH), with four still present the next day. The second was a flock of 20 on the sandbar at Horton GPs on Sep 19th, which were watched flying off, but another elsewhere at the site and yet another at nearby Colne Mere the same day made a total of 22, with none remaining the following day.

TEAL EURASIAN TEAL *Anas crecca*

A common winter visitor and passage migrant, scarce in the summer, has bred (Amber List)

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Teal

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	31	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	18	12	-
Bray GPs	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Burghfield GPs	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	191	161	8	6	-	1	-	6	6	16	34	59
Dorney Wetlands	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	3	-
Great Meadow Pond	45	26	8	4	2	-	2	2	2	-	2	4
Horton GPs	83	50	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Lea Farm Lake	327	65	64	19	-	3	3	18	44	28	34	350
Lower Farm GP	176	142	60	12	6	4	9	24	33	35	118	300
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	31
Moor Green Lakes	44	58	29	12	2	6	8	26	40	16	11	41
Padworth Lane GP	10	20	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	40
Pingewood GPs	-	-	22	4	-	-	-	5	-	-	20	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	13	1	12	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	14	5	2	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	15	15
Twyford GPs	58	3	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	-
Woolhampton GPs	12	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Wraysbury GPs	17	15	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	7	10	7	7	2	2	-	4	7	6	7	10
Number of birds	419	132	101	91	3	2	-	26	118	119	84	460

High numbers were present in both winter periods, being around double the average monthly maximum counts from recent years. Most wintering birds had departed before the fourth week of April and birds started to return in August.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Uncommon visitor of presumed feral origin which occasionally breeds

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Red-crested Pochard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	4	2	3	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	3	4	2	5	5	-	-	-	-	4	3
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Wraysbury GPs	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Totals of this species were in line with recent years, with the bulk of the records coming from mid Berkshire and none from west Berkshire. In east Berkshire, they were only reported in the first winter period. The only indication of breeding concerned several reports of a pair in the Hosehill Lake area in late spring. Three freshly fledged juveniles at Hosehill Lake on Jun 29th (ABT) were likely to have been raised locally.

POCHARD COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

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

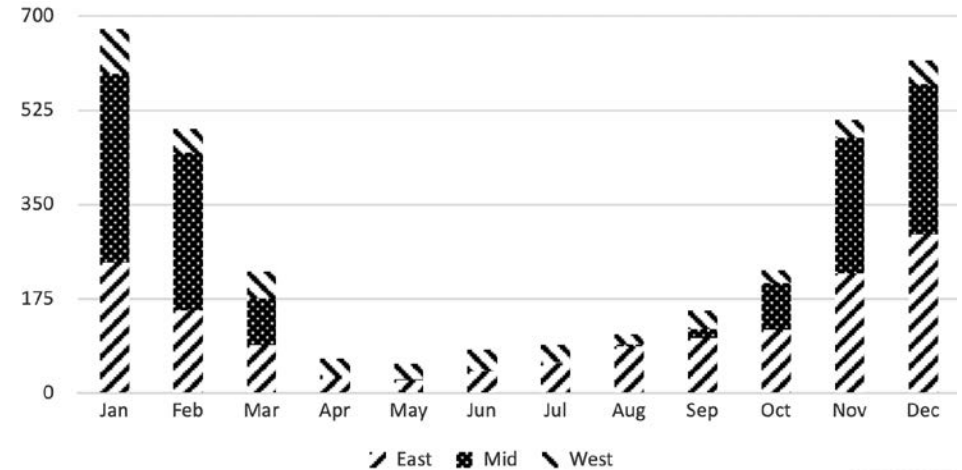
Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Pochard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	2	1	7	4	-	-	2	4	-
Bray GPs	111	35	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	63	-
Burghfield GPs	15	95	66	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9	69
Dinton Pastures CP	70	178	8	-	-	-	-	1	-	36	148	137
Dorney Wetlands	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Great Meadow Pond	66	58	60	22	21	37	50	76	59	17	81	52
Horton GPs	14	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	30	72	12	9
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Lower Farm GP	32	35	17	12	13	16	18	14	12	14	23	32
Moatlands GPs	150	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	45	21
Moor Green Lakes	25	19	19	1	2	1	5	3	7	3	15	19
Padworth Lane GP	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	14
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	6	8	12	13	11	11	9	-	1	1	2	3
Theale GPs	95	4	4	-	-	-	1	3	16	46	5	20
Twyford GPs	16	15	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	18	4
Woolhampton GPs	45	-	21	6	4	5	2	5	21	-	4	3
Wraysbury GPs	14	39	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	9	34	215
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	3	-	2	2	1	2	-	1	1	1	3	4
Number of birds	3	-	8	5	1	4	-	2	2	6	31	18

This was a good year for reports of confirmed breeding, with a total of nine broods observed at five sites. There were: four broods at Great Meadow Pond; two broods at Lower Farm GP; and single broods at Thatcham Marsh, Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre, and Moor Green Lakes. At the latter site, this was probably the first occasion that breeding had occurred. Numbers in both winter periods were roughly 70% of the average of maximum counts in recent years. Away from sites where Pochard summered, in the first winter period most birds had departed by the middle of March but the return of birds in the second winter period was more gradual, with the first arrivals in July. The chart shows that the winter influx was concentrated in east and mid Berkshire, as with Tufted Duck.

Pochard: Monthly Totals by Region



FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant

First winter: the ringed drake that was present at the end of 2016 at Dinton Pastures CP remained into 2017 and was last seen on Feb 26th. This bird was regarded as the same individual that was first reported in December 2015, which was traced to the German reintroduction scheme near Hamburg through its metal ring. **Second winter:** two ringed drakes appeared at Dinton Pastures CP on Nov 7th, and a third bird was present on Nov 8th staying just one day (ABT, DJB, SDa). Though mobile at first, two birds subsequently favoured Middle Marsh and remained until the end of the year. The number of the metal ring on one of the birds, 00U5, was read on two occasions and again this was found to accord with the German reintroduction scheme.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

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

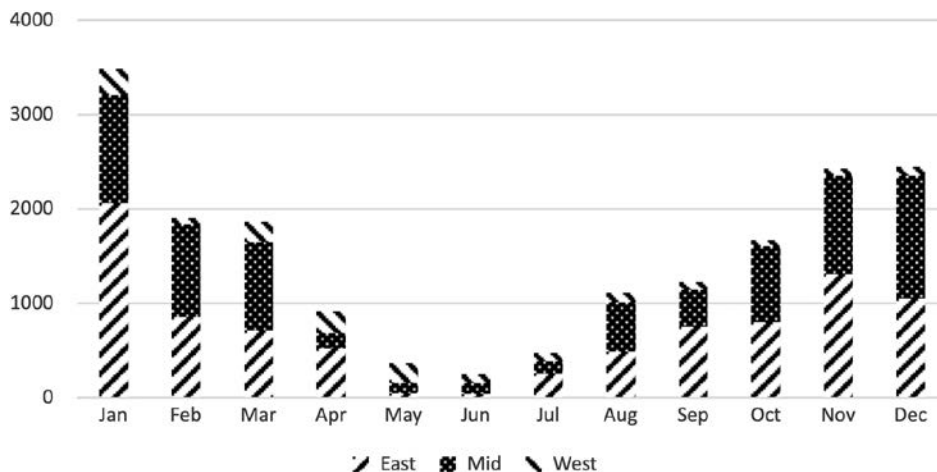
Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Tufted Duck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	2	-	-	20	6	2	2	6	-	-	2	-
Bray GPs	419	302	63	21	12	15	-	-	178	275	374	70
Burghfield GPs	251	342	383	-	-	-	-	-	123	133	278	259
Dinton Pastures CP	111	180	130	17	7	20	-	7	-	56	86	143
Dorney Wetlands	80	-	8	-	1	-	-	-	7	-	70	-
Great Meadow Pond	27	57	112	73	24	13	18	12	11	13	22	21
Horton GPs	126	153	-	45	-	-	-	-	-	88	264	97
Lea Farm Lake	6	11	18	-	-	14	6	4	-	6	18	24
Lower Farm GP	36	35	61	56	57	33	41	48	22	15	27	24
Moatlands GPs	78	62	103	-	-	-	-	182	12	186	118	412
Moor Green Lakes	319	104	168	94	-	-	110	80	49	69	92	360
Padworth Lane GP	50	36	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	42

Queen Mother Reservoir	272	23	18	17	4	2	104	383	507	148	35	36
Thatcham Marsh	23	31	31	42	43	18	12	17	24	17	18	28
Theale GPs	250	115	155	44	50	36	119	268	213	378	278	179
Twyford GPs	258	186	119	35	31	37	7	57	37	42	133	115
Woolhampton GPs	210	-	114	96	52	18	26	21	14	27	29	21
Wraysbury GPs	820	160	243	270	-	-	-	-	-	202	373	465
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	7	8	6	10	7	5	2	5	3	4	8	6
Number of birds	145	110	138	88	83	42	32	31	29	17	195	150

Tufted Duck: Monthly Totals by Region



Tufted Ducks were confirmed as breeding at 11 locations in the county, rearing at least 16 broods. As usual, the summer numbers were boosted in east and mid Berkshire with the winter influx, but remained constant throughout in west Berkshire, as shown by the chart. In the first winter period, peak numbers were roughly double the average monthly peak from recent years, while numbers in the second winter period were more typical.

SCAUP GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

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

The run of poor years continued with just two birds, which arrived in 2016, still present into the first winter period of 2017. A first winter drake was reported intermittently at Horton and Wraysbury GPs until Feb 4th (CDRH, CL), and a first winter female at Moatlands GPs remained until Mar 9th (JA *et al.*).

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)

A total of nine birds during the year represented an average showing for this species, and most were present for just one day. **First winter/Spring:** three drakes and a female were found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 27th (CDRH) with one drake remaining until Apr 1st (MO). **Autumn:** a drake and two females were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 24th (DJB *et al.*); and a drake and one female were found at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 9th (ABT).



Long-tailed Duck, Moor Green Lakes, Mar 4th, Dave Rimes.

This first winter female was present in the area from Feb 6th until Mar 11th.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Rare winter visitor (Red Listed)

The only report of this species concerns a first winter female at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 6th (RFM *et al.*). What was presumably the same bird reappeared on Feb 28th (TR *et al.*) and remained until Mar 11th, during which time it visited many of the lakes in the complex and often appeared very close to the jetty at the Horseshoe Lakes Activity Centre.

GOLDENEYE COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Goldeneye

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Burghfield GPs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Dinton Pastures CP	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Dorney Wetlands	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Lea Farm Lake	4	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	7	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
Moor Green Lakes	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Theale GPs	18	7	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Twyford GPs	3	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
Woolhampton GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	34	49	34	5	-	-	-	-	-	2	20	33
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

First winter: numbers in this period were around 30% higher than in recent corresponding periods, with peak numbers occurring during a cold spell in late January and early February. A drake at Woolhampton GPs on Jan 6th was the only record received from the west of the county all year. The last birds reported in the spring were five around the Wraysbury GPs on Apr 1st. **Second winter:** the first returning bird was at Wraysbury GPs on Oct 8th, where numbers increased to typical values until the end of the year, whereas low numbers were reported from other sites.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

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

Weekly maximum counts are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Smew

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	9	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

First winter: in the east of the county, at least ten were present in the Wraysbury and Horton area in January (five adult drakes, one first winter drake, four females) with the final three reported on Mar 2nd. In mid Berkshire, a female was at Searles Farm Lane GP from Jan 6th to Mar 11th, and another female at Main Pit, Theale, from Jan 19th to 27th. **Second winter:** no reports were received.

GOOSANDER COMMON MERGANSER *Mergus merganser*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

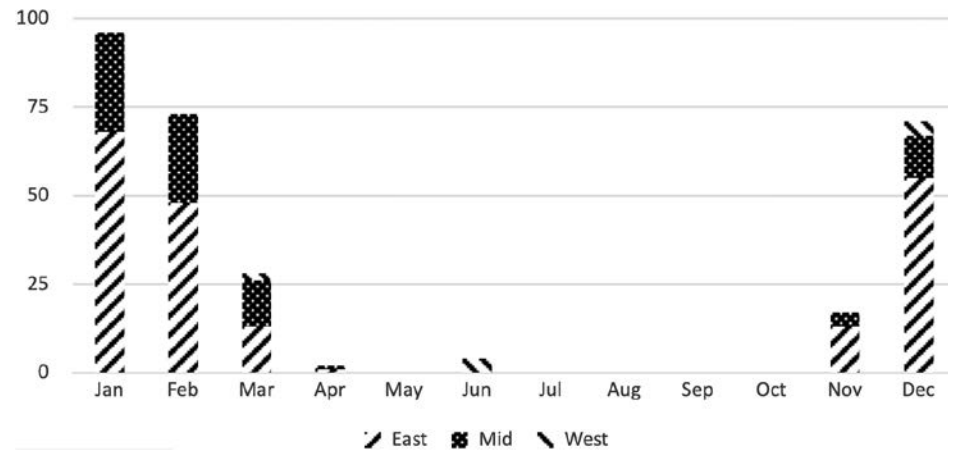
Monthly Maximum Counts for Goosander

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Horton GPs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	7	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Moor Green Lakes	55	34	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	41
Padworth Lane GP	3	8	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Theale GPs	13	9	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wraysbury GPs	10	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	4	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	3
Number of birds	3	9	7	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	3	11

Overall numbers were similar or higher than in recent years. The distribution across Berkshire is shown in the chart.

First winter: Moor Green Lakes remained the premier site in the county for Goosander; the peak counts were made at the end of the day as birds arrived on Grove Lake to roost. Flocks here typically comprised 50 – 55% males. Occasionally birds were reported from the R. Blackwater alongside the gravel pit complex. The last bird to be reported in this period was at Padworth Lane GP on Apr 5th. **Summer:** a female with three juveniles was photographed at Kintbury on Jun 19th, and breeding at the same site was reported for 2016 (Tim Cully). There have been sporadic reports of summering adult Goosander in the past from around the county, but this constitutes the first confirmed breeding in Berkshire. Note

Goosander: Monthly Totals by Region



that Goosander were confirmed breeding in Wiltshire in 2014. **Second winter:** the first returning bird was found at Heath Lake, Crowthorne, on Nov 5th. This was followed by a typical increase across east and mid Berkshire.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

As last year, there was just a single one-day report with a first winter drake and a female at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 24th (CDRH). This date constitutes the second earliest autumn arrival; the earliest was an exceptional September record in 1993. This year's poor showing is in line with a national decline in numbers over the last fifteen years, thought to be due to the species' wintering range shifting further east in Europe.

NIGHTJAR EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

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

At least 50 churring males (or territories) were recorded. The first for the year was at Roundoak Piece on May 1st. In west Berkshire the most westerly record was of one (unsexed) at Snelsmore Common CP on Jun 9th and 10th; on Greenham Common there was a minimum of three between May 26th and Jul 7th; at nearby Crookham Common only one was noted between May 15th and 28th; on Bucklebury Common only two were counted between May 10th and Aug 13th, the latter being the latest date recorded. In mid Berkshire, on Padworth Common a male and a female were noted in different territories while in Ufton Nerve Woods at least three were recorded between May 1st and 23rd. In east Berkshire, two territories and fledged young were reported from Wildmoor Heath BBOWT on Jul 17th; there was another territory nearby at Wellington College Heath on Jun 1st; several counts from different parts of Swinley Forest suggested a minimum total of nine churring males between May 21st and Jul 15th; and at nearby Swinley Park six were heard churring between May 15th and Jun 13th. The highest count for any site was from South Ascot where at least 17 territories were identified between Jun 1st and 9th, while in Sunninghill Park there were four on May 31st.

SWIFT COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

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

The screaming calls of Swifts, once a common feature of our towns, are no longer heard in many parts of the county. Swifts have undergone a roughly 50% decline in numbers nationally since 2000, and this is reflected in the local population according to the Berkshire Bird Index.

The first Swifts of the year were recorded at Brimpton and Woolhampton GPs on Apr 17th followed by a steady trickle in smallish numbers but including: ten at Theale GPs on Apr 22nd; 30 there on Apr 25th; and 20 at Wraybury GPs on Apr 28th. Flocks of 100 or more were frequently reported over gravel pits: 200 at Burghfield GPs on May 7th; 100 at Moor Green Lakes on the same day; and 120 at Dinton Pastures CP on Jun 4th. Later in the summer much larger flocks were reported: 800 feeding over fields between Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) and White Waltham Airfield on Jun 27th, and at least 1,000 there three days later. Whether these were locally breeding birds or part of a late summer influx of non-breeding birds is not known. Return migration is mostly in late July and early August. On Jul 23rd 100 were seen drifting south over White Waltham, and 360 were noted moving south west over Compton Downs on Jul 26th. By mid-August, far fewer Swifts were being reported and the final record was of one at Fobney Meadow on Sep 16th.

Breeding: the first screaming activity was noted on May 6th at Hungerford, and at Caversham birds arrived three days later than in 2016. Screaming was recorded at 14 other sites by parties of various sizes from three to 37, the latter over Hamilton Road, Reading. At a site in Bracknell, the first arrivals were noted on May 13th, rather later than in 2016. The only record of birds actively entering a nest site was from Woodlands Park on Jun 14th. At Cookham Rise, two were circling the spire of the Methodist church on Jun 23rd where nest boxes had been erected and taped calls were probably used to attract the species. Screaming in Hungerford was not noticed after Jul 22nd and at Bracknell not after Jul 25th.

CUCKOO COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Locally common though declining summer visitor (Red Listed)

The first arrivals were noted on Apr 9th at: Lavell's Lake; Swinley Forest; Whistley Green; and Woolhampton GPs. During the year they were recorded at 54 sites across the county, a reduction from last year's 78. Indeed, the Berkshire Bird Index shows a 2.7% per year decline in this species which is in line with a 37% national reduction in numbers over the last ten years. Monthly numbers are shown in the table.

Monthly Totals for Cuckoo

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Total birds	40	59	16	3	1
Of which juveniles	-	-	-	3	1

Some 39% of records to the end of June were of calling males. There were no records positively identifying female birds, and only one of a pair, at Southcote Meadows on May 25th. The only breeding records involved birds holding territory at Thatcham Marsh on May 21st and Jun 11th, and a fledged individual with a short tail being mobbed by Magpies and Long-tailed Tits at Newbury on Jun 18th. Juveniles were noted at: Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 15th; Thatcham Marsh on Jul 20th; Basildon Park on Jul 23rd; and, the final record for the year, at Great Meadow Pond on Aug 16th.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Common urban resident (Wild Rock Dove is Green Listed)

Though found in large numbers in most urban areas and often seen in flocks in the countryside, this species goes largely unrecorded. Over the year, it was reported at only 48 sites: ten in east Berkshire, four in mid Berkshire and 34 in west Berkshire. High counts recorded were 51 at Boxford on Nov 2nd, and 88 at Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) on Nov 14th. There were no records of even probable breeding.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common resident and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Stock Doves were recorded widely throughout the year in some 100 1 km squares. Whilst mostly a bird of woodland and of open countryside, some frequent urban and suburban areas, and there were several reports of them under garden feeders. Nationally, the Stock Dove population has experienced a small increase since 2000, and at a local level the Berkshire Bird Index suggests a similar change.

First winter: most records were of ones or twos, but substantial winter flocks were also recorded. The highest counts were: 40 at Cow Down on Feb 6th; 190 at Great Meadow Pond on Feb 12th; 300 at Compton on Feb 16th; at least 50 at Fobney Meadow on Feb 16th; and a large flock of 277 was reported feeding on cut old dry meadow grass at Ruscombe as late as Apr 16th. **Breeding:** display was first noted at Nores Hill, Reading, on Mar 3rd. Whilst typically nesting in holes in trees, Barn Owl boxes were being used at Bucklebury Ford on Mar 17th and Braywick Nature Centre on Mar 30th. 16 pairs and 11 singing males were counted at Swinley Park on Apr 13th. The first nest with eggs was noted at Aldermaston GPs on Apr 22nd where the first young were seen on Apr 27th. A hole in a large dead tree was still being used at Nores Hill on Jul 28th. The only record of fledged young was from North Ascot on Sep 16th where an adult and a juvenile were "taking some flak from a Wood Pigeon in the garden". **Second winter:** the numbers reported increased towards the end of November with 80 noted at Colnbrook on Nov 19th. Counts in excess of 100 were: 150 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 28th and 120 on Dec 2nd; and 190 at Horton GPs on Dec 2nd.

WOODPIGEON COMMON WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

One of the most abundant species in the county, recorded in the last Atlas surveys in all but one tetrad. As with most common species, it is very much under-recorded other than in surveys, with records this year from only around 10% of Berkshire's 1 km squares. However, the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey shows its abundance in the county to have been stable this century (Berkshire Bird Index).

First winter: some 56% of records were of fewer than ten birds. However, there were 12 counts in excess of 100: 200 at Englefield on Jan 2nd; 200 at Boxford on Jan 22nd; the highest was 520 at Great Meadow Pond on Mar 5th; and 400 at Widbrook Common the next day as a flock was put up by a low flying Buzzard. A leucistic bird was noted at Lambourn on Jan 18th, which was presumed by the observer to be the same as one there on May 5th 2015. **Breeding:** display was first seen at Greenham Common on Apr 7th although nest building had been recorded a month earlier at Cookham Rise on Mar 11th. The first juveniles were noted in a feeding flock at Great Meadow Pond on May 28th; there were only four other records of fledged young. **Autumn:** half of the records were of fewer than ten birds. The first large count was of 250 at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 3rd, with 1,000 there

on Oct 22nd. A large movement of 1,600 was seen at Woose Hill, Wokingham, on Oct 27th; 300 were noted moving south at Newbury the next day; and on Oct 30th, 360 were at Woose Hill and 330 moved west at South Ascot. **Second winter:** the highest counts of winter flocks were: 900 at Great Meadow Pond on Nov 5th; a notable 4,370 at Parkfarm Down on Nov 17th feeding in the fields, from which most flew off north to a roost in Ashdown Park, Oxon; and 500 at Eastbury Down on Nov 30th.

TURTLE DOVE EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

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

There were possibly only three birds recorded in the county this year from four sites, continuing the serious decline of this species. The earliest record was of a single bird in mid Berkshire seen on power cables at Roundoak Piece and Padworth Common on May 9th (PH, CMc). There were further sightings of probably the same bird at this site on several dates until May 29th and again on Jun 17th, often heard purring on the power lines. The bird was also seen to spend time across the border in Hampshire (MO). Elsewhere in west Berkshire, one was singing and display fighting at Hodcott Down, West Ilsley, on May 28th, and probably the same bird on Jun 2nd, Jun 26th and Jul 17th, but it was not noted on Jul 31st (ABT). Single birds were noted at Aldermaston GPs from Jun 8th to 13th (JPM), and at Thatcham Marsh from Jun 11th to 12th (MO).

COLLARED DOVE EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common resident (Green Listed)

Collared Doves were recorded in 58 1km squares through the year, the great majority of records being of ones and twos. In east Berkshire, they were noted in 16 1km squares; the only count higher than eight was of 25 feeding in a garden in Slough on Jan 15th. In mid Berkshire, they were recorded in 14 1km squares and the only records greater than two were of ten at Twyford on Jun 6th and in Reading on Aug 8th. In west Berkshire, they were recorded in 28 1km squares, the highest count being of eight at Speen Moor Plantation on an unspecified date. **Breeding:** the first nest building was noted at Woodlands Park on Jan 1st, but the first singing was not noted until Jan 28th at Moor Green Lakes. Breeding was proved at only one site, Lundy Lane, Reading, where fledged young were seen on Jun 16th and young were in a second nest on Jul 26th. The Berkshire Bird Index for Collared Dove, which showed a significant decline between 2000 and 2010, has remained fairly stable since then.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

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

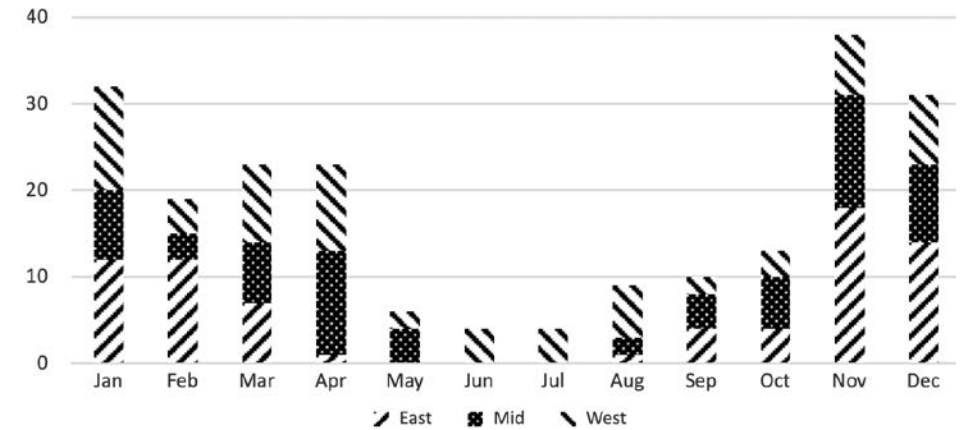
Water Rails were recorded throughout the year from 48 sites: 14 in east Berkshire, 18 in mid Berkshire and 16 in west Berkshire. None were recorded in other than a wetland habitat. The majority of counts (88%) were of ones or twos. The highest counts were: seven at Great Meadow Pond on Jan 2nd and 8th; six at Fobney Meadow on Apr 2nd; eight at Dorney Wetlands on Nov 24th; and six at Great Meadow Pond on Nov 26th.

The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table and distribution across the regions in the chart.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Water Rail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	3	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	4	2	3
Dorney Wetlands	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	8	3
Fobney Meadow	-	-	2	6	4	-	-	1	2	1	4	1
Freeman's Marsh	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Thatcham Marsh	1	2	3	3	2	4	3	4	2	1	1	1
Theale GPs	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-
Windsor Great Park	7	5	4	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	6	5
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	12	9	9	7	0	-	1	2	2	4	11	11
Number of birds	16	10	11	12	0	-	1	2	2	4	13	17

Water Rail: Monthly Totals by Region



The above chart illustrates: the extent to which numbers peaked in both winter periods due to the presence of wintering birds; that numbers declined from mid-April; and, conversely, increased markedly in November with the arrival of winter visitors.

First winter: wintering numbers in January were markedly higher than in January 2016. They declined in February as some moved away but increased in March and April as migrants passed through. Numbers declined markedly from mid-April with a small potential breeding population remaining. **Breeding:** a survey of potential breeding areas in the Thames, Kennet and Loddon valleys was carried out over three years (2016-18), with most of the sites visited in 2017. Birds were found at 36 locations, with sharming or higher breeding evidence at 28 (Righelato, 2019, Birds of Berkshire Annual Report 2016 pp 16-23). **Autumn:** the small rise in numbers from late August through the autumn may include locally bred birds and the early arrival of birds from elsewhere. **Second winter:** the main arrival of winter visitors occurred mid-November, particularly in east Berkshire; some passing through, but many remaining to winter.

MOORHEN COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

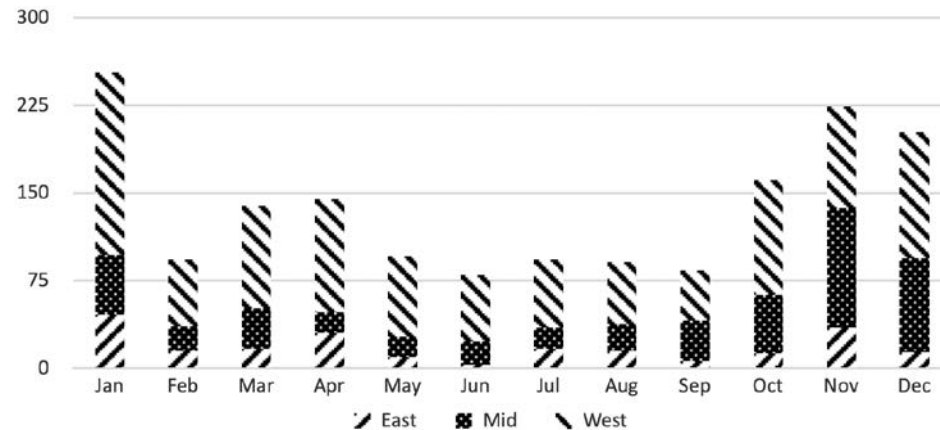
Common and widespread resident in wetland habitats (Green Listed)

Moorhens were widely distributed throughout the year, recorded at 93 sites: 28 in east Berkshire, 26 in mid Berkshire and 39 in west Berkshire. The maximum monthly counts at the regular sites, in alphabetical order, and numbers at sites elsewhere were as shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Moorhen

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	13	4	5	-	-	2	-	-	-	5	6	6
Freeman's Marsh	15	1	-	-	1	-	7	-	-	-	10	10
Horton GPs	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-
Lower Farm GP	48	27	24	14	15	15	14	22	23	27	41	41
Moor Green Lakes	18	-	11	11	4	-	2	5	6	8	6	10
Padworth Lane GP	3	-	7	3	2	2	5	-	-	-	9	7
Thatcham Marsh	27	20	17	16	12	15	11	17	14	20	24	26
Wraysbury GPs	3	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	6	4
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	25	15	18	25	18	16	17	12	9	16	24	16
Number of birds	140	40	85	99	68	46	57	59	65	97	157	120

Moorhen: Monthly Totals by Region



Sites not listed in the table with more than 15 birds were: 20 at Southcote Linear Park, Reading, on Jan 6th; 19 at Speen Moor, Newbury, on Jan 28th; 23 at Dorney Wetlands on Sep 19th; 32 at Dorney Wetlands on Nov 24th; and 22 at Donnington Grove CP on Dec 6th.

Breeding was confirmed at 19 sites. Nest building was first noted at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 24th; the first nest with eggs was seen at Hungerford Marsh on Apr 17th; and the first chicks were reported at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Apr 30th. The largest broods noted were of fives at Hosehill Lake and at Twyford GPs, while fours were seen at Great Meadow Pond, on the R. Thames at Hurley, at Theale GPs, and at Aston. At Lower Farm GP two pairs used old Coot nests rather than build their own!

The Berkshire Bird Index suggests a small decline in Moorhen population, which nationally has shown a 26% decrease over the last ten years.

COOT EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra*

Common resident and winter visitor generally to more open waters (Green Listed)

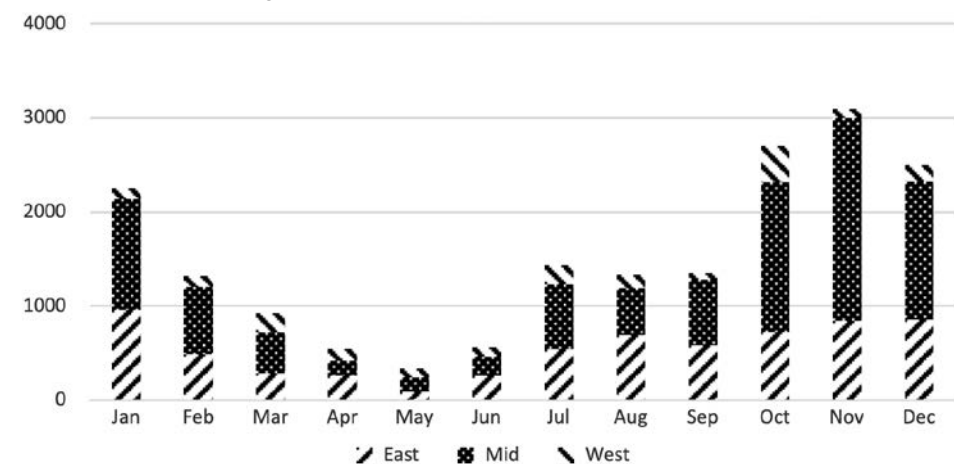
Coots were recorded right through the year at 70 sites: 19 in east Berkshire, 24 in mid Berkshire, and 27 in west Berkshire. Of the 728 reports, 99 (14%) were of 100 or more. There were 11 with 400 or more, and a maximum of 730 at Theale GPs on both Jan 25th and Nov 11th.

Maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Coot

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	1	-	-	6	-	6	10	12	-	10	9	-
Bray GPs	219	117	65	38	-	-	-	-	-	91	191	184
Burghfield GPs	141	128	102	-	-	-	-	-	157	223	232	177
Dinton Pastures CP	37	50	46	-	-	16	-	-	-	253	328	265
Dorney Wetlands	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	20	-
Great Meadow Pond	41	40	41	47	50	160	205	254	202	170	145	91
Horton GPs	179	192	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	55	168	132
Lower Farm GP	66	84	76	38	31	29	21	29	25	300	30	39
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	114	220	394	45
Moor Green Lakes	336	60	85	42	5	3	148	134	136	143	164	319
Padworth Lane GP	32	50	21	11	10	5	6	-	-	-	15	29
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	1	1	2	-	-	2	128	246	123	13	-
Thatcham Marsh	26	25	21	22	11	24	24	25	20	26	25	23
Theale GPs	730	351	114	52	50	90	619	335	185	589	730	668
Twyford GPs	169	122	91	31	37	71	36	120	128	186	247	110
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	65	28	20	20	141	57	28	22	34	-
Wraysbury GPs	183	76	-	80	-	-	-	-	-	137	136	128
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	11	4	12	20	12	15	8	5	3	7	11	10
Number of birds	91	21	197	115	148	140	221	239	111	150	253	288

Coot: Monthly Totals by Region



The table shows the expected higher numbers in the winter months, but the sudden increase in numbers in July was thought by some observers to be due to an influx and not entirely

due to the presence of juveniles. Other significant counts were 175 on Jul 27th and 130 on Aug 29th at Summerleaze GPs, and 100 at Lower Farm Trout Lake, Newbury, on Dec 13th.

The chart illustrates that numbers in west Berkshire are more or less constant through the year, in comparison to mid and east Berkshire, where numbers are supplemented significantly by winter arrivals.

In the breeding season, display was first noted at Hamstead Marshall on Mar 15th and nest building at Woolhampton GPs on Mar 17th. The first chicks were seen at Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Apr 14th. Several broods of five or six chicks were noted, but the prize must go to a pair at Aston with ten on May 16th. A minimum of 43 successful pairs were recorded. However, one observer commented that breeding success at a site near Newbury, where seven nests had been noted, was very poor as at May 31st; several nests had failed and three pairs had only one chick each.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)

Records of this delightful little species were received from 45 locations up and down the county. There were several counts of 11 birds at Moor Green Lakes, and one report of 16 individuals on Aug 28th. Other high counts included 20 at Lower Farm GPs on Jun 27th, although this did include young birds in family parties. Breeding was reported from around seven sites including Moor Green Lakes, where well-grown young were seen on Aug 10th, and Marsh Benham, where a nest with five eggs was seen on Jun 22nd. Several records were received of birds on quite small ponds, such as Mill Pond, Bracknell, and Oval Pond, Roundoak Piece. Generally speaking, the species seems to thrive in Berkshire, mainly due to the abundance of water bodies within our county.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

Records were received from 42 locations throughout the county. The very large numbers at Queen Mother Reservoir in August and September would be the post breeding build up that seems to occur most years. The monthly maxima at the most popular sites are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Great Crested Grebe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	1	2	2	1	2	-	-	-	-
Bray GPs	18	10	14	16	8	14	6	-	-	25	12	8
Burghfield GPs	14	19	22	-	-	-	10	-	46	33	17	14
Dinton Pastures CP	11	12	10	3	2	8	-	3	-	10	29	13
Dorney Wetlands	2	2	12	-	4	-	8	2	9	-	6	-
Great Meadow Pond	2	5	7	7	15	16	16	7	8	8	5	3
Horton GPs	10	12	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	11	14	9
Lea Farm Lake	3	3	1	-	3	-	-	3	-	4	2	1
Lower Farm GP	2	6	6	6	6	4	4	2	-	6	1	-
Moatlands GPs	9	17	7	6	-	-	-	-	25	24	14	4
Moor Green Lakes	12	4	15	7	8	4	12	17	23	14	15	16
Padworth Lane GP	1	1	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	26	8	13	14	12	13	55	121	198	95	13	7
Thatcham Marsh	1	2	5	4	4	3	3	1	2	3	2	1
Theale GPs	13	13	32	14	12	15	36	32	49	30	23	16

Twyford GPs	24	13	21	20	26	21	20	34	28	30	33	19
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	12	7	8	8	26	33	35	26	23	9
Wraysbury GPs	18	12	33	15	-	-	-	-	-	20	32	43
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	6	8	7	10	12	7	4	2	4	4	10	8
Number of birds	24	29	27	39	37	32	24	8	22	17	29	26

Breeding was recorded from around 23 sites, with nest building commencing in March. This species prefers the larger bodies of water, as opposed to the previous species which has a preference for more secluded areas.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Uncommon passage and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A pretty average year for this species in 2017, with just five records involving seven birds. A summer plumage adult was photographed at Main Pit, Theale, on May 12th (ABT). A winter plumage adult was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 25th (CDRH), the bird remaining until the following day. Another bird was at this site on Oct 25th (CDRH), this one remaining until Nov 12th (ABT). A first winter bird was at Aldermaston GPs on Oct 26th (JPM). Two winter plumage birds were found at Main Pit, Theale, on Oct 21st (Andrew Merrick); these were joined by another on Oct 23rd (KEM), and the three birds were then seen regularly until Nov 1st when one had moved on. The other two remained until being finally reported on Nov 16th (KEM).



Black-necked Grebe, Queen Mother Reservoir, Nov 3rd, Andy Tomczynski.
This winter plumage bird was present from Oct 25th to Nov 12th.

STONE-CURLEW EURASIAN STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

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

The first report was of one at a private site at Herons Nest, Theale, on Mar 23rd, considerably earlier than the earliest (Apr 3rd) quoted in The Birds of Berkshire Atlas from 2010, though data on arrival dates is sparse. All the remaining records were from the traditional breeding area in the north-west of the county between Apr 17th and Jul 13th. The reports refer to around 14 birds at five locations, involving at least four pairs. The only evidence of confirmed breeding was of a pair seen with a fully-feathered chick on Jun 16th. These numbers, though relatively low, fall within the range of fluctuations seen in recent years.

OYSTERCATCHER EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER

Haematopus ostralegus

Uncommon but increasing passage migrant and a scarce winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Spring: Oystercatchers were first recorded at Theale GPs on Feb 3rd, followed by others at Summerleaze GPs and Moor Green Lakes on Feb 6th. From Feb 11th, they were recorded on an almost daily basis through February and March at some 20 sites, most frequently at

Moor Green Lakes, Theale GPs and Dinton Pastures CP. Ones and twos comprised 93% of records with twos accounting for 68%; the highest counts were of five at Twyford GPs on Mar 6th and seven there on Apr 18th, and a minimum of two pairs at Theale GPs on Mar 12th. **Breeding:** this species continues to consolidate its breeding status in the county, with successful breeding confirmed at eight sites and breeding behaviour observed at a further two. At Main Pit, Theale, up to four adults were reported and there were several reports of a single chick between May 9th and 19th, though another report on May 19th concerned nine birds of which several were this year's birds. At Summerleaze GPs, two pairs were present on separate islands, though hard to observe. An adult was seen feeding a juvenile on Jun 14th, and three fledged and flying young were seen there on Jun 25th. Breeding was further confirmed when an adult was seen to feed a juvenile on Jun 27th, which was still present on Jul 5th. A pair mating at White Place Farm, Cookham, on Apr 20th may have been one of these pairs. At the following sites, a single pair bred successfully with the following outcomes: three chicks were seen at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 23rd, with two eventually fledging successfully; one chick was first seen at Woolhampton GPs on May 23rd, which survived an attack from a Little Egret on May 26th and was reported as almost full grown on Jun 9th; one chick was seen on the island at Loddon NR, Twyford, on May 5th and 15th; a pair nested on the British Airways Pit at Wraysbury GPs, with three chicks first seen on May 14th, and all still present, looking well-grown and capable of flight, on Jun 15th; three one or two day-old chicks were present at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Apr 22nd, with two well-grown survivors remaining on May 2nd; and there were several reports of two adults but just one report of a single week-old juvenile on Sandford Lake at Dinton Pastures CP on May 30th. At Hosehill Lake, Theale, the female of a pair was reported sitting on a nest between Apr 15th and May 2nd, but no young were ever reported. During this period, Oystercatchers were noted at several other sites but many were likely to be the same breeding individuals. **Autumn:** at the start of this period, many reports related to lingering birds at the breeding locations (until the end of July), but at the same time other reports were of passage birds. Variable numbers were noted at Queen Mother Reservoir, with two to five between Jul 6th and 13th, and up to two between Jul 24th and 29th. Oystercatchers were recorded on only five dates in August: at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 4th and 5th; Moor Green Lakes on Aug 6th; and Theale GPs on Aug 19th with two there on Aug 27th. The final record was much later, at Theale GPs on Nov 8th.

AVOCET PIED AVOCET

Recurvirostra avosetta

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

Just five birds were reported this year. Two adults flew in at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 14th and departed after seven minutes (DJB). A bird that was colour-ringed mid-red on both legs above the knee arrived at Padworth Lane GP on Aug 22nd and left two hours later after being flushed by a Red Kite (KEM, RHS). Two first winter birds were present at Queen Mother Reservoir from Dec 4th to 12th (CDRH, ABT, PNe).



Avocet, Queen Mother Reservoir, Dec 4th, Peter Newbound.
These two first winter birds stayed until Dec 12th.

LAPWING NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

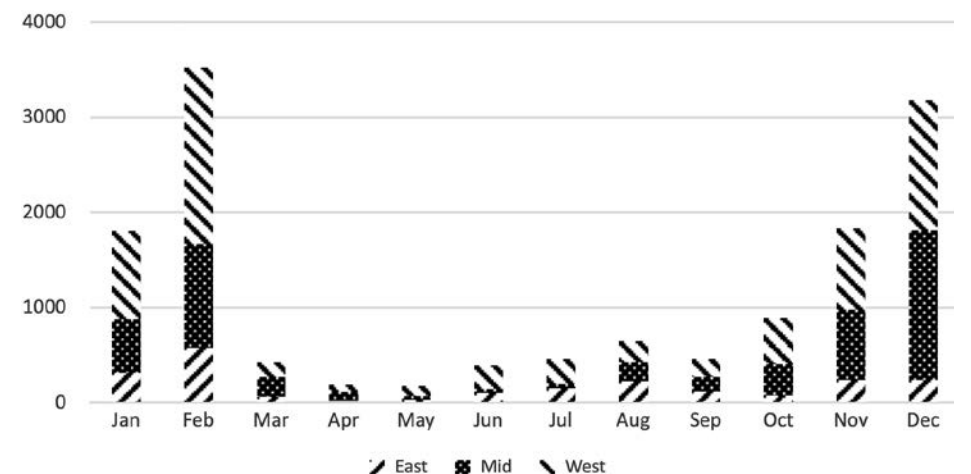
Locally common summer resident, common winter visitor and passage migrant, is in long term decline (Red Listed)

Lapwings were recorded right through the year from Jan 1st to Dec 31st at 72 sites: 15 in east Berkshire, 20 in mid Berkshire and 37 in west Berkshire. This was somewhat fewer than the 94 of 2016. A comparison of monthly totals with those for 2016 reveals spring and summer levels slightly higher than in 2016, though the trend in breeding abundance remains negative (Berkshire Bird Index). The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Lapwing

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	1	2	10	14	-	-	-	-	105	80
Dinton Pastures CP	75	20	1	6	2	1	-	-	-	50	50	100
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	58	15
Englefield	150	600	70	31	11	6	12	-	-	112	207	490
Eton Wick Floods	-	48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	-	240	100	8	3	-	12	200	150	-	120	550
Great Meadow Pond	6	45	6	10	8	36	28	13	10	-	-	-
Greenham Common	21	50	8	2	8	7	1	-	-	-	-	4
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	200	150	-	3	3	26	-	-	-	174	252	252
Lower Farm GP	227	400	101	8	10	95	122	134	77	77	100	185
Moor Green Lakes	158	232	50	7	3	50	92	154	112	74	133	156
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	2	3	3	-	7	-	-	-	80	-
Pingewood GPs	65	-	6	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Streatley	442	560	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	197	680	625
Thatcham Marsh	10	150	1	4	6	14	35	85	46	-	46	-
Theale GPs	-	2	16	11	10	9	11	-	1	-	31	30
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	1	3	5	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	6	10	10	19	18	15	5	1	2	3	1	4
Number of birds	453	1029	64	89	93	138	133	60	64	206	30	706

Lapwing: Monthly Totals by Region



The monthly regional distribution is shown in the chart.

First winter: away from the regular sites, some significant counts were recorded: 150 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 2nd; 450 on the Avington Estate on Feb 2nd; 250 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 3rd; and 100 at Welford on Feb 4th. However, numbers declined rapidly during mid-February. **Breeding:** breeding behaviour was noted at 20 sites with at least 40 pairs present. Seven sites were in east Berkshire, five in mid Berkshire and eight in west Berkshire. Display flights were first noted at Crookham Common on Feb 28th, and the first chicks were seen at Greenham Common on Mar 21st. Sadly these were predated, as were the two broods from another pair there, and the brood from a pair at Crookham Common. For the nine other sites where young were observed, just one chick was observed to progress to the stage of being referred to as a juvenile, at Lower Farm GP on Jun 24th. We can only guess the outcome from the others. **Autumn/Second winter:** there was a surge in county totals during August, particularly in mid Berkshire with weekly counts exceeding 370. The increase in numbers at the regular locations as the year progressed can be read from the table. Significant counts elsewhere during this period were: 200 on the Compton Downs on Oct 17th; 250 at Boxford from Dec 21st to 27th; and 300 at Cow Down on Dec 21st.

GOLDEN PLOVER EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Locally common winter visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

During the year Golden Plovers were recorded at 22 sites: five in east Berkshire, four in mid Berkshire and 13 in west Berkshire. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Golden Plover

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Englefield	528	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	24	-	313
Greenham Common	-	95	71	22	-	-	-	-	-	101	50	23
Lower Farm GP	60	64	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	2	-
Remenham Hill	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-
Woodlands Park Fields	3	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	300
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	8	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	7	8	5
Number of birds	533	33	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	237	1131	1060

First winter: the data behind the figures in the table for this period reveal that Golden Plovers were continually present at Englefield, Greenham Common, and Lower Farm GP. The largest numbers were recorded during January, particularly at Englefield where there were six treble figure counts between 178 and the maximum of 528. Elsewhere there were 150 at Boxford on Jan 2nd, and three records of flocks of 100: at Bradfield; seen from the M4 near Welford; and Newbury. Numbers declined in February when there were 15 counts of 40 or more. At Greenham Common, the month's highest count was on Feb 24th, and the highest at Lower Farm GP was on Feb 4th. In March, there were only three records of 40 or more, predominantly from Greenham Common, with a maximum on Mar 1st, supported by Lower Farm GP with maxima of 70 on Mar 4th and 8th. The only record from elsewhere was of one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 11th. The final spring record was 12 at Greenham Common from Apr 7th to 12th.

Autumn/Second winter: The first returning winter visitor was one at Englefield on Sep 15th, but the next were not seen until Oct 3rd when small groups totalling 24 were noted at Englefield again. Away from the regular sites, 130 were seen flying high over Newbury on Oct 12th, 750 were at RAF Welford on Nov 12th, and 100 were seen at Knowl Hill on Nov 26th.

Numbers increased at Streatley, reaching 180 on Nov 19th and 370 on Dec 26th. Golden Plover are not a regular feature at Moor Green Lakes so sightings of up to 30 between Nov 3rd and Dec 16th were likely to be due to disturbance elsewhere. Finally, at the end of the year there were some high counts: 220 at Cow Down on Dec 21st; and 320 at Boxford between Dec 21st and 27th.

RINGED PLOVER COMMON RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Declining summer visitor, uncommon passage migrant (Red Listed)

Spring: Ringed Plovers were recorded at some ten sites across the county, principally at: Queen Mother Reservoir, Moor Green Lakes, and Horton Brook Quarry in east Berkshire; Theale GPs in mid Berkshire; and frequently at Lower Farm GP in west Berkshire. The first reported for the year were: one at Moor Green Lakes and two at Theale GPs on Feb 23rd; and two at Horton Brook Quarry on Feb 24th. Peak counts were seven at Moor Green Lakes on May 6th, and six at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 17th.

Breeding: there was promise of breeding at three sites but no chicks were reported to suggest that any of the attempts had been successful. A pair was present at Horton Brook Quarry between Apr 4th and Jun 17th. During that time, mating and territorial display flights were noted, and an adult was seen on a nest on Apr 24th and May 12th. Display was noted nearby at Horton GPs on Apr 27th. At Theale GPs, a pair that was sometimes seen on the sailing club beach from Mar 6th was also seen on the adjacent Herons Nest landfill site where, on Apr 9th, territorial behaviour was witnessed. The pair was still present on May 14th, though by this time the landfill had been ploughed, probably destroying any nesting attempt. However, a single bird was seen at the site again on Jun 11th. At Lower Farm GP, a pair was present continuously from Apr 22nd to at least May 12th (when reports of varying numbers due to newly arrived migrants made the picture less clear) and were observed mating on Apr 24th and May 2nd. There was no further evidence of breeding here, but up to three Ringed Plovers were reported most days between Jun 6th and Jul 21st.

Autumn: Ringed Plovers were found at seven sites in the autumn, with the vast majority of reports coming from Queen Mother Reservoir and Lower Farm GP. There were up to four at Queen Mother Reservoir on 15 dates between Jul 29th and Oct 8th and a tightly knit flock of 14 flew straight through to the south on Sep 13th. Up to two were reported at Lower Farm GP on nine dates between Aug 9th and Sep 13th. Elsewhere, an adult at Lea Farm Lake from Jul 1st to 7th was only the seventh July record there; two were at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 10th; and five were at Borough Marsh on Sep 4th. There were singles at Burnthouse Lane GP on Aug 4th; at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Aug 10th; and Moor Green Lakes on Aug 28th.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

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

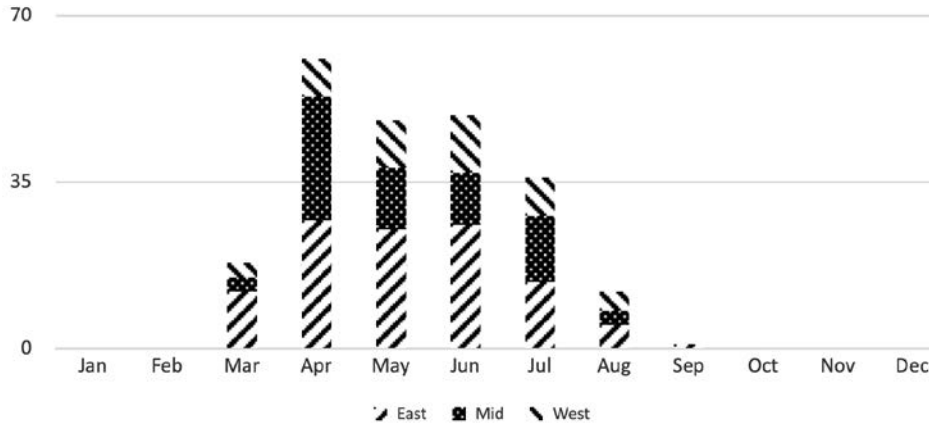
This species was recorded at some 20 sites across the county as summarised in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Little Ringed Plover

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	7	18	15	13	11	3	1	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	18	61	48	49	36	12	1	-	-	-

Little Ringed Plovers were found at nine sites in mid Berkshire, six in east Berkshire and five in west Berkshire. The chart gives totals of monthly maximum counts at sites according to region, showing that mid and east Berkshire held the majority of birds.

Little Ringed Plover: Monthly Totals by Region



Spring: the first record was of one at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 13th, followed by another at Horton Fields on Mar 15th and two at Summerleaze GPs on Mar 16th. Thereafter numbers built up; some 15 birds had arrived by Mar 18th with pairs first noted on Apr 9th. Numbers increased to a peak weekly count of 35 by Apr 23rd. Display was first seen on Mar 16th at Summerleaze GPs and then at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 1st. Mating was first noted at Horton GPs on Apr 4th. The first occupied nest was seen at Lower Farm GP on May 1st and thereafter at four other sites. Nest building was observed at Moor Green Lakes as late as May 26th. The first chicks were seen at Lower Farm GP on May 16th, when one of the two chicks was eaten by a Jackdaw, and then at a further nine sites across the county. The highest counts of chicks were four, at two sites: Horton GPs on May 19th and at Lower Farm GP on Jun 28th.

Autumn: after a peak weekly count of 29 in the first week of July, numbers dipped significantly with a weekly peak of 13 at the start of August and just two records after the end of August. The highest single counts during this period were seven at Lower Farm GP from Jul 1st to 8th, followed by six at each of three sites during the first week of July: Dinton Pastures CP, Lea Farm Lake, and Summerleaze GPs. The final records were of single birds at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 1st (a juvenile) and on Sep 13th.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Uncommon passage migrant (Schedule One and Red Listed)

Spring: the earliest sighting was of two which flew in from the south at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 23rd. The next day brought several more, with singles at Lower Farm GP, Crookham Common, and Moatlands GP, and two at Horton Brook Quarry. On May 3rd, one flew over Main Pit, Theale, and three flew through Burnthouse Lane Floods. The majority of records, however, were from Queen Mother Reservoir, with four on Apr 29th, two singles on Apr 30th, and then singles on five dates until the last spring record on May 19th. In all, around 22 individuals were recorded in the spring.

Autumn: the first returning birds were eight at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 15th, which flew straight over south-south-east, followed by three on Jul 22nd, one on Jul 24th, six on Jul 26th, and one on Aug 4th. Elsewhere, there were singles flying over Burnthouse Lane GPs and Lower Farm GP on Aug 17th (possibly the same bird), and four at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 21st. Around 25 were recorded in the autumn.



Whimbrel, Queen Mother Reservoir, May 19th, Andy Tomczynski.
The last record for spring, during which 22 birds were recorded.

CURLEW EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

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

There were no reports of Curlew in either winter period. **Spring/Breeding:** the first record and the only spring passage bird concerned one at Hungerford Marsh on Apr 3rd. The remaining spring birds were all in west Berkshire at traditional sites on the Downs. Up to three birds were present in the Compton and Aldworth area between Apr 22nd and Jul 16th. Two of these were reported around Lowbury Hill on three dates and were regarded as a pair that was nesting across the border in Oxon. Single birds were observed further east on Compton Downs on May 21st and Jul 16th, the latter date considerably later than any other breeding season reports this year. The area north of Lambourn hosted up to two pairs at Wellbottom Down in the brief period between May 18th and Jun 4th. These could account for four birds at Seven Barrows on May 21st. A single bird was also reported from Welford on May 2nd, a site where Curlew have been present in the breeding season in recent years. No evidence was received that breeding had taken place at any location within the county.

Autumn: return passage of Curlews starts as early as June (The Birds of Berkshire Atlas, 2013), which accounts for a series of typically short-staying birds at Queen Mother Reservoir: singles on Jun 10th, 11th and 26th; three on Jun 28th; and another single on Jul 4th. The last one for the year was also at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 30th.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Only four records were received involving eight or nine birds; all were at Queen Mother Reservoir in a brief six-day period. The first, probably female, was watched flying east on Apr 29th and departed after five minutes with a Whimbrel (CDRH). The next day five males and a female in summer plumage touched down for an equally brief visit (CDRH). A bird in winter plumage was present on May 1st (DJB), as was a female on May 4th (CDRH).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce passage migrant (Schedule One and Red Listed)

Around 73 birds were reported through the year, a figure well above recent averages. There was a particularly strong and widespread autumn passage involving some 65 birds. **Spring:** there were eight birds: one in winter plumage at Fobney Meadow on Apr 10th; a pair that circled Queen Mother Reservoir without landing on Apr 21st; and five at Moor Green Lakes and Fleethill Farm on May 18th comprising two summer plumage, one partial summer plumage and two winter plumage birds. **Autumn:** the first returning migrants were 20 at Hosehill Lake on Jul 9th, which increased to an impressive 29 the next day, of which only three remained on Jul 11th. This appears to be the largest gathering ever recorded in Berkshire. There followed reports, usually of one to three birds, from: Borough Marsh; Burnthouse Lane GPs; Fobney Meadow; Hosehill Lake, Theale; Lea Farm Lake; Lavell's Lake; Lower Farm GP; Moor Green Lakes; and Queen Mother Reservoir. Higher counts were made at Queen Mother Reservoir with six on Jul 10th and nine at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 12th. Four birds of the *islandica* race were picked out: two at Fobney Meadow on Jul 25th; and separate singles at Burnthouse Lane GP and Hosehill Lake on Aug 4th. The final bird of the year was at Lower Farm GP on Sep 27th.

TURNSTONE RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Spring: the only spring record was of one in winter plumage at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 9th. **Autumn:** the first returning migrants were four at Queen Mother Reservoir between Jul 21st and Jul 24th. A summer plumage bird found at Lower Farm GP on Jul 26th remained until Aug 7th. Thereafter, all records were of single birds at Queen Mother Reservoir: a summer plumage adult on Jul 29th; another summer plumage adult from Aug 1st to 2nd; an adult moulting into winter plumage on Aug 7th; a juvenile from Aug 22nd to 29th; and a worn adult on Aug 28th. The single spring bird and the ten autumn birds made 2017 one of the best years for this species.

RUFF *Calidris pugnax*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)

Six birds were reported, two in spring and four in autumn. **Spring:** one was at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Apr 15th and 16th, and a male in almost complete breeding plumage was at Lower Farm GP on May 6th. **Autumn:** there was a first winter female at Lower Farm GP on Sep 3rd. Other singles were at Burnthouse Lane GP on Sep 16th; at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 1st; and a final first winter female at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 11th and 12th.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce but regular passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Twenty birds were recorded in 2017, all at Queen Mother Reservoir, with twelve in spring and eight in autumn. **Spring:** the earliest record was one in winter plumage on Apr 4th (ABT); followed by another on Apr 30th (PNe); next was one in summer plumage on May 13th remaining to May 14th (CDRH) when parties of two and four visited (MO); and another two on May 15th (DJB, CDRH). The last spring record was of one on May 29th (CDRH).

Autumn: the season started with a series of adult birds, distinguished by differing details in their retained summer plumage feathers. The first returning bird was seen on Jul 27th (CDRH), with another on Jul 30th and 31st, and a third on Aug 1st and 2nd (CDRH), on



Black-tailed Godwit, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 25th, Andy Tomczynski.



Turnstone, Queen Mother Reservoir, Jul 29th, Andy Tomczynski.

A fine returning summer plumage bird.



Ruff, Burnthouse Lane GPs, Sep 16th, Marek Walford.

One of two birds in the county in autumn, this one staying for two days. Unbarred tertials suggest a first summer bird.



Sanderling, Queen Mother Reservoir, May 14th, Andy Tomczynski.

An adult spring bird, one of six on this date at this site.

which latter date three new adults were present (CDRH, PNe). Another adult was seen on Aug 6th (CDRH), and finally a juvenile was noted on Aug 15th (DJB, ABT, PNe).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

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

Dunlins were recorded at nine sites with the majority of records from Queen Mother Reservoir, Moor Green Lakes and Lower Farm GP. **Spring:** the reports received suggest that 59 to 61 birds passed through in spring. The first sighting was of one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 7th. Initially numbers in the county were low with only nine bird-days by the end of April, but from Apr 28th to May 23rd they were recorded on an almost daily basis with 89% of records being of ones or twos. The peak counts were five at Horton GPs on May 1st and a separate flock of five at Horton Brook Quarry the same day. The only higher count was of 11 at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 17th, which included a flock of ten that

flew over with five Ringed Plovers. The final spring record was of one at Moor Green Lakes on May 28th.

Autumn: approximately 57 Dunlins were reported in the county in the autumn, with the first returning migrant at Theale GPs on Jul 4th. Dunlins were reported on 21 dates at Queen Mother Reservoir, with numbers observed varying on an almost daily basis, suggesting plenty of migration activity involving around 38 birds. On the other hand, despite an almost continuous presence at Moor Green Lakes, the uniformity of the reports suggests that only two birds were involved. Elsewhere around ten birds were reported from Lower Farm GP between Aug 1st and Oct 14th, and another four sites hosted around seven birds. Maximum autumn counts were five at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 8th and seven there on Sep 25th. Most had departed by Nov 2nd; the last were singles at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 9th and Horton Fields on Nov 19th.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Very rare vagrant (Amber Listed)

The only one for the year was a first winter bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 30th (CDRH, PNe), the first immature for 15 years.

[Editor's note: The Purple Sandpiper at Queen Mother reservoir on 20th November 2015, reported as a first winter, has been identified as an adult.]

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Scarce passage migrant, principally in autumn (Green Listed)

Three autumn birds were reported, which is a typical showing for recent years. On Sep 25th, two were seen in flight with a mixed flock of 17 waders over Queen Mother Reservoir, reportedly flushed from Staines Reservoir by a Peregrine (CDRH). Another was seen in flight on Oct 20th (CDRH). The partial draining of Staines Reservoir was thought to be a contributory factor in attracting this species to the area.

2016 addition: One at Lavell's Lake on Sep 8th 2016 (FJC).

PECTORAL SANDPIPER

Calidris melanotos

Rare vagrant

A juvenile was recorded at Moor Green Lakes on numerous dates from Sep 18th to Oct 2nd (GDu *et al.*). It was initially found on the main lake of the New Workings, but subsequently relocated to East Fen.



Pectoral Sandpiper, Moor Green Lakes, Oct 1st, Roger Murfitt.

This juvenile American wader stayed for fifteen days; this was its penultimate day.

WOODCOCK EURASIANWOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

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

First winter: reported from nine sites in January, including an impressive count of five flying off from their winter roost in Gorrick Plantation at dusk on Jan 18th. Other reports in the first two months concerned singles, typically after being unexpectedly flushed, and frequently at sites that do not feature in the breeding reports. Three were flushed from the main mire at Snelsmore Common on Mar 8th and two together were flushed from dead bracken in Swinley Forest on Apr 13th, all in daytime. **Spring:** the roding display flights were noted from mid-May to early July. From the maximum counts at the various sites, a total of 39 birds were observed displaying at 11 sites: four in east Berkshire, two in mid Berkshire, and five in west Berkshire. A summary of the peak counts during the breeding season is as follows: five at Snelsmore Common; three at Bucklebury Common; three at Greenham Common; one at Crookham Common; three at Nalder Plantation; two at Padworth Common; three at Roundoak Piece; five at South Ascot; two at Wood End, Sunninghill Park; four at Swinley Park; and six at Swinley Forest (estimated from counts at various locations in the forest). **Second winter:** the first report from this period was of one at Bagnor on Nov 10th. In December, singles were at: Theale GPs on Dec 2nd; Streatley on Dec 3rd; Wokefield Common on Dec 6th; Lambourn on Dec 22nd; and two at Brimpton on Dec 14th and 24th, the final record for the year.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

First winter: there were probably 14 to 16 individuals in the county. Two were at Lea Farm Lake on Jan 1st and one thereafter on many dates until Mar 18th. Two were on the island at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jan 2nd. At Horton, the suitable habitat had become fragmented but nevertheless two were flushed from little more than vegetated puddles on Jan 8th, and one was found in a newly flooded area there on Feb 8th and 19th. There was one was at Greenham Common on Jan 17th; two at Fobney Meadow on Jan 25th; and four there on Feb 3rd. Singles were reported from Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest, on Jan 29th and Mar 15th. Other March records involved singles at Dinton Pastures CP on Mar 15th and 16th, and finally at Eton Wick on Mar 28th.

