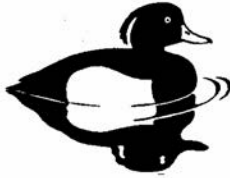


# The Birds of Berkshire



Annual Report  
2018

Published 2022

# 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.
- A free copy of the Birds of Berkshire Annual Report, when it is published by the Club.

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/>.

As part of the celebrations of its 75th anniversary in 2022, the BOC published *Berkshire's Birdscapes*. This booklet reviews the changes in the Royal County's landscapes and breeding birds since 1947. More details, including how to obtain copies, are available at: <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/berkshires-birdscapes/>

For further details of the Club and membership visit [www.berksoc.org.uk](http://www.berksoc.org.uk)

or contact the Hon. Secretary:

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# The Birds of Berkshire

*Annual Report for 2018*

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Robert Godden, Marek Walford, Andy Tomczynski and Sally Wearing.

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## Introduction

After serving as Managing Editor of the Berkshire Annual Report for several years, Renton Righelato has stepped down from the role. Renton played a major part in the editing of every report since the joint 2006-2007 issue, most of which feature his scientific articles on species monitoring and conservation. This is a considerable contribution for which the Club is very grateful. His responsibilities have now been divided between Sally Wearing and myself. As Scientific Editor, I oversee the preparation of the Systematic List and bring together the other articles that make up the report. Sally as Publishing Editor arranges the proofreading and liaises with the publisher, with the printed report as the end result.

Good progress has been made in recent years with reducing the annual report backlog and it is hoped that that progress will be sustained. A number of factors are relevant to this progress. Firstly, as the county records database is now available on the BOC website (<http://berksoc.org.uk/berkshire-bird-database/>), there is less need to write accounts as lists of records and more opportunity for analysis and discussion, which it is hoped both writers and readers will find more interesting. It is also hoped that people will make use of the county records database to carry out their own research. Secondly, some automatic processing of the records in the database is carried out to assist those who write the species accounts by providing them with statistics or tables and charts. Lastly, use is made of local data from BTO surveys to give a more balanced analysis of the status of common species than would be obtained from the patchy coverage of these species in observers' records.

We are always keen to include articles in these annual reports. If you would like to offer an article with local relevance for a future report, I would be pleased to hear from you.

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

**2016 Report:** It came to the attention of the previous editorial team that there were a number of errors in the 2016 Annual Report. The most significant of these have been addressed in the online version of the report available on the Club's website. It was decided not to re-publish printed copies of that report for economic reasons, but we have included in this report errata that affect the 2016 Systematic List.

*Robert Godden*

## Acknowledgements

The preparation of the annual report relies on the voluntary efforts of many people for data collection, species account writing, preparing articles, providing photographs, editing and, critically, the observers who put in their records. This report includes a list of the observers whose records contributed to the report. We hope the list is accurate; please let us know of any errors or omissions, for which we apologise.

We are particularly grateful to our County Recorder, Marek Walford, who has provided the electronic dataset of records, and to all the species account writers who are listed on page 26. Our thanks also go to Roger Murfit, Ken Moore and Renton Righelato, who all provided articles, to Andy Tomczynski as Photographic Editor and to the photographers who generously provided their excellent shots. We are very grateful to Rob and Rachel Still for design and production of the report. Rob is the Publishing Director of WILDGuides, who offer a wide array of high quality, practical titles in natural history, and kindly transforms our drafts into expertly finished printed reports.

Since the start of the Reading (now Berkshire) Ornithological Club in 1947, all of the covers

of our annual reports have been illustrated by Robert Gillmor, MBE. He was a member of the Club from 1949 until his death in May 2022. He donated all the artworks, both to adorn the reports and to raise funds for the Club. He painted the Goshawk on the cover of this report despite struggling with ill health. We cannot thank him enough, not only for his artworks, but also his longstanding support of and involvement with the BOC.

*Robert Godden & Sally Wearing*

## 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 two 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 online using Berksbirds ([www.berksbirds.co.uk](http://www.berksbirds.co.uk)) or sent by email to the Recorder [records@berksoc.org.uk](mailto:records@berksoc.org.uk) as an Excel file or as a CSV file.

### Excel files

These should have the following eight columns in this order: **Species, Site, Grid reference, Arrival date, Departure date, Number, Notes, Breeding status, Observer.**

**Species:** Required. 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. When using a system such as Berksbirds to submit records, it is preferred if pre-existing site names are used. If possible, reserve the use of large-scale location names such as Lambourn Downs or Swinley Forest for records or survey data that apply to the area as a whole and indicate that in the notes. 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 144 to assist with identification. Further details can be found at [www.berksbirds.co.uk/pits.asp](http://www.berksbirds.co.uk/pits.asp).

**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" e.g. "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. This field should also be used to record information about breeding and unusual behaviour. For passage migrants, an accurate assessment of numbers of birds involved is sometimes only possible when the time of arrival or departure is noted.

**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**

These 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 23).

# Carrion Crow Dropping Freshwater Mussels

by Roger Murfitt

On June 23rd 2018 at Moor Green Lakes nature reserve in Finchampstead, Berkshire, I noticed a Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) flying towards me along the wide riverside path. The bird dropped a hard, dark object from its bill, and when I reached the area I found a hard, stony patch of the path with a large number of mussel shell fragments scattered around. It became clear that the Carrion Crow was deliberately dropping Freshwater Mussels onto the ground to break the shell and retrieve the soft mollusc inside. Indeed, on a subsequent visit (March 29th 2019), my wife and I saw a Carrion Crow on the ground in the same area, consuming a Mussel from a broken shell.

Similar behaviour has been documented from coastal areas, where Carrion Crows access Marine Mussels (e.g. Davenport *et al.* 2014), but I have not found reference to this for inland Crows and Freshwater Mussels. At the coast, Mussel beds can be revealed at low tide, but access to Freshwater Mussels for inland Crows will be more challenging. In this case it may be that the Crows were benefiting from low water levels in the adjacent, relatively shallow, River Blackwater.

**Postscript:** on further reflection I have also wondered whether the Crows may be accessing Mussels from the gravel pit at the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes during periods when the water level is pumped down for infill.

**Reference**

Davenport, J., O’Callaghan, M. J. A., Davenport, J. L., & Kelly, T. C. 2014. Mussel dropping by Carrion and Hooded Crows: biomechanical and energetic considerations. *J. Field Ornithol.* 85: 196–205.



Carrion Crow, Fobney Meadow, Dec 2nd, Andy Tomczynski

The story of the Royal County's avifauna as it has evolved with changing landscapes, climate and human influence, from the foundation of the Reading (now Berkshire) Ornithological Club in 1947 to today.

BERKSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

The Reading Ornithological Club, now the Berkshire Ornithological Club, was founded in 1947. As part of the celebration of the Club's 75th Anniversary, this booklet reviews the changes in the Royal County's landscapes and analyses the changes in its avifauna over the 75 years: the breeding species we have lost and those we have gained.

Changes in agriculture, changes in woodland management, urban growth and extensive development of wetland reserves have driven major changes in our breeding birds. Despite losses and serious declines in some much-loved species, the last 75 years have seen a substantial increase in bird species breeding in Berkshire. Eleven species that bred in 1947 no longer breed in the county, but 32 new breeding species have arrived.

This lavishly illustrated, full-colour, 32 page booklet was published in 2022. A copy is provided free to BOC members.

Details of how to obtain copies are available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/berkshires-birdscapes/>

**Trade enquiries:** Brian Clews, [brian.clews@btconnect.com](mailto:brian.clews@btconnect.com), 01628 526091.

Sample pages

## Breeding Goshawks in Berkshire

by Renton Righelato

Goshawks have been quietly colonising the southern counties of England for the last thirty or so years. In the Atlas surveys for 1987-9, breeding was confirmed in just three 10 km squares, in East and West Sussex and south Oxfordshire. Twenty years later, breeding was confirmed in thirteen 10 km squares, clustering around the New Forest and the Surrey weald. By 2018, when the first pair was reported to have bred successfully in Berkshire, there were 76 confirmed pairs elsewhere in the southern counties reported to the Rare Birds Breeding Panel: Wiltshire (30), Hampshire (35), Sussex (seven), Surrey (two) and Oxfordshire (two) (Eaton *et al*, 2020).

In Berkshire, possible breeding was noted in the 1970s and at another site in the 1980s (Standley *et al*, 1993). This century there has been an increase in records, with sporadic reports of Goshawks in the breeding season from east, mid and west Berkshire, almost all of single birds. The 2008-2011 Atlas surveys recorded no breeding evidence within Berkshire, but display was noted at two sites just outside the county border (Bucknell *et al* 2013). Prior to 2018, breeding had not been confirmed; however, most of the year Goshawks are secretive birds and rarely seen in the woods they occupy, so breeding may well have gone unrecorded in the county.

In July 2018, farm workers brought to the landowners' attention a pair of Goshawks feeding one or two noisy nestlings in an area of coniferous woodland in Berkshire, which the owner and I had frequently visited earlier in the year and noticed nothing. Adults and a fledgling were seen on and off in July and early August 2018, but there were no further sightings until May 2019, when the landowner photographed two adults making a food pass. In mid-June, a fledged bird was seen near the nesting area, whilst a second young bird was being fed in the nest. In 2020, three further young were fledged in the same group of trees.