Autumn and second winter: the first of four or five autumn birds was one at Lower Farm GP on Oct 15th and 21st. The next record was not until December when singles were at: Lea Farm Lake on Dec 2nd and 17th; Lower Farm GP on Dec 9th; and Borough Marsh on Dec 17th.

SNIPE COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Snipe were recorded at 41 sites: 14 in east Berkshire; 15 in mid Berkshire; and 12 in west Berkshire. The monthly totals by region through the year are shown in the table.

Monthly Totals by Region for Snipe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	59	62	66	31	3	-	-	11	19	25	45	66
Mid	31	104	90	42	1	-	1	4	7	12	12	14
West	27	79	46	21	2	2	2	12	20	38	27	44

There was a maximum count of 62 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 22nd, 45 counts (9%) of 20 or more, and 212 (42%) of ones or twos. Maximum monthly counts are given in the second table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Snipe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	7	49	55	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	7
Dorney Wetlands	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	-
Eton Wick	13	2	2	2	1	-	-	5	3	3	2	-
Fobney Meadows	2	50	6	9	1	-	1	4	2	5	3	-
Horton GPs	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Lea Farm	15	4	20	14	-	-	-	-	3	5	6	4
Lower Farm GP	6	16	21	11	2	2	2	7	17	18	3	9
Moor Green Lakes	28	58	15	4	-	-	-	4	16	19	38	62
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1
Pingewood GPs	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slough Sewage Farm	-	-	46	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Streatley	15	57	23	4	-	-	-	1	-	9	20	27
Thatcham Marsh	-	5	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	10	1	2
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	11	4	5	3	1	-	-	2	2	2	1	5
Number of birds	15	4	11	11	2	-	-	6	3	2	3	10

First winter and spring: during the first four months, Snipe were recorded at some 31 sites with a continuous presence at several sites, as is evident from the table above. Peak counts were: 50 at Fobney Meadow on Feb 3rd; 57 at Streatley on Feb 4th; 58 at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 7th; and 55 at Lavell's Lake on Mar 7th. Overall, numbers for the county appeared to be at their highest during February. At Moor Green Lakes, the raised water levels on East Fen caused the Snipe to rest on the grass tussocks, making them easier to count. Numbers declined markedly from early April and only five remained by the last week of April. **Summer:** although up to two birds were reported regularly throughout May, June and July at Lower Farm GP, there was no evidence to suggest that breeding had occurred. **Second winter:** the first sign of an increase in numbers occurred in the second half of August followed by a gradual increase up to the end of the year. Away from the regular



Grey Phalarope, Billingbear Park Golf Club, Sep 12th, Andy Tomczynski.
This confiding first winter bird stayed for just a day at this unlikely location.

locations, singles were at Greenham Common on Sep 19th and Oct 27th, and at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 26th. Also, two were flushed from the top of Walbury Hill on Sep 28th; three were there on Nov 2nd.

Additional information 2011: there was an interesting belated report of a ringed Snipe observed on Jan 28th 2011 at Lower Farm GP. It was discovered that HN37960 had been ringed as adult on Aug 23rd 2009 at Jeziorsko, Glinno Łódzkie, Poland, 1,378 km to the east!

GREY PHALAROPE RED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Rare visitor usually after autumn storms (Not Listed)

Two autumn birds were reported. A very confiding individual was found at Billingbear Park GC Sep 12th (RD *et al.*), and an adult in winter plumage flew in at Lower Farm GP on Sep 30th during a light shower and remained until Oct 14th (JA *et al.*), though it spent much of its stay out of sight.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Common Sandpiper

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	2	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	3	6	1	3	2	3	3	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2	1	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Pingewood GPs	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	2	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	5	6	1	9	8	8	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	2	2	1	8	2	3	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	-	-	-	13	6	-	4	6	1	1	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	20	12	-	4	9	1	1	-	-

Spring: the first Common Sandpiper recorded was one at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 10th. They were then recorded at 34 sites: nine in east Berkshire; 15 in mid Berkshire; and ten in west Berkshire. The highest spring day counts were of six at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 1st and six at Lower Farm GP on May 10th. The reports show very little separation between the spring and autumn passages, but a bird at Queen Mother Reservoir between Jun 1st and 3rd was possibly the last of the spring as there followed a fortnight with no records.

Autumn: a single bird at Lower Farm GP on Jun 17th commenced a period when Common Sandpipers were reported on an almost daily basis in the county, and a handful of individuals were specifically aged as juveniles. Peak day counts were: eight at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jul 20th; nine at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 21st; and six to nine were reported regularly at Queen Mother Reservoir through most of August, reducing to three to five in early September. Ones or twos were present at Lower Farm GP; Moor Green Lakes; Padworth Lane GP; and Theale GPs on many dates and for extended stays in the autumn. Away from the regular sites, they were reported from Streatley on Aug 2nd and 12th; Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead, on Aug 20th; and Newbury Racecourse between Oct 8th and 31st, this being the final record of the year.

A Common Sandpiper that had been colour-ringed as an adult at Cromdale, Highland, in May 2015 returned there in spring 2016; in 2017 it was observed at Lavell's Lake on Apr 17th before being reported again at Cromdale 12 days later.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Green Sandpipers were recorded in every month of the year except May. They were seen at 34 sites: eight in east Berkshire; 16 in mid Berkshire; and ten in west Berkshire.

First winter/spring: wintering numbers varied through January and February with a maximum of six, but during the last week of March numbers in the county increased to nine. Peak counts were three at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 17th and 28th. By the middle of April, spring passage had increased the county total to 16 with a maximum count of eight at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Apr 22nd; the last bird of the spring was recorded there on Apr 28th. **Autumn/second winter:** a very early returning bird was noted at Fobney Meadow on Jun 3rd. Numbers began to increase from the middle of June to a peak of 22 at the end of August. Highest site counts were: five at Fobney Meadow on Jun 29th; seven at Fobney Meadow on Jul 18th; and 12 at Burnthouse Lake GP on Aug 21st. There was then a steady decline as birds moved onwards, with ten remaining at the end of October. From mid-December only single birds remained to winter at six sites across the county.

The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table and the distribution of monthly totals in the regions in the chart.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Green Sandpiper

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brimpton GPs	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	1	2	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Eton Wick Floods	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	2	1	-	5	7	4	1	-	2	1
Horton Brook Quarry	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	4	1	1	1	1
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	1	1	-	1	3	2	3	2	-	1
Lower Farm GP	1	1	2	1	-	2	3	5	3	3	1	1
Moor Green Lakes	1	2	3	1	-	-	1	4	6	2	2	1
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2
Pingewood GPs	1	-	-	8	-	3	2	12	3	1	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	4	5	2	7	-	1	2	9	6	7	4	3
Number of birds	5	5	3	8	-	1	2	14	11	9	6	4

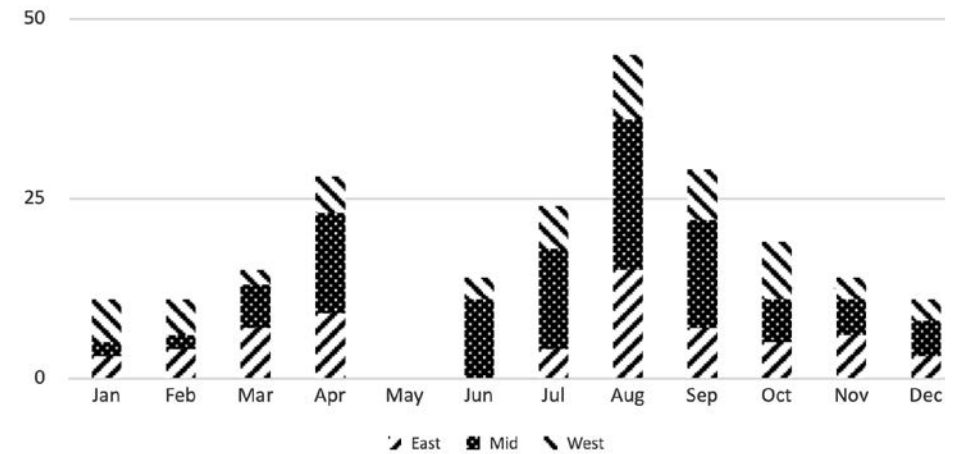
REDSHANK COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

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

Spring: The earliest records were of singles at Eversley and Lower Farm GPs on Feb 18th; the next was a whole month later at Theale GPs on Mar 18th. Redshanks were then recorded in small numbers on an almost daily basis to the end of April at some 15 sites. The highest counts were: four at Main Pit, Theale, and Hosehill Lake between Mar 23rd and 31st; five on many dates at Moor Green Lakes; and six at Fleethill Farm on Apr 17th.

Summer/Breeding: Redshanks were reported from nine locations during May and June with pairs putting in more extended stays at: Theale GPs; Pingewood GPs; Fleethill Farm;

Green Sandpiper: Monthly Totals by Region



and Moor Green Lakes. Sightings at seven other sites across the county were generally brief, involving ones or twos that were probably migrants or local wanderers. Evidence of breeding was limited to reports of display or mating at Loddon NR, Twyford, on Apr 19th and Burnthouse Lane GP on May 7th.

Autumn: The autumn passage of Redshanks is much less marked than the spring passage in Berkshire, and 2017 was typical with just 12 or so birds. This included an adult that remained at Queen Mother Reservoir from Jun 23rd to Jul 24th, and parties of three at Main Pit, Theale, on Jul 2nd and Lower Farm GP on Jul 12th. Singles were seen at three other sites, and the last was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 16th.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

There were only two birds for the year; the average annual total in recent years is four birds. The only spring record was of one at Fobney Meadow on Apr 24th and 25th. A returning juvenile was on the East Fen at Moor Green Lakes from Aug 13th to 24th.



Wood Sandpiper, Fobney Meadow, Apr 24th, David Hampton.
This adult was the only spring record.



Greenshank, Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, May 6th, Dave Rimes.

GREENSHANK COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

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

Spring/Summer: records were not evenly spread across the county. There were only two in east Berkshire; six in mid Berkshire; and seven sites in west Berkshire. The first for the year was at Hosehill Lake on Mar 29th; the next two arrivals were three weeks later at Crookham Common on Apr 22nd. From then until May 10th, there was a steady flow of mostly single birds, some lingering several days, with the many reports in the Lower Farm GP and Crookham Common area probably arising from just one or two mobile birds. The final spring bird was noted at Lower Farm GP on May 26th.

Autumn: the first autumn migrants were three seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 10th (the highest autumn count) with one there on Jul 13th, followed by other singles at Crookham Common on Jul 17th and Windsor Great Park on Jul 22nd. Birds were recorded on an almost daily basis from Aug 8th to Sep 12th. The principal sites were: Queen Mother Reservoir; Moor Green Lakes; Burnthouse Lane GPs; and Theale GPs. Most records were of singles but there were three counts of twos: Moor Green Lakes on Aug 10th; Burnthouse Lane GPs on Aug 20th; and at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 29th. The penultimate bird was at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Sep 12th, followed by an unusually very late bird at Sandford Farm on Dec 16th.

PRATINCOLE SP.

A pratincole of undetermined species was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 11th (CDRH). It was watched for about eight minutes as it flew in from the south-east, passing over the reservoir without descending to the water, then veering off north-north-east, briefly flycatching as it flew over Langley. Unfortunately, it was not close enough to identify to specific level. However, the date favours Collared Pratincole, and one was found on Fair Isle three days later. The only pratincole species on the Berkshire list is Black-winged Pratincole, with a record of one at Manor Farm Sewage Farm, Reading, from 5th to 9th Aug 1976.

KITTIWAKE BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)

There were four records of single birds, all from Queen Mother Reservoir: an adult type on Jan 15th (CDRH), an adult in summer plumage on Feb 25th (CDRH), another summer plumage adult on Apr 1st (CDRH) and a juvenile on Dec 11th (CDRH). All were brief stayers, the longest being for 25 minutes.

SABINE'S GULL *Xema sabini*

Rare vagrant (Not Listed)

A good year for this rare species with two records reported. Not since the minimum of 12 birds following the gales in October 1987 has there been more than one bird recorded in a single year. Since then, there have been records of single birds in 1994, 1999, 2013, 2014 and 2016, all at Queen Mother Reservoir.

The first record for 2017 was of an adult at Lower Farm GP, Thatcham, on Aug 9th (IW, ABT, NC). The bird was found resting on a gravel island at 08:10 in very overcast conditions after a period of heavy rain. It flew off south-west, veering west over the racecourse at 09:13, but was seen again late in the afternoon on the water at Lower Farm GP, possibly having spent some time with other gulls on the racecourse during the day. The second record for the year was of another adult found on the water at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 10th (CDRH).



Sabine's Gull, Lower Farm GP, Aug 9th, Andy Tomczynski.

Record shots of this adult. An exciting find for the observers of this county rarity.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

There were 871 records from 120 locations widespread across the county. 86% of these records were below a count of 100, and 50% below a count of ten. As would be expected, the highest counts were at roosts, the most significant being: 10,000 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 27th; 10,000 at Main Pit, Theale, on Nov 11th; and 12,500 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 9th. Counts of 1,000 were recorded on the River Thames at Goring in February, and at Lea Farm Lake and Lower Farm GP in November.

Breeding: This occurred at several locations, namely: Main Pit, Theale; Hosehill Lake, Theale; Loddon NR, Twyford; Dinton Pastures CP; Moor Green Lakes; and Wraysbury GPs. However, details of breeding numbers and fledging are patchy.

At Moor Green Lakes, 60 nests were counted on Tern Island and ten on the tern rafts, with three on the East Fen and one on the New Diggings. The highest count of fledged juveniles was 25 on Jul 15th with five unfledged birds also seen on this date. At the Loddon NR, 12 broods were noted with 32 juveniles seen on Jun 27th. At Main Pit, Theale, breeding occurred on three islands and counting nests was difficult, but 155 juveniles were counted on the edges of the islands on Jun 30th, this being considered a low count by the observer. At Hosehill Lake, no breeding records were received but there were 238 birds present on May 5th. Also, at Dinton Pastures CP, breeding was known to occur but no recording was undertaken or entered in the database. At Wraysbury GPs, 12 chicks from five nests were seen on Jun 21st. At Lower Farm GP, 84 adults and 39 juveniles were counted on Jul 13th; presumably these were local breeders.

Recoveries: A bird ringed at Pitsea landfill site, Essex, on Jun 4th 2016 was seen at Eton Wick on Jan 3rd. Another bird from Pitsea, ringed on Mar 10th 2012, was seen by the River Thames at Datchet on Oct 7th; this was its sixth autumn on the river. Also at Datchet were a bird ringed at Bedfont Lakes, London, on Jun 17th 2010, which was seen on Dec 9th, and a bird ringed at Sprog, Korsor, Vestsjlland, Denmark, on May 27th 2015, seen on Nov 4th.

A leucistic adult was seen in the Queen Mother Reservoir roost on Oct 25th.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

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

All records came in spring, from the end of March to early May. An adult in winter plumage flew low over Lower Farm GP on Mar 27th (NC) before gaining height and departing to the north. On the same day, between 13:00 and 14:00 a flock of ten (seven winter plumage adults, three first winter) joined Black-headed Gulls at Village Pit, Wraysbury GP (CDRH). The following day, Mar 28th, a summer plumage adult arrived at Queen Mother Reservoir at 07:26 but was gone by 09:00 (DJB). Nearby, also on Mar 28th, a winter plumage adult with a strong pink wash on its underparts, unlike any seen on Mar 27th, was seen fly-catching over Village Pit, Wraysbury GPs (CDRH).

Two birds (first winter and a partial summer plumage adult) were at Hosehill Lake, Theale, at 13:30 on Apr 5th (KEM). The next April record was also at Hosehill Lake when an adult in summer plumage was present for a few minutes only on Apr 22nd, before flying off at 14:45 (KEM). Two birds (adult summer plumage and a first summer) were seen circling Queen Mother Reservoir in the early morning on Apr 30th (CDRH).

A further seven birds were seen in early May: three summer plumage adults joined two Black Terns at Moatlands GPs on May 2nd (JA) at 06:40, only staying a few minutes; one first winter bird was recorded at Main Pit, Theale, at 16:15 on May 4th (KEM, BTB, RHS); two were seen at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on May 7th at 11:30 (DMac); and lastly a single first summer bird was recorded sitting on a raft on Queen Mother Reservoir on May 9th at 06:50 (DJB).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*

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

Ninety-four records (made on different dates) were received from 14 locations across the county. 61% of these were from Queen Mother Reservoir. Careful observation of plumage provided the opportunity to determine the minimum number of birds probably visiting the reservoir during a period of time, e.g. four birds during January and five birds during the period November to December. The highest counts for Queen Mother Reservoir were three birds on Jan 23rd and three again on Dec 25th. Of interest, with respect to breeding potential in the county, was the presence of two adults in summer plumage seen at Queen Mother



Mediterranean Gull, Queen Mother Reservoir, May 1st, Andy Tomczynski.

A first summer bird. One of the ninety-four dates this species was seen in the county.



Mediterranean Gull, Moor Green Lakes, May 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

This pair, seen at this site on three separate dates, showed signs of breeding but moved on.

Reservoir on Mar 12th, Apr 17th and Apr 24th. No leg rings were observed as the birds were sitting on the water or flying over.

Two birds together were also seen at Moor Green Lakes on Tern Island on May 26th, Jun 2nd and Jun 18th. One of these birds was a summer plumage adult with a Darvic ring originating in Dublin. This bird was seen carrying nesting material on May 26th. The other bird of the pair showed second summer plumage. There was no further evidence of breeding at this site. A first summer bird was seen preening on Tern Island on Jun 1st for 15 minutes and not subsequently.

Probably the same Moor Green pair (adult and second summer) were also seen at Main Pit, Theale, when a ringed adult and a second summer bird, appearing to be a pair, seemed to be prospecting over the islands on Jun 11th. The following day this pair were recorded at nearby Hosehill Lake, where they were seen displaying, mating, and carrying bits of reed stems. They were seen later in the day circling for some time over the Black-headed Gull colony on the smallest island of Main Pit.

An adult in summer plumage was also seen at: Lea Farm Lake on Feb 20th, Mar 22nd, Jun 20th and Jul 18th; Hosehill Lake on Apr 23rd, May 23rd and Jul 16th; Horton Road GP on Jun 19th; Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Jun 28th; Horton Brook GP on Jul 11th; and Colbrook on Jul 22nd, Jul 24th and Aug 13th. None of these records mentions whether the bird was ringed, although only in a few instances would the legs have been observable.

A juvenile bird was seen on fields adjacent to Great Meadow Pond on Jul 2nd. Two juveniles with very fresh plumage were present at Lower Farm GP at 17:30 on Jul 26th, close together on a spit. One was slightly more advanced with a line of grey upper scapulars not evident in the other bird. Juveniles were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 21st and Aug 29th.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Mediterranean Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	3	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	3
Theale GPs	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	-
Number of birds	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	-

COMMON GULL MEW GULL *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

There were 210 records from 54 locations. As usual for this winter visitor, most high counts occurred from January to March and then built up again from September through to December. Highest counts are invariably at gull roost locations where birders have taken the trouble to estimate numbers. By far the highest count was of 3,000 birds in the Queen Mother Reservoir roost on Nov 9th (DJB). The next highest roost count was 500, again at Queen Mother Reservoir, on Feb 22nd. The most significant high count away from a roost site was 800 seen at first light in fields by Great Meadow Pond, Windsor on Feb 19th. It is apparent that a large number of birds probably move between the Queen Mother

Reservoir roost and Great Meadow Pond on a regular basis, the latter location seeming to be a favoured area. The following high counts were also recorded at this location in the first winter period: 150 on Jan 1st; 193 on Feb 15th; 300 on Feb 26th; 350 on Mar 8th; 403 on Mar 12th; and 200 on Mar 15th. Similarly, there were 450 on Dec 24th (DJB) in the second winter period but preceded by much lower counts prior to this date.

Away from this location, there were roost counts at Moatlands GP of 105 on Jan 11th and 300 on Dec 16th. No other counts exceeded 100, but 33 counts from various locations recorded between ten and 100 individuals. 77% of all records were fewer than a count of ten.

During May and June these birds are scarce, so a flock of 16 first winter birds flying north-east over Queen Mother Reservoir on May 2nd was unusual.

Few records are received from the Downs, with only four this year; the highest were 60 at Bury Down, West Ilsley, on Feb 1st, and 60 at Lowbury Hill, Compton, on Nov 17th.

Moor Green Lakes, a well-watched location, provided regular counts on the New Workings during the early months of the year with the highest of 65 on Feb 17th (RFM).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

There were 97 records entered in the database from 20 locations. Queen Mother Reservoir accounted for 64% of these records, including the highest count of 32 on Dec 26th. The highest counts (10 to 32) occurred during the period September to January. Any wintering birds away from the Queen Mother Reservoir roost were usually seen at the Knowl Hill Landfill site (which closed at the end of the year) and on nearby fields. Thirty birds were seen at the landfill on Dec 1st; four further records during the year from this site ranged from counts of three to nine individuals of mixed ages. Nine birds were seen in a field near Waltham St Lawrence on Jan 3rd. It will be interesting to see whether closure of the landfill will affect numbers in the future.

All records from the middle or west of the county concerned single birds, mostly from the Theale and Thatcham areas.

A first winter bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 17th (DJB) with a yellow ring was ringed on the Isle of May, Fife, on Jun 14th 2016.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Great Black-backed Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Horton GPs	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Lower Farm GP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Moatlands GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	1	3	4	1	-	3	6	10	12	20	32
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Theale GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Twyford GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	2
Number of birds	30	-	1	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	15	36

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare but annual winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A single bird was seen on three dates during February and was the 16th record since the year 2000. The first winter individual was seen in the Queen Mother Reservoir roost on Feb 8th (CDRH). It was assumed to be the same bird (based on the level of pigmentation) that was seen at the British Airways Pit, Wraybury GPs, on Feb 19th, and then later on the same day seen flying in from the east and landing on the north bank of Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH). It was also present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 20th (CDRH).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Rare winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Two different birds were seen on six occasions, all at Queen Mother Reservoir. The first, a first winter individual, was seen on the north-east bank initially, and then chased by other gulls to the far end of the reservoir, on Feb 12th (CDRH). The second bird, in third winter plumage, was first seen flying in to join the roost at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 22nd (CDRH). This bird was subsequently seen again at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 29th and 31st, and Apr 5th and 6th (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 218 records from 55 locations, with 12% of the records greater than a count of 100 and 31% greater than ten. During the first winter period, the highest counts were: 150 on Grove Lake, Moor Green Lakes, on Jan 18th; 100 at Lower Farm GP on Feb 5th; and 100 at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 6th. Counts were low during March and April, and a count of 100 was not exceeded until May 12th, when 120 were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir. Numbers built up to 300 at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 16th with birds apparently feeding on beached flying ants. Thereafter, 100 or so remained throughout the summer in the east Berkshire area: 160 at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 24th; 160+ on Smith's Lawn, Windsor, on Jun 28th; 190 at the same location on Jul 2nd; and 110 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 4th and 100 on Jul 7th.

Smaller numbers, between 30 to 70 birds, were seen on several dates at Queen Mother Reservoir throughout August. Numbers increased during September away from Queen Mother Reservoir during the day, with 240 at Remenham Hill on Sep 15th, and 580 (the highest count) at Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) on Sep 19th. Surprisingly, the highest count anywhere in October was nine at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 29th. There were 400 at Knowl Hill Landfill on Nov 8th and then 400 at Queen Mother Reservoir the following day, presumably the same flock. The landfill site count peaked at 600 on Dec 1st. Another significant count was of 400 roosting at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 29th and then 240 on Dec 12th. The highest count in west Berkshire during the second winter was 100 on Cow Down, West Ilsley, on Dec 21st.

There were no definitive breeding records for the year, although indirect evidence of local breeding may be surmised from the presence of two recently-fledged juveniles with two adults at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 18th, and a flock of 15 juveniles there on Jul 30th. A few juveniles were present throughout August at Moor Green Lakes, with a maximum of four on Aug 14th.

HERRING GULL (*argentatus*)

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

In the first winter period, there were: two adults at Knowl Hill Landfill on Jan 13th (ABT); an adult heading east over Woose Hill on Jan 22nd (PBT); and a third winter bird at Lower Farm GP on Feb 10th (NC). An adult of this race, thought to be the same individual each time, was identified at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 14th and 17th, and Aug 12th, 29th and 31st (CDRH). A further two were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 9th and on several subsequent evenings. Finally, four adults and one juvenile were there together on Sep 19th (CDRH). Some large, dark-mantled birds, presumed to be the *argentatus* race, were in a large flock of Herring Gulls at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 9th (DJB), while some were also in a Moor Green Lakes' roost on Nov 12th (PBT).

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Scarce autumn/winter visitor (Amber Listed)

There were 21 sightings of Caspian Gull during the year, involving ten or 11 birds, summarised in the table of monthly maximum counts. Nearly all were in east Berkshire, at Queen Mother Reservoir or locations nearby.

First winter: the year started with an adult at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, on Jan 1st (MFW). Several records then came from Queen Mother Reservoir with sightings of some recognisable individuals. For instance, a first winter bird was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on four dates between Jan 4th and Feb 3rd, and this or an extra bird also on Mar 31st and Apr 24th, when it was seen at Colnbrook before being re-found at Queen Mother Reservoir 20 minutes later (CDRH). An adult was present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 29th (CDRH) while another first winter individual was seen at the same site on five dates between Feb 18th and Mar 7th, on which date it was also seen at Horton GPs (CDRH). **Second winter:** the first returning bird was an adult at Queen Mother Reservoir on the early date of Jul 27th (CDRH). After a first winter bird was recorded at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 29th (KEM), the remaining records concerned four individuals at Queen Mother Reservoir at the end of the year: a first winter on Nov 12th; an adult female on Dec 2nd; another first winter on Dec 16th and 23rd; and a third first winter on Dec 26th (CDRH).

2016 addition: Second-winter plumage bird, Lower Farm GP, Jan 25th–28th (ABT *et al.*).

Monthly Maximum Counts for Caspian Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lea Farm Lake	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

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

There were 131 records from 22 locations. No reports were made in April. In May, only one individual was seen, a first summer bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 16th and 29th (CDRH). The peak counts were in July and August. The highest count was of 18 birds together at Horton Brook Quarry, which is situated just to the east of Queen Mother Reservoir, on Jul 28th (CDRH). This locality accounted for all the counts exceeding five for the period July

to September, ranging between five and 18 birds. The highest counts away from the Queen Mother Reservoir area were: four at Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 23rd (KEM); four at Moatlands GPs on Feb 2nd (ABT); and four at West Ilsley on Sep 15th (CDRH). 58% of all the records in the year were of single birds only. The first juvenile was seen on Jul 2nd at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH, ABT), this apparently being a week earlier than usual.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Yellow-legged Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Horton GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1
Lower Farm GP	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	3	2
Moatlands GPs	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	1	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	2	1	-	1	3	17	10	6	2	1	1
Theale GPs	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	2	1	-	-	-	3	4	2	3	2	1	2
Number of birds	2	1	-	-	-	7	32	19	17	5	1	2

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus graellsii*

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

Sightings from 72 locations provided 546 records, 67% of which were from west Berkshire. Largest counts were during the period July to February with 11 counts exceeding 1,000 individuals; all of these were at: Lower Farm GP; Main Pit, Theale; or the west Berkshire Downs. These figures no doubt reflect the pattern of bird movement between feeding sites on the Downs and roosting sites in the river valley. The peak count for the year was 4,000 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 11th, followed by 3,600 at Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 19th. The largest flocks on the west Berkshire Downs were 1,000 following the plough on Bury Down, West Ilsley, on Jul 24th, and 2,000 seen moving between fields west of the village at West Ilsley on Sep 11th. Ninety-five birds, an unusually high count for the time of year and presumably late migrants, were observed at Lower Farm GP on May 18th. Low numbers prevailed for the rest of May and throughout June.

To give some perspective to these figures, it is of interest to note that the county record for a roost count is 22,000, at Theale on Sep 23rd 2003. In later years, the mid-winter counts were usually in the order of 7,000. The habit of feeding on the downs was first noted in 1993, with numbers exceeding 1,000 in the years of the first decade of this century (The Birds of Berkshire Atlas, 2013).

Breeding: an adult pair reclaimed their territory on the central tower of Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 22nd, after breeding successfully on it the previous year. They were observed nesting on the tower on May 9th. The breeding pair were sitting continuously and were joined by another pair mating alongside them on May 27th. The sitting pair of adults had two chicks visible on the central tower on Jun 11th, with the additional pair of adults still present. A juvenile was seen being fed by an adult on Jul 19th, and two newly-fledged juveniles were present on Jul 21st. Three pairs of adults were present on the tower in late June to early July. An unaccompanied, fully-fledged juvenile, the first of the autumn, was recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 9th and was considered not to have been raised there. Recently fledged juveniles were seen begging food from a parent at Queen Mother Reservoir on the late date of Sep 22nd. These presumably bred locally. A pair was recorded as having again successfully nested on the chimney of a Victorian house in east Reading, with two

adults and one juvenile seen on Jul 24th. A pair appeared to be nesting on a factory rooftop on Oldfield Road, Maidenhead, on May 30th.

Additional information for 2010-12: it was discovered that a colour-ringed bird watched at Lower Farm GP on Jan 10th had been ringed as an adult at Pitsea Landfill Site in March 2010. Since then, it had been observed on Amrun, an island in the North Frisian group in Germany, in June 2011, then at Priorslee Lake, Salop, in February 2012, and finally on Amrun again in June 2012.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Lesser Black-backed Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	2	1	3	1	-	1	-	1	-	-
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	3	3	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	-	-	1
Lower Farm GP	4000	2000	40	6	95	20	27	13	120	1000	3000	72
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	2	110
Moor Green Lakes	50	4	35	2	-	-	2	200	145	500	150	90
Padworth Lane GP	6	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	2	2	8	20	6	35	12	30	5	100	5
Thatcham Marsh	7	11	3	5	6	5	3	13	4	3	100	2
Theale GPs	-	1	3	1	4	3	1	8	3600	1	2000	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	15	11	7	7	10	9	9	7	7	5	14	8
Number of birds	621	531	60	23	38	42	1072	455	2910	269	718	721

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*fuscus*)

BALTIC GULL *Larus fuscus fuscus*

2012 addition: following an article in the September 2018 issue of British Birds ("Breeding 'Baltic Gulls' from the Horsvaer archipelago in Norway and the occurrence of such birds in Britain"), several records of this subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gull have been accepted by BBRC. These include a record from Berkshire, the first for the county, at Lower Farm GP, Newbury, on Jan 9th and 10th 2012 (N Cleere). It was ringed (J127) at a breeding colony in Maritholman Sorvest, Norway on Jul 2nd 2005. Prior to the Berkshire sighting, it was seen at a landfill site in Gloucestershire in October and November 2005. [Recorder]

SANDWICH TERN *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

A respectable total for the year of 21 birds were seen on seven dates at four locations. All records were for spring apart from one in September. As most birds on passage pass through in a day, a single bird staying at Queen Mother Reservoir from Mar 23rd to 24th (CDRH, ABT, PNe) was perhaps a result of a fresh northeast wind. Three birds flew around calling and sitting on buoys at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 30th (CDRH). The following day, another three birds were present at Queen Mother Reservoir: a single individual resting on buoys in the morning before flying off, followed by two more birds arriving in the afternoon that roosted on buoys at the south end of the reservoir (CDRH). Also on Mar 31st, a single bird was seen in the morning sitting on a buoy at Main Pit, Theale (AVL).



Sandwich Tern, Queen Mother Reservoir, Mar 24th, Peter Newbound.

This bird lingered for two days, perhaps impeded by a strong north-easterly wind.



Little Tern, Queen Mother Reservoir, Jul 24th, Roger Stansfield.

The third bird of the year (with Common Tern behind) being the only returning migrant.

There was an obvious passage on Apr 9th, with six birds together at Queen Mother Reservoir lingering for ten minutes in the morning, followed by a single bird in the afternoon that circled and stayed for only five minutes (CDRH). On the same day, a single bird was sitting on pontoons on the Jubilee River from 10:30 to at least 14:00 (EB, DAC). Also on Apr 9th, two birds were heard, then seen resting and feeding at Goring Lock before flying south into Berkshire, the first seen by the observer there in over 45 years of birding (NJB). The last spring record was a single bird that flew in from the south-east before settling on a raft at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 12th (CDRH).

The only autumn passage record was of two birds together (adult and first winter) that circled for nine minutes above Queen Mother Reservoir before flying off high south-east at 09:24 on Sep 17th (CDRH).

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

An average year with three individuals seen. The first was found initially at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, at 06:34 and then was well-watched at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on May 7th (FJC *et al.*). It remained there until at least 10:15.

The second individual was also found at Lea Farm Lake on May 27th (PO, BTB, MFW).

The third bird was found at 11:50 sitting on a raft in front of the clubhouse at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 24th (RHS *et al.*). It remained until at least 13:30.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

The first record of the year was on cue at the end of March at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 30th. The last, a first winter bird, was also recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir, on Sep 25th. Five hundred and thirty-four records were received from 57 locations. The highest single count of the year was of 84 birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 31st. The highest count in spring was 42 birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 6th. Of interest was a bird with an almost wholly black-bill at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 29th, possibly a bird still retaining this winter plumage feature. Maximum monthly counts are summarised in the table.

Breeding: this was observed at 11 locations. As usual, it is difficult to provide a definitive number of successful breeding attempts. Taking all the observations together across the

county, it appears that at least 70 pairs bred and at least 65 juveniles were seen. The following summarises the best data for individual locations. At Lower Farm GP, Thatcham, three pairs bred, one of which was in an old Coot's nest, with ten juveniles seen on Jul 13th. Two pairs bred at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre with two chicks seen on Jul 13th. A pair was observed nesting at Midgham GP on Jun 3rd and courtship feeding on Jun 18th.

At Woolhampton GP, a pair was seen on the raft with two almost fully-grown chicks on Jul 5th. Two pairs bred at Hosehill Lake, Theale, with three fledged and two unfledged juveniles seen on Jul 7th. Observing nests on the islands at Main Pit, Theale, was difficult, but 14 adults seen carrying food to the island on Jul 26th gave some indication of the numbers breeding. At Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, at least seven pairs were nesting on the island on May 30th, and eight juveniles were seen on Jul 7th. Three pairs bred at Loddon NR, Twyford, with one chick seen on Jun 27th.

On Tern Island, Moor Green Lakes, four pairs were sitting on nests on May 19th, with six chicks noted on Jun 17th. A successful breeding season was noted at Summerlease GP, with 37 adults present with at least ten broods on Jun 2nd. Sixteen chicks were seen there on Jun 27th and the observer considered that at least 15 breeding pairs were present. Fourteen fledged juveniles were seen there on Jul 8th. A marginally larger breeding colony was established on the Pier Tower at Queen Mother Reservoir. Forty adults were present there on Jun 17th, rising to a peak count of 84 birds on Jul 31st. Fifteen juveniles were observed there on Jul 26th.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Common Tern

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bray GPs	-	-	-	4	4	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	3	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	-	2	8	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	2	2	4	2	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	8	32	3	8	1	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	7	10	15	19	5	15	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	8	10	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	3	10	12	12	2	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	1	7	40	40	84	57	12	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	3	5	4	4	4	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	1	5	20	7	14	12	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	7	9	2	4	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	2	3	4	4	2	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	-	-	-	5	11	10	6	3	-	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	25	56	51	48	5	-	-	-	-

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

A rather poor show this year with only 13 birds in total, the worse year since 2001. Nine birds were sighted in spring; the first record was two birds at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 22nd (GEW). Thereafter, two birds were recorded on Apr 24th (KEM) and three on May 4th (KEM, BTB, RHS) at Main Pit, Theale.

An interesting bird was found at Main Pit, Theale, on Jun 11th; it had an incomplete hood and a wholly black bill, features of a first summer 'portlandica' type bird. It was still present on Jun 12th (AM, ABT, CDRH) and was photographed. A first summer plumage bird is a rarity in the county, although not in the UK.

The last spring record was a single bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 25th (CDRH), feeding with the Common Terns.

The first autumn record was also at Queen Mother Reservoir, with three birds seen on Jul 24th (CDRH). The group included a juvenile, this being the earliest record ever in the county. A first winter bird was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 11th, and possibly the same bird was still present on Sep 13th and 14th (DJB, ABT, CDRH).

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Uncommon passage migrant (Green Listed)

An average total for the year of 41 birds were recorded in nine locations, with 29 on spring passage and 12 on return passage. The first was seen to fly straight though east to west at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 24th. Two birds were present on Moatlands GPs and one on Main Pit on Apr 30th. Seven birds were seen to fly south over Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, at 06:35 and eight birds flew south over Cock Marsh, Cookham, at 06:50, both on May 1st. Two birds lingered at Moatlands GPs for a few days from May 1st to 5th.

A flock of six were seen at Main Pit, Theale, at 06:50 on May 6th, staying for less than five minutes. A single bird was found feeding with Swifts at Moor Green Lakes on May 7th. The last spring record was a single bird at 06:05 at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 14th, departing soon after ahead of a shower.

Two early returning adults were seen at Main Pit, Theale, on Jul 4th at 05:55 before departing at 06:12. Two moulting adults were seen at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jul 22nd. Another single moulting adult was present on a raft at Queen Mother Reservoir at 08:20 on Aug 24th. A juvenile was present at Lower Farm GP on Sep 3rd, and was seen with another juvenile on Sep 28th. Three birds (one adult and two juveniles) were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 24th, and another adult was seen for 40 minutes in the early morning of Sep 25th. The last sighting of the year was a winter plumage bird on Hosehill Lake from Oct 1st to 2nd.

ARCTIC SKUA PARASITIC JAEGER *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Rare passage migrant (Red Listed)

A light morph adult flew straight over Queen Mother Reservoir heading south-west at 09:06 on Sep 25th, before turning and heading off north (CDRH).

RED-THROATED DIVER

RED-THROATED LOON

Gavia stellata

Rare winter visitor (Green Listed)

Just one record in 2017 of this species that is rarely seen inland. A winter plumage or non-breeding adult was found at Main Pit, Theale, on May 5th (KEM). This is the first record in the county since 2013, when a winter plumage bird was present at Queen Mother Reservoir on several dates during



Red-throated Diver, Main Pit, Theale, May 5th, Andy Tomczynski.

This winter plumage or non-breeding adult stayed for one day.

April and May. This species of diver appears to be the rarest to be found inland throughout the country, and this seems to be reflected in the scarcity of records in Berkshire.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER COMMON LOON *Gavia immer*

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

A very poor showing again in 2017 for this species, with just one bird found at Main Pit, Theale, at 16:10 on Feb 5th (KEM). However, after initially giving good views, the bird could not subsequently be relocated. Traditionally, this has been the most frequently found diver in Berkshire, but in recent years very few have been recorded.

MANX SHEARWATER

Puffinus puffinus

Very rare vagrant (Amber Listed)

Just a single record this year of this seabird that is rarely seen inland. A bird was found at Main Pit, Theale, at around 13:10 on Sep 8th (Andrew Merrick). The bird remained for the rest of the day, but typically for this species could not be relocated the following day. This is the first occurrence in the county since single individuals were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir in 2011 and 2012.

SHAG EUROPEAN SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Red Listed)

After being absent since 2013, there was one record involving two birds in 2017. Two juvenile or first winter birds were found at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Aug 28th (KEM). The two birds remained until dusk. However, the following morning only one bird could be found. This individual stayed nearby at Main Pit, Theale, until finally being reported on Sep 11th.

CORMORANT GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

Records of Cormorants were received from 66 locations throughout the county. Clearly the majority of these were from the river valleys and numerous bodies of water we are lucky



Shag, Main Pit, Theale, Sep 11th, Roger Stansfield.
This juvenile bird (right), last seen on this date, stayed for fifteen days.



Manx Shearwater, Main Pit, Theale, Sep 8th, Andy Tomczynski.
Found at 13:10, it stayed for the remainder of the day and was observed diving for long periods.

enough to have in our area. The table indicates the peak numbers at the most popular sites.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Cormorant

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	1	-	-	12	13	12	4	4	-	2	3	-
Bray GPs	29	6	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	25	34
Burghfield GPs	25	25	9	-	-	-	-	-	10	25	26	29
Dinton Pastures CP	12	14	13	-	5	3	1	-	-	12	32	41
Dorney Wetlands	2	-	-	-	3	-	5	5	-	-	16	-
Great Meadow Pond	9	5	3	2	3	1	1	6	3	15	7	12
Horton GPs	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	7	-
Lea Farm Lake	4	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	14	14
Lower Farm GP	47	21	18	20	24	26	29	24	28	25	48	28
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	20	11	1
Moor Green Lakes	84	70	60	32	21	-	13	15	21	62	78	90
Padworth Lane GP	6	-	2	4	3	2	1	-	-	-	3	13
Queen Mother Reservoir	5	11	17	15	12	3	652	789	600	171	1	3
Thatcham Marsh	9	11	3	6	3	12	21	22	18	13	18	6
Theale GPs	50	30	3	3	2	2	43	24	65	29	54	4
Twyford GPs	16	14	10	13	12	3	1	3	5	10	16	19
Woolhampton GPs	20	20	9	5	7	17	5	2	3	1	9	5
Wraysbury GPs	20	13	-	19	-	-	-	-	-	88	7	5
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	11	17	9	18	12	7	4	7	4	7	8	8
Number of birds	34	49	33	54	23	14	4	11	12	21	35	39

The records of 700+ at Queen Mother Reservoir on several dates were very impressive, with a peak of 789 birds on Aug 8th. Several records of breeding were received, including three nests at Lands End GP, Twyford, and three nests at Trout Lake, Lower Farm GP.

BITTERN EURASIAN BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

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

A total of six Bitterns were recorded in Berkshire in 2017, five in the first winter/spring period and just one in the second winter period. This was a slight improvement on 2016, when only four birds were recorded. During the first period, two birds were seen at Dinton Pastures CP on Jan 1st and were reported regularly until Feb 25th. One of this pair was observed for the last time on Mar 4th (DFI). A single bird was watched for 20 minutes at Windsor Great Park on Jan 22nd (DJB). Another single, which had wintered at Midgham GP (Quarry), was last seen on Mar 3rd (JPM). Finally, a spring bird was an interesting record at Lower Farm GP, on the quite late date of Apr 24th (NC, ABT). The second winter period produced just one bird, first seen on Nov 8th at White Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP (CDRH).

CATTLE EGRET WESTERN CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Rare vagrant

Two Cattle Egrets were recorded in Berkshire in 2017; the species is becoming a regular sight in the county, with only three blank years since 2007. A bird in summer plumage was found at Twyford GPs mid-morning on May 10th (DJB), flying off north at 11:08. It was relocated later in the day at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, (G Emmett) and remained there until last reported at 18:12. Another individual was found quite late in the day at Woolhampton GPs on Mar 17th (AEDH).



Cattle Egret, Lea Farm Lake, May 10th, Andy Tomczynski.

One of two birds seen in the county, this summer plumaged bird staying for only a day.



Great White Egret, Woolhampton GPs, Jul 15th, Andy Tomczynski.

One of five individuals seen in the county during the year. A yellow bill indicates an immature non-breeding bird.

2014 information omitted in error: A non-breeding adult landed on the south bank of the Thames near cattle at 11:18 on May 12th, but was repeatedly flushed by dogwalkers and flew back to Little Marlow GP at 11:30 (CDRH).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Locally common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

This is a very familiar species in Berkshire, due mainly to the river valleys and many gravel pits throughout the county. Some high counts were recorded as follows: an exceptional 15 birds, including some juveniles, at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 4th; ten birds at Lower Farm GPs on Aug 26th; and eight at Padworth Lane GP on Nov 4th. During the breeding season, some high numbers were recorded: 31 birds at the heronry at Lands End GP, Twyford, on Mar 6th; and 22 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Mar 9th, with at least 11 occupied nests in the heronry there. Overall, the species appears to be doing very well in Berkshire, with several very productive heronries throughout the county.

GREAT WHITE EGRET GREAT EGRET *Ardea alba*

Rare but increasing vagrant

This species is now a regular feature in Berkshire, with five individuals recorded in 2017. A bird first seen at Crookham Common Pools on Jul 13th (JPM) was relocated the following day at Lower Farm GPs (NC), then found at Woolhampton GPs on Jul 15th (GEW); the bird remained at this site until Jul 16th. Another was at British Airways Pit, Wraysbury GPs, for most of the day on Aug 26th (CDRH); this bird was then reported again at the same site on Sep 1st (CL). A bird originally found on the spit at Little Marlow GPs, Bucks, was seen to fly off south over Cock Marsh, Cookham, Berkshire, at 14:50 on Oct 18th (ADB). Another individual was found feeding alongside five Grey Herons at Padworth Lane GPs, on Dec 14th (RJB). This bird was photographed the following day at the same site (ABT) and was found again at Woolhampton GPs on Dec 15th, where it remained until the following day. Moor Green Lakes hosted another on Nov 20th (MHu, RFM); this individual was then seen regularly until Dec 22nd (MO), before relocating to nearby Fleethill Farm, Finchampstead, from Dec 22nd (JMC) until Dec 26th (RCM). Overall a very impressive year for this beautiful species, and one wonders how long before we get a breeding pair in the county.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Locally common resident that breeds in very small numbers (Schedule One and Green Listed)

Records were received from approximately 75 locations from east to west in the county. Some high counts reported were: eight birds at Eversley GPs on Jan 18th; nine at Chamberhouse Farm, Thatcham, on Feb 22nd; 16 at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Oct 19th; 20 in a daytime roost at Wraysbury GPs on Oct 28th; and nine at Horton GPs on Nov 12th. Breeding was recorded at several sites, with young reported at a site in the east of the county, among others. Generally speaking, this species has become a very familiar sight, mainly because we are lucky enough to have an abundance of water bodies throughout the county.

OSPREY WESTERN OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

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

A fairly low return for this year with only five reports. The first was seen at Boxford on Apr 1st (RJC). The next was flying north, low over Lower Farm GP on Apr 10th (NC, MJD). The last spring record was of a bird flying north over Emmer Green on Apr 20th (ABT). Another was seen at Kintbury, a regular site for the species over the past few years, but on the unusual date of Jun 26th (ILW). The only returning bird was of one flying south over Dinton Pastures CP on Sep 13th (FJC, RM).

HONEY-BUZZARD EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare summer migrant (Amber Listed)

There were sightings of single birds in suitable breeding habitat at a site in June and July, and at another site in August.

SPARROWHAWK EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)

A typical scattering of records of mainly single birds, with a few reports of two and very occasionally up to four from just under 400 reports. This is one of the few raptor species where most records are slightly skewed away from the west of the county, and an increasing number come from suburban gardens. As is typical with birds of prey, there was limited reporting of breeding, but juveniles and immatures were seen in several suitable locations.

GOSHAWK NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare visitor (Green Listed)

There was one acceptable record this year, from a site in the west of the county on Sep 3rd (Andrew Merrick).

MARSH HARRIER WESTERN MARSH HARRIER

Circus aeruginosus

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

Eight sightings of Marsh Harriers were submitted, but these probably only involved four to five individuals. The only spring record was of a female flying north away from Dinton Pastures CP on Mar 30th (FJC).



Marsh Harrier, Starveall Farm, West Ilsley, Aug 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

One of two juvenile birds seen together at this location.

Three juveniles were seen together at Lambourn over a bean field, being chased by a Brown Hare, on Aug 14th (CDRH). The remainder of the sightings probably relate to these birds. A juvenile at Starveall Farm, West Ilsley, was relocated on Cow Down and joined by another juvenile on Aug 26th (ABT); one juvenile was seen at Compton Downs (DJB) and another or the same at Lambourn (CDRH), both on Sep 1st; the final sighting was at Aldworth on Sep 3rd (Andrew Merrick, per KEM).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

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

There were several reports, all from the first quarter of the year. The first, a ringtail, was at Cow Down on Jan 5th (JCMo), with the same or a different ringtail at Lambourn on Jan 18th (CDRH). A male was hunting over Wellbottom Down, Lambourn, on Feb 7th, and possibly the same male was still there on Mar 13th (CDRH). A male that was seen to chase off a Peregrine at Bury Down, West Ilsley, on Apr 10th could be the same bird from the Lambourn area previously reported (ABT).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Common (locally abundant) re-introduced resident (Schedule One and Green List)

This was the most ubiquitous raptor, with over 1,000 reports from right across the county. Breeding Bird Survey data show the Kite population was still increasing, though at a lower rate than in past years (Berkshire Bird Index). The highest concentrations and monthly maxima from regularly watched sites are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Red Kite

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aston	20	23	1	8	19	50	-	30	-	26	-	-
Brimpton/Woolhampton area	1	-	3	12	3	29	-	-	-	-	-	-
Combe area	13	7	12	8	8	7	5	6	4	2	9	9
Compton/Aldworth/ East Ilsley area	8	15	9	2	-	5	21	17	-	19	14	7
Cookham area	12	-	9	1	-	-	14	-	46	-	18	-
Lambourn area	12	4	-	5	-	-	4	7	-	-	5	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	6	14	13	2	1	2	1	1	1	20	12	12
Twyford/Wargrave area	5	8	6	3	5	1	-	2	2	15	10	7
Windsor area	50	10	15	7	15	8	7	3	3	13	5	4
Knowl Hill/ White Waltham area	-	-	-	18	-	6	-	-	-	45	>100	-

In addition to the figures in the table, other notably high counts were: 30 at Farley Hill on Jan 11th; 36 at Purley-on-Thames on May 25th; 38 at Peasmore on Dec 3rd; and 36 at Farley Hill on Dec 29th. Often large numbers were seen where land was disturbed by ploughing, cutting grass, or harvesting. The Woolley Down roost, which once held the largest numbers in the county, is now much depleted with counts of 25 on Jan 28th and 15 on Dec 12th. The species is clearly breeding in good numbers, and there were confirmed, successful nests from several areas in the west and east of the county.

BUZZARD COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common and widespread resident and passage migrant (Green Listed)

There were just under 900 reports from across the county, with the largest frequency and concentrations coming from the more rural areas west of Reading. The Berkshire Bird Index shows Buzzard abundance continuing to increase, though at a slower rate than over the last decade. The largest counts were as follows: ten on the Ridgeway at Compton on Feb 16th; 15 at Walbury Hill on Jul 2nd; 14 at Crookham Common on Jul 17th; 14 at Colnbrook Landfill on Sep 22nd; 29 all feeding on the ground in a field at Englefield on Oct 14th; and ten at Jealotts Hill on Oct 30th.

BARN OWL WESTERN BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Uncommon but widespread resident (Schedule One and Green Listed)

A total of 98 records for this species were submitted, in addition to the information provided by the Kennet and Pang Valley Barn Owl Group (KPVBOG), who monitor boxes between the Wiltshire border and Fobney in Reading, and the Bisham Barn Owl Group (BBOG), who monitor a roughly triangular area bounded by Henley, Bracknell and Windsor. It is possible to infer from the locations that some of the birds in these additional reports were from sites monitored by those groups. In addition, 29 of the casual sightings came from the vicinity of nest boxes: 11 at Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, and 18 at Moor Green Lakes. Unlike most others, these boxes are easily visible to users of those sites. The first sightings of the year were on Jan 2nd when single birds were seen at Finchampstead and Lavell's Lake. All casual sightings were of one or two birds except when a hunting adult and two ready-to-fledge chicks were seen at the nest box site at Dinton Pastures between Jul 4th and 16th, and when a week later four newly fledged owlets were seen at the same location. Sightings, mainly of single birds, continued throughout the year until the last date of Dec 28th when a single bird was seen at Brimpton GPs. BBOG boxes in Berkshire had ten nesting attempts. From these, 23 chicks fledged from eight boxes, one attempt failed, and the chicks at the other box fledged before they could be counted. KPVBOG results including a comparison to previous years can be found in the first table.

KPVBOG Breeding Success

	Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of boxes		91	111	123	119	125	136	174	188
Successful boxes		10	18	27	-	45	15	39	40
Chicks fledged		29	54	72	-	173	31	100	114
Average brood size		2.9	3	2.7	-	3.8	2	2.5	2.8

Barn Owls typically live for about four years, but about 70% do not survive their first year (figures from Barn Owl Conservation Trust). KPVBOG try to recover any dead birds reported to them and these are sent for post mortem, primarily to support research into the use and effects of rodenticides, although it can sometimes identify other causes of death. These are usually road casualties, starvation or as a result of an altercation with a rival species. A dead bird found at Shottesbrooke House, White Waltham, on Jun 30th showed all the classic signs of the latter. If a dead bird has been ringed, it is also possible to calculate how long it has lived and how far it has travelled from the ringing site. The 2017 recoveries return for the KPVBOG is shown in the second table.

KPVBOG Recoveries for 2017

Ringing Details		Recovery Details			
Location	Date	Location	Date	Cause of Death	Km Travelled
Pangfield	18/7/16	Theale	11/5/17	Road casualty	3km
Chapel Row	22/7/16	Stanford Dingley	21/5/17	Unknown	4km
Tutt's Clump	6/7/17	Bradfield	27/8/17	Kite?	2km
Marlston	11/7/16	Eling	11/9/17	Unknown	3km
Bucklebury	10/7/17	Tidmarsh	20/9/17	Unknown	8km
Sulhamstead	6/7/17	Sulhamstead	12/10/17	Unknown	0km
Water Meadows	29/6/17	Beedon	20/11/17	Unknown	7km

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

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

By far the most common of the owl species in the county, with 142 records submitted from sites across Berkshire in all months of the year between Jan 1st and Dec 27th. As it is almost completely nocturnal, this species is more often heard than seen. The highest count of four was at Bucklebury Common on Aug 13th. There were six counts of three birds from: Eversley GPs; Roundoak Piece; Swinley Park; Aldworth; and Lower Green. All other counts were of either single or two birds. **Breeding:** an adult and juvenile were seen or heard at Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Apr 18th, May 23rd and Aug 14th; a female and two juveniles at Swinley Park on Jun 6th; three calling juveniles at Aldworth on Jun 19th; single calling juveniles at Eastbury and Lambourn on Jun 20th; an adult female and two juveniles near a nest box at Cookham on Jul 3rd; and two calling juveniles on Jul 8th at another site in Cookham. Calling juveniles were also reported from: Bennetts Hill, Burghfield, on Jul 11th; Wildmoor Heath on Jul 17th; and a second site in Burghfield on Jul 20th. A further record of an egg in a nest box with a camera was reported from The Wilderness, Kintbury, on May 6th and 7th, but no outcome was received.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

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

This species continues to struggle, although reports were received from a total of 37 sites across the county and in every month of the year. **Breeding:** records are scarce; however, birds holding territory were reported in Enborne on Mar 25th and 26th, followed by birds visiting what was presumed to be a nest site on Apr 13th and 14th. A further two birds holding territory were reported in Finchampstead on Jun 13th, and a bird holding territory was also recorded in Newbury between Jul 16th and Jul 24th. Two juveniles were reported from White Place Farm, Cookham, on Jul 11th, and an adult and juvenile were reported from Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Jul 17th. The Kennet and Pang Valley Barn Owl group have a small number of Little Owl boxes (most of which are used by Great Tits!). However, one site has reliably supported breeding over several years. Sadly, this box was waterlogged when it was checked in 2017 and contained two cold eggs. The box was modified and will hopefully prove a success again in the future. Another surprise encounter during a visit to ring Barn Owl chicks on Jul 3rd was in a box adjacent to the Barn Owl box on a private site in Sulham. It had previously been checked and found to be empty but, on this occasion, it contained a roosting adult female Little Owl which was subsequently ringed. There were no counts of more than two birds from any site.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Little Owl

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	6	4	7	6	3	5	4	1	3	6	7	3
Number of birds	6	4	7	8	3	7	5	1	3	7	7	5

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Rare resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

There was a single record of this species from its traditional site in west Berkshire. Interestingly, it was a breeding record, when an adult was seen perched and two juveniles were heard calling on Jun 21st (ABT).

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

A total of 14 records were received for this species and all but two came from the traditional wintering sites on the Berkshire Downs. **First winter:** the first sighting was when four birds were seen at dusk at West Illsley on Jan 2nd. This and adjacent sites continued to hold birds until Mar 13th. The highest count of eight came on Feb 7th when the birds were disturbed by a low-flying aircraft, but all other counts except one were of two or more birds. Away from the Downs, the only sighting was of a single bird circling above Horton Gravel Pits on Mar 14th. **Spring:** an adult showing signs of wing moult was reported hunting at an undisclosed site in west Berkshire on May 31st. **Second winter:** a single bird, which was being harried by gulls then Red Kites, was reported circling over Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 15th. The only other sighting, which was also the last one of the year, was of two birds back at the traditional downland site on Dec 28th, being harried by crows after being disturbed by walkers.

KINGFISHER COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

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

Records were received from 98 locations: 30 in east Berkshire, 35 in mid Berkshire, and 33 in west Berkshire. Where sites are very close together, only one has been included, because some records would be of the same birds overlapping. Although a large number of the records were from the rivers Thames, Loddon and Kennet, many were from larger bodies of water, including lakes and gravel pits. The monthly status based on maximum site counts, is shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Kingfisher

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	21	15	17	14	18	19	21	24	23	20	21	21
Number of birds	24	19	24	17	21	25	28	28	36	26	27	25

Little was reported of breeding in 2017; two birds were seen at a possible nest site at Padworth Lane GP on Mar 30th, and four juveniles were observed at Bray GPs on Jul 21st. Several records of two birds together and of birds carrying fish during the breeding season were reported, which probably indicates breeding took place at these sites. The lack of proven breeding records is hardly surprising, considering how elusive the species can be.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dryobates minor*

Scarce resident, whose numbers continue to decline (Red Listed)

Unfortunately, only three records were received of this critically declining species, which mirrors reporting in 2016. This is a stark reminder of how bad things have become for this species in our county, considering there were 31 records in 2010 and 29 in 2011. A bird was recorded at Greenham Common on Feb 2nd (RJC); a bird was at Windsor Great Park, a previous stronghold for the species, on Mar 15th (DJB); and finally another was calling at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Dec 21st (CMc). One wonders how long before this beautiful little bird becomes extinct in Berkshire, a very sad loss indeed.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common and increasing resident (Green Listed)

The most common and widespread woodpecker species in Berkshire. Records were received from many suitable wooded areas in the county, with some high counts reported. Nine birds were present at Windsor Great Park on Apr 9th, with another count of seven on May 9th. Ten birds were recorded at Swinley Park on May 18th. Seven birds were at Boxford on Jun 24th, which, considering the date, probably involved a family party. Breeding was reported from numerous sites, underlining how successful this species is in the county, in comparison to its smaller cousin.

GREEN WOODPECKER EUROPEAN GREEN WOODPECKER

Picus viridis

Common resident (Green Listed)

This familiar and widespread species was recorded from 60 sites throughout the county: 18 in east Berkshire, 24 in mid Berkshire, and 18 in west Berkshire. This is probably the easiest woodpecker to view, owing to its habit of foraging on open areas of grassland. Some high counts were recorded: eight birds were present at Burghfield GPs on Apr 9th; six, including two juveniles, at Crookham Common on Sep 29th; and a family party of seven at South Ascot on Oct 30th. As can be seen from the above records, breeding was widespread in the county, with adults feeding young being observed, and in late summer many juveniles being reported. However, the Berkshire Bird Index shows small, but statistically significant, falls in both the abundance index compared to 2000 and its trend.

KESTREL COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Common and widespread resident (Amber Listed)

There were 493 records submitted this year, 78% of counts being single birds or pairs. Multiple counts were predominantly family parties. Eight individuals were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 10th, and 12 were seen at Fobney Meadow on Jul 23rd, with seven in view at one time. This is a widespread resident of Berkshire, reported from 128 sites. There has been a 1% per year downward trend from year 2000, with abundance declining but the significance of this is relatively low.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

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

Sightings of ten individual Merlin were recorded in 2017. As expected, records were early and late during the year. **First winter:** the first reports were a female at both Bury Down and Cow Down on Jan 17th (ABT), and a probable female at Lambourn on Jan 18th

(CDRH). March records comprised two at Queen Mother Reservoir: one immature male on Mar 2nd (DJB) and a first summer male on Mar 22nd (CDRH). **Autumn/Winter:** a female/juvenile was recorded perched on a fence at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 21st (CDRH). In October, a male arrived at Lower Farm GP with a flock of Golden Plover on Oct 5th (IW, NC). A male was also recorded there on Oct 7th (JA) and 12th (DK). An October record for an unsexed individual was submitted from Streatley on Oct 22nd (NJB). There were two records in November: a female viewed resting on the ground at Remenham Hill on Nov 2nd (CDRH) and a female/juvenile flying low over fields at Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill, on Nov 6th (DJB). The final record for the year was a male at Stanmore on Dec 3rd (GDS).

HOBBY EURASIAN HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Schedule One and Green Listed)

Records came from 121 sites, predominantly in the river valley areas, with 30% of records from west Berkshire, 35% mid Berkshire and 35% east Berkshire. Reports were usually of single birds. The first record of the year was a bird at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Apr 19th. Good counts of birds seen hawking came from east Berkshire, with six at Horton GPs on May 18th and nine on May 22nd, and from west Berkshire, with five seen hunting low over a field at Lower Farm GP on May 2nd.

Monthly Maximum Regional Counts for Hobby

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	-	-	-	2	21	9	5	11	10	1	-	-
Mid	-	-	-	8	21	6	5	12	8	-	-	-
West	-	-	-	5	18	4	5	10	11	-	-	-

Breeding was confirmed from only one site, where a pair raising two juveniles was recorded in east Berkshire on May 24th (PJC, BN). The last record of the year was a bird seen flying north at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 2nd.

PEREGRINE PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

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

Records were received from 52 1 km squares with some long-staying birds at their usual sites. Birds were present for most months of the year at Theale GPs, with two juveniles seen squabbling over prey on Aug 10th. A resident pair at Queen Mother Reservoir occupied the nest box on Jun 28th, with a juvenile being recorded for the remainder of the year. The Fujitsu building in Bracknell was another regular haunt, as were Eversley GPs, Fobney Meadow and Lower Farm GP. Records were county-wide with the last sighting of the year being at Eversley GPs on Dec 31st.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET

Psittacula krameri

Common resident in the east of the county, uncommon elsewhere

This non-native bird is still not making any real headway into mid or west Berkshire. The well-established roost next to the M4 at Slough continues with huge numbers recorded. An estimated count of 2,200 birds was reported on Dec 8th. Other large numbers were seen around Windsor, where 300 were recorded at a pre-roost on Oct 1st and 205 at Great

Meadow Pond on Oct 22nd. Fifty were seen flying over Maidenhead town centre on Oct 12th. There were regular sightings in mid Berkshire but not of any great numbers; there were records from most months at Dinton Pastures CP with the maximum number of five seen on Apr 10th and May 3rd. Other mid Berkshire records were predominantly individual sightings around east Reading. In west Berkshire, one individual was seen at Thatcham on Feb 5th and one at Newbury on Jun 29th.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce winter visitor (Not Listed)

Two individuals were recorded this year: one at Swinley Forest, first reported on Jan 6th (CRG) and present until Mar 29th (MHu); and one at Bury/Cow Down from Jan 14th (MJD, MJT) until Mar 14th (MHu).

JAY EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident (Green Listed)

Although one of the most colourful UK bird species, the Jay is very secretive when breeding. Records and sightings throughout the year were predominantly of single birds or pairs. Only two juveniles were recorded, at Upper Bucklebury on Jul 13th. Sightings were county-wide but under-recorded; out of the 492 records, 65% were from west Berkshire, 17% from mid Berkshire and 18% from east Berkshire. Larger gatherings included: seven at Combe on Feb 8th; 11 in South Ascot on Apr 13th; seven at Lower Farm GP on Sep 17th; and 14 seen foraging for acorns at Swinley Forest on Oct 28th. The species has experienced a 2% per year downward trend since year 2000, with a significant decline in abundance.