At the end of June 2019, when the nest was empty, we were able to make a closer inspection. We saw that there were two nests, one in the tree used in 2018, the other in a similar Hemlock about 30m away. Both had fresh faeces and feathers under them. It appeared that the new nest had been the one used for breeding in 2019 and perhaps the old nest was being used as a roosting site by the male and/or the newly fledged birds. Although showing high fidelity to a nesting area, Goshawks do not normally use the same nest in consecutive years. In a study of Goshawks breeding in lowland Britain, 58% of attempts involved building a new nest, often within a short distance (<100m) of an old nest (Anon, 1989).

In coniferous woodland, an association has been reported between Goshawk nests and nesting sites chosen by Firecrests, which was postulated to be due to protection the Goshawks afford from nest predators such as Grey Squirrels (Mawson, 2010). In this context, it is worth noting that our Goshawk nests were within 20m of an active Firecrest territory (one of only two we had found in the woodland), but that the crests had been in occupation for at least the previous five years, when, to the best of our knowledge, there were no Goshawks.

The woodland concerned is around 100 ha. in all, with a mixture of coniferous and broadleaf trees, and the Goshawk nesting area is a 3 ha. block of mature Hemlock and Scots Pine with a sparse Holly understorey. The estate was previously used for Pheasant-rearing and shooting, which the present owners have discontinued. They have adopted a range of conservation measures to encourage floral and faunal diversity. Perhaps one result is the diversity of raptors: Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Red Kite, Buzzard, Barn Owl, Little Owl and Tawny Owl nest within less than a 1km radius.

[This article refers to events in 2019 and 2020 as well as 2018. We have decided to publish the entire text in the 2018 annual report in part due to the backlog with issuing reports, but also as the events in the three years are related with the most significant event falling in 2018. Eds]

### References

- Anon, 1989. *British Birds* **82**, 52-57.
- Bucknell N.J., Clews B., Righelato R., Robinson C., 2013. *The Birds of Berkshire*, 2nd edition. Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group, Reading.
- Eaton M., Holling M., Rare Birds Breeding Panel, 2020. *British Birds* **113**, 737-791.
- Mawson G., 2010. *British Birds* **103** 244-5.
- Standley P.E., Bucknell N.J., Swash A., Collins I.D. 1993. *The Birds of Berkshire*. Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group, Reading.

### Acknowledgement

Thanks are due to the landowners, who cannot be named for confidentiality reasons, for bringing the Goshawks on their land to my attention, for their valuable conservation work, and excellent photographs and records.



Recently fledged juvenile July 2018

# Sightings of Colour-marked Birds in Berkshire 2018

by Robert Godden

Bird ringing has provided a wealth of information about bird migration and longevity in the hundred years of its history. A small metal ring carrying a unique code attached to a bird's leg when first caught, often as a nestling, uniquely identifies that bird as an individual, and this provides basic data on time elapsed and distance travelled if that ring is ever encountered again. The chance of that is small, and the overall recovery rate of 2% is achieved mainly through trained ringers capturing ringed birds in nets and members of the public finding deceased ringed birds.

A recent development has been the use of colour marking, in conjunction with the traditional BTO metal ring, to provide a means of recognising individual birds through field observation. Different methods are employed that are appropriate to the species, such as wing-tags for birds of prey, nasal saddles for ducks, neck collars for geese, and coloured leg rings for birds with long legs such as waders and gulls. The leg rings may incorporate a short readable code and may employ a combination of colours. Most of us will have seen birds marked in these ways and we would expect that this would improve the recovery rate. This has been borne out in studies, for example amongst migrating Dunlin ringed in Poland in autumn at the mouth of the Vistula River and observed again before the following May, 0.56% of these were trapped allowing the metal ring to be read, whereas 4.95% were resighted in the field allowing the colour ring details to be captured, an almost ten-fold increase in the recovery rate [Meissner & Bzoma, 2011].

When a colour-marked bird has been found and details have been noted, it is hoped that the observer will follow this up and notify the relevant ringing project. After all, that is why the bird was ringed! The European Colour-Ring Birding website (<https://cr-birding.org/>) was set up to help the observer find the correct ringing project and contact details by entering some basic information about the colour-marking. If the observer can provide the ringing project with extra information, such as an alphanumeric code, this should enable them to identify the particular bird for their records and, in return, provide the observer with details about when and where the bird was ringed, and any subsequent observations. By this means it was learnt that a Bar-tailed Godwit that turned up one spring at Moor Green Lakes had been ringed in the Netherlands eight years previously, had been sighted 65 times in the Netherlands every spring and August since then, and had even been observed in Mauretania, West Africa, during one December!

During 2018, 44 records were submitted involving 30 colour-marked birds seen in Berkshire, and in many cases the observer provided details of the colour-marking and received back the life histories; others have been investigated retrospectively to complete this article. Cathy McEwan's assistance with records of Black-headed Gulls was greatly appreciated. The table shows summarised information for all the birds involved. It is hoped that in the future more observers will take note of colour-marked birds and submit their sightings, so that the wealth of information about bird behaviour that this unlocks can be shared. Please send details of colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls observed at Hosehill Lake to Cathy McEwan ([tabcgsec@yahoo.com](mailto:tabcgsec@yahoo.com)), and all other reports of colour-marked birds to Marek Walford, the County Bird Recorder, by the usual methods such as via [berksbirds.co.uk](http://berksbirds.co.uk).

## References

Meissner, W., Bzoma, S., 2011. Colour rings with individual numbers increase the number of ringing recoveries of small waders. *Wader Study Group Bulletin*. 118. 114-117.

| 2018 Sighting Details |  |                    |                    |  |           | History   |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|--|-----------|---|
| Species               | Ring Details                                     | Location           | 2018 Sightings     | Notes  | Observer  |   |
| Pochard               | Nasal saddle with a light green band down length | Moor Green Lakes   | Jan 14th           | Female   | RCM       | Ringed in France.   |
| Great Bustard         | Pale Blue (Right leg)                            | Newbury Racecourse | Apr 6th            | Ring observed on one of two 2nd calendar year birds. | D Edwards | From the Wiltshire re-introduction scheme, hatched in May 2017.   |
| Rock Dove             | Dark Blue (Right leg)                            | Eton Wick          | Jul 29th           | Racing pigeon  | KR        |   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 21L6  | Hosehill Lake      | Jun 20th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 15th 2013. Many spring-time reports each year until 2016 at Hosehill Lake, but also reported from Ballymena, Northern Ireland, in Aug 2014 and Jul 2015. |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 24N5  | Woolhampton GPs    | Jul 14th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 14th 2014.   |
|                       |  | Bottom Lane GP     | Sep 9th            |  | KEM       |   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 24N6  | Hosehill Lake      | Jun 20th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 14th 2014. 49 spring-time reports each year until 2016 at Hosehill Lake, but also reported from Brimpton Mill GP in winter 2015.                         |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 24P4 on White                               | Moor Green Lakes   | Apr 3rd            |  | RCM       | Ringed as a nestling at Moor Green Lakes, Jun 22nd 2014. Reported there in Apr 2015.  |
| Black-headed Gull     | Black 24V4 on White                              | Pangbourne Meadow  | Jan 22nd; Mar 19th |  | ATa       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 11th 2016.   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Black 25C2 on White                              | Hosehill Lake      | Mar 12th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 7th 2010. 40 subsequent spring-time records in most years since, all at Hosehill Lake.   |
|                       |  | Purley Meadows     | May 16th           |  | MJS       |   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 25L3  | Hosehill Lake      | Apr 26th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 15th 2013. 61 spring-time reports each year until 2016 at Hosehill Lake, but also reported from Englefield in Mar 2014.                                  |
|                       |  | Hosehill Lake      | Jun 20th           |  | KEM       |   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 25V3  | Hosehill Lake      | Jun 27th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 11th 2016.   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Black 26K5 on White                              | Moor Green Lakes   | Mar 11th           |  | RCM       | Ringed as a nestling, Jun 8th 2013, at Hosehill Lake by T G Ball (R&B Ringing Group). Reported in each subsequent spring at Moor Green Lakes.   |
| Black-headed Gull     | Code 26N1  | Hosehill Lake      | Mar 12th           |  | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 14th 2014.   |