MAGPIE EURASIAN MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Abundant breeding resident (Green Listed)

The breeding abundance of Magpies has changed little since 1994, the period covered by the Berkshire Bird Index. The maximum counts for Berkshire were: 29 at Speen Moor Plantations on Jan 28th; 23 at Cookham on Aug 29th; 21 at Lower Farm GP on Nov 15th; 60 roosting in trees at Dorney Wetlands on Dec 12th; and 38 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 31st.

JACKDAW WESTERN JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*

Abundant breeding resident (Green Listed)

Widespread across the county, Jackdaws are sociable birds in autumn and winter; the maximum count for the year was 3,000 flying in to roost at Fobney Meadow on Oct 15th. Other large counts included: 200 at Greenham Common on Feb 12th; 200 at Brimpton on Jun 23rd; 200 feeding on a stubble field at Englefield on Jul 15th; and 375-400 at Great Meadow Pond on Aug 27th and again on Nov 12th. One recorder counted two families of 16 individuals coming from his neighbour's chimney in Upper Bucklebury on Jun 3rd. The Berkshire Bird Index indicates a doubling in breeding season abundance of Jackdaws since the year 2000.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Abundant breeding resident in rural west Berkshire, less common further east (Green Listed)

Remaining predominantly in the west of the county, records were received from 202 grid references: 88% in west Berkshire, 8% in mid Berkshire and 4% in east Berkshire. Large counts were noted but only two rookeries, totalling approximately 135 nests: 68 at Pinkneys Green on Mar 29th, and 67 at Welford on May 2nd. Other large counts were 200 at Farley Hill on Jul

14th and 200 birds at Lambourn on Aug 12th. Counts of 100 were recorded from Lambourn on May 23rd, Greenham Common on Sep 4th, and Cow Down on Dec 21st.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant breeding resident (Green Listed)

Only 897 records of this county-wide corvid were submitted in 2017, as expected evenly distributed throughout the year. It was under-reported with only three actual breeding records. Maximum counts failed to reach 100 this year: 60+ were at Great Meadow Pond on Aug 27th; and 80 on pasture in Colnbrook on Sep 29th. Juveniles were only recorded once: 20+ in a group of 30 at Great Meadow Pond on May 10th.

RAVEN NORTHERN RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Now an established and locally common resident in south-west Berkshire, elsewhere an increasing resident and passing visitor (Green Listed)

Good numbers of Ravens were seen county-wide with 375 records submitted. The stronghold still appears to be the Combe/Inkpen area with 12 individuals recorded at Combe on Mar 6th, 9th and 30th, and Dec 4th. To the east of the county, ten birds were seen flying west to east at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 1st. **Breeding:** there were three records this year: a family party of two adults and two juveniles by their nest at Sunninghill on May 13th (DJB); a family party of five recorded at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 11th (DJB); and another of two adults and four juveniles at Upper Lambourn on Jun 26th (CDRH).

WAXWING BOHEMIAN WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Irregular winter visitor in varying numbers, locally common in eruption years

Just two confirmed records of this iconic species were received this year. The first was of three birds present for two days from Jan 9th in Dover Road, Slough Trading Estate, moving between hawthorn and an apple tree on the Bath Road side of the railway bridge (C Grove). However, there was no sign of the birds on Jan 11th despite an extensive search. Secondly, five birds were first sighted on Jan 27th feeding on rotting apples at the rear of a garden in Bennings Close, Bracknell (S C Rider). Although not all five were present all the time (*photo: page 29*), these birds showed very well (MO) from the adjacent public footpath until the last reported date of Feb 18th.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common and locally abundant resident (Green Listed)

Coal Tits show a preference for sites with conifers though not exclusively. It is a widespread species; reports were received from 73 sites across the county, with no obvious regional bias. Its abundance, as measured by the Berkshire Bird Index, is significantly higher than in the reference year, 2000.

The ringing records received were of 143 juveniles, 61 adults, three unaged, 146 re-traps and no recoveries¹. There were two specific ringing records this year. An adult male ringed in 2013 at Crookham Common was caught again on Apr 25th at the same site, having therefore survived at least 3 years, 5 months and 19 days. The second was originally ringed as a first-year bird in 2015 near Romsey, Hampshire, and recovered on Dec 2nd in Bowdown Copse, Thatcham, making it at least 2 years, 1 month and 9 days old.

¹ Re-traps are live recoveries within 5 km of ringing site; recoveries are locally ringed birds found further away.

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

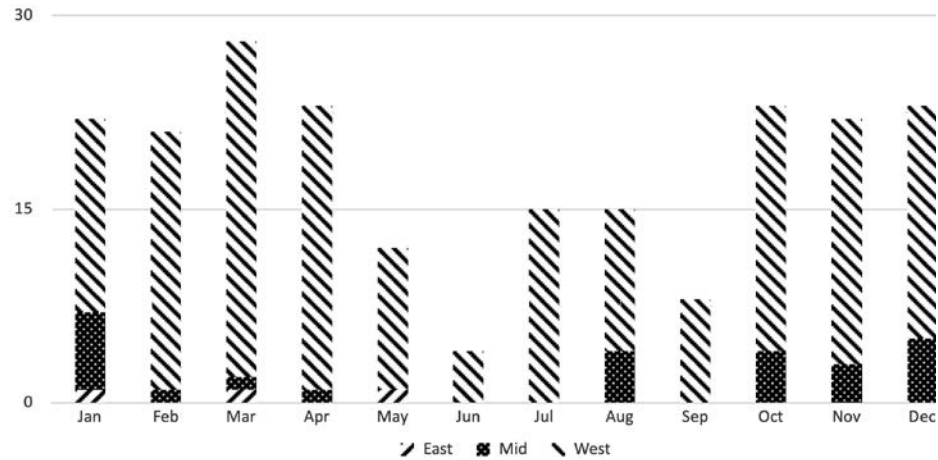
A locally common resident in west Berkshire and an uncommon resident in mid and east Berkshire where the national decline has been more pronounced (Red Listed)

Reports came from 54 sites this year, predominantly in west Berkshire, with only three east of Theale, none of which were in the breeding season (Moor Copse, Waltham St Lawrence, Ashley Hill). The chart shows regional distribution of reported birds.

Most records were of one to four birds, but six were seen at Combe Wood on Apr 8th and five at Greenham Common on Apr 27th. Although there were no reports of breeding, there were many records of birds in suitable habitat during the breeding season.

Ringling records showed 37 juveniles, ten adults, three unaged, 38 re-traps and no recoveries.

Marsh Tit: Monthly Totals by Region



WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

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

This species continues to hold on in the Combe Wood and Walbury Hill area of west Berkshire, where the maximum number of birds reported this year was seven on Mar 25th. No reports of any nests or young were received.

BLUE TIT EURASIAN BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident (Green Listed)

A widespread species whose abundance remains stable (Berkshire Bird Index). Large numbers of Blue Tits are ringed; the extensive use of nest boxes facilitates ringing of nestlings. Ringing totals this year were: 1,514 nestlings, 1,356 juveniles, 468 adults, one unaged, 814 re-traps and six recoveries. The following two birds were among the oldest reported this year: a nestling ringed at Hosehill Lake, Theale, in 2009 was re-trapped at the same site on Jan 22nd, making it over seven years and eight months old; and a first-year bird ringed in 2009 at Crookham Common was caught for the fourth time on Mar 16th at the same site, making it over eight years old.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident (Green Listed)

The other widespread and abundant tit species. Approximately two-thirds the number of Great Tits were reported as the number of Blue Tits. Its abundance as measured by the Breeding Bird Survey (Berkshire Bird Index) is stable. Ringing records were reported of 584 nestlings, 594 juveniles, 266 adults, 436 re-traps and one recovery. One outstanding record was a male originally ringed as a first-year on Nov 11th 2011, which has been re-caught nearly every year at Harvey's Meadow, near Hungerford, including this year on Nov 11th.

BEARDED TIT BEARDED REEDLING *Panurus biarmicus*

Very scarce winter visitor and very rare summer visitor that has bred (Green Listed)

There was only one record of this species this year. An adult male was found in the Manor Lake reedbed, Moor Green Lakes, on Nov 26th (RCM). It had been disturbed by a flock of starlings dropping into the reeds. It called and showed well on the path side of the reeds by a small willow sapling. It fed for two or three minutes before moving off, calling, but still in the reedbed. This apparently was the first ever record for the Eversley GP/Moor Green Lakes complex. A photograph was taken and posted on the Berksbirds.co.uk website. The next evening, Nov 27th, the bird was heard calling very loudly close by as it flew in from the south into the same reedbed but it was not subsequently seen (ABT, RHS). Calls were heard from the centre of Manor Lake reedbed on Nov 28th when it was too dark to see anything (CRG); this was the final day of any reports.



Bearded Tit, Moor Green Lakes, Nov 26th, Roger Murfitt.

The bird in this single record shot by the fortunate finder was heard on two subsequent days.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

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

The delightful song of the Woodlark could be heard in at least 26 breeding territories in 2017, midway between the 18 for 2016 and the 36 in 2013. A lack of precision in the reports from Greenham Common and the Swinley Forest area may mean that more territories were held than the figures indicate.

Jan-Mar: three birds were back on their long-standing breeding grounds at Greenham Common on Jan 11th, increasing to six on Mar 10th and ten on Mar 17th. In the Swinley Forest area, two had returned to Wishmoor Bottom on Feb 18th, with three the following day; there were two at Crowthorne from Mar 10th; four singles at four sites across Swinley Forest on Mar 14th; three in song between Upper Star Post and Rapley on Mar 15th; and one at Hut Hill on Mar 28th. Records elsewhere included: one at Swinley Park on Feb 20th; two at Ufton Nervet on Mar 4th; and at least six at Buttersteep, South Ascot, on Mar 11th.

Spring/Summer: the information for breeding localities 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). One in song at Lower Farm GP, Newbury, on three dates in May and Jun may have strayed from Greenham Common. Sep-Dec: apart from seven at Hut Hill, Swinley Forest, on Sep 19th, the records were confined to Greenham Common in September. All were single-figure counts, except for a likely 18 birds, including one in song, again on Sep 19th.

Woodlark: Breeding Season Summaries

Locality	Number of Territories	Max Count inc. young	Notes
Monks Lane, Newbury	1		Song heard twice in Jun
Greenham/Crookham Common	3+	11	2+ territories Greenham, 1 territory Crookham, 3 juvs seen in Apr
Padworth Common	1	1	
Ufton Nerve	1?	2	
Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Berkshire locations):			
Crowthorne Woods	2	6	
Swinley Forest	3+	17	
MOD Heathland/Wishmoor Bottom	1+	5	2 juvs seen in Jun
Sandhurst Royal Military Academy	?	?	No reports received
Swinley Park	4	4	Same as 2016
South Ascot	8	8	2+ pairs bred, a new site record
Buttersteep, South Ascot	2	2	

SKYLARK EURASIAN SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

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

The breeding population of the Skylark in Berkshire has shown only a small decline in recent years, following its large falls prior to 2000 (Berkshire Bird Index). It was more widespread in the west of the county (see table). An uneventful year saw one large count.

Skylark: Number of Localities by Region

	Jan – Mar	Apr – Aug	Sep – Dec
West Berks	25	38	23
Mid Berks	10	16	9
East Berks	16	16	13
Total	51	70	45

First winter: a quiet period yielded only three counts above 40: c.50 at Bury Down, West Ilsley, on Jan 2nd; 80 at Englefield on Feb 4th; and 60+ there on Mar 11th. **Spring/Summer:** although breeding was no doubt widespread, it was only confirmed at: the Compton Downs; The Ridgeway near Streatley; Waltham St Lawrence; Woodlands Park Fields, Maidenhead; and Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill). **Autumn/Second winter:** a handful of three-figure counts comprised: 100 at Englefield on Oct 8th; 100+ at Compton Downs on Oct 17th; c.200 at Remenham Hill on Oct 29th; 100+ at Cold Harbour on Nov 6th; 115 at Compton Downs on Nov 17th; c.120 at Burnthouse Lane GPs, Pingewood, on Dec 4th; and a notable 800+ in a snow-covered field at Lambourn on Dec 28th.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

Spring: five at Lower Farm GP, Newbury, on Mar 11th represented a normal arrival time. A below average passage (see table) reached its peak in the third week of April. The highest counts were: 200 at Padworth Lane GP on Apr 11th; 200 at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 15th; 150 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 15th; 180 at Moatlands GPs, Theale, on Apr 18th; and an estimated 200 at Summerleaze GPs, Maidenhead, on Apr 19th.

Spring Weekly Maximum Counts for Sand Martin

Week	11-Mar	18-Mar	25-Mar	1-Apr	8-Apr	15-Apr	22-Apr	29-Apr	6-May	13-May
Commencing										
Number of sites	6	8	10	11	8	13	11	7	8	4
Number of birds	49	207	285	385	388	873	467	106	211	108

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

Breeding: birds were observed using nesting-holes at: Woodspen (c.35 holes in use); Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre (lots of holes in use); Hosehill Lake, Theale; Burnthouse Lane GP (c.30 holes in use); Blake's Lock, Reading (three+ holes in use); Lea Farm Lake, Hurst (27 holes in use, many young fledged, and three+ chicks still being fed on Aug 22nd); Odney Club Sports Ground; and Blackpotts Railway Viaduct (ten+ holes in use, some young fledged). **Summer/Autumn:** early gatherings of 100 were noted at Lower Farm GP on Jul 11th and Jul 21st, as well as at Hosehill Lake on Jul 23rd and Jul 29th. Passage is assumed from Aug 1st and was poor (see table). The only three-figure counts were: 120 at Hosehill Lake on Sep 12th; 100 at Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 12th; 130 at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 13th; and 100 at Hosehill Lake on Sep 21st, which provided the last record for the year, an exceptionally early date.

Autumn Weekly Maximum Counts for Sand Martin

Week	1-Aug	8-Aug	15-Aug	22-Aug	29-Aug	5-Sep	12-Sep	19-Sep
Commencing								
Number of sites	5	4	5	2	3	7	7	2
Number of birds	93	104	28	15	63	153	432	101

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 (Green Listed)

The Swallow suffered a dismal spring and summer in Berkshire, relieved by an amazing passage of 3,000 on Sep 20th.

Spring: a very poor passage (see table) commenced with a single bird at Burnthouse Lane GPs, Pingewood, on Mar 25th. Remarkably, there was only one count above 55, which was of 200 at Moor Green Lakes on May 9th.

Spring Weekly Maximum Counts for Swallow

Week	25-Mar	1-Apr	8-Apr	15-Apr	22-Apr	29-Apr	6-May	13-May	20-May
Commencing									
Number of sites	17	22	22	35	18	18	16	6	16
Number of birds	29	38	74	177	134	132	470	67	52

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

Breeding: confirmed breeding was only reported at three sites (Brimpton GP, Compton Downs, and Hurst Green GP, Twyford) while being likely at Moor Green Lakes. **Autumn:** passage (see table) was much better than in spring. Many counts between 100–200 were made in September, with an astonishing rush of 3,000 birds passing north-west on a broad front through Queen Mother Reservoir in just ten minutes on Sep 20th (CDRH). Numbers fell to mostly single figures in October until the last bird was seen at Greenham Common on Oct 27th.

Autumn Weekly Maximum Counts for Swallow

Week Commencing	1–Aug	8–Aug	15–Aug	22–Aug	29–Aug	5–Sep	12–Sep	19–Sep	26–Sep
Number of sites	6	6	10	11	10	11	13	18	9
Number of birds	58	110	276	239	635	469	622	3697	200

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 (Amber Listed)

The breeding population of this species continues to decline in Berkshire (Berkshire Bird Index), as elsewhere in the country. **Spring:** the first record concerned two birds at an unspecified site on the M4 on Apr 8th. Passage was light (see table), with maximum counts of only c.50 at Moor Green Lakes on May 3rd and 50 at Woolhampton GPs on May 20th.

Spring Weekly Maximum Counts for House Martin

Week Commencing	8–Apr	15–Apr	22–Apr	29–Apr	6–May	13–May	20–May
Number of sites	11	18	13	10	11	7	12
Number of birds	41	121	90	150	147	83	148

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

Breeding: reports of nesting were received for 11 localities (west to east): Brightwalton; Streatley Warren (ten+ nests); Whistley Green; Twyford; Hambledon Lock house, Aston (seven+ nests); Moor Green Lakes; Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill; Binfield; Holyport; Foliejon Park, Maiden's Green (25+ nests); and Great Meadow Pond, Windsor. **Autumn:** as with the Swallow, passage (see table) was much stronger than in spring, and greatest through much of September. Very large flocks of 500 or more appeared from the end of August, with 500+ at Lower Farm GP, Newbury, on Aug 31st; c.750 at Compton Downs on Sep 1st; 500 at Ham Island STW, Old Windsor, on Sep 10th; 500 at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Sep 14th; and 500+ at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Sep 21st. Numbers dwindled to single figures after Oct 4th, and passage ended with one at Newbury on Oct 30th.

Autumn Weekly Maximum Counts for House Martin

Week Commencing	1–Aug	8–Aug	15–Aug	22–Aug	29–Aug	5–Sep	12–Sep	19–Sep	26–Sep
Number of sites	9	4	9	8	11	11	11	13	8
Number of birds	108	124	237	232	1470	1682	1634	1443	355

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, Green Listed)

The records of this resident warbler are summarised in the table. As most are based on singing birds, for many localities the number of territories may be similar to the maximum count. The species is common in the Kennet valley, where about 150 birds were recorded.

Locality	Maximum count	Locality	Maximum count
Kennet valley			
Hungerford Marsh area	7	Brimpton GP	4
Eddington	1	Woolhampton GPs	5
Denford area	8	Woolhampton	3
Kintbury area	6	Aldermaston GP	2
Hamstead Marshall	3	Padworth Lane GP	2
Marsh Benham	6	Bottom Lane GPs, Theale	1
Enborne	1	Hosehill Lake, Theale	4
Newbury area	3	Theale GPs	2
Lower Farm GP	3	Moatlands GPs area	6
Hambridge	4	Burghfield GPs area	12
Thatcham Marsh	38	Southcote Meadows area	5
Thatcham area	9	Green Park	1
Midgham GP	2	Fobney Meadow area	13
Lambourn valley			
Welford	1	Bagnor	2+
Boxford	3	Speen Moor	1
Hunt's Green	3+		
Thames and Loddon			
Pangbourne Meadow	1	Great Meadow Pond, Windsor	4
Dinton Pastures area	7	Wraybury GPs area	4+
Twyford GPs area	5	Horton GP	2
Bray GPs	3	Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve	1
Dorney Wetlands/Eton Wick	18		

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)

The numerous records contained little of particular interest. A high count of 35 at Greenham Common on May 31st was followed by even higher counts in the autumn of: 40+ at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Sep 15th; 38 at Greenham Common on Sep 26th; 50 at Windsor on Oct 12th; 51 at Twyford GPs on Oct 25th; and 46 at Twyford GPs on Nov 29th. A nest was noted in broom in the sewage works at Moor Green Lakes in April.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Rare but increasingly recorded vagrant (Not Listed)

The first of two reports of this species was of a single bird at Crookham Common, on the morning of Sep 26th (MJD), which remained in a row of trees at the east end of the common for much of the day, with the last reported sighting at 17:11 (RGI). The second record came from the Berkshire portion of an Emmer Green garden on Oct 26th (ABT) where it was seen flitting around in a tree with a Goldcrest. This species is becoming quite a regular feature in the county in recent years.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

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

Records of this species remain widespread from across the county, though its abundance in the breeding season continues to fall (Berkshire Bird Index). Monthly totals are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Willow Warbler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	13	73	38	22	13	22	12	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	22	277	143	54	33	61	26	-	-	-

Spring: the first record of a singing male was on Mar 21st and came from Searles Farm Lane GPs. There were no other records until Mar 29th when there were records from Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, and Woolhampton GPs. Migration then built up, coming to a peak in April. The highest single site count, 21, came from Greenham Common on Apr 29th. There were 15 counts in double figures from sites between Hungerford and Fobney Meadow. **Breeding:** records remain scarce, however there were two reports of agitated behaviour from Brimpton and one of nest building from Lower Farm GP. Adults with faecal sacs were noted at Bisham and Greenham Common. There were three reports of juveniles: one was ringed at Brimpton on Sep 5th; a further one was ringed there on Sep 16th; and one was sighted at Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 11th. **Autumn:** passage started in mid-July with a migrant noted at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Jul 16th, with a further two birds there on Aug 6th. Two migrants were also noted at Englefield on Jul 30th and Aug 13th, when one was heard calling from a strip of set-aside. The last reported date was Sep 29th with sightings of single birds at Greenham Common and Fobney Meadow. Sadly, this species is still showing statistically significant declines in the county. This was echoed by a comment from an observer at Wishmoor Bottom: “massive decline in last 20 years”.

CHIFFCHAFF COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

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

This is a common and widespread species with records received from all parts of the county. It has followed national trends by showing a statistically significant increase, with breeding season abundance being more than twice that in 2000 (Berkshire Bird Index). Chiffchaffs now regularly overwinter in Berkshire and records were received from every month of the year, with migrants starting to arrive in March. **First winter (Jan–Feb):** records came from 42 sites across the county. The highest winter counts, which may have been boosted by migrants from colder weather elsewhere, were 12 from Roundmoor Ditch at Eton Wick on Jan 23rd and Feb 9th, and 20 along the Blackwater River on Jan 29th. **Spring/Summer (Mar–Jul):** seventeen seen along the stream at Dorney Common on Mar 4th may have contained early migrants and 11 birds at Searles Farm Lane on Mar 11th were noted by the observer as “looks like a spring arrival.” As migration progressed, counts increased; 49 singing birds were recorded at Burghfield GPs on Mar 30th, with 43 there on Apr 9th. Thatcham Marsh held 41 birds between Apr 20th and 22nd. **Breeding:** evidence other than singing males came from throughout the county. Birds with evidence of a brood patch were found at Thatcham Marsh on May 21st and at The Wilderness, Kintbury, between Jun 26th and 28th. Adults carrying food were noted at: Dorney Wetlands on May 16th; Thatcham Marsh on May 23rd; Swinley Forest on Jun 3rd and 25th; Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Jul 9th; and from Winnersh on Jul 26th. Fledged young were found between May 28th and Jul 22nd at: Barton Court, Kintbury; Brimpton GPs; Great Shefford STW;

Harvey’s Meadow, Hungerford; Lower Green; Thatcham Marsh; The Wilderness, Kintbury; and Woolhampton GPs. The highest count of nine came from Brimpton GPs on Jul 13th. **Autumn/Second winter:** passage started in August with counts from individual sites rising. The highest autumn counts were of 33 birds on Sep 15th at Twyford GPs and 40 on Greenham Common on Sep 26th. Numbers tailed off as the year progressed although they increased again in December with counts of five along the Blackwater River on Dec 28th, and six at Eton Wick also on Dec 28th, with eight there on Dec 31st. Other Dec 31st reports came from Horton GPs, with two birds noted, and a single bird from Thatcham.

CHIFFCHAFF (*tristis*) COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*tristis*)

Phylloscopus collybita tristis

Very scarce winter visitor

There were four accepted records of this subspecies, all from Sandhurst STW. Two birds were noted on Jan 25th (PJC); one on Jan 29th (JMC); two were photographed on Feb 3rd (ABT); and one was seen and heard on Mar 13th (ABT).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

This species was widely reported from suitable habitat throughout the county. Site and monthly high counts are shown in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Sedge Warbler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	28	26	18	12	12	10	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	97	128	71	61	20	12	-	-	-

Spring: this was one of several warbler species which arrived earlier in 2017 than 2016 (they also departed earlier). First reports came from opposite ends of the county on Apr 2nd (Apr 8th in 2016), with a singing male at Heron Lake, Wraybury, and three birds at Thatcham Marsh, where one was ringed. This latter site also produced the highest count of 22 birds, heard between May 9th and 11th. Other sites with records of 20 or more were Hungerford Marsh and The Wilderness, Kintbury. Counts of between ten and 18 birds were recorded at several sites to the west of the county; the highest counts in the east were at Wraybury, which held 11 singing males on Apr 27th, and Dorney Wetlands, where a pair and 16 singing males were reported on May 16th. **Breeding:** displaying males were reported from Bagnor and Boxford on Apr 24th, and from Enbourne on May 4th. Birds with brood patches were reported at: Thatcham Marsh on May 13th, Jun 3rd and 11th; The Wilderness, Kintbury, on Jun 26th; and at Harvey’s Meadow, Hungerford, on Jul 2nd. A pair were seen feeding young at Fobney Meadow on Jul 20th, and at Colebrook Lake, Moor Green Lakes, on Jul 31st. Fledged young were reported from The Wilderness, Kintbury, between Jun 22nd and Jul 14th, and at Freeman’s Marsh, Hungerford, on Jul 19th. The apparent western bias of probable and confirmed breeding evidence and high counts may be a reflection of records from ringing sites rather than the abundance of the birds. More records from the mid and eastern areas would enable a more accurate picture of how this species is faring in the rest of the county. Evidence from the BTO suggests it is in decline in South East England. **Autumn:** migration started in July with two first winter birds noted at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Jul 16th followed by another two birds there on Aug 13th, and one from Englefield on Aug 27th. A brief snatch of song heard at Coley Park Farm, Reading, on Sep 22nd was the final record of the year (Oct 2nd in 2016).

REED WARBLER EURASIAN REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

The table shows the number of sites and birds reported

Monthly Maximum Counts for Reed Warbler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	19	21	17	13	14	7	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	81	188	119	105	59	14	-	-	-

The first reports of this migrant species came five days earlier than in 2016, when a singing male was reported from the Manor Lake part of the Moor Green Lakes complex on Apr 6th. Dorney Wetlands recorded its first birds the following day, when three were reported on Apr 7th. Reports then came in from across the county. The highest count of 53 birds, which included 41 singing males, four pairs, and four individual birds, came from Dorney Wetlands on May 16th. Other high counts came from Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, where 31 or 32 were consistently recorded in early May. The other high count of 30 came from Thatcham Marsh on May 30th. **Breeding:** this was confirmed by observations of adults feeding young at several locations: Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Jun 11th; Bray GPs on Jun 14th; Theale GPs on Jun 14th; Thatcham Marsh on Jun 18th; Dorney Wetlands on Jul 18th and 25th; Woolhampton GPs on Aug 2nd; and Moor Green Lakes on Aug 14th. Records continued to come in from across the county until September. The final records were of two birds together at Fobney Meadow on Sep 20th and a single bird at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 24th. The last departure dates are also earlier than Oct 2nd in 2016.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

Locustella naevia

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

A total of 37 records were submitted for this species and came from 13 sites between Apr 15th and Jul 25th. The spread of records has improved since 2014, when reports were received



Grasshopper Warbler, Fobney Meadow, Apr 28th, Andy Tomczynski.
One of four birds at this location during April and May.

from just eight sites, all in west Berkshire. The first record came from Hosehill Lake, Theale, where one was heard reeling by the viewing screen on Apr 15th. The next record was at Fobney Meadow when two birds were seen as well as heard on Apr 19th. Birds were present until at least May 14th, and were heard reeling, seen, and photographed by several observers. This territorial behaviour coupled with an observation of agitated behaviour may suggest a breeding attempt, but this was not confirmed. Fobney Meadow also produced the highest count for this species with four on Apr 22nd. Other records of either single birds or two birds came from: Bagnor; Dorney Wetlands; Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford; Moor Green Lakes; Slough Sewage Farm; Southcote; Thatcham Marsh; The Wilderness, Kintbury; Walbury Hill, Combe; and West Meadows, Marsh Benham. The last record came from Walbury Hill, where one was in a patch of long grass and umbellifers, and a brief snatch of song was heard, on Jul 25th.

BLACKCAP EURASIAN BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

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

This species is now regularly reported county-wide throughout the year from a variety of habitats. Most winter records come from birds visiting garden feeders. It is a species which is showing a statistically significant increase in abundance in the breeding season (Berkshire Bird Index). **First winter (Jan-Feb):** birds were reported from 30 sites, with 87 reports of ones or twos, including 45 from gardens. The birds were mainly taking sunflower seeds and fat from feeders. Birds were also noted taking berries on Mahonia, Cotoneaster, Pyracantha and Ivy. More unusually, one individual was reported to be eating scone and another taking bread. **Spring/Summer (Mar-Jul):** although there were a small number of reports of males singing in February (birds which had probably overwintered), the reports and numbers increased from March onwards. The highest counts of singing males were in the Burghfield GPs complex, with 28 on Mar 30th, rising on Apr 9th to 102, before falling to 93 on Apr 22nd. Other counts of over 20 were: 30, of which 29 were singing, at Twyford GPs on Apr 19th; 27 at Thatcham Marsh between Apr 20th and Apr 22nd, with 25 there between May 9th and May 11th; and 22 which included two family parties at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on May 31st. **Breeding:** brood patches were found on birds at Woolhampton GPs on May 3rd and at Thatcham Marsh on May 21st; adults carrying food or faecal sacs were reported from Enbourne between May 24th and Jun 5th; and visits to a probable nest site were noted at Brimpton on Jun 16th, and at Aldermaston GPs the following day on Jun 17th. Agitated behaviour was noted at Thatcham Marsh between Jun 20th and Jun 24th, and at Boxford on Jun 24th; and a nest with young was reported on the Kennet and Avon Canal near Reading between Jul 6th and 16th. Fledged young were reported between May 28th (when 14 birds which included a pair feeding three juveniles were seen at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor) and Jul 29th (when a fledged juvenile was seen at Brimpton GPs). Reports of fledged juveniles continued throughout June and July, including some from gardens where adults were feeding juveniles on berries including Honeysuckle and Mahonia. Other sites where fledged juveniles were recorded include: Dorney; Emmbrook, Wokingham; Lavell's Lake; Moor Green Lakes; and Compton Downs. **Autumn/second winter:** reports of fledged young continued into August, with the last report being a male with a fledged juvenile at Brimpton on Aug 25th. The highest autumn counts of 30 came at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 10th and at Dorney Wetlands on Sep 19th. The only other double figure counts from the mid or east of the county were 12 at Twyford GPs on Aug 1st and ten at Cock Marsh on Aug 29th. All other double figure counts came from west Berkshire ringing sites. This reflects the activity of the recorders and not the birds. To get a complete picture, records from the mid and east areas of the county would be welcomed.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

Monthly Maximum Counts for Garden Warbler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	1	29	28	22	10	6	1	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	2	47	87	56	19	8	1	-	-	-

Spring: the first report of the year was on Apr 5th when one was heard singing at Braywick Park LNR. Reports of ones and twos then began to come in from across the county from Apr 9th; these included a bird which was caught and ringed in the paddock at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Apr 14th. The number of sites where this species was recorded peaked in April, and the number of birds recorded peaked in May. Double figure counts were received from two sites: 11 were recorded in song at Greenham Common on May 9th; and 12 were singing at Twyford GPs on May 10th. **Breeding:** a pair were seen mating at Twyford GPs on May 4th. There were only three confirmed breeding records: at Twyford GPs, perhaps unsurprisingly, where a pair were seen feeding several young on May 31st; at Hosehill Lake where three fledged young were noted on Jun 14th; and at Woolhampton GPs where a fledged youngster was recorded on Jul 7th. **Post breeding:** other reports consisted of a family party seen at Twyford GPs on Jun 27th and a presumed migrating juvenile at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Jul 16th. Reports of single birds or small numbers, no higher than four, continued to come in county-wide through July and August. The final records of the year were similarly earlier than 2016 – early September as opposed to the end of the month. These came from the west of the county: a single bird was reported at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 27th; and the final record of the year was at Greenham Common where another single bird was noted on Sep 1st.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

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

Monthly Maximum Counts for Lesser Whitethroat

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	19	23	12	4	7	6	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	28	29	13	4	9	7	-	-	-

Spring: migrants started to arrive back in April with the first record at Wraysbury on a typical date of Apr 16th (three days later than 2016), followed by Jealott's Hill on Apr 17th. There was then a steady stream of records of ones and twos on a daily basis across the county during the remainder of April and May. The highest count was four at Field Farm Landfill on Apr 24th. **Breeding:** records of breeding, other than singing males, were thin on the ground. **Post breeding:** a "stunning" juvenile/first winter bird was seen at Dorney Wetlands on Jul 25th. An adult with a juvenile were seen at Lardon Chase, Streatley, on Aug 1st; two fresh juveniles were at Streatley Warren on Aug 10th; and a juvenile was ringed at Brimpton GPs on Sep 1st. Records of one or two birds continued through to September, including at Emmbrook, Wokingham, when two birds were seen on Sep 16th. The last records were single birds at Greenham Common and Wraysbury Scrub on Sep 19th, six days earlier than in 2016.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca halimodendri*

Very rare vagrant

A bird of one of the eastern races of Lesser Whitethroat (*blythi* or *halimodendri* referred to as Siberian Lesser Whitethroat) was found by a visiting birder who first saw the bird in his host's back garden in South Ascot on Jan 29th. It was seen on many occasions over the next

two months, until the last sighting on Mar 30th. In common with many other records of these races, it was attracted to a garden feeder. Although rare, individuals of these races have been detected as far back as the 1940s, primarily on the east coast, but the taxonomy of this group is under review, and subspecies may yet be reclassified as full species. In any case this record would represent a taxon that is a county first. See the finders' report by S Davies and G East on page 8.