| 2018 Sighting Details    |                                 |                        |                          |            |           | History  |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|--|
| Species                  | Ring Details                    | Location               | 2018 Sightings           | Notes      | Observer  |  |
| Black-headed Gull        | Code 26P1                       | Hosehill Lake          | Mar 12th; Jun 27th       |            | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 7th 2015. Reported at Wilstone Resv, Herts, in Apr 2016 and later in spring 2016 at Hosehill Lake.  |
|                          |                                 | Hosehill Lake          | Jun 27th                 |            | KEM       |  |
| Black-headed Gull        | Code 27S7                       | Hosehill Lake          | Jun 27th                 |            | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 4th 2016.   |
| Black-headed Gull        | Code 28N0 on White              | Lea Farm Lake          | Apr 8th                  |            | DBI       | Ringed at Lea Farm Lake, Jun 15th 2014. Reported from Little Marlow GP in Jun 2015, and back at Lea Farm Lake in Feb and Jul 2016.   |
| Black-headed Gull        | Black 28S3 on White             | Pangbourne Meadow      | Nov 16th, 21st; Dec 20th |            | ATa       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 4th 2016.   |
| Black-headed Gull        | Black 28V2 on White             | Dorney Wetlands        | May 25-27th; Jun 26th    |            | KPD       | Ringed as a nestling Jun 17th 2017 at Hosehill Lake by T G Ball.   |
| Black-headed Gull        | Code 29K0                       | Hosehill Lake          | Mar 12th                 |            | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 8th 2013. Reported there each spring until 2016.  |
| Black-headed Gull        | Code 2X32                       | Hosehill Lake          | Mar 12th                 |            | KEM       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 13th 2009. 100 further sightings until 2016 at Hosehill Lake, and at Swadlincote, Derbys, in Jan 2015.  |
| Black-headed Gull        | Code 2X74                       | Lower Farm GP          | Aug 7th                  |            | ABT       | Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake, Jun 20th 2009. 69 subsequent spring-time records in each year since, mostly from Hosehill Lake, but also other local sites as far as Lower Farm GP. |
| Mediterranean Gull       | Code AYEE on Yellow (Right leg) | Moor Green Lakes       | Apr 29th; May 2nd, 3rd   | 1st summer | RCM, RJG  | Ringed at Lobnitz GP, Saxony, Germany.   |
| Mediterranean Gull       | Orange ring (Right leg)         | Lea Farm Lake          | Mar 2nd                  | Adult      | ABT       |  |
| Caspian Gull             | Code HAT77 on Yellow            | Queen Mother Reservoir | Nov 6th                  | 2nd winter | ADB       | Also seen at Little Marlow GP on Nov 3rd, probably ringed Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.   |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | White CJD on Red (Left tibia)   | Lower Farm GP          | Feb 3rd                  |            | ABT       |  |
| Cormorant                | White KRP on Green (Right leg)  | Moor Green Lakes       | Jan 31st                 |            | RCM       | Belgian-ringed bird, also reported here in 2012 and 2014.  |
| Little Egret             |                                 | Hosehill Lake          | Sep 8th, 11th            |            | KEM, DNTR |  |
| Buzzard                  | Green (Left leg)                | Moor Green Lakes       | Oct 7th                  |            | MHu       |  |
| Peregrine                | Orange (Left leg)               | Moor Green Lakes       | Dec 28th                 |            | RFM       |  |
| Robin                    |                                 | Winkfield              | Feb 13th                 |            | KTa       |  |

## Birding Highlights of 2018

by Andy Tomczynski

**JANUARY:** undoubtedly the month's highlight was the continuing presence of 16 **Parrot Crossbills** at Wishmoor Bottom until the end of the month. The influx of **Hawfinches** also continued into the new year, with sightings at numerous locations; Basildon Park was the prime site with a maximum count of 160 on the 28th. A **Great Northern Diver** found at Woolhampton GP on the 17th remained until month end. A **Great Grey Shrike** on Cow Down, West Ilsley, was seen on several dates from the 13th. A Smew was at Wraysbury GP from Jan 7th to 12th. Two drake **Ferruginous Ducks** frequented Middle Marsh at Dinton Pastures CP throughout the month (and until Feb 17th); both were ringed birds from a captive bred re-introduction scheme in south Germany and probably not a self-sustaining population. The month was notable for the number of scarcer grebe species. **Black-necked Grebes** were recorded at Lower Farm GP on 28 days of the month, ten of which had five individuals present. On the 17th and 18th, an additional four were present at Main Pit, Theale, giving a total of nine individuals in the county. Remarkably a **Slavonian Grebe** joined the five **Black-necked Grebes** at Lower Farm GP on the 3rd. On the 6th, a **Slavonian Grebe** was found at Main Pit. Two were present there on the 9th, staying until the next day. Another was found at Lower Farm GP, making a total of three in the county on this date.



*Black-necked Grebe, Lower Farm GP, Jan 4th, Andy Tomczynski*

**FEBRUARY:** fewer **Parrot Crossbills** remained at Wishmoor Bottom, with the last sighting of eight on the 17th. A pair of **Black-necked Grebes** remained at Lower Farm GP until the 24th at least. Elsewhere, an additional three were noted at Main Pit on the 3rd, and two at Moatlands GP on the 24th. The **Great Northern Diver** at Woolhampton was last reported on the 2nd. The **Great Grey Shrike** and the **Short-eared Owls** were still being seen at Cow Down until the last week of February. Five **Jack Snipe** were seen at Lavell's Lake on the 26th. **Mediterranean Gulls** were noted at several locations - Moatlands GP, Lavell's Lake, Queen Mother Reservoir and two at the unusual location of Palmer Park, Reading on the 6th. A **Smew** was seen at Wraysbury GPs on the 5th and 8th with two there later in the month, and a **Brent Goose** at Lea Farm Lake from the 6th until the 25th.

**MARCH:** **Parrot Crossbills** were still with us this month, with the last four seen on the 11th, while the West Ilsley **Great Grey Shrike** remained to the 14th. **Hawfinches** continued to be seen throughout the month and into early April, with a maximum count of 22 on Mar 9th at Shaw House, Newbury. The pair of **Black-necked Grebes** at Lower Farm GP remained for the whole of the month as they moulted into breeding plumage and

undertook courtship displays. Another pair were present at Moatlands GP on the 24th and 26th, and a single bird visited Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on the 11th and 13th. Single **Jack Snipe** were seen at Lower Farm GP on the 1st, Hambledon Lock on the 18th and Greenham Common on the 25th. The highest count of **Short-eared Owls** at Bury Down for the late winter was nine on the 11th, and one circled high over Queen Mother Reservoir on the 9th. A **Water Pipit** was seen at Foudry Brook, Reading, on the 2nd. **Mediterranean Gulls** continued to be seen, with singles at Dorney Wetlands, Lower Farm GP, Main Pit and Wraysbury GP, and up to three at Queen Mother Reservoir. The highest count of **Goldeneyes** for the year so far was 30 on the 8th at Wraysbury GP where a **Scaup** was also present, while nearby at Horton GP a pair of Pintails visited on the 24th. A passage of **Common Scoters** occurred at the end of the month, with three at Woolhampton GP on the 25th, then five at Lower Farm GP, two at Queen Mother Reservoir and three at Main Pit, all on the 31st. **Little Gulls** passed through Queen Mother Reservoir, Wraysbury GP, Main Pit and Lower Farm GP on the 17th and 18th. Other signs of migrating birds were evidenced by a **Kittiwake** at Moor Green Lakes on the 14th, **Sandwich Terns** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 17th and 31st, a **Knot** over Queen Mother Reservoir on the 17th, and an **Avocet** at Main Pit on the 17th, followed by four at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 24th. A male **Marsh Harrier** passed through Moor Green Lakes on the 3rd, and a **Ruff** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the same date. The first spring **Wheatear** was at Greenham Common on the 13th and two **Little Ringed Plovers** at Moor Green Lakes on the 14th. Lastly, of note, was the discovery of a **Black Redstart** at Woodhurst Park, Bracknell on the 30th, seen again two days later.

**APRIL:** another **Black Redstart** appeared at Moor Green Lakes on the 11th, staying until the 13th. The **Long-eared Owls** wintering in a garden in Maidenhead were still present on the 1st. Also on the 1st, there was a count of 16 **Bramblings** at Brimpton Common. The pair of **Black-necked Grebes** remained at Lower Farm GP up to the 15th. A single was at Main Pit on the 4th, followed by another pair (not the Lower Farm GP pair) on the 8th and again on the 15th. **Great White Egrets** were seen at Hungerford, Padworth Lane GP, Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP and at Bottom Lane, Theale. A pair of **Mediterranean Gulls** at Hosehill Lake mid-month appeared to relocate to Moor Green Lakes on the 27th. Four **Pintails** were seen on Twyford floods on the 3rd, and a single at Fobney Meadow on the 21st. A female **Ring-necked Duck** appeared at Lower Farm GP on the 6th and remained until the 19th, but paid a visit to Woolhampton GP on the 12th. A **Hawfinch** seen at Stanford Dingley on the 13th was the last of the memorable influx. Spring passage continued with **Sandwich Terns** seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on several dates. The 8th was a key date for **Little Gull** passage, with 13 at Queen Mother Reservoir, ten at Searles Lane GP, nine at Main Pit and others at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Lower Farm GP and Moatlands GP. The 8th was also key for **Common Scoter** passage, as parties comprising 23 birds were seen at Lower Farm GP, Queen Mother Reservoir, Summerlease GP, Windsor Great Park and Main Pit, with five present at the latter location the next day. The 8th also accounted for a **Kittiwake** at Main Pit, and an **Arctic Tern** at Queen Mother Reservoir. On the 9th, two **Arctic Skuas**, probably a pair as they showed flight display, were present early morning at Queen Mother Reservoir, and a **Red-necked Grebe** showed there on the 14th. At the end of the month, parties of seven and six **Arctic Terns** passed through Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP and Wraysbury GP respectively. Wader passage provided two **Avocets** at Lower Farm GP on the 9th. **Whimbrels** were widespread, with singles passing through Datchet Common, Moor Green Lakes, Lower Farm GP, Englefield and Lea Farm Lake, and five parties totalling 12 birds through Queen Mother Reservoir. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Moor Green Lakes on the 13th, a **Greenshank** at Lower Farm GP on the 15th, and a Sanderling at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 28th. **Ring**

**Ouzels** appeared on cue at their regular stopover sites of Greenham Common, Inkpen Hill and Walbury Hill, and also visited Queen Mother Reservoir. Burnthouse Lane had a **Grasshopper Warbler** on the 22nd, with other singles at Wraysbury GP on the 22nd, and Hungerford Marsh on the 23rd. A single **Pied Flycatcher** made a brief appearance at Wishmoor Bottom on the 19th. A **Marsh Harrier** was seen at Datchet on the 2nd. Lastly two **Great Bustards** were at Newbury Racecourse on the 6th, having strayed away from Wiltshire!

**MAY:** there were three **Mediterranean Gulls** at Moor Green Lakes on the 1st, two of which mated and nested, and remained incubating for the rest of the month. A first summer **Yellow-legged Gull** spent the month at Horton GP and Queen Mother Reservoir. Other gull highlights, also at Queen Mother Reservoir, were single **Kittiwakes** that flew over on the 23rd and the 25th, and two **Caspian Gulls** on the 27th. A full summer plumaged **Great Northern Diver** was seen to circle the Queen Mother Reservoir before departing on the 10th. The reservoir also provided the only May records of **Arctic Tern** and **Sandwich Tern**, on two dates each, while the other scarce migrant tern, **Black Tern**, had a good spring passage between the 20th and 27th, with a flock of 27 at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 21st and a maximum of 40 seen at Main Pit on the 24th. By far the rarest duck was a male **Lesser Scaup** at Lower Farm GP on the 21st. Less rare was a pair of **Garganeys** at Fobney Meadow on the morning of the 25th. Queen Mother Reservoir also provided records of the scarcer waders on passage. A **Grey Plover** flew over the reservoir on the 24th and landed in the adjacent Horton Brook Quarry. On the 25th, there were three **Turnstones** at Queen Mother Reservoir and one at Lower Farm GP. There was a single **Whimbrel** at Horton GP on the 6th, and four at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 18th. **Sanderlings** were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on several dates, amounting to around 12 birds in all. There was also one at Moor Green Lakes on the 24th. In late May, **Greenshanks** were seen at Moor Green Lakes and at Dorney Wetlands. Sadly, the **Turtle Doves** reported from the Berkshire Downs on the 9th and Burnthouse Lane on the 20th were the sole observations of 2018. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was heard singing at Crookham Common on the 31st and again on Jun 6th.

**JUNE:** unfortunately, the Moor Green Lakes **Mediterranean Gulls'** breeding attempt failed after a very extended time on the nest incubating the eggs. They were last seen on the 27th. Gulls at Queen Mother Reservoir included two adult **Kittiwakes** on the 4th, a first summer **Caspian Gull** on the 3rd and increasing numbers of **Yellow-legged Gulls**, peaking at three on the 24th. A female type **Marsh Harrier** flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on the 2nd. A male **Garganey** was present at Moor Green Lakes on the 7th, then a pair on the 9th. On the same date, a pair were also present at Lower Farm GP. A single **Garganey** was seen at Lea Farm Lake on the 28th. Two adult **Black Terns** circled Moor Green Lakes on the 26th and a **Ruff** appeared there on the 28th. **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard reeling at Cookham Common on the 5th and at Hungerford Marsh on the 28th.

**JULY:** **Mediterranean Gulls** continued to be reported in ones and twos at Queen Mother Reservoir, Lower Farm GP, Windsor Great Park, Bray GP and Brimpton GP. **Yellow-legged**



*Common Scoter, Queen Mother Reservoir, Jul 7th, Chris Heard*



**Gulls** increased in number during the month, with peaks of nine at Queen Mother Reservoir and 16 at Horton Brook Quarry. A first summer **Caspian Gull** was also seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 7th and 9th. A **Garganey** was at Lea Farm Lake on the 7th, and **Common Scoter** put in an appearance at Queen Mother Reservoir in early July including a flock of nine on the 7th. Waders began their return migration during the month. Moor Green Lakes, Lower Farm GP, Lea Farm Lake and Eton Wick all hosted **Black-tailed Godwits**, with a combined total of 20 in seven parties counted. A **Greenshank** was at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 16th. **Sanderlings** were also seen at the reservoir, with singles on the 23rd and 31st. A **Wood Sandpiper** frequented Fleethill Farm from the 23rd to the 31st, whilst a single **Turnstone** was at Moor Green Lakes on the 30th.



*Sanderling, Queen Mother Reservoir, Jul 31st, Chris Heard*

**AUGUST:** this month's highlight was a **Spotted Crake** at Eton Wick. One was seen on the 27th, then daily until the 31st. An observer thought there was the possibility of two birds, as two different coloured bills were seen on the 'single' bird on the 27th. An **Osprey** over Hosehill Lake was also another great highlight. The only **Mediterranean Gull** in the month was a juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 1st. Up to seven **Yellow-legged Gulls** were present at Queen Mother Reservoir all month, with six on the adjacent Horton Brook Quarry on the 23rd and a maximum of 12 at Colnbrook at the end of the month. **Cormorant** numbers at Queen Mother Reservoir reached 550 on the 9th. Queen Mother Reservoir hosted an impressive assortment of waders at various times during October, totalling five **Black-tailed Godwits**, four **Turnstones**, four **Sanderlings**, five **Curlews**, a **Ruff** and three **Greenshanks**. Elsewhere a **Black-tailed Godwit** stayed at Eton Wick from the 10th until the 19th, with three together there on the 12th, while a **Spotted Redshank**, probably the scarcest wader of the period, was seen



*Great White Egret, Hosehill Lake, Aug 28th, Andy Tomczynski*

on the 12th at Lower Farm GP, where a **Ruff** was present on the 31st. A **Garganey** was seen on several dates at Dorney Wetlands between the 13th and 30th. A **Great White Egret** was found at Bottom Lane, Theale, on the 25th, and subsequently at Hosehill Lake from the 26th until the 31st, when it was in the company of 16 **Little Egrets**. Queen Mother Reservoir had a **Black Redstart** on the 14th and a first summer **Arctic Tern** on the 29th. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was caught and ringed at Brimpton GP on the 13th.

**SEPTEMBER:** the Eton Wick **Spotted Crake** became two on the 2nd, which justified the suspicion of two being present in August. The last sighting of a **Spotted Crake** was on the 10th. The sight of three **Grey Phalaropes** together on Main Pit on the 22nd was remarkable, with one remaining to the next day. Other scarce wader species on passage included a **Wood Sandpiper** at Lower Farm GP on the 1st, a **Turnstone** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 17th, two **Whimbrel** at Main Pit on the 9th, and a **Ruff** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 5th and three on the 16th. A single **Greenshank** was at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 1st, then three on the 2nd. Fourteen **Black-tailed Godwit** were found at Moor Green Lakes, and two at Lower Farm GP on the 18th. A **Great Skua** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 23rd was an exciting find. The only **Black Tern** was a single at Lower Farm GP on the 12th while a flock of seven **Sandwich Terns** graced Queen Mother Reservoir on the 23rd. On the 24th, a juvenile **Gannet** flew close past Queen Mother Reservoir and, soon after, two more juveniles called in at the reservoir. **Yellow-legged Gulls** and **Caspian Gulls** continued at Queen Mother Reservoir, and **Cormorant** numbers exceeded 900 there on the 13th. Lastly, it was an interesting month for egrets. At Hosehill Lake, the **Little Egrets**, whose numbers peaked at 17 on the 22nd, were joined at times by a **Cattle Egret** and up to two **Great White Egrets**. **Cattle Egrets** also visited Lower Farm GP mid-month with a maximum of seven on the 18th. September passerines included a **Pied Flycatcher** at Dinton Pastures on the 13th, a **Rock Pipit** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 25th and 26th, while a **Grasshopper Warbler** was a late find at Windsor Great Park on the 16th.

**OCTOBER:** **Yellow-browed Warblers** were the main highlight of the month, being seen at three locations. Two were ringed at Greenham Common on the 16th; one was present at Dinton Pastures CP from the 24th until Nov 2nd; and another was seen at Reading University on the 29th. A **Whooper Swan** visited Moor Green Lakes on the 22nd and a **Garganey** was at Wraysbury GP on the 28th and 29th. **Little Egrets** peaked at 18 on the 2nd at Hosehill Lake. Three **Great White Egrets** were at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 11th with another at Dinton Pastures CP on the 29th, and a **Cattle Egret** arrived at Fobney Meadow on the 21st, staying until Nov 6th. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Lower Farm GP on the 24th, with two on Compton Down and Queen Mother Reservoir, where up to two **Caspian Gulls** were present throughout the month. A **Merlin** was seen at Weathercock Hill on the 15th and a **Hen Harrier** on Eastbury Down on the 22nd. **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 15th and at Burnthouse Lane GP on the 26th. The **Coot** count at Main Pit was 912 on the 14th. Lower Farm GP hosted a **Black-tailed Godwit** from the 8th to 10th, and a **Jack Snipe** on the 20th. A **Ring Ouzel** was seen on Greenham Common on the 16th. A **Knot** was at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 2nd; two **Rock Pipits** were there on the 14th and a **Water Pipit** at Fobney Meadow on the 28th and 29th. There were 78 **Corn Buntings** on the 10th on Compton Down.

**NOVEMBER:** a single **Mediterranean Gull** was seen at Wraysbury GPs on the 4th and a **Caspian Gull** at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 6th. **Yellow-legged Gulls** were widespread with reports from Lower Farm GP, Wraysbury, Main Pit, Moor Green Lakes and Queen Mother Reservoir. Queen Mother Reservoir also attracted **Red-breasted Mergansers** with three on the 16th and another individual on the 17th, then a **Brent**

**Goose** (the second record for the year) on the 17th. **Goosander** numbers reached 21 at Moor Green Lakes on the 29th. At Dorney Wetlands, three **White-fronted Geese** were seen on the 26th. A ringed **Ferruginous Duck** returned to Dinton Pastures CP on the 2nd but was only seen again once, on the 10th. **Great White Egrets** continued to be seen, with individuals at Padworth Lane GP, Fleethill Farm and Moor Green Lakes. **Golden Plovers** reached a count of about 300 at Lower Farm GP on the 3rd. A **Merlin** was present on Roden Down on the 2nd, a **Short-eared Owl** at Cow Down on the 21st and a **Long-eared Owl** returned to the winter roost site in a Maidenhead garden on the 14th. **Two Water Pipits** appeared at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 21st while numbers at Fobney Meadows steadily increased, with three remaining into early November.