WHITETHROAT COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)

Monthly Maximum Counts for Whitethroat

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	45	55	43	18	21	15	3	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	148	225	239	94	56	20	3	-	-

Now back on the Green List, the Whitethroat population in Berkshire, which has grown significantly over the last twenty years, appears stable (Berkshire Bird Index). **Spring:** the first record of 2017 came on Apr 8th, exactly the same date as 2016, when a single bird was reported from Dorney Wetlands. This was rapidly followed on Apr 9th with records from: Lavell's Lake; Moor Green Lakes; and The Wilderness, Kintbury, where two birds were recorded. Records of ones and twos then flowed in from across the county. Highest spring counts were: 25 recorded in Wraysbury Scrub on Apr 27th; and 27 at Churn Road, Compton, on May 2nd, including a nesting pair and 20 singing. **Breeding:** reports of displaying males came at Greenham Common on Apr 29th and May 7th, with other records from Bagnor and Boxford on Jun 24th. A bird carrying nesting material was reported from Padworth Lane GP on Apr 19th and 20th. Birds were seen visiting a probable nest site at Enbourne between May 24th and Jun 5th, and at Lower Green on Jun 25th to 26th. Reports of adults carrying food between May 28th and Jul 4th came from: Crookham Common; Aldermaston; Padworth Lane GP; Twyford GPs; Englefield; Emmbrook, Wokingham; Lambourn; Wellbottom Down; Walbury Hill, Combe; Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill; and Moor Green Lakes. Fledged young and family parties were reported from many sites across the county. The highest breeding season counts were: 21 recorded at Englefield on Jun 4th, with 26 there on Jul 3rd; and 44 recorded between Starveal and Blewbury Down on Jun 15th, including 29 singing, three pairs and nine others. **Autumn:** there was a steady stream of reports of birds, mainly ones and twos, but several of four and six during late August, September and into October. The last record was at Colnbrook when a bird was seen in flight and briefly then perched in a hedge on Oct 14th.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

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

This heathland specialist was reported every month during the year from ten sites, mainly the traditional strongholds of Greenham Common and sites within or near Swinley Forest. The records started on Jan 4th when seven individual birds were seen at Wishmoor Bottom. Sightings of small numbers, either singles or pairs, often near Stonechats, continued throughout the winter and early spring with Wishmoor Bottom continuing to report the highest numbers of up to seven birds. **Breeding:** agitated behaviour was reported from Crookham Common Pools on May 6th, and nest building was noted at Greenham Common on May 19th. Confirmed breeding came from Crookham Common and Greenham Common between Mar 21st and Jun 22nd. At Greenham, two territories were identified and adults were later seen carry faecal sacs or food, and a further two territories were identified at Crookham Common, also with adults carrying faecal sacs or food. Fledged young were

then reported from these territories, with four young in company with an adult at Greenham Common on Jun 22nd. At Wishmoor Bottom, a family party was reported on May 28th and a fledged juvenile was reported on Jun 15th. Fourteen birds were reported there on Jul 4th. The birds appeared to come from six territories and consisted of three singing males (one with a nearby juvenile), one female with two juveniles, and broods of four and three juveniles. So at least four pairs had bred. This was also the highest individual count for this species. Elsewhere, five pairs were identified at Wildmoor Heath, including a displaying male. Some of these birds also bred successfully. **Post breeding:** reports continued until the year end, with predominantly ones and twos. Exceptions were: ten at Greenham Common on Sep 28th; seven at South Ascot on Oct 30th; and ten at Wishmoor Bottom on Nov 30th. The final records for the year came on Dec 28th, when one bird was recorded at Moor Green Lakes and five were seen at Wishmoor Bottom.

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 Green Listed)

Reports of this tiny bird continue to increase, both in overall number and the number of locations. Mainly seen in its normal strongholds in the county, there is now more evidence from suburban locations. The west and east of the county have the most sightings, with about half as many in the more built-up central area. The majority of sightings were in the first half of the year, with fewer reports in summer, and then a gradual build-up into the winter months.

First Winter: single birds or pairs were reported regularly at: Finchampstead Ridges; Greenham Common; Snelsmore Common Country Park; Swinley Park; and Whiteknights Park, Reading; all regular established territories. Outside these expected locations, there were reports of: one at Streatley Recreation Ground on Jan 4th; one at a play park in Bracknell on Jan 20th; and one in a garden at Twyford on Jan 29th. **Spring/Summer:** reports continued to come from the regular sites over the breeding season, with 38 territories located in the Crown Estate and MoD forest lands in the south-east of the county. However, not many confirmed breeding reports were received. Two adults fed one young in a Bracknell garden on Jun 23rd (the pair having been present from April), and adults were seen carrying faecal sacs at Nores Hill on Jun 30th, remaining in residence throughout the year. Reports tailed off over the summer, with exceptions being: four (two territories) at Bucklebury Common on Jun 13th; two at Frilsham on Jun 13th; one at Sandhurst on Jun 21st that stayed for the rest of the year; and one in a rear garden in Maidenhead on Jul 17th. **Second winter:** there continued to be reports from the regular breeding locations. Other reports included: two in a garden in North Ascot on Oct 26th; one heard at Cookham on Oct 27th; one in a Lower Earley garden on Nov 14th; one at Thatcham Marsh on Nov 23rd and Dec 5th; and one in Wokingham on Dec 28th.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

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

Although slightly down on 2016, reports of Goldcrests remained substantial at over 600, with most from the west of the county and smaller, but significant, numbers from the east and central areas. Reports came from 150 locations during the year, with a slight emphasis on the colder months. Largest counts were: at least 50 in Crowthorne Wood on Jan 14th; ten at Thatcham Marsh on Jan 27th; 22 in Swinley Park on Feb 20th; 12 in Swinley Forest on Mar 14th; 14 in South Forest, Windsor Forest, on Apr 8th; 33 in Swinley Park on Apr 13th; 16 on Cranbourne Chase on Apr 24th; 18 in Swinley Park on May 5th; 12 in North Forest, Windsor Forest, on May 9th; 12 on Greenham Common on Oct 6th; at least ten in Prospect

Park, Reading, on Oct 9th; and 20 on Greenham Common between Oct 31st and Nov 25th. Although these large counts occurred in wooded areas, there were reports of smaller numbers of birds in a wide range of habitats, including suburban gardens. **Breeding:** there were many reports of territorial behaviour, but confirmed or suspected breeding was reported only a few times, including: two carrying food to a nest in Prospect Park on Mar 24th; a fledgling at Brimpton GPs on Jun 14th; an occupied nest at Lower Green, Inkpen, on Jun 15th; six birds including fledglings at Walbury Hill on Jun 23rd; one fledgling at Woolhampton GPs on Jul 4th; two birds including a fledgling at Aldermaston GPs on Jul 7th; an adult and three juveniles in a garden in Earley on Jul 9th; and an adult and a juvenile in a garden at Brimpton on Jul 13th.

WREN EURASIAN WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

An abundant resident (Green Listed)

The BTO's Breeding Bird Survey shows no change in abundance of Wrens in Berkshire (Berkshire Bird Index). In 2017, there was a small reduction of around 15% in reports of this, the most common bird in Britain, with a similar reduction in the number of locations, but this suggests reduced reporting, rather than a reduction in population. Indeed, the site maxima recorded were higher, with 121 at Burghfield GPs on Apr 9th topping the list, and seven locations reporting over 30 birds, compared to only four such locations in 2016. Counts of over 20 birds were recorded at 14 sites: nine in the west of the county; two in central Berkshire; and three in the east. These included: 30 at Barton Court, Kintbury, on Apr 9th; 47 at Swinley Park on Apr 13th; 39 at Enborne on Apr 13th; 38 at Speen Moor plantations on Apr 29th; 33 at North Forest, Windsor Park, on May 9th; and 48 at Thatcham Marsh on May 23rd. There were just 11 confirmed breeding reports, mainly of nest activity but also family groups actively feeding.

NUTHATCH EURASIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Common and widespread woodland resident (Green Listed)

Nuthatch abundance, as measured by the Berkshire Bird Index, has been increasing steadily over the last twenty years. Reports received in 2017 were predominantly from the west, with as many reports from there as the rest of the county. Sightings were slanted towards the beginning of the year, with consistent reports until May, then a decline through the summer until an increase through the autumn and into the winter.

Significant individual counts were: ten in Combe Wood on Feb 12th; 18 in South Forest, Windsor Forest, on Apr 8th; 14 in Swinley Park on Apr 13th; 13 at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on May 28th; and 12 at Hermitage on Dec 24th. The maximum count in Prospect Park, Reading, was five on Sep 26th, down from 21 in 2016. There were 12 reports of confirmed breeding, and many reports of birds visiting feeding stations.

TREECREEPER EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident (Green Listed)

While not reported in great numbers, Treecreepers were distributed across the county, with reports coming predominantly from the east and west, and fewer from the central region. Sightings were from a large number of different locations. Mostly seen as single birds or pairs, the highest counts were: nine in South Forest, Windsor Forest, on Apr 8th; eight in North Forest, Windsor Forest, on Apr 9th; and eight in Swinley Park on May 18th. There were four territories identified on Wildmoor Heath throughout the year. Confirmed breeding was reported at: Wishmoor Bottom on May 14th; Aldermaston on Jun 3rd; Brimpton GPs on Jun 16th; and the Wilderness, Kintbury, on Jul 8th.

STARLING COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Winter: murmurations of Starlings, a feature of the colder months of the year, are a spectacular sight. While this year could not match the 6,000 gathering seen in 2016, there were more reports of 300+ than last year. Significant flocks are shown in the table. The west of the county remains the overall winter stronghold, with significant numbers of birds in the centre and east in the autumn migration period. **Breeding:** as a breeding species, Starlings continue to decline in the county (Berkshire Bird Index). There were just eight reports of confirmed breeding. A flock of 100+ at Englefield on Jun 4th comprised mostly juveniles.

There were two reports of leucistic birds: one juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir between May 27th and Jul 18th, and another at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 27th - 28th.

Monthly Regional Maximum Counts for Starling

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	50	77	12	110	143	52	172	150	165	423	1197	391
Mid	14	176	21	7	42	105	-	-	3	250	2799	331
West	2110	713	1195	39	192	85	222	161	94	1114	2502	175

Monthly Maximum Counts for Starling

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Combe	90	22	800	-	1	-	-	-	-	7	7	-
Compton Downs	-	600	300	-	-	-	-	-	-	364	1070	-
Cow Down, West Ilsley	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84
Greenham Common	11	28	4	6	87	24	150	32	63	69	42	24
Lower Farm GP	400	27	39	4	3	8	14	23	28	600	400	31
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	70	2	85	120	25	170	50	15	9	121	60
Elsewhere												
Number of sites	13	13	11	14	17	11	4	4	3	13	20	11
Number of birds	1173	219	83	61	166	185	60	206	156	738	4858	698

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce passage migrant (Red Listed)

A disappointing year for this erratic visitor. **First winter:** unlike 2016, no over-wintering birds were reported.

Spring passage: the first report of the year was of two males at Combe Gibbet on Apr 11th (ABT). There were further sightings at this location for 11 days, peaking at four males on Apr 14th (CBur), with two males and two females on Apr 22nd (DFI). This means a minimum of six birds were here on spring passage. One male was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 20th (CDRH), and four were seen at Greenham Common on Apr 22nd (MIAn). At least two of these birds stayed for a week. A female was found at Burnthouse Lane GPs on May 5th (RCW, JCMo, AVL), and a male was seen at Greenham Common on May



Ring Ouzel, Crookham Common, Apr 24th, Andy Tomczynski.

One of the two birds lingering on the common for a week.

10th (AEDH), which was unlikely to have been one of the earlier visitors. This makes a probable total of ten birds for the spring passage. **Autumn passage:** there was one male at Cow Down on Sep 22nd (CRG); a first winter bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 28th (CDRH); followed by a male and a female (both first winter birds so probably one of these was the one present the previous day) at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 29th (CDRH).

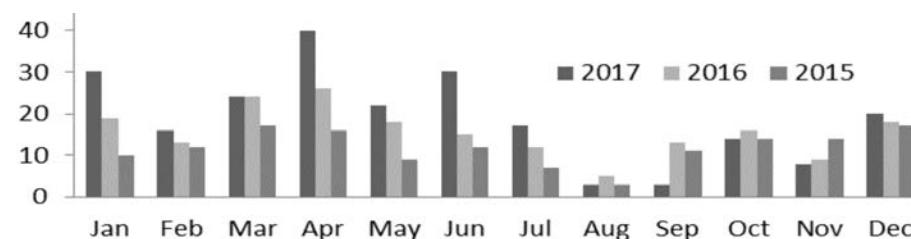
BLACKBIRD COMMON BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

The blackbird remains a common sight throughout the county, and overall was surely under-reported, even with the 1,000+ reports over the year. Individual reports of interest included: 34 at Freemans Marsh on Jan 18th; 31 at Enborne on Apr 13th; 40 on Greenham Common on Apr 24th; 31 at Speen Moor Plantations on Apr 29th; 31 at Lower Farm GP on Nov 10th; and 34 at Hyde Farm, Bisham, on Dec 21st. The graph shows the maximum number of birds reported on Greenham Common monthly over the last three years (JL, IW), as a snapshot of the stability of the population on that one site. County-wide, the abundance of Blackbirds in the breeding season shows a similar stability (Berkshire Bird Index).

The chart shows the maximum monthly counts at Greenham Common from 2015 to 2017.

Blackbird: Monthly Maximum Counts at Greenham Common



FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

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

While the number of reports was similar to 2016, fewer large flocks were reported. Distribution across the county favoured the west, as shown in the table.

Monthly Regional Maximum Counts for Fieldfare

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	153	336	162	4	-	-	-	-	-	299	367	783
Mid	370	495	18	2	-	-	-	-	-	359	260	222
West	843	1399	480	59	-	-	-	-	-	586	1195	151

First winter: there were reports of large groups, smaller groups and single birds, as well as mixed flocks with other thrushes throughout the first two months of the year, falling off through March. The largest flock was 400 at Compton Downs on Feb 4th. The last report was of a bird at Greenham Common on Apr 24th. **Second winter:** the first arrival was a single bird seen flying over Calcot on Oct 3rd. Major arrivals came much later in the month, with 13 flying west at Great Meadow Pond on Oct 15th, and 300+ flying west in groups of up to 50 birds over Lower Farm GP on the morning of Oct 28th. The largest flock was 450 at Ashley Hill, Warren Row, on Dec 26th.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

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

These migrant thrushes were widely reported across the county, with reports only slightly slanted towards the west, although, as the table shows, the numbers reported were highest in the central region.

Monthly Regional Maximum Counts for Redwing

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	306	740	605	1	-	-	-	-	-	390	279	818
Mid	704	1133	192	7	-	-	-	-	-	1679	590	559
West	256	451	73	2	-	-	-	-	-	342	656	178

First winter: there were 170 reports in the first part of the year, with flocks of up to 500 seen on open land. Reports of smaller groups continued through March, tailing off into April, with the final sighting being three birds at Whistley Green on the evening of Apr 22nd.

Second winter: the first report of arriving birds was of one at Lavell's Lake on the morning of Oct 3rd, followed half an hour later by 12 birds at Calcot. The full migration started a week later, with flocks of up to a dozen birds. There were 154 birds at Greenham Common by Oct 16th, and over 1,000 birds were seen in flocks of 100 or so flying over Southcote Meadows during the morning of Oct 31st. During November and December, parties of 50-150 were reported at numerous sites, feeding on pastures and arable fields.

REDWING (ICELANDIC) *Turdus iliacus coburni*

The one report of this sub-species was of two birds in Windsor Great Park on Feb 11th (CDRH): "Rather obvious Icelandic *T.i.coburnii* - with large Redwing flock (during continuing snow-fall): first noted their significantly darker ups, then both clearly larger than Scandinavian Redwings, alongside, and apparently fatter; much heavier breast-streaking, almost coalescing (and restricting percentage of pale ground colour); flanks looked redder (but could be due to more contrast with ups); supercilium and sub-moustachial strongly suffused with buff".

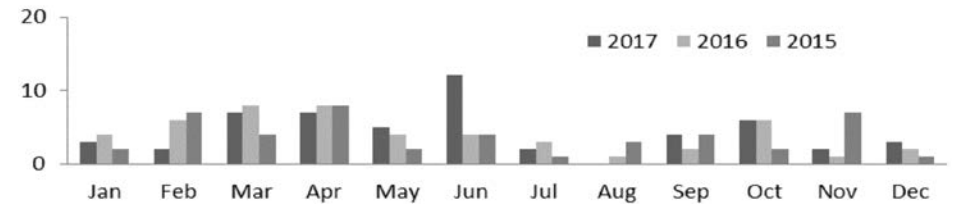
SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)

Reports for Song Thrushes remained predominantly from the west of the county, with roughly four times as many reports as from both the east and centre. However, with reports from around 150 locations, the Song Thrush seems to be maintaining its status. Breeding abundance as measured in the Berkshire Bird Index shows a small increase over the last twenty years. There were just 11 reports of confirmed breeding, along with all-year-round reports of birds singing. Major sightings included: at least 18 at Compton on Jan 3rd; 31 at Burghfield GPs on Apr 9th; 14 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 26th; 12 on Greenham Common on Jun 17th; 16 at Upper Bucklebury on Oct 23rd; 12 at Lower Farm GP on Oct 28th; and 12 at Padworth College on Nov 25th. The graph indicates both the relative stability of the population over two years at one site with consistent recording, Greenham Common, and the seasonal fluctuation in numbers.

The chart shows the maximum monthly counts at Greenham Common from 2015 to 2017.

Song Thrush: Monthly Maximum Counts at Greenham Common



MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

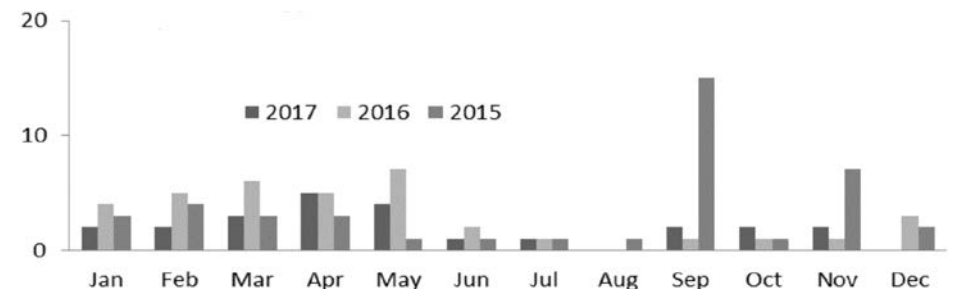
Common though declining resident (Red Listed)

The number of sightings reported was approximately the same as in the previous year and from around the same number of locations. There were eight reports of confirmed breeding. However, post breeding counts were higher, with seven counts of more than ten birds (of which three were over 20), compared to only four counts of over ten in 2016. As with Song Thrush, the west of the county is the stronghold for this bird, with over twice as many reports as in the east, and nearly four times as many as the central area. However, the largest groups were two in the east: 20 at Virginia Water on Jan 25th; 20 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 13th; and one in mid Berkshire, with 23 at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Sep 9th.

Although the numbers are perhaps too small to draw useful conclusions, the graph for Greenham Common, a site with consistent recording, is included for comparison with the other resident thrushes.

The chart shows the maximum monthly counts at Greenham Common from 2015 to 2017.

Mistle Thrush: Monthly Maximum Counts at Greenham Common



SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red Listed)

Spotted Flycatchers typically arrive around the middle of May. This year, the first one reported was at Hungerford on May 6th; by the end of the month birds had been reported, often singing, at twelve sites, from Hungerford in the west to Windsor Great Park in the east.

Breeding: the majority of reports during the breeding season came from woodlands in the west of the county, where breeding was confirmed or probable at eight sites, and from the regular sites of Windsor Great Park and Swinley Forest in the east. There was no evidence of breeding submitted for mid Berkshire, though birds were present at Swallowfield Church in May and June, and single birds were reported at Aston and Roundoak Piece in mid-May. **Post breeding:** in August and September, dispersing or migrant birds were reported from sites

across the county, at which there had been no evidence of breeding: Colnbrook; Cookham; Prospect Park, Reading; Dinton Pastures CP; Hosehill Lake, Theale; Burnthouse Lane; Eversley GPs; Stanford Dingley; and Seven Barrows, Lambourn. Walbury Hill, in particular, appears to attract migrant birds, with at least six present on Aug 15th, with smaller numbers on other days. The last record of the year was at Prospect Park, Reading, on Sep 26th.

Spotted Flycatcher: Minimum Numbers of Birds by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	-	12	11	7	16	6	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	-	18	23	16	36	9	-	-	-

ROBIN EUROPEAN ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

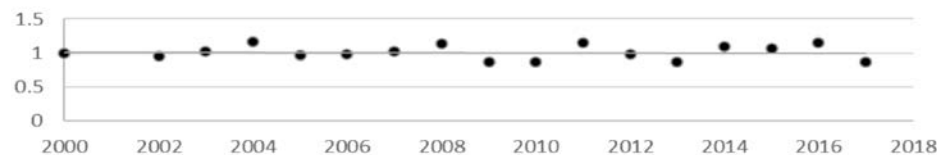
Abundant resident (Green Listed)

The abundance of Robins in Berkshire, as measured by the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey, has been remarkably constant over the period 2000 to 2017, showing a small, but statistically not significant, increase (Berkshire Bird Index).

The chart shows the relative abundance in the breeding season since 2000.

High counts of singing birds were reported from a wide range of sites, though without systematic surveying and site area information these should not be taken as an indication of habitat preference or density. Notable high counts were: 87 singing birds at Burghfield GPs on Mar 30th; 47 in Swinley Park on Apr 13th; and 54 on a walk covering half of North Forest, Windsor Great Park, on May 9th. Nest building was noted as early as Feb 5th and the first fledged young on Apr 20th. In the autumn, when Robins are again singing and holding territory, high counts were often reported, for example: 25 at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 19th; 18 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 23rd; 24 at Crookham Common Pools on Sep 30th; 33 at Spleen Moor Plantations on Oct 28th; and 20 at Freeman's Marsh on Nov 2nd. Some of these autumn birds may have been on passage or winter visitors: one observer noted a rather orange-breasted bird holding territory in the middle of Fobney Island.

Robin: Relative Abundance 2000–2018¹



¹ No data for 2001 because of access restrictions due to a foot and mouth disease outbreak

NIGHTINGALE COMMON NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

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

A slightly earlier arrival than recent years, the first bird being seen at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 3rd, followed over the next three weeks by arrivals at all the main sites: Brimpton GPs; Searles Farm Lane GPs; Crookham Common; Moatlands GPs; Thatcham Marsh; Hosehill Lake, Theale; and Dinton Pastures CP. The numbers of singing males reported (45) was lower than in 2016 (74). These data do not come from systematic surveys and they are likely to underestimate numbers. However, the gravel pits around the Theale area clearly remain the stronghold for this species. It is noteworthy that, as in recent years, few records have come from west of Newbury (only on the Kennet & Avon Canal at Dreweats Lock and Marsh Benham in 2017) and there was only one site east of Reading (Dinton Pastures CP).

The last record of the year was on the rather early date of Jul 4th, when a bird was still singing, though weakly, at Main Pit, Theale.

The table shows the number of singing males recorded at all sites.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Nightingale

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
River Kennet west of Newbury	-	2	-	-
Greenham/Crookham Commons	5	5	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	1	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	1	-	-
Brimpton GPs	3	2	2	-
Midgham GPs	-	1	1	-
Wigmore Lane GP	-	1	-	-
Main Pit, Theale	6	10	1	1
Moatlands GP	3	6	-	-
Hosehill GP	1	2	-	-
Burghfield GPs	11	11	-	-
Dinton Pastures	1	2	-	-

BLACK REDSTART

Phoenicurus ochruros

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

A poor year for Black Redstarts in the county: no breeding records, and reports from only three sites in the spring and one in autumn. **Spring:** a female was seen in a garden in Hungerford on Mar 10th (PK), then on Mar 26th a female type was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH), and a male was photographed in a Thatcham garden on the same day (RJB). **Autumn:** a female or first winter bird was present at Emmbrook, Wokingham, from Oct 22nd to 25th (PO).



Black Redstart, Emmbrook, Oct 25th, Andy Tomczynski.

This first winter or female bird was seen frequenting the roof tops of a new housing development.

REDSTART COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Localised summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Redstarts arrived, as usual, early in April, with the first at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 5th, followed by others in their Thames Basin Heaths' breeding area, and, to the west, at Greenham Common (a female on Apr 15th) and at Combe Gibbet (Apr 20th). Evidence of territory holding was restricted to the woodlands of Swinley Forest, South Ascot, and Wishmoor Bottom, where birds were observed feeding young from Jun 3rd. Away from the Thames Basin Heaths, there were records between mid-June and late July, when still spotty juveniles were seen in the West Woodhay/Walbury Hill area and in the Greenham Common/Lower Farm area. We do not know, however, whether these birds bred locally.

From late July, records came from a much wider area: from Colnbrook in the east, to Remenham Hill, Dinton Pastures CP and Fobney Island in mid Berkshire; and across west Berkshire at Brimpton, Greenham and Crookham Commons, Wigmoreash Pond, and on the

Downs at Streatley, West Ilsley, Compton, West Woodhay and Walbury Hill. The last records of the year were at Colnbrook and Crookham Common on Sep 26th.

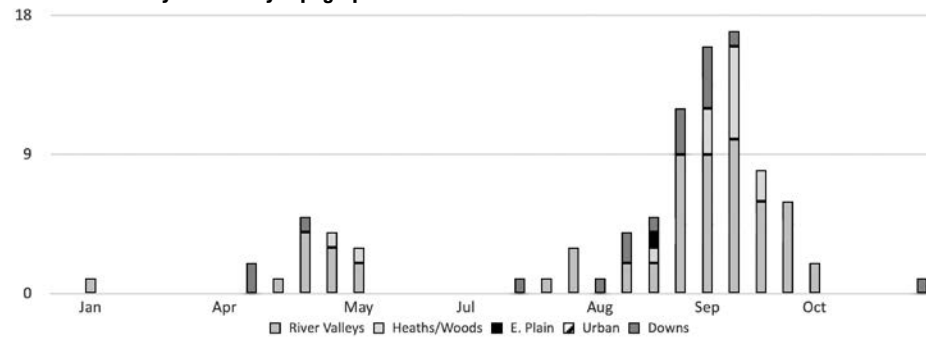
WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

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

The Whinchat that had been found at Remenham on Dec 30th 2016 was still present on Jan 2nd (CDRH).

Spring: the first spring passage bird was on the early date of Apr 11th at Combe Gibbet, followed on Apr 21st by a bird at Burnthouse Lane, then others over the following ten days across the county. The timing of the spring passage and the distribution across the county was similar to other years, though numbers were around half those in 2016. Records came from: Horton; Slough STW; Lea Farm Lake, Hurst; Swallowfield; Burnthouse Lane; Greenham Common; Combe Gibbet; and Wellbottom Down. **Autumn:** the first returning bird was recorded on Compton Downs on Jul 16th. Thereafter, ones and twos were reported from across the county, largely from those open areas most frequented by birdwatchers, such as Burnthouse Lane, Moor Green Lakes and Walbury Hill. As in spring, numbers were around half of those in 2016. The last record was of two birds at Burnthouse Lane on Oct 3rd.

Whinchat: Weekly Maxima by Topographic Area



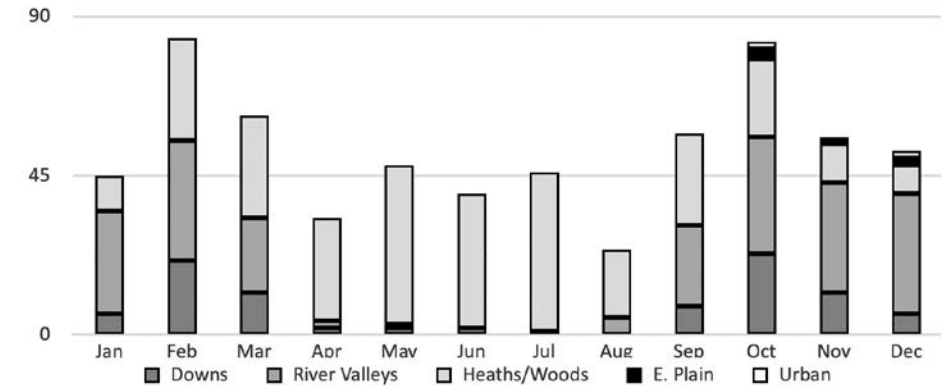
STONECHAT EUROPEAN STONECHAT *Saxicola rubicola*

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

Stonechat numbers fluctuate considerably from year to year. Following an apparently poor breeding season in 2015, perhaps due to a colder than normal winter and spring, the peak autumn totals have increased from the 39 recorded in 2015 to 104 in 2016 and 89 in 2017. Through 2017, the monthly totals have almost all been higher than the averages for 2000 to 2008 (The Birds of Berkshire Atlas, 2013) and the subsequent annual reports. This may be, at least in part, due to the mild conditions of the previous two winters. **First winter:** birds were spread widely, occupying at least 40 sites, particularly on farmland in the river valleys. Most birds were reported in groups of two or more and, where sex was quoted, two thirds appeared to be in pairs. The largest concentration reported was 20 on Crookham Common at the end of February, foraging on patches of recently cut gorse. **Breeding:** although Stonechats use the river valleys and, to a lesser extent, downland in winter, they breed almost exclusively on heathlands. In 2017, there were only two reports of breeding on the downs, at East Garston and Lambourn, and one in the river valleys, on the New Diggings at Moor Green Lakes. The great majority of breeding birds were on the Thames Basin Heaths, where at least 25 territories were reported, and at Greenham and Crookham Commons, where there were at least four territories and post-breeding numbers of at least 15 were

recorded. The extent to which the appearance of birds away from the heathland breeding sites represents dispersal of locally bred birds or immigrants is unclear. A party of six at a Colnbrook Landfill in early October was notable, as was a party of five at Englefield at the end of September. **Second winter:** in November and December, the distribution was much the same as that in January and February, with river valley sites predominating. Most birds were in groups of two or more, usually with male and female together. The largest number reported together was five, at: Fobney Meadow; Walbury Hill; and Wishmoor Bottom. The chart shows clearly the seasonal changes in distribution.