**DECEMBER:** a **Great White Egret** also remained at Moor Green Lakes on the 14th and at Fleethill Farm on the 24th. Up to two **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported from Queen Mother Reservoir throughout the month, with a **Yellow-legged Gull** there on the 17th and two at Lower Farm GP on the 29th. The three **White-fronted Geese** were relocated at Old Windsor from the 17th to the 29th. **Goosander** numbers reached 36 at Moor Green Lakes on the 29th. A **Goshawk** was seen on the 14th at a west Berkshire location. A **Hen Harrier** was seen on three dates in the Lambourn area, on one occasion harried by a **Short-eared Owl**, a species that was also present at Cow Down for most of December, with a peak count of three on the 4th. A **Great Northern Diver** found on a small lake at Beale Park on the 22nd and a **Scaup** seen at Moor Green Lakes on the 29th both remained into 2019. Lastly the roost of **Ring-necked Parakeets** at Slough next to the M4 reached an estimated 2,500 on the 14th.



Great Northern Diver, Beale Park, Dec 24th, Andy Tomczynski

## The Berkshire Bird Index

by Renton Righelato

The Berkshire Bird Index (BBI) is a measure of the change in abundance of commoner species in the county, derived from the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) 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](mailto: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 2018. Statistically significant results at  $p < 0.05$  are shown in bold. More detail and graphs of the changes in relative abundance of 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 2018 include Red Kite, Buzzard, Jackdaw, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and 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.

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 by around half over the last eighteen years.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Sarah Harris at the BTO for providing the Berkshire index data and all the Breeding Bird Survey volunteers. The Breeding Bird Survey is a partnership jointly funded by the BTO, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers.

| Species                  | Trend<br>%/year index change | Index 2018/2000<br>85% confidence limits |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Red-legged Partridge     | -1.07                        | 1.65-0.74                                |
| Pheasant                 | 1.31                         | <b>1.67 - 1.2</b>                        |
| Canada Goose             | -0.65                        | 1.26 - 0.58                              |
| Mallard*                 | <b>-2.47</b>                 | 1.07 - 0.62                              |
| Swift*                   | <b>-3.16</b>                 | 0.38 - 0.14                              |
| Cuckoo**                 | <b>-2.56</b>                 | 0.66 - 0.31                              |
| Stock Dove               | 12.7                         | 3.77 - 1.47                              |
| Woodpigeon               | -0.58                        | 1.22 - 0.9                               |
| Collared Dove**          | <b>-3.09</b>                 | 0.86 - 0.49                              |
| Moorhen                  | -1.47                        | 1.07 - 0.59                              |
| Lapwing**                | <b>-2.02</b>                 | 0.83 - 0.35                              |
| Red Kite <sup>1**</sup>  | <b>17</b>                    | <b>7.38 - 1.00</b>                       |
| Buzzard <sup>1**</sup>   | <b>16</b>                    | <b>6.33 - 2.28</b>                       |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | -0.18                        | 1.26 - 0.73                              |
| Green Woodpecker**       | <b>-2.03</b>                 | 0.56 - 0.28                              |
| Kestrel                  | -1.81                        | 1.21 - 0.47                              |
| Jay*                     | <b>-2.09</b>                 | 1.33 - 0.68                              |
| Magpie                   | -0.65                        | 0.89 - 0.59                              |
| Jackdaw**                | <b>7.32</b>                  | <b>2.67 - 1.53</b>                       |
| Rook                     | 0.49                         | 4.65 - 1.76                              |
| Carrion Crow             | -2.64                        | 1.12 - 0.71                              |
| Coal Tit                 | 0.07                         | 1.78 - 0.84                              |
| Blue Tit                 | -0.48                        | 1.39 - 1.06                              |
| Great Tit                | -1.21                        | 0.99 - 0.71                              |
| Skylark*                 | <b>-1.39</b>                 | 0.97 - 0.68                              |
| Swallow                  | -0.24                        | 0.73 - 0.36                              |
| House Martin**           | <b>-3.20</b>                 | 0.59 - 0.31                              |
| Long-tailed Tit*         | <b>-1.71</b>                 | 0.64 - 0.34                              |
| Willow Warbler**         | <b>-1.94</b>                 | 0.28 - 0.14                              |
| Chiffchaff               | 4.77                         | 2.25 - 1.42                              |
| Blackcap**               | <b>5.39</b>                  | <b>2.28 - 1.52</b>                       |
| Whitethroat              | 1.63                         | 1.81 - 0.97                              |
| Goldcrest                | 0.28                         | 1.19 - 0.61                              |
| Wren                     | 0.80                         | 1.19 - 0.91                              |
| Nuthatch                 | 2.24                         | 2.13 - 1.15                              |
| Starling**               | <b>-2.53</b>                 | 0.54 - 0.3                               |
| Blackbird                | -0.25                        | 1.08 - 0.87                              |
| Song Thrush              | -0.56                        | 1.4 - 0.91                               |
| Mistle Thrush            | -1.50                        | 1.1 - 0.58                               |
| Robin                    | 0.13                         | 1.00 - 0.78                              |
| House Sparrow*           | <b>-3.07</b>                 | 1.24 - 0.7                               |
| Dunnock                  | -1.25                        | 1.02 - 0.7                               |
| Pied Wagtail**           | <b>-4.04</b>                 | 0.55 - 0.25                              |
| Chaffinch**              | <b>-4.47</b>                 | 0.35 - 0.25                              |
| Bullfinch                | -1.21                        | 0.75 - 0.35                              |
| Greenfinch**             | <b>-5.73</b>                 | 0.45 - 0.25                              |
| Linnet**                 | <b>-2.64</b>                 | 0.58 - 0.3                               |
| Goldfinch**              | <b>12.55</b>                 | <b>5.31 - 2.94</b>                       |
| Yellowhammer**           | <b>-2.00</b>                 | 0.61 - 0.39                              |

<sup>1</sup> reference year 2010 Significant trend at  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*

## Berkshire Bird Index 2018

**Trend:** this is the linear regression for 2000 -2018 expressed as % per year change.

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

Grey background – significantly decreasing trend; black – significantly increasing trend.

**Index:** this is the species' abundance in 2018 relative to the abundance in 2000. It is shown as a range within the upper and lower 85% confidence limits. Annual indices may be affected by factors other than long term trends, such as the weather.

<sup>1</sup> Because of the difficulty in measuring the low abundance of Red Kite and Buzzard in the year 2000, for these two species a reference year of 2010 has been used.

### Some points to note:

- Most Berkshire trends are consistent with previous years and are also found in the national data from the BTO.
- The apparent increasing abundance of Stock Dove is not statistically significant due to high variability in counts but is consistent with the national trend.
- Although the changes are hardly significant, the data for both Magpie and Jay suggest some decline, unlike the other corvids.
- The apparent negative trend for Long-tailed Tit should be treated with caution. It is only marginally statistically significant and contrasts with a significant national increase.

For national trends see <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birdtrends/2019>

## Weather Summary 2018

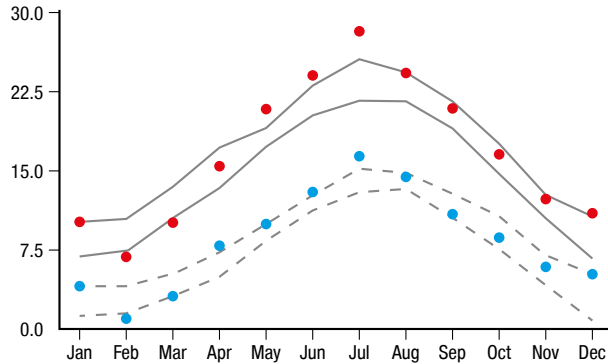
*Renton Righelato*

The weather summary here is based on the Met Office weather reports for Heathrow. Grey lines are shown one standard deviation either side of the average for 2000 – 2017.

In 2018, the first winter period was colder than usual since 2000, with more than average freezing weather in February and March, followed by an unusually warm spell in late April. Summer temperatures were a little higher than average. Autumn was unexceptional and the second winter was mild. Spring rainfall was on the high side and summer somewhat drier than average.

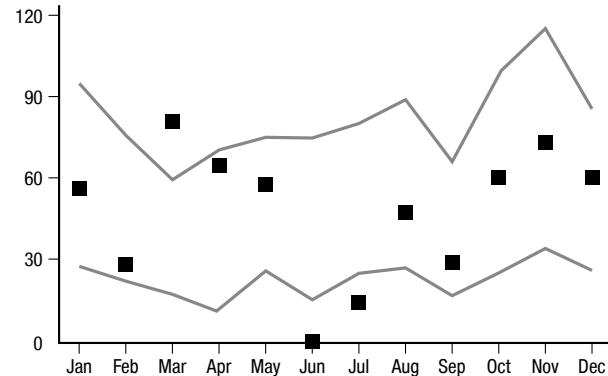
### Temperature °C

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



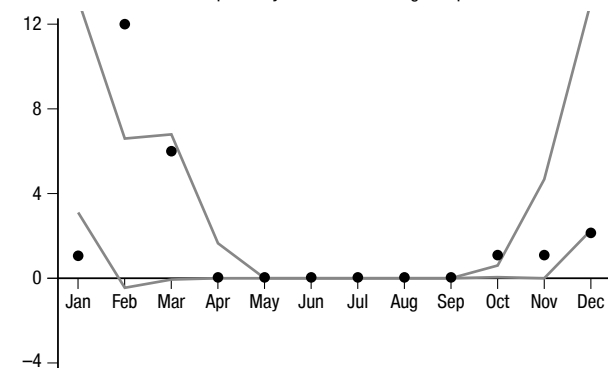
### Rainfall

Monthly rainfall (mm).



### Days air frost

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



## Report for 2018 by the Berkshire Records Committee (BRC)

*Committee members when the 2018 records were examined:  
Marek Walford (County Recorder), Andy Horscroft (Secretary), Adam Bassett,  
Adrian Hickman, Ken Moore and Hugh Netley.*

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 2018

#### Category 2 species

Taiga Bean Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Tundra Bean Goose, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Eider, Velvet Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Ruddy Duck, Alpine Swift, Turtle Dove, Corncrake, Spotted Crake, Crane, Black-winged Stilt, Dotterel, Curlew Sandpiper, Purple Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, Spotted Redshank, 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, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Storm Petrel, Leach's Petrel, Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Spoonbill, Night-heron, Cattle Egret, Purple Heron, Honey-buzzard, Golden Eagle, Goshawk, Montagu's Harrier, Black Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Rough-legged Buzzard, Long-eared Owl, Wryneck, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Red-footed Falcon, Red-backed Shrike, Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Hooded Crow, Waxwing, Penduline Tit, Bearded Tit, Shore Lark, Short-toed Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Wood Warbler, Pallas's Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling, Bluethroat, Pied Flycatcher, Dipper, Tree Sparrow, Richard's Pipit, Olive-backed Pipit, Common Rosefinch, Twite, Common Redpoll, Parrot Crossbill, Serin, Lapland Bunting, Snow 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

White-fronted Goose, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Garganey, Scaup, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Quail, Red-necked Grebe, Slavonian Grebe, Black-necked Grebe,

Avocet, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot, Temminck's Stint, Sanderling, Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Kittiwake, Little Gull, Yellow-legged Gull (spring), Sandwich Tern, Little Tern, Arctic Tern, Great Northern Diver, Gannet, Shag, Great White Egret, Osprey, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Hoopoe, Merlin, Great Grey Shrike, Willow Tit, Yellow-browed Warbler, Ring Ouzel, Black Redstart, White Wagtail (autumn), Water Pipit, Rock Pipit, Hawfinch.

## Review of 2018 Records

Records that the Committee has not been able to accept are listed below. We do not include reports from social media, that do not have observer details and/or notes. Where descriptions are available but have not been provided, we would welcome them or further supporting information for any of these records.

### Records considered 'not proven' by BBRC

None

### Records considered 'not proven' by BRC

The following records were not accepted after circulation to the committee. In most 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.

**Crane**, Binfield, two, June 28th.

**Osprey**, Reading, May 8th.

**Goshawk**, Lavell's Lake, female, April 21st.

**Golden Oriole**, Whiteknights Park, Reading, March 25th.

### 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](mailto:records@berksoc.org.uk).

**Garganey**, Moor Copse, Tidmarsh, two, April 12th.

**Garganey**, Burghfield GPs, August 18th.

**Scaup**, Lower Farm GP, March 30th-31st.

**Common Scoter**, Queen Mother Reservoir, two, April 3rd.

**Quail**, Streatley Hill, May 29th.

**Crane**, Loddon Bridge, May 18th.

**Crane**, Winnersh, two, June 28th.

**Slavonian Grebe**, Lower Farm Trout Lake, Newbury, January 30th.

**Curlew Sandpiper**, Fobney Meadow, Reading, two, September 7th.

**Wood Sandpiper**, Moor Green Lakes, September 2nd.

**Little Gull**, Winnersh, May 7th.

**Caspian Gull**, Lower Farm GP, first-winter, January 22nd, also January 29th and February 9th & 20th.

**Caspian Gull**, Lower Farm GP, second winter, January 28th, also February 12th.

**Caspian Gull**, Lower Farm GP, February 14th.

**Caspian Gull**, Lower Farm GP, first winter, March 3rd.

**Caspian Gull**, Lower Farm GP, two, June 20th.

**Caspian Gull**, Lower Farm GP, second winter, December 21st.

**Sandwich Tern**, Queen Mother Reservoir, two, August 7th.

**Arctic Tern**, Lower Farm GP, two, May 1st.

**Great Northern Diver**, Lower Farm GP, April 15th.

**Great White Egret**, Pingewood GPs, June 2nd.

**Great White Egret**, Lower Farm GP, June 14th.

**Great White Egret**, Lower Farm GP, July 1st.

**Great White Egret**, Thatcham Marsh, October 21st.

**Osprey**, Lower Farm GP, May 11th.

**Osprey**, Freeman's Marsh, May 17th.

**Osprey**, Dinton Pastures CP, September 24th.

**Goshawk**, Confidential, January 25th.

**Goshawk**, Confidential, February 11th.

**Marsh Harrier**, Woolhampton GPs, May 5th.

**Marsh Harrier**, Woolhampton GPs, August 11th.

**Hen Harrier**, Bury Down, February 16th.

**Hen Harrier**, Burghfield GPs, April 12th.

**Hen Harrier**, Brightwalton Common, December 23rd.

**Long-eared Owl**, Sandhurst, February 26th.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, Lower Farm GP, May 20th.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, Winkfield, two, June 18th.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, Holyport, November 17th.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, Lower Farm GP, female, December 22nd.

**Merlin**, M4 J8/9, February 9th.

**Merlin**, Wargrave, February 18th.

**Merlin**, Eastbury, December 31st.

**Great Grey Shrike**, West Ilsley, April 1st.

**Golden Oriole**, Wokingham, August 17th.

**Waxwing**, Bracknell, January 10th.

**Willow Tit**, Moor Green Lakes, January 25th.

**Wood Warbler**, Greenham Common, May 23rd.

**Siberian Chiffchaff**, Eton Wick, January 7th.

**Ring Ouzel**, Inkpen Hill, three, April 3rd.

**Black Redstart**, Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, two, October 31st to November 1st.

**White Wagtail**, Lower Farm GP, two, September 22nd.

**White Wagtail**, Bracknell, October 7th-21st.

**White Wagtail**, Lower Farm GP, October 24th.

**White Wagtail**, Lower Farm GP, November 6th.

**White Wagtail**, Moor Green Lakes, November 19th.

**White Wagtail**, Moor Green Lakes, December 3rd.

**Water Pipit**, Theale GPs, two, March 18th.

**Mealy Redpoll**, Winkfield, three male & two female, February 3rd.

**Mealy Redpoll**, Wishmoor Bottom, c.20, February 18th.

# Introduction to the 2018 Systematic List

by Robert Godden

The Systematic List that follows provides a summary of the status of the bird species recorded in Berkshire in 2018; more detailed information on these species can be obtained by exploring the online database at <http://berksoc.org.uk/berkshire-bird-database/>.

The List is a condensed analysis of the many records of birds submitted by observers, and for 2018 this amounted to almost 60,000 records. It would not have been possible to write this report without those records, so I would like to express my thanks to all the observers and to encourage them to continue to submit their records for future years. The intention to clear the backlog of annual reports can only be achieved if these records are received in a timely manner and we ask that they are submitted either at the time or within two months of year end. 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 or BirdTrack, you do not need to submit them again, so maybe consider doing so throughout the year to save you a big job in January.

The accuracy of the accounts depends on the quality of the records, which are typically a combination of species name, count, date, location and supplementary notes. The Report of the BRC covers the validation of records of less common species. Of the relatively small proportion of records that present problems when writing species accounts, the majority of issues concern the names used for locations. Guidelines to help with consistency and accuracy are given in the Submitting Records section of this report. A map of the main sites encountered in this report is included on page 144 to assist with identification.

Grateful thanks are due to the team of volunteer Species Account Writers (SAWs) who have written accounts as follows:

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Kittiwake to Arctic Skua   | Andy Tomczynski  |
| Chaffinch to Reed Bunting  | Anne Harrison    |
| Firecrest to Mistle Thrush   | Brian Hackett    |
| Owls   | Cathy McEwan     |
| Nightjar to Coot, Stone-curlew to Greenshank, Wood Warbler to Chiffchaff, Reed Warbler to Dartford Warbler | John Hobson      |
| Kestrel to Peregrine, Parakeet to Raven  | Katie Jenks      |
| Little Grebe to Black-necked Grebe, Sedge Warbler, Escapes and Hybrids                                     | Marek Walford    |
| Kingfisher to Green Woodpecker   | Mark Whitaker    |
| Woodlark 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, Great Northern Diver to Little Egret                             | Robert Godden    |
| Coal Tit to Great Tit  | Roger Stansfield |
| Red-legged Partridge to Pheasant   | Sean Murphy      |
| Osprey to Buzzard  | Steve Ricks      |
| Brent Goose to Whooper Swan  | Val Brown        |

To strike a balance between conciseness, readability and recognising observers' efforts in the field, observers' initials are applied in just these cases: to records of scarce and rarer species; to reports of significant survey work; and to accompany reports of first and last migrants.

Inevitably the recording of common species is patchy and does not correlate well with their true distribution, which can mean that any changes in their status may not be detected as quickly as with better recorded species. This report draws on the output of the Berkshire Bird Index where data from long-term, standardised surveys of randomly selected tetrads across the county should provide a more reliable picture of the status of commoner species.