Stonechat: Monthly Maxima by Topographic Area

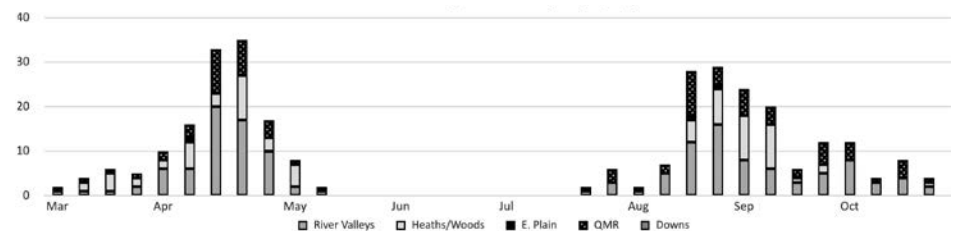


WHEATEAR NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant (Green Listed)

A fairly typical year for Wheatear. **Spring:** the first bird of the year was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 7th, typically a site for early Wheatears. In the first three weeks of the spring arrival, 70% of birds were males, then through April approximately equal numbers of males and females were seen, and during May females predominated (65%). Peak passage was in mid-April, when 12 were seen on the downs at West Ilsley on Apr 16th, and ten at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 20th. Overall, nearly half (46%) of birds were recorded on the downs, 17% at Queen Mother Reservoir, and 22% at Greenham and Crookham Commons; the remainder were spread over 17 other sites. The last of the spring passage was at Wellbottom Down on May 24th. **Autumn:** return passage began with birds at Queen Mother Reservoir and Compton Downs on Jul 29th. Passage peaked in late August to early September, when ten birds were on Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 22nd; eight on Compton Downs on Aug 26th; and seven on Crookham Common on Sep 14th after rain. There was a similar distribution of birds between sites to that in spring. Again, Queen

Wheatear: Weekly Maxima by Topographic Area



Mother Reservoir was the most used site (26% of birds) with Greenham and Crookham Commons accounting for 19%, and downs sites together for 36%. The last bird of the year was at Queen Mother Reservoir on a typical date of Oct 27th.

One of four birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 18th was identified as a Greenland Wheatear *O. o. leucorhoa* (DJB).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common but declining resident (Red Listed)

Although probably much under-recorded, reports came from across the county: 81 from 26 sites in west Berkshire, 40 from 13 sites in mid Berkshire, and 46 from 20 sites in east Berkshire. The majority were from the favoured habitats for this species, such as farm buildings, urban areas, and rural village locations. Counts of 20 or more birds were reported from 17 sites; notable counts were regularly recorded in the Maidenhead area which appears to be a stronghold for the species. **Spring:** sightings of 40+ birds were recorded at Arkle Avenue, Thatcham, on Mar 12th, and at White Waltham Airfield on Jun 12th. An encouraging year-high count of 100+ was seen in the Heywood Farm Barns area on Jun 26th, with good numbers of birds reported between May and September. An impressive 45 were reported in a Cookham Rise garden on Aug 8th, increasing to around 60 birds by Oct 11th. **Breeding:** recently fledged young were reported from five locations: Woodlands Park; Cookham Rise; Brimpton; West Reading; and the New Town area of Reading. Nest building and nests with young heard were also reported across the county, with the bulk of records coming from the western area: Hungerford; Sheepdrove Farm near Lambourn; Boxford; Newbury Racecourse; Moor Green Lakes; and Hurley. The Berkshire Bird Index of breeding season abundance shows little change since 2000.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Common though possibly declining resident (Amber Listed)

There were 782 records from 123 locations by 56 observers, the vast majority of which were recorded in the western part of the county (82%). The species is well-established across the county where there is plenty of suitable scrub, hedgerow, and town habitat, and is undoubtedly under-recorded here. Counts above ten birds were recorded on 14 occasions during the year, among these were: 17 at Leckhampstead on Feb 4th; 18 at Crookham Common Pools on Feb 18th; 14 at Enborne on Mar 25th; 20 birds reported as singing on territories at Burghfield GPs on Mar 30th, increasing to a year high count of 35 by Apr 9th; 16 at Boxford on Mar 31st; and 13 at Greenham Common on the same date.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Dunnock

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	31	34	32	48	37	36	21	14	14	15	30	18
Number of birds	82	131	162	214	107	99	53	25	37	41	93	56

Breeding: a total of 88 reports were submitted for singing males on territory at 36 locations. The bulk of sightings were from the west of the county and were recorded by a small number of observers. Courtship behaviour was reported at eight separate locations; the first was on Feb 3rd. Nest building and an adult bird carrying a faecal sac were recorded at two locations, and suspected active nests at other sites. The first of 12 records of fledged young was of a juvenile bird being fed at Ascot on Apr 24th. Juvenile birds were reported until Jul 22nd, with reports of adults with brood patches in June and July. Breeding abundance measured by the Breeding Bird Survey has shown little change over the last twenty years (Berkshire Bird Index).

YELLOW WAGTAIL WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Common but declining passage migrant uncommon and local summer resident (Red Listed)

Between April and September, a total of 104 records were received across the county from 59 locations: 29 in west Berkshire, 12 in mid Berkshire, and 18 in east Berkshire. The majority of sightings in mid and east Berkshire were for passage birds during the Apr–May and Jul–Sep migration periods. The tables show the total number of sites with records, and the total number of birds over seven-day periods from the first record in April until the final record in September. Where a site has multiple counts in the same time period, the highest day count for the week has been used.

Spring Weekly Maximum Counts for Yellow Wagtail

Week commencing	2– Apr	9– Apr	16– Apr	23– Apr	30– Apr	7– May	14– May	21– May	28– May	4– Jun	11– Jun	18– Jun	25– Jun
Number of sites	–	5	7	10	3	5	3	2	2	1	1	2	3
Number of birds	–	6	12	18	6	12	4	4	5	1	1	2	7

Autumn Weekly Maximum Counts for Yellow Wagtail

Week commencing	2– Jul	9– Jul	16– Jul	23– Jul	30– Jul	6– Aug	13– Aug	20– Aug	27– Aug	3– Sep	10– Sep	17– Sep	24– Sep
Number of sites	1	–	2	–	–	–	2	6	12	4	7	5	2
Number of birds	1	–	7	–	–	–	4	17	34	5	23	13	2

Spring passage: began with the first sighting of a male at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 9th. A steady stream of sightings of individual birds and the occasional two then followed for the rest of the month. The exceptions were three on the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 17th, and four at Queen Mother Reservoir on both Apr 24th and 30th, which were possibly lingering birds. The occasional bird was reported across east and west Berkshire through May with a year high count of eight birds, including six males, being seen amongst ponies at Colnbrook on May 11th. **Breeding:** another very poor year for recorded breeding in the county. The first signs of possible breeding were of a pair of birds, with the female collecting nest material, reported at Wellbottom Down on May 18th. Two pairs were recorded on territory at Lambourn Downs on May 31st, and a male was reported singing on territory on Jun 19th. A male was also reported singing at Roden Downs, Compton, on Jun 19th. The only confirmed juvenile bird in known breeding areas was from Weathercock Hill, Lambourn, on Jun 29th, though this may have been an early migrant. The bird was present with three males and another seen flying over. This is the second year in a row where no reports of successful breeding have been received. The lack of confirmed breeding may be partly due to a lack of coverage in the summer months, but it is an indicator of further decline as a breeding species in Berkshire. **Autumn passage:** compared to 2016, there were fewer records. The significant difference was that there were no counts of eight or more during the whole passage period. The autumn passage started with a single juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 6th, with another, or possibly the same bird, on Jul 19th. A count of six was recorded at Great Shefford STW on Jul 22nd. The final sighting for the month was of three first winter/female types at Colnbrook on Jul 13th. An autumn high count of seven birds was recorded on Compton Downs on Aug 20th. Seven were also at Lea Farm Lake, Hurst, on Aug 27th, three of which were going over south-east. On the same day, six were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir along with another six, including two adult males, at Colnbrook. Moving into September, a count of six was recorded at Greenham Common on Sep 13th with the same number reported on a “landfill site” at Colnbrook on Sep 16th. Four birds paid a brief visit to the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 17th. Sightings tailed off for the last two weeks of September, with the final sighting of the year being a single bird at Crookham Common Pools on Sep 30th.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Locally common resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)

Records were received for 114 locations across the county: 43 sites in west Berkshire, 40 in mid Berkshire, and 31 in east Berkshire. These totals are generally in line with the numbers recorded in recent years. As expected, rivers, sewage treatment works and wetland areas provided the habitat for the vast majority of reports received.

A monthly summary of records is given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Grey Wagtail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	33	21	36	32	37	18	16	17	18	25	25	17
Number of birds	40	37	70	62	80	35	37	26	38	44	36	22

High counts: the majority of reports received were for between one and four birds, or related to family parties. Higher counts were: five birds at Eton Wick Floods on Feb 9th; a year-high count of nine birds at Padworth Lane GP on Mar 15th; seven at Barton Court, Kintbury, on Apr 9th; six at Lower Farm GP on Jun 21st, and a count of eight birds at Great Shefford STW on Jul 22nd.

Breeding: between April and July, there was evidence of breeding at 23 locations; copulation was recorded at Thameside Promenade, Reading, and two pairs were seen nest building at Marsh Benham. Probable nest sites were recorded at The Wilderness, Kintbury, and adults were seen carrying food at: Boxford; Streatley; Queen Mother Reservoir; and at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury. Young or family parties were reported at the following other sites: Freeman's Marsh and Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford; Marsh Benham; Snelsmore Common CP; Newbury town centre; Brimpton GPs; Streatley STW; Bottom Lane Floods; Sulhamstead Abbots; Moatlands GPs; Dinton Pastures CP; Lea Farm Lake, Hurst; Moor Green Lakes; Dorney Wetlands; Great Meadow Pond; and Queen Mother Reservoir. Young were recorded at 16 locations, which is in line with records in recent years. **Autumn passage:** a record of five birds, with three dropping in whilst the other two continued over, reported at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Sep 6th, may indicate passage. Six birds were also reported at Great Meadow Pond on the sewage treatment works on Sep 17th. Overall, however, there were no noticeable increases of numbers during this period at the well-watched sites across the county.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Uncommon passage migrant

The nominate race, *M. a. alba*, was reported on 35 occasions from seven locations across the county through the spring and autumn passage. The majority of sightings were from two sites: 17 occasions at Lower Farm GP in the west; and 13 at Queen Mother Reservoir in the east. There were a handful of sightings from the other five locations: two in east Berkshire, and three in mid Berkshire. As in recent years, there was a significant contrast between the spring and autumn counts. There were 31 records in spring, when the plumage contrast with Pied Wagtails is more obvious, and only five for the autumn period. **Spring passage:** a good spring passage was recorded between Mar 23rd and May 29th, with an increase on 2016's numbers. There were 31 records, totalling around 35 different birds. The first of these was a male at Lower Farm GP on Mar 23rd. Numbers remained in the ones and twos throughout April. Four birds, three males and a female, were reported at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 4th. An adult female, a first summer female and a pair, were also reported at Queen Mother Reservoir, on Apr 22nd. The final spring passage sighting was of a first summer

female with "a club-foot on RH side" at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 29th. **Autumn passage:** five birds were reported during the autumn period. The first report was of two birds at Lower Farm GP on Sep 9th, with a single bird being seen until Sep 13th. Two more birds were reported at Lower Farm GP on Sep 27th. The final autumn passage record was of a first winter type at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 8th.

PIED WAGTAIL WHITE WAGTAIL (*yarrellii*) *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green Listed)

A species that occurs across most of the county, reported by 64 observers who recorded a total of 368 sightings from 82 locations during the year. The reports were distributed thus: 235 in west Berkshire, 34 in central Berkshire, and 99 in east Berkshire. **Breeding:** the Berkshire Bird Index suggests a small decline in abundance in the breeding season. Breeding evidence came from locations across the county. Pairs were seen displaying at Newbury Racecourse on Apr 27th, and at Greenham Common on May 2nd. The first report of adult birds being seen carrying food was at Moor Green Lakes NR on Apr 23rd. This activity was also seen: near the Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on May 10th; at Padworth Lane GP on May 14th; at Remenham on May 16th; and again near the Great Meadow Pond on Jul 9th. This last date indicated a possible second brood. The first signs of successful breeding were indicated by juvenile birds being seen at Brimpton GPs on May 23rd. There were also reports of juvenile birds being seen at: Boxford; Lower Farm GP; Great Meadow Pond; and Queen Mother Reservoir. For such a widespread species there are still, alas, relatively few confirmed breeding reports in the county. **Non-breeding:** outside the breeding season, records of 50 or more birds in the first winter were: 100+ flock gathering at dusk to roost at Sandhurst STW on Jan 9th, the highest count of the year; and 50+ at New Diggings at Moor Green Lakes also on Jan 9th. Later in the year, 50+ birds were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 14th; 52 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 23rd; and 60 were recorded in alfalfa crop fields at Farley Hill on Aug 24th. Fifty-four birds were seen near Manor Farm, Brimpton, on Oct 9th; later in the month a site-high count of 76 birds was recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 19th, with 50+ birds still being present on Oct 31st. A monthly summary of records is given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Pied Wagtail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	25	13	14	15	17	17	12	8	11	15	21	12
Number of birds	186	110	32	44	37	46	117	169	149	208	153	84

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, locally common summer resident (Amber Listed)

First winter/spring: flocks were unexceptional, the highest being: 50 at Cheapside on Jan 5th; 50+ at Thatcham Marsh on Jan 28th; 50+ at Burnthouse Lane GP on Mar 8th; and 100 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 16th, which included a movement overhead to the north-west. Light passage to the north continued until Apr 22nd, otherwise numbers were low. **Summer/breeding:** between May and July, it was reported at ten sites in west Berkshire, but none in mid or east Berkshire. Breeding took place at: the Lambourn Downs (three pairs); Walbury Hill (carrying food); Greenham Common (young seen); Crookham Common (young seen); and Compton Downs (carrying nest material). **Autumn/second winter:** suggestions of passage began in August. Southward movements became pronounced in the middle of September; the highest counts were: 140 on the Compton Downs on Sep 17th; and 70 at Eton Wick on Sep 19th. Movement continued until early November, with

the highest counts at Queen Mother Reservoir: 105 on Oct 18th, 153 on Oct 19th, and 111 on Nov 2nd. After mid-November, numbers settled to below 50, except for 59 at Woodlands Park Fields on Dec 4th, and 68 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 5th. A monthly summary of records is given in the table.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Meadow Pipit

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	17	13	16	10	5	6	6	7	25	28	27	14
Number of birds	222	166	236	60	20	35	26	23	527	511	399	203

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Locally common but declining summer visitor, uncommon passage migrant (Red Listed)

The welcome increase in Tree Pipits noted in 2016 continued in 2017, during which a survey by DJB revealed a healthy total of 33 territories in the Swinley Forest, Swinley Park and South Ascot areas. **Spring/summer:** the first arrival was in song at the Crowthorne Triangle on Mar 31st. Almost all the reports related to breeding sites, but a migrant was present at Horton GPs on Apr 14th and 15th. 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). **Autumn:** unusually, there were no reports of migrants, and the last record concerned one at Greenham Common on Sep 1st.

Tree Pipit: Breeding Season Summaries

Locality	Number of Territories	Max Count inc young	Notes
Lower Green	1	1	
Walbury Hill/Combe	2	2	
Snelsmore Common	2	3	
Greenham/Crookham Common	1	3	
Bucklebury Common	–	–	No reports
Padworth Common	2	2	
Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Berkshire locations):			
Crowthorne Woods	4	4	Some may refer to Swinley Forest
Swinley Forest	?	?	
Wildmoor Heath	1	1	Only 1 displaying bird
MOD heathland/Wishmoor Bottom	4	6	3 juvs
Sandhurst Royal Military Academy	–	–	No reports
Swinley Park	6	6	
South Ascot area	19	?	5+ families with young

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

Just four records, a sharp drop from 2016, with none in autumn. One was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 5th and 6th (CDRH), followed by four there on Feb 22nd (DJB). One at Queen Mother Reservoir between Mar 4th and 13th (CDRH *et al.*) was considered to be the same bird that had been seen in January. The final record of the year was one at Bottom Lane Floods, Theale, on Mar 23rd (CMc, KEM).

ROCK PIPIT

EURASIAN ROCK PIPIT

Anthus petrosus

Scarce passage migrant and a rare winter visitor (Green Listed)

Numbers were lower this year. **Spring:** an early bird showed at Horton Brook Quarry on Feb 4th and 5th (CDRH). **Autumn:** there was a trickle of singles through Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 26th, 29th and Oct 3rd (all CDRH), Oct 13th (ABT, CDRH), Oct 23rd (CDRH) and Nov 2nd (DJB, RHS).



Rock Pipit, Queen Mother Reservoir, Nov 2nd, Roger Stansfield.

The last one of eight seen during the year.

ROCK PIPIT (*littoralis*) EURASIAN ROCK PIPIT (*littoralis*)

Anthus petrosus littoralis

Scarce passage migrant and a rare winter visitor (Green Listed)

One was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on the typical date of Mar 12th (CDRH).

CHAFFINCH COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

The Berkshire Bird Index shows a continuing decline in abundance of this familiar, but under-reported, bird. This year saw only two-thirds of the records that were submitted in 2016, and a corresponding drop in the total number recorded, with the majority of birds being seen in locations in west Berkshire. The highest counts were reported during the winter months, including: 67 at Crookham Common on Jan 5th; 24 at Mill Ride, Ascot, on Jan 14th; 28 at Eastbury Down, Lambourn, on Feb 9th; 27 at Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford, on Feb 23rd; and 23 at Boxford on Mar 31st. The second winter period saw high counts of: 40 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 31st; 33 at Welford on Nov 1st; 50 at Remenham Hill on Nov 2nd; 26 at Combe Church on Nov 9th; 26 at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Nov 13th; 90 at Parkfarm Down, Lambourn, on Nov 17th; 40 at Englefield on Nov 25th; an impressive 150 at Dean's Copse, Burghfield, on Nov 21st; 22 at Walbury Hill on Dec 4th; 80 at Englefield on Dec 22nd; 40 at Fleethill Farm, Finchampstead, on Dec 28th; and 50 at Reading Services on Dec 29th. There was only one report of breeding activity, when a pair was seen collecting nest material at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury, on Apr 29th.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Winter visitor and passage migrant in varying numbers (Schedule One and Green Listed)

Bramblings were recorded at 37 sites across the county: 16 in east Berkshire, 14 in mid Berkshire, and seven in west Berkshire. They were often seen in gardens around feeders in the company of other finches, mainly Chaffinches. Numbers of this winter visitor vary greatly from season to season. **First winter:** there were fewer sightings in the first winter period compared to 2016, the largest count being an impressive flock of 100+ at South Ascot on Apr 6th. The last sighting of the first winter period occurred at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 11th. **Second winter:** the first autumn sighting was at Windsor Great Park on Oct 24th. The highest numbers of records were during November and December, with 33 and 28 sightings respectively. Other notable flocks were seen in November, including 40-50 at Englefield on Nov 25th and 34 there on Nov 30th.



Hawfinch, Mortimer, Dec 5th, Andy Tomczynski.
One of the 160 records from 30 locations across the county resulting from an irruption from Central Europe.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce and declining visitor, formerly an uncommon resident (Red Listed)

At the start of the year, a single bird was seen feeding on Hornbeam seeds in Windsor Great Park on Jan 14th, which was presumed to be the same bird as had been seen in Dec 2016.

However, Hawfinches grabbed the birding headlines in the autumn of 2017, and will be long remembered for their widespread irruption into the UK from central Europe. Records were submitted by nearly 60 observers who had taken the opportunity to seek out this generally elusive finch. From mid-October onwards, birds were observed at 35 sites across Berkshire. At Basildon Park, groups of up to 17 were recorded during November, and in December numbers grew to at least 100 by the end of the month. Other locations included Padworth College, where up to six were seen from the end of October until early December. At Dinton Pastures CP, a flock of 15 birds passed through on Oct 28th, and for much of November and December one to three birds were seen there on many occasions. Over 50 records were submitted, with sightings of up to seven birds at Eversley GPs. Observers at Windsor Great Park saw up to ten birds in the Hornbeam trees there during November. Seeing this unobtrusive finch was a major highlight for many this autumn! – see page 12.

BULLFINCH **EURASIAN BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Uncommon but widespread resident, the long-term decline appears to have stabilised (Amber Listed)

An unobtrusive, but widespread species, Bullfinches were reported from sites across the county: 53 in west Berkshire, 43 in mid Berkshire, and 35 in east Berkshire. They were often seen in pairs or in small family groups outside of the breeding season. There were counts of six birds or more from 16 locations; the highest was 14 at Twyford GPs on Nov 29th.

Though known from Atlas surveys to breed across the county, there were only a few breeding reports: a female was seen gathering nesting material at Sandford Farm, Woodley, on May 3rd; a possible juvenile was heard calling at Woose Hill, Wokingham, on Jun 7th; seven birds including juveniles were seen at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Jul 5th; two juveniles were seen at

Fobney Meadow on Jul 30th; and calls of young were heard at Hungerford on Jul 31st. The breeding season abundance as measured by the Breeding Bird Survey has remained stable over the last twenty years (Berkshire Bird Index).

GREENFINCH **EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** *Chloris chloris*

Common and widespread resident and winter visitor, has declined in recent years (Green Listed)

Greenfinches were reported from 80 locations across the county. Whilst still a common bird in gardens and rural areas, the abundance of Greenfinches has declined significantly. Since 2000, the Berkshire abundance measured by the Breeding Bird Survey (Berkshire Bird Index) has fallen by over half, reflecting the national rapid decline over the last decade (BTO, Birdtrends).

There were no counts of flocks larger than 40: counts at Greenham Common were around twenty for much of the year; up to 40 were at Englefield in November and December; 25 at Parkfarm Down, Lambourn, on Nov 17th; 20+ at Dean's Copse, Burghfield, on Nov 21st; and at least 22 at Woodlands Park Fields on Dec 4th.

Reports of breeding were few and included the following: a pair were seen nest building at Cookham Rise on Mar 20th; a nest with eggs at Brimpton on Jun 15th; and four juveniles at the bird table there on Jun 29th. The same observer reported nestlings at this location on Jul 11th. An adult and four juveniles making begging calls were seen at Woose Hill, Wokingham, on Jul 18th.

TWITE *Linaria flavirostris*

Scarce and decreasing passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)

There was just a single sighting of Twite in the county in 2017: a bird at Remenham Hill on Oct 27th. This is the first record for this species since 2006, which was also recorded by the same observer (CDRH). It was seen with c.100 Linnets, and was subsequently seen well and photographed. Details and photos were sent to the County Recorder.

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)

Linnets were seen throughout the county: 35 sites in west Berkshire, 22 in mid Berkshire, and 20 in east Berkshire. There were 23 reports of flocks of over 100 birds, and 62 reports of flocks of between 30 and 100. **First winter:** high counts included: a minimum of 400 at Cow Down, West Ilsley, on Jan 5th; 200 at this location on Feb 7th; 150 at Sheepdrove on Feb 9th; 180 at Roden Downs, Compton, on Feb 16th; and at least 226 at Compton Downs on Mar 30th. **Breeding:** although large numbers of birds were reported during spring and summer, there were few reports of breeding. There were three reports of nesting: a male was seen with nest material at Roden Downs, Compton, on Apr 13th; a pair with nest material at Burnthouse Lane GP on Apr 16th; and a pair nest-building at Englefield on Jun 4th. Juveniles were seen on eight occasions, including a pair with two juveniles at Cold Harbour, Knowl Hill, on Jun 1st. The Berkshire Bird Index, which showed a rapid decline in breeding season abundance of Linnets from 1994 to 2004, has been fairly stable since. **Autumn/second winter:** in August there were high counts of over 200 at Compton Downs and 200 to 300 at Englefield. In November, 350 were seen at Parkfarm Down, Lambourn on Nov 17th, and there were 400 at Englefield on Nov 25th, where their numbers rose to 600 by the end of December.



Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Dec 24th, Michael McKee.
Two of the sixteen birds seen at this location that provided a real treat for birders of this county rarity.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly a sporadic breeder (Red Listed)

There were almost 200 sightings across the county, at 12 locations in west Berkshire, 20 in mid Berkshire, and 31 in east Berkshire.

First winter: the highest counts were observed on the Thames Basin Heaths: 105 at Swinley Forest on Mar 14th; 50 there on Apr 2nd; at least 220 at South Ascot on Apr 6th; and 102 in five separate flocks at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 11th, and 200 on Apr 12th. At Moor Green Lakes, there were up to 40 during this period. The last sighting in the first winter period was on Apr 29th.

Second winter: the first report came on Sep 27th with five birds at Greenham Common. The highest counts were of 39 at Windsor Great Park on Oct 15th, and 50 at East Park Farm Playing Fields, Charvil, on Dec 20th. In contrast to the first winter period, there were no reports of more than eight birds in the Swinley Forest area.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Lesser Redpoll

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	10	8	16	13	-	-	-	-	3	17	21	10
Number of birds	114	74	327	493	-	-	-	-	7	129	125	89

PARROT CROSSBILL *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Rare vagrant (Amber Listed)

The early reports of what proved to be a small irruption into the UK of Parrot Crossbills, the first since 2013, came from Shetland in late October. Towards the end of November, a small party was found on Nov 23rd in the Norfolk Brecks where numbers grew over the next few days. A party of 16 crossbills was found at Wishmoor Bottom on Nov 25th, and photographs were posted (MHu). The next day, the birds were relocated and identified as Parrot Crossbills (ABT). They comprised a mixture of adult and first winter males and females. The birds could often be located by their distinctive chirruping, and obligingly spent much of the time feeding in small clumps of Scots Pine in an open area of Wishmoor Bottom, often coming to drink at puddles on the paths. Occasionally one or more Common

Crossbill were seen with the Parrots or close by, giving the opportunity to compare structure and feeding behaviour. This was only the second confirmed occurrence of Parrot Crossbills in Berkshire, the first being a party of four at Crowthorne in Jan-Feb 1983 – see page 10.

The party of 16 remained in the area until the end of January 2018, dwindling then until the last few were recorded in early March, when one male was reported singing (JOB).

CROSSBILL RED CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Regular (irruptive) visitor in variable numbers (depending on cone crop), occasionally breeds (Schedule One and Green Listed)

Seventy records were submitted from 11 locations, which, except for three in mid Berkshire, were all in east Berkshire; the main site, as usual, was Swinley Forest.

First winter: there were only seven counts of ten or more birds, almost all of which were in the coniferous woodland in or around Swinley Forest; the highest was 30 on Mar 14th. Away from this area, single birds were recorded at Padworth in January, and at Benyon's Inclosure, Mortimer, in March. A pair was seen at Roundoak Piece in April. **Breeding:** there were a few reports of breeding, including a female collecting nesting material on Jan 4th. Juveniles were seen on three occasions: a male feeding two newly-fledged juveniles at Buttersteep, South Ascot, on Apr 13th; at least two juveniles in a party of 15 at Swinley Park on Apr 13th; and four juveniles at South Ascot on May 30th. **Post breeding:** Crossbills were heard calling on two occasions in June and again in July, but otherwise were not seen again until Oct 2nd. Thereafter, only small numbers were seen, and only in Swinley Forest, until the end of the year, when a few were sometimes seen consorting with the Parrot Crossbills in Wishmoor Bottom.

GOLDFINCH EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Abundant and widespread resident (Green Listed)

Sightings continue to be extensively reported across the county: 64 locations in west Berkshire, 29 in mid Berkshire, and 52 in east Berkshire. High counts were recorded from late August and included: 280 at Englefield on Aug 27th and 100 there on Aug 31st; 110 at Greenham Common on Sep 1st; an impressive 300 at Englefield on Sep 16th; and 110 at Parkfarm Down, Lambourn, on Nov 17th.

Breeding: an adult was seen collecting nesting material at Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Mar 16th. Two juveniles were seen being fed by an adult at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on May 28th. There were 20 sightings of juveniles in family groups and in flocks of up to 82 including adults. The Goldfinch continues to be abundant and widespread throughout the county. Its breeding season abundance shows a significant upward trend (Berkshire Bird Index).

SISKIN EURASIAN SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce in summer (Green Listed)

Siskins were reported from locations across the county, with 21 sites in west Berkshire, 21 in mid Berkshire, and 39 in east Berkshire, which has larger areas of coniferous forests that provide suitable habitat for this finch species.

Monthly Maximum Counts for Siskin

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	23	23	21	5	6	2	-	-	2	14	24	17
Number of birds	438	307	280	27	24	13	-	-	2	148	140	214

First winter: the highest count was 80 at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 2nd, where substantial parties were seen over the winter period to early March. Elsewhere, 50 were seen at Bottom Lane GP on Jan 2nd; 70 at Virginia Water, Windsor Great Park, on Jan 25th; and 40 plus were seen at Bracknell on Feb 1st. **Breeding:** the only breeding evidence was a report of a flock of ten to 15 juvenile Siskins seen feeding on the ground at Wishmoor Bottom, Swinley Forest, on Jun 4th. Siskins were heard and identified in a large flock of birds in Scots Pines at Fence Wood, Hermitage, on Jul 15th. **Second winter:** the larger counts were: 45 at Aston on Oct 31st; 40 at Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead, on Dec 2nd; 50 at Moor Green Lakes from Dec 24th to 27th; and 40 at Boveney Lock, Windsor, on Dec 25th. There were 59 reports of flocks of between ten and 30 birds, mostly from locations in east Berkshire, and 19 reports of Siskins visiting garden feeders.

LAPLAND BUNTING LAPLAND LONGSPUR *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A single Lapland Bunting was seen with a roving flock of Corn Buntings and Linnets at Lambourn on Dec 22nd (CDRH). This is the first Berkshire record since one was recorded at Remenham Hill in Oct 2007 (by the same observer).

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Locally common resident on the downs of north-west Berkshire, now possibly extinct in the rest of the county (Red Listed)

This species is now only seen at the downland sites in the west of the county and is probably extinct in mid and east Berkshire. Sightings were reported from 21 locations in west Berkshire.

First winter: high counts included: 45 at Wellbottom Down, Lambourn, on Jan 6th; 50 at Cow Down, West Ilsley, on Jan 17th; 40 at Sheep Down, West Ilsley, on Feb 4th; an impressive 200 at Sheepdrove on Feb 9th; and 31 at Cow Down, West Ilsley, on Mar 10th. Thereafter smaller groups were seen until September. Where reported, the larger flocks were feeding on stubble. **Breeding:** evidence of breeding included the following: 41 reports of singing birds; a pair nest building on Compton Downs on Jun 15th; and at least four pairs in a group of 16 which were feeding young with caterpillars at Weathercock Hill, Lambourn, on Jun 29th. **Second winter:** On the Lambourn Downs, flocks in excess of 20 were seen at a number of sites, with a peak of 180 on Dec 28th. Substantial flocks were seen too on the Compton Downs in September to November, the largest being around 100 with Linnets and Yellowhammers on Nov 19th.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Locally common but declining resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)

As expected, there were more reports of Yellowhammers from locations in the west of the county, which contains more of their preferred habitat of farmland and downland: 42 sites in west Berkshire, 18 in mid Berkshire, and 27 in east Berkshire. There were fewer high counts of 15 or more than last year.

First winter: the highest count of 85 was on the Lambourn Downs at Sheepdrove on Feb 9th. On the North Hampshire Downs, 17 were at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Feb 16th; on the downs at West Ilsley there were 25 at West Ilsley on Feb 18th and 20 on the Compton Downs on Mar 30th. Away from the downs, 21 were seen at Sonning Meadows on Feb 21st; at least 60 at Mortimer on Mar 12th; and 19 at Spencers Wood on Apr 8th. **Breeding:** there were over 40 reports of singing birds between February and August, but not many reports of

breeding. A female was seen dropping down to a nest in rough grass with food in its bill at Sonning on Jun 8th; a bird was seen nest building on Compton Downs on Jun 15th; a male was seen carrying food at the Ridgeway, Streatley, on Jul 13th; a bird was on four eggs in a Box bush at Sheepdrove Farm, Lambourn, on Jul 26th; and a female with three juveniles was at Parkfarm Down, Lambourn, on Sep 6th. The Berkshire Bird Index shows a continuing decline in breeding season abundance. **Second winter:** in the second winter period, good numbers were reported for the Compton Downs, with a maximum of 70 on Oct 22nd. At Walbury Hill, Combe, numbers were in the range 23 to 34 in October to December. At Cow Down, West Ilsley, 36 were counted on Dec 21st, and at least 45 at Lambourn on Dec 22nd. Away from the downs, the only substantial party was 20 at Remenham Hill on Oct 28th.

REED BUNTING COMMON REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Locally common resident and winter visitor, population showing signs of stabilising after long-term decline (Amber Listed)

Reed Buntings were seen at 84 locations across the county with almost half being in west Berkshire. Apart from their usual habitats of wetland and farmland sites, they were also seen on drier habitats such as game strips and other open areas of grassland, especially during the winter months when they form flocks with other buntings and finches. They were also observed visiting garden feeders. There were eight reports of birds in oilseed rape crops between April and early July. This supports evidence that Reed Buntings utilise Oilseed Rape fields away from wet features during the breeding season (Gruar *et al.* 2006. *Bird Study* 53: 47-54).

First winter: the highest count was 50 in January. High counts of ten or more included the following: ten to 15 in a hedgerow at Remenham on Jan 5th; 50 there in a hedge alongside a game-strip (with two Yellowhammers) on Jan 15th; 12 at Whiteknights Park and Lake, Reading, on Jan 17th; 11 at Lower Farm GP, Newbury, on Feb 4th; 15 in a garden at Southcote, Reading, on Feb 17th; 13 at Englefield on Feb 19th; at least ten at Fobney Meadow, Reading, on Mar 17th; and 13 at Woolhampton GPs on Mar 17th. **Breeding:** some substantial numbers were recorded in suitable wet breeding habitat: 18 at The Wilderness, Kintbury, on Apr 9th; 19 at Dorney Wetlands on May 16th; and 12 at Fobney Meadow on Jul 5th. Smaller numbers were reported from a range of farmland habitats both on the downs and in the river valleys. There were many reports of singing birds, but only two reports of nest building or birds with nest material. A bird was seen carrying food at Woolhampton GPs on May 15th; a female feeding at least three young was seen at Fobney Meadow on May 25th; a pair was seen with food at Sheepdrove on Jun 14th; and a pair feeding young were at Dorney Wetlands on Jul 25th. There were seven sightings of juveniles in ones or twos during July and August. **Second winter:** the highest count was again 50, as in January. There were 17 at Dorney Wetlands on Sep 19th; 15 plus on a game strip at Aston on Oct 31st; 11 at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Dec 3rd; 50 in a hedge by a game strip at Remenham on Dec 13th; 11 at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor, on Dec 17th; ten at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 27th; and a minimum of 20 at Windsor Great Park on Dec 31st.

ESCAPES

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

There were six sightings: two during early summer in Clapton, three in the Greenham/Crookham Common area in the first six months, and a single sighting in the Easthampstead Park area of Bracknell during March.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Berkshire's last recorded Red-breasted Goose was on Mar 3rd 2013. This year's bird was first recorded at Lower Farm GP on Jun 12th (NC, ABT). It was unringed and in good condition, with no sign of plumage damage. It stayed at Lower Farm GP until last seen on Jun 28th (GJS).

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Recorded in most months of the year, at 12 different sites, all in east Berkshire; the sightings may have been of the same individual. They started at Summerleaze GP on Jan 2nd and finished on Christmas Day at two sites, Widbrook Common and Windsor Great Park.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

The one remaining bird of the Blackwater Valley flock was recorded only three times during the year. Each time was at Moor Green Lakes, the last date being on Dec 1st.

Black Swan *Cygnus stratus*

The first two of 2017 were at two places in Reading, on Jan 26th and Feb 19th. A single bird was recorded at Sonning Meadows on Feb 21st and Mar 9th, and another at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 20th. On Aug 11th, a single bird was at Lower Farm Trout Lake, and two were recorded in Windsor on Aug 20th and 23rd. Two were present at Queen Mother Reservoir at the end of August, and a single bird was at Lower Farm GP on Sep 10th for five days and again on Oct 13th-14th. In December, a single bird was reported from two different locations along the Thames.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

There were two reports: a flock of 12 in Newbury in May, and two at Thatcham Marsh during the first six weeks of the year.

White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis* (Also known as Bahama Pintail)

There were single one-off sightings during the period Aug 30th to Sep 27th at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre.

Cockatiel

Just a single bird was reported, on Jul 2nd at Fobney Island.

HYBRIDS

Branta × Anser hybrid

Canada Goose × Greylag Goose

This regular hybrid was noted at several locations: one at Beale Park Wildlife Park on Jan 21st (NJB); singles at Great Meadow Pond on Feb 5th and Sep 24th (DJB); two at Purley on Thames on Jan 21st and a single on Feb 27th (MJS); three at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Oct 4th (MFW); one at Main Pit, Theale, on Oct 8th (WeBS); one at Warfield House on Nov 2nd and Dec 14th (MSFW); and two at Padworth Lane GP on Dec 3rd (MFW).

Branta hybrid

Canada Goose × Barnacle Goose

One was reported at Padworth Lane GP on Dec 14th (WeBS).

Anas hybrid

Pintail × Mallard

One at Twyford GPs on Oct 25th (DJB) was considered by the observer to possibly be a drake Pintail x Mallard.

Aythya hybrids

Ferruginous Duck type (Ferruginous Duck × Pochard – “Paget’s Pochard”)

The regular Moor Green Lakes bird, which has wintered for over ten years, was present between Jan 14th and Mar 11th (RCM). Another was at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Jan 25th (DJB).

Non-specified Aythya hybrid

A drake was at Bray GPs from Nov 14th to Nov 30th (DJB).

Falco hybrid

Peregrine × Gyr Falcon

An escaped bird was seen over Northcroft Park, Newbury, on Oct 25th (AEDH).

First and Last Dates of Selected Summer Migrants

Species	First date	Last date
Blackcap*	March 12th	November 11th
Chiffchaff*	March 11th	November 17th
Common Sandpiper	April 10th	October 15th
Common Tern	March 30th	September 25th
Cuckoo	April 9th	August 16th
Garden Warbler	April 5th	September 1st
Hobby	April 19th	October 2nd
House Martin	April 8th	October 30th
Lesser Whitethroat	April 16th	September 19th
Little Ringed Plover	March 13th	September 13th
Nightingale	April 3rd	July 4th
Nightjar	May 1st	August 13th
Quail	June 4th	July 24th
Redstart	April 5th	September 26th
Reed Warbler	April 6th	September 24th
Sand Martin	March 11th	September 21st
Sedge Warbler	April 2nd	September 22nd
Spotted Flycatcher	May 6th	September 26th
Stone-curlew	March 23rd	July 13th
Swallow	March 25th	October 27th
Swift	April 17th	September 16th
Tree Pipit	March 31st	September 1st
Turtle Dove	May 9th	July 17th
Whitethroat	April 8th	October 14th
Willow Warbler	March 21st	September 29th
Yellow Wagtail	April 9th	September 30th

*Difficult to distinguish between early/late migrants and wintering birds

Last and First Dates of Selected Winter Visitors

Species	Last date	First date
Brambling	April 11th	October 24th
Fieldfare	April 24th	October 3rd
Redwing	April 22nd	October 3rd
Golden Plover	April 7th	September 15th
Goldeneye	April 1st	October 8th
Goosander	April 5th	November 5th

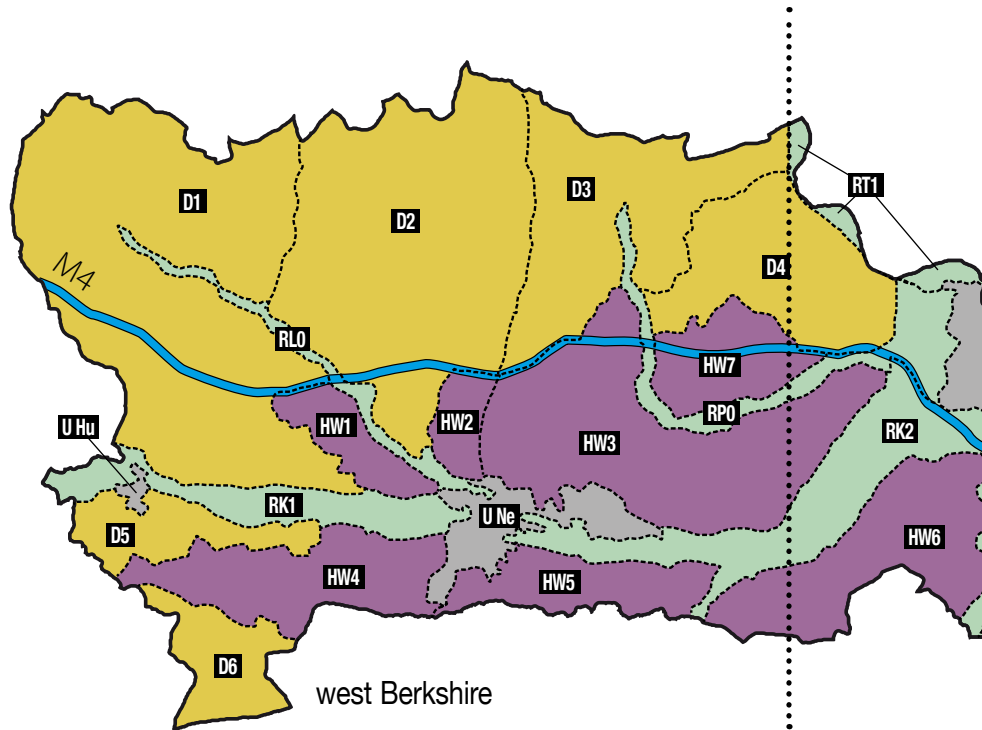
Contributors to the Systematic List 2017

Abbott S D.....SA	Callister T	Farrar A R
Absolom AAA	Campbell D K	Farrell G R
Absolom J	Campbell G	Fendley R
Addison R.....RA	Campbell D	Fincham N
Adnams R.....RA	Campbell J	Firth TTFi
Ahlgren L.....LA	Carey S	Fitzpatrick P
Alder GGAI	Carter D A.....DAC	Flack DDFI
Alley G	Cattell M.....MC	Flannagan A W.....AWF
Amphlett M J	Chapman P	Fletcher J
Anderson P	Charlson E	Foster C W.....CWFo
Andrews J EJA	Chivers J L.....JCh	Foyer M
Applby J	Chown P K.....PKC	Frankum R.....RF
Aylard R	Claridge R JRJC	Fuller DDF
Ball T GTGB	Clark J MJMC	Gardiner A
Bamford P	Clark F C.....FCC	Gardner M
Barker D J.....DJB	Cleal DDCI	Garner-Langham L.....LGL
Barnes D J.....DJBa	Cleere NNC	Garrett C SCSG
Barton E J	Clews B D.....BDC	Gent C RCRG
Bashford R I	Collins R.....RCo	George C M.....CMG
Bashford R	Collins R E C	Gibson T L
Bass C G	Cottingham F J.....FJC	Gilham R.....RGi
Bassett A DADB	Cox S	Gipson PPG
Bassett D C	Craft S J	Given Q
Batchelor S D	Crathorne BBCr	Godden R J.....RJG
Bates E.....EB	Crawford R.....RCr	Godden N R.....NG
Batho G SGSB	Crockford B	Goodey J.....JG
Baynes M	Crouch J.....JCr	Graham S ASAG
Beaney V R	Crowley P J.....PJC	Grant K R
Bennett B T.....BTB	Darrell-Lambert D G	Grove C
Bennett R W	Davies S	Guyatt T ATAG
Birkett J	Davies R C W.....RCWD	Hadfield P D.....PDHa
Bishop J.....JBi	Dawson RRD	Hale J AJHa
Blackmore DDBI	Day SSDa	Hammatt N
Blundell L RLRB	Day M	Hampton D WDWH
Blunden A0	Dear M J.....MJD	Hardy RRHAr
Bolton A.....AB	Deasy J	Hargreaves Mr & Mrs
Booth A.....ABO	Devereau S C.....SCD	Harle C
Bright-Thomas PPBT	Dickinson B	Harrington J EJEH
Bristow P	Dodds D A M.....DAMD	Harvey D T
Brook R.....RBro	Dove A.....AD	Haseler J.....JH
Brookes C	Driver P WPD	Hastings DDH
Brooke-Taylor D	Dryden R.....RDr	Hawtree J NJNH
Brooks C	Duffus G.....GDu	Hear S V
Brown S A.....SAB	Duncan K P.....KPD	Heard C D R.....CDRH
Brown GGBro	Dunk P	Hemmings M.....MHe
Brown D T	Earl S	Hickman A E DAEDH
Brownlow H.....HB	Easterbrook M	Hickman PPH
Bryant P	Edwards N	Hicks R
Buchanan J C.....JCB	Edwards P J.....PJE	Highfield M
Buckel F C	Edwards G	Hollands B J.....BJH
Buckingham D	Edwards R & W	Holmes A
Buckler D	Elliott S	Hopkins B
Bucknell N J.....NJB	Elliott-Moustache G	Horscroft A M.....AMH
Burch CCBur	Evans L G R.....LGRE	Hotchkis R W
Burness R JRJB	Everitt S	Housely D J.....DJHo
Butler J.....JBut	Fairley M	Hubbard M JMJH
Calcutt DDC	Farquhar I A	Hugh K A

Humm J	Matthias A N	Reaney A..... ARe	Taylor A ATa	Walford M F MFW	White D
Humphrey P PHu	May B..... BMay	Reedman R RR	Taylor K..... KTa	Walker B J BJW	Why M..... MW
Hunt M S MHu	McAvoy S	Reeve B..... BR	Taylor M J..... MJT	Wallace R RW	Williams K
Hurst F	McCarthy M G..... MGM	Reid T	Terry P	Walsh J	Williams P A PAW
Hutchins P E..... PEH	McCulloch J I	Reidson L	Theobald R C RCT	Wang E	Williams C D
Hutchison A..... AH	McEwan C CMc	Reynolds D J..... DJR	Thorn L..... LTh	Ward J D	Williams R
I'Anson M..... MIAAn	McMahon A..... AMc	Rhodes K..... KR	Thornton G GT	Wass G & D	Williams-Jones D..... DWJ
Insole P	Meads S M SME	Richardson R	Tilby J	Water Rail Survey	Williamson C S..... CSW
Jacobs R S..... RSJ	Merrick A	Ricks S SRI	Tomczynski A B ABT	Watson M I G..... MIGW	Williamson J
Jenkins D DJe	Merryweather A	Rider S C	Trout N S NST	Watts R C RCW	Wilson G E GEW
Jinks R..... RJ	Milbum H	Righelato R RRI	Turner R M RMT	Wells T J	Wilson H J
Jones C D CDJ	Miller P A	Rimes D N T DNTR	Turner G..... GTu	Werran R..... RWe	Wood T
Jones C M	Milligan R F..... RFM	Rivoire J R..... JRR	Turton M H..... MHT	Weston I L G IW	Woodford J B
Jones B..... BJ	Mills D J DJM	Roberts A	Tyler D..... DTY	Wetland Bird Survey WeBs	Woodham J S JSW
Jones T	Mitchell M J..... MJM	Robinson D R	Vallas J C	Wheeler M J	Worraker W
Jones D M	Mitchell J E..... JEM	Robjohns A	Vaughan J	Whitaker M S F MSFW	Wright D..... DW
Jones K KJo	Moor Green Lakes Report MGLR	Rogers P	Vogel M MV	White K G KGW	
Jones M	Moore R C..... RCMo	Rolfe M D..... MDR			
Jones C..... CJ	Moore K E..... KEM	Rose J E JRos			
Kay R A	Morgan J C JCMo	Ryall J			
Keel R R..... RRK	Morrison L	Ryland C			
Keenan F	Murfitt R C..... RCM	Rylands K			
Kelson D W	Musselwhite M J	Rymer A..... AR			
Kenchington P PK	Myerson T	Salmon A			
Kendall P PKe	Myerson A T	Salt A			
Kettell M M..... MMK	Nahkola A	Sandell J..... JS			
King G J..... GJK	Napper E EN	Scholey G D GDS			
Kirby A J	Nash D P DPN	Scott S SSc			
Kirby M	Neal S M	Scudamore P..... PSc			
Knass G	Needs J..... JNe	Seymour K R..... KSeY			
Kujawa S	Netley H R..... HRN	Sharp M			
Lamsdell C..... CL	Newbound P J..... PNe	Shelwood M			
Lanfear J	O'Brien J..... JOB	Shilland E M			
Larkins S..... SL	Ogilvie L M	Short P P			
Latham M J..... MJL	O'Hanlon J	Silver N NS			
Lawson A V..... AVL	Oldcorn I IO	Silverwood T			
Lee D C	O'Neil P..... PO	Sketch P A			
Legg J..... JL	Owen G M	Slater A ASl			
Lerpiniere J..... JLe	Paine I D..... IDP	Smart S			
Lerpiniere R J..... RJL	Payne D E E DEEP	Smith M J MJS			
Lewington I	Peat L	Smith R G..... RGS			
Lewis P PLe	Peck R..... RP	Spence I M			
Lewis S	Pepperell K	Spicer M			
Loades J R..... JRL	Percival N	Spooner C D			
Lock A	Pett T G	Stacey G			
Lomas P J	Phelps M S	Stansfield R T..... RTS			
Long D F..... DL	Piccolo A	Stansfield R H..... RHS			
Loves J A	Pidgeon M MP	Staves L LS			
Lund M MLu	Pocock M	Steele A J..... AJS			
Lyle B BL	Pollard G	Stevens P			
Lyle R A..... RAL	Polley K	Stevens P J			
Mackenzie D..... DMac	Pounds M D	Stevenson S..... SS			
MacKenzie C S..... CSM	Price R A G..... RAGP	Stewart G J GJS			
Mann L B..... LBM	Proddow S K SKP	Stoney A			
Mannion P PM	Puttock B	Stow A N ANS			
Many observers MO	Pyrah R J..... RJP	Strawbridge L			
Marchant J H	Quelch I..... IQ	Stux L			
Marriner N NM	Ralphs I L	Sumner G J..... GJSu			
Marsh R..... RM	Rampton N..... NR	Sussex D J..... DJS			
Martin J P JPM	Randall G..... GR	Swallow J L JLS			
Maskell J M..... JMM	Rawlings N D	Sweetland A S AS			
Masters P D		Sweetland T TS			

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

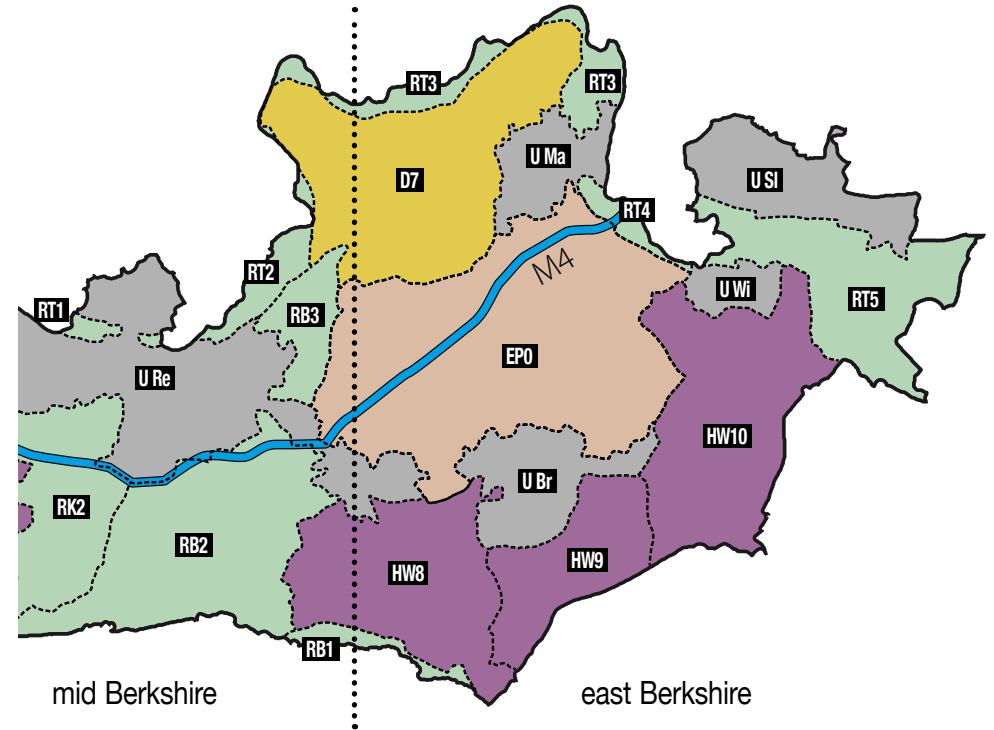
	DC
Lambourn Downs	D1
Farnborough Downs	D2
Compton/Aldworth/Isley Downs	D3
Eastern Downs & Woods	D4
North Hampshire Downs - S Hungerford	D5
North Hampshire Downs - Combe/Walbury heights	D6
Remenham/Hurley/Cookham Plateau	D7

TC: Heaths/Heathland Woods and associated areas

	HW
Wickham Heath	HW1
Snelsmore Common	HW2
Curridge/Hermitage & Bucklebury Plateau	HW3
Inkpen Plateau	HW4
Greenham/Crookham Plateau	HW5
Wasing/Burghfield	HW6
Yattendon/Frilsham	HW7
Crowthorne/ Finchampstead	HW8
Swinley Forest	HW9
Windsor Great Park & Forest	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

	R
Thames: Goring Gap to Reading	RT1
Thames: Reading to Wargrave	RT2
Thames: Wargrave to Maidenhead	RT3
Thames: Jubilee River to Windsor	RT4
Lower Thames & Colne	RT5
Kennet: West of Newbury & Dun	RK1
Lower Kennet & tributaries	RK2
Lambourn valley	RLO
Pang Valley and Sul Gap	RPO
Blackwater	RB1
Loddon Valley above Winnersh	RB2
Lower Loddon	RB3

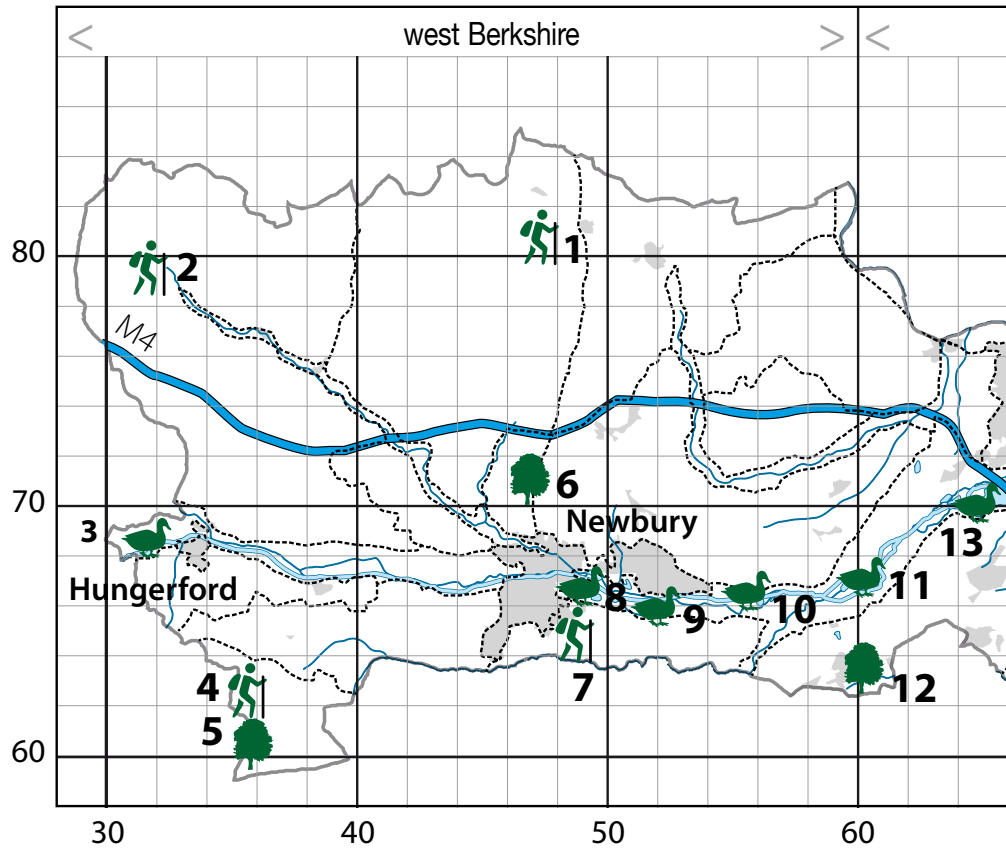
TC: Eastern Plain

	EP
Twyford/Binfield/Windsor Plain	EPO

TC: Urban Areas

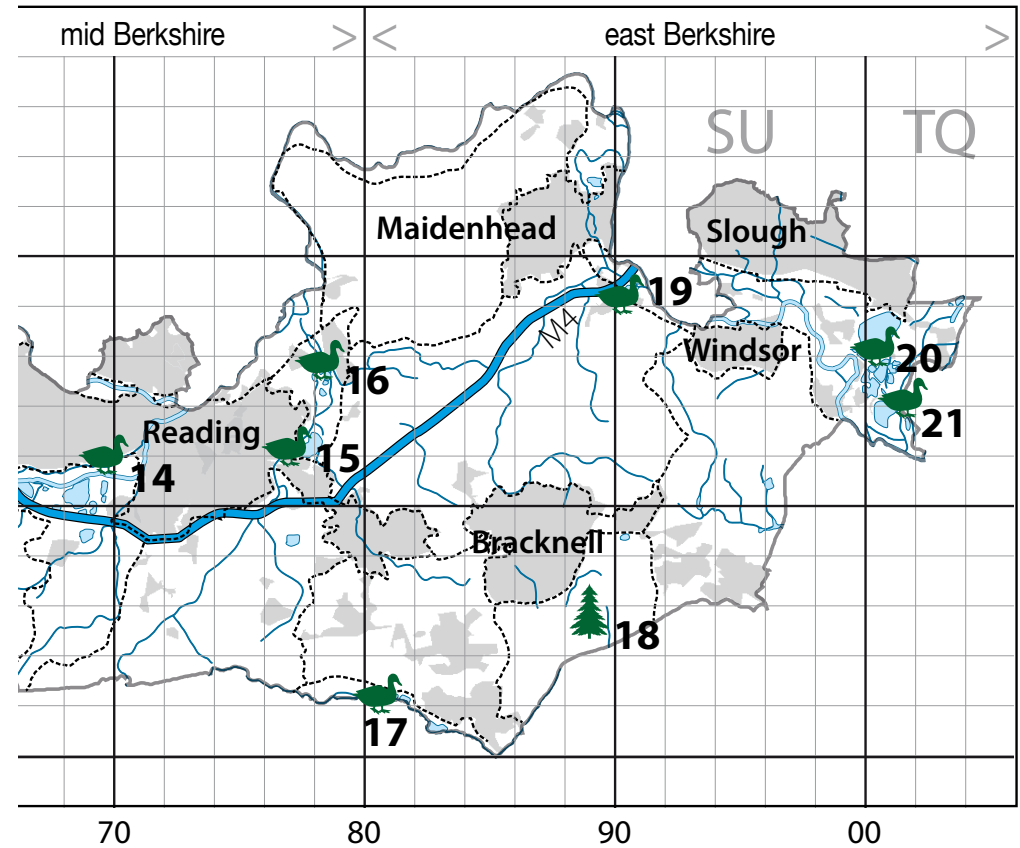
	UR
Hungerford	U Hu
Newbury-Thatcham	U Ne
Greater Reading	U Re
Bracknell	U Br
Maidenhead	U Ma
Windsor	U Wi
Slough & Langley	U Si





Some Birdwatching Sites in Berkshire



- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 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. Wryasbury Gravel Pits |
| 11. Padworth Lane Gravel Pit | |

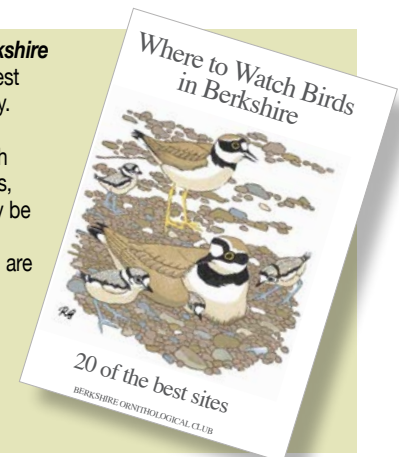
Some of the better-known birding sites in the county are shown here.
For access details and more information visit <http://berksoc.org.uk/countysites/>



- Key**
-  Downland and commons
 -  Wetlands
 -  Mostly coniferous woodland
 -  Mostly broadleaf woodland

Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire

is the BOC's guide to the 20 best birdwatching sites in the county. It is a beautifully illustrated full-colour 48 page A5 booklet, with site descriptions, access details, information on which birds may be found, maps and photographs. Details of how to obtain copies are available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/where-to-watch-birds-in-berkshire/> or from Brian Clews, brian.clews@btconnect.com, 01628 526091.



County Directory

COUNTY BIRD RECORDER

Marek Walford, 30 Bellingham Walk, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LS.
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, Jane Campbell, 111 Mays Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 7DG

Telephone 07980 076128

Email: secretary@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. The Club 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. During the winter months, invited speakers come to talk on a variety of bird topics. Members receive a copy of the Club's Annual Report and the quarterly newsletter "FieldViews" containing the events programme for the coming months. Mrs L Staves, 39 Priory Avenue, Hungerford, RG17 0BE

Tel. 01488 682301

Email: enquiries@newburybirders.co.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.

BERKSHIRE BIRD RECORDS DATABASE

<http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/bird-records-archive/>

This database is the core information source used for research and reports on birds in Berkshire. It is accessible online to make searching easier and to encourage research.

BERKSHIRE BIRD NEWS

www.berksbirds.co.uk

This is an independent website devoted to offering a free resource to birdwatchers in Berkshire. It provides 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 Finchampstead. Work parties, newsletters, an annual report and access to bird hides.

Membership Secretary: David Bishop, 7 Ambarrow Crescent, Little Sandhurst, Berks, GU47 8JA

Email: davidrbishop@yahoo.co.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, and survey work.

<https://tabcg.webs.com>

Cath McEwan, Secretary,

Email: tabcgsec@yahoo.com

LOCAL RSPB GROUPS

These groups promote and represent the RSPB in the local community. Activities include indoor and outdoor meetings.

Further details from the RSPB

www.rspb.org.uk/

or directly from:

Reading RSPB Local Group

<https://www.reading-rspb.org/>

Wokingham and Bracknell RSPB Local Group

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/groups/wokinghamandbracknell>

The Birdwatching Code

(Based on the RSPB's code at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/birdwatching/the-birdwatchers-code/>, 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. A new Countryside Code was launched in April 2021 for England and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

Know the law

In England, Scotland and Wales, it is a criminal offence to disturb, intentionally or recklessly, at or near the nest, a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Disturbance could include playback of songs and calls. The courts can impose fines of up to £5,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to six months for each offence. In Scotland, disturbance of Capercaillie and Ruffs at leks is also an offence.

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. In England, Wales, a fine of up to £20,000 may be imposed by the Magistrates' Court, or an unlimited fine by the Crown Court. In Scotland, the maximum fine on summary conviction is £40,000, or an unlimited fine on conviction on indictment.

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.*