In common with previous annual reports, many species accounts include a table of maximum counts. As the automatic calculations that produce these tables take no account of birds departing and being replaced by other individuals, the counts, especially for migratory species, should be regarded as minimum counts, although based on maximum counts at each location. The formatting of the tables in this report has also changed slightly, incorporating a row of monthly counts from the BTO's Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), totalled over all the Berkshire sites that were covered. These figures are not additional to any that appear previously in the table. For example, if the February WeBS count at Moor Green Lakes found 40 Goosanders, the February Moor Green Lakes entry in the table will give the highest count of the month, quite likely the WeBS count of 40, while the total in the WeBS row has included 40 in the summation.

This year, 203 species were recorded in a wild state in the county, with a further seven less usual subspecies identified and another seven species of unknown or escaped origin. The reports indicated that 104 species were confirmed to have bred, with another seven species probably breeding.

## Abbreviations used in the Systematic List

|              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| <b>CP</b>    | Country Park             |
| <b>GC</b>    | Golf course              |
| <b>GP(s)</b> | Gravel Pit(s)            |
| <b>NR</b>    | Nature Reserve           |
| <b>R.</b>    | River                    |
| <b>SF</b>    | Sewage Farm              |
| <b>STW</b>   | Sewage Treatment Works   |
| <b>SPA</b>   | Specially Protected Area |

## 2018 SYSTEMATIC LIST

*Edited by Robert Godden, Marek Walford, Andy Tomczynski and Roger Murfitt*

### RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

*Locally common introduced resident with numbers inflated in autumn at certain sites for shooting*  
Records for this introduced bird were received from 59 locations: 44 in west Berkshire, five in mid Berkshire and ten in east Berkshire. During the year, counts of ten or more were reported from 15 locations with 13 of these in west Berkshire. Many of these high counts involved birds released at country estates for shooting. Some of the highest counts in west Berkshire were: 46 on the Compton Downs on Oct 19th; 45 at Streatley on Nov 21st; 35 at Eastbury Down, Lambourn Downs, on Dec 13th; and 33 at Boxford on Oct 25th. In mid Berkshire, there were 25 from six coveys at Englefield on Dec 14th, and in east Berkshire, 32 at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 16th. Breeding was likely at several sites in the Lambourn Downs area. The Berkshire Bird Index reports no significant change in population levels since 2000 [BBI 2018].

### GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

*Localised and declining resident (Red Listed)*  
Records for this species came from 18 locations, continuing the decline from the 20 locations reported in 2017 and 27 in 2016. Eight of these locations were in west Berkshire, three in mid Berkshire and seven in east Berkshire. Nonetheless, sizable coveys of birds were reported across the county, but only in five locations were more than five birds counted at any one time. As in recent years, the largest counts throughout the year came from Englefield; daily counts of 20 or more birds from this site consisting of one or more coveys were reported for seven months with the highest counts in May (RCr). Across the county, significant counts were: ten at West Ilsley on Jan 7th and 12 at Leckhampstead on Mar 17th, both in west Berkshire; mid Berkshire, 23 pairs at Englefield on May 11th; and in east Berkshire, 35 at Hyde Farm, Bisham, on Dec 9th. Breeding reports included a pair with six fledged young at Englefield on two dates in August (plus three other coveys that were probably family groups), and a juvenile at Great Meadow Pond on Jul 11th..

### PHEASANT COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

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

A commonly reported species with records from across the county, particularly rural areas, in all months of the year. Most records were from west Berkshire with over 60 locations; in mid Berkshire there were 24, and 15 in east Berkshire. This is the most popular bird for shooting and large numbers are released in the autumn for sport. This was reflected in the records as most of the highest counts (greater than 50) reported were in January and then September to December, and all were from locations in west Berkshire. The highest count was 122 at Walbury Hill on Oct 19th. There was a record of an albinistic form at Mortimer on Dec 20th. Breeding was only recorded from three locations, although it is likely to occur throughout the county in rural areas. The Berkshire Bird Index reports no significant change in population levels since 2000 [BBI 2018].

### BRENT GOOSE BRANT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)*

A dark-bellied bird was sighted between Feb 6th and 25th on Lea Farm Lake, associating with Canada Geese and a Bar-headed Goose (RD *et al.*). Later in the year, a single dark-bellied adult was seen on Queen Mother Reservoir on the morning of Nov 17th (CDRH). At least one Brent Goose has occurred in the county each year this century.

### CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

*Common and widespread introduced resident*

The Canada Goose population in Berkshire remained stable [BBI 2018]. Monthly counts for the main locations from which sightings were reported are shown in the table. Of particular note were the very high numbers recorded on Lower Farm GP in the autumn: 800 in September, and 600 in October and November. On the Thames, the WeBS count for October was 208 between Reading and Pangbourne. Elsewhere, the highest count was 303 birds at Aston on Nov 22nd. As in previous years, breeding activity was under-reported; a total of 114 goslings were recorded from approximately 29 pairs.

#### Canada Goose: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan   | Feb   | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug   | Sep   | Oct   | Nov   | Dec   |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Burghfield GPs           | -     | 47    | 23  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 63    | -     | -     | 103   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 19    | 35    | 6   | 3   | 31  | 50  | 15  | -     | 50    | 14    | 60    | 48    |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 2     | 206   | 104 | 51  | 45  | 32  | 16  | 33    | 343   | 12    | -     | 11    |
| Horton GPs               | 26    | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     |
| Lea Farm Lake, Hurst     | 163   | 48    | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 140   | 152   | 170   | -     |
| Lower Farm GP, Newbury   | 285   | 80    | 88  | 36  | 64  | 48  | 12  | 230   | 800   | 600   | 600   | 200   |
| Moatlands GPs, Theale    | -     | 31    | 33  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     |
| Moor Green Lakes NR      | 112   | 101   | 52  | 26  | 67  | 110 | 127 | 50    | 87    | 175   | 101   | 88    |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 4     | 20    | 20  | 16  | 12  | 9   | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | 20    |
| Pingewood GPs            | -     | -     | -   | 2   | -   | -   | 45  | -     | 30    | -     | -     | -     |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -     | -     | 2   | 2   | -   | 11  | -   | 330   | -     | -     | 120   | -     |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 125   | 27    | 15  | 17  | 25  | 65  | 34  | 35    | 180   | 24    | 20    | 49    |
| Theale GPs               | 20    | 34    | 15  | 84  | 27  | 32  | 143 | 123   | 122   | 18    | 7     | 40    |
| Twyford GPs              | 14    | 54    | 16  | 41  | 10  | 10  | 67  | 5     | 99    | 40    | 14    | 15    |
| Windsor Riverside        | -     | -     | 47  | 2   | -   | -   | 273 | 200   | 114   | 173   | -     | -     |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 50    | 40    | 35  | 25  | 11  | 22  | 7   | 19    | 25    | 3     | 16    | 24    |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 14    | 19    | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     |
| No. birds at other sites | 806   | 506   | 293 | 174 | 277 | 203 | 104 | 362   | 499   | 320   | 644   | 845   |
| Number of other sites    | 15    | 21    | 20  | 21  | 25  | 12  | 5   | 12    | 8     | 6     | 13    | 8     |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 220   | 485   | 241 | 254 | 69  | 185 | 246 | 444   | 528   | 478   | 419   | 347   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 1,640 | 1,248 | 753 | 479 | 569 | 592 | 843 | 1,387 | 2,552 | 1,531 | 1,752 | 1,443 |

### BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

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

The feral population of 23 were frequently reported in the Moor Green Lakes area until March and then departed; they normally spend the breeding season at Stratfield Saye. They returned in October with numbers boosted to 34 birds, and were regularly reported until the end of the year. Elsewhere, three birds were seen in the Remenham area on Feb 12th, and single individuals were reported from Charvil GP and Dorney Wetlands (January), Wargrave

(March), Billingbear Park GC and Streatley (April), Dinton Pastures CP (April and July), and Lower Farm GP (July).

## GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

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

As in previous years, the highest numbers were recorded on Great Meadow Pond with a maximum count of 464 on Feb 25th. As in 2017, large numbers were observed feeding in the Englefield stubble fields in the early autumn, with 400 individuals recorded on Sep 10th. The population of Greylag Geese in the UK has been rising steadily since the 1990s when annual monitoring began [BTO BirdTrends], with no sign of levelling off. Limited survey data suggest a similar pattern in Berkshire. Apart from good records of breeding activity from Great Meadow Pond, where 136 goslings were reported from 28 pairs, breeding at other sites was probably under-reported or not given in detail. In all, 257 goslings and around 49 pairs were reported.

### Greylag Goose: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep   | Oct | Nov   | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | 4   | 8   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -     | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | 4   | 4   | 2   | 2   | 18  | 11  | -   | -     | 2   | -     | 8   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 19  | 464 | 29  | 269 | 248 | 343 | 321 | 140 | 395   | 323 | 233   | 301 |
| Horton GPs               | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -     | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | 29  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 42  | 5     | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 26  | 16  | 80  | 10  | 15  | 32  | 30  | 53  | 36    | 50  | 57    | 42  |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | 272   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 1   | 1   | 6   | 5   | 4   | 2   | 2   | 102 | -     | 30  | 11    | 40  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 3   | -   | 16  | 4   | 29  | 49  | -   | -   | -     | -   | 70    | 90  |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 80  | -   | 80    | -   | -     | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 4   | 18  | 242 | -     | -   | 9     | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 3   | 3   | 1   | 4   | 6   | 2   | 1   | 28  | 20    | 4   | -     | 4   |
| Theale GPs               | 121 | 80  | 140 | 72  | 34  | 16  | 46  | 112 | 355   | -   | 110   | -   |
| Twyford GPs              | -   | -   | 2   | 12  | 6   | -   | -   | -   | 40    | 1   | 1     | -   |
| Windsor Riverside        | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -     | -   | -     | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 105 | 33  | 23  | 16  | 16  | 35  | 26  | 27  | 130   | 81  | 3     | 50  |
| Wraysbury GPs            | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -     | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 179 | 165 | 236 | 48  | 108 | 188 | 150 | 25  | 608   | 256 | 290   | 318 |
| Number of other sites    | 8   | 5   | 12  | 9   | 16  | 9   | 2   | 2   | 5     | 4   | 6     | 5   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 185 | 412 | 87  | 198 | 95  | 269 | 165 | 354 | 511   | 625 | 359   | 7   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 487 | 770 | 552 | 444 | 470 | 689 | 687 | 729 | 1,664 | 789 | 1,061 | 853 |

## WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

### GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

*Uncommon but regular winter visitor, scarce passage migrant*

Three birds, two adults and a first winter, were reported in association with Canada Geese on Dorney Wetlands on the afternoon of Nov 26th (DAC). What may well have been the same individuals were seen again between Dec 17th and 29th in fields near Old Windsor with Canada and Egyptian Geese, and were attributed to the Russian race *A. a. albifrons* (CDRH).

## MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

*Locally common resident (Green Listed)*

A regular sight wherever there is access to open water, the iconic Mute Swan can be found in urban and rural wetland locations throughout the county. Not much bothered by human activity, Mute Swans regularly nest in urban areas, as witnessed by passers-by along the Thames in Reading.

Monthly maximum counts from the regular sites are shown in the table. As usual, the highest numbers were reported from the Windsor Promenade where birds were present for much of the year, with the maximum count of 198 on Sep 11th. Elsewhere, a count of 50 birds was recorded on the Thames near Caversham Bridge in Reading on May 23rd. Breeding activity was reported from 27 sites, with 115 cygnets hatched by around 33 pairs. Predation of eggs and young by unknown culprits was reported by several recorders.

### Mute Swan: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bray GPs                 | 8   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | -   | 17  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 17  | 27  | 13  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 27  | 29  | 23  | 17  |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 9   | 4   | 6   | 2   | 5   | 7   | 2   | -   | 6   | 14  | 15  | 24  |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 7   | 4   | 4   | 4   | 11  | 11  | 6   | 6   | 9   | 16  | 11  | 8   |
| Horton GPs               | 32  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 2   | 3   | 6   | 7   | 7   | 2   | 7   | 2   | 2   | 21  | 25  | 14  |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 3   | 2   | -   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 12  | 9   | 4   | 12  | 10  | 7   | 7   | 15  | 21  | 24  | 16  | 9   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 16  | 11  | 11  | 10  | 14  | 20  | -   | -   | -   | 10  | 17  | 11  |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 4   | 5   | 9   | 11  | 9   | 9   | 1   | 1   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 2   | 5   | 4   | 7   | 5   | 3   | 1   | 2   | -   | 2   | 1   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | 8   | 8   | 1   | 6   | 4   | 7   | 10  | 12  | 35  | 21  | 26  | 34  |
| Twyford GPs              | 47  | 40  | 25  | 8   | 6   | 2   | 10  | 2   | 14  | 35  | 48  | 40  |
| Windsor Riverside        | 23  | -   | 176 | -   | -   | -   | 147 | 116 | 198 | 167 | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 11  | 12  | 8   | 15  | 4   | 6   | 6   | 11  | 13  | 10  | 9   | 18  |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 6   | 10  | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| No. birds at other sites | 103 | 114 | 65  | 57  | 190 | 88  | 83  | 65  | 122 | 73  | 127 | 52  |
| Number of other sites    | 20  | 19  | 19  | 20  | 29  | 14  | 10  | 9   | 12  | 9   | 17  | 9   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 157 | 110 | 59  | 39  | 35  | 33  | 38  | 28  | 99  | 117 | 177 | 157 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 305 | 256 | 331 | 132 | 273 | 162 | 307 | 240 | 456 | 425 | 319 | 228 |

## WHOOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

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

One adult, noted at different times by several recorders, spent the morning of Oct 22nd in the Moor Green Lakes area, between East Fen and Colebrook Lake (TR *et al.*).



## EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

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

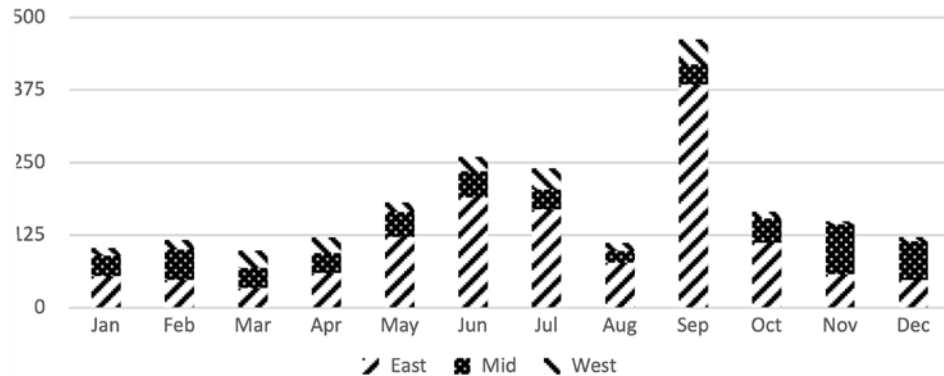
Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Egyptian Goose: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bray GPs                 | -   | -   | 2   | 9   | 18  | 75  | 40  | -   | 10  | -   | -   | 2   |
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 2   | 3   | 2   | 4   | 8   | 12  | 6   | -   | 2   | 9   | 2   | 2   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 11  | 29  | 14  | 20  | 26  | 14  | -   | 3   | 4   | 6   | 11  | 21  |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 6   | 2   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 3   | 5   | 10  | 11  | 9   | 12  | 13  | 7   | 2   | 6   | 3   | 3   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 2   | 4   | 9   | 4   | 16  | 29  | 22  | 12  | 60  | 93  | 2   | 5   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 18  | -   | 2   | 9   | 37  | 62  | 82  | 52  | 13  | 8   | 6   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 2   | 2   | 2   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 7   | 7   | 4   | 6   | 2   | 2   |
| Theale GPs               | 1   | 8   | 2   | 10  | 10  | 10  | 22  | 14  | 9   | -   | 3   | 6   |
| Windsor Riverside        | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 21  | 4   | 4   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 4   | -   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 56  | 64  | 49  | 45  | 48  | 39  | 27  | 13  | 348 | 31  | 116 | 81  |
| Number of other sites    | 14  | 17  | 16  | 15  | 13  | 10  | 6   | 4   | 7   | 6   | 15  | 12  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 21  | 21  | 23  | 19  | 14  | 69  | 96  | 44  | 30  | 42  | 32  | 22  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 103 | 117 | 99  | 121 | 182 | 260 | 240 | 112 | 462 | 166 | 149 | 122 |

Breeding was reported from 15 locations with at least 25 broods, including ten broods at Great Meadow Pond. A pair with 14 goslings at Horseshoe Lake, Sandhurst on May 21st was the largest family party observed, while on Feb 28th two goslings were watched foraging in the snow at Reading University. The numbers reported continued to show an easterly bias as is evident from the chart.

### Egyptian Goose: Monthly Maxima by Region



## SHELDUCK COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Shelduck: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 2   | 3   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 8   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 3   | 7   | 7   | 9   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Horton GPs               | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | 1   | 3   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 2   | 4   | 2   | 4   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 3   | 2   | 4   | 4   | 6   | 9   | 9   | 7   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | -   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 3   | 1   | 2   | 8   | 11  | 9   | 11  | 9   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | 5   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 1   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 3   | 9   | 12  | 5   | 7   | 2   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | 2   | 3   | 4   | 3   | 4   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | 10  | 5   | 11  | -   | 5   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 23  | 31  | 32  | 44  | 38  | 23  | 20  | 18  | 1   | -   | 5   | 2   |

**First winter:** only one or two were present in Berkshire at the New Year, but numbers started to increase from the middle of January, reaching a peak in April with the majority of the birds in the east of the county. **Breeding:** five sites held pairs during the breeding season; successful breeding was confirmed at four of them as summarised in the table.

### Shelduck: Breeding Success

| Location               | No. Pairs | Outcome   |
|------------------------|-----------|---|
| Dorney Wetlands        | 4         | 1 brood, max 9 ducklings May 26th                         |
| Great Meadow Pond      | 4         | No young reported   |
| Horton GPs             | 1         | 1 brood, 1 duckling Jun 7th                               |
| Moor Green Lakes       | 2         | 1 brood, max 7 ducklings Jun 23rd and still 6 on Aug 5th  |
| Queen Mother Reservoir | 3         | 1 brood, max 7 ducklings Jun 30th and still 5 on Jul 31st |

At Moor Green Lakes, some interest was shown in the tunnel nest box on Plover Island early in the season, but in the end two pairs set up territories on the New Workings [MGLG 2018]. There was also an appalling account of a female Shelduck fatally injured by a spring trap set in a pipe at Great Meadow Pond on Apr 29th. **Second winter:** the summering birds gradually departed during August to the moulting grounds in the Wadden Sea, and the last was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 29th. With the exception of a single juvenile at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 19th, none were present in the county until a widespread arrival in late November, which commenced with two at Lower Farm GP on Nov 16th. Surprisingly, this was not sustained and the one at Lower Farm GP on Dec 3rd was the last to be reported in 2018.

## MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

*Locally common introduced resident*

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Mandarin Duck: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 1   | 3   | 3   | -   | -   | 1   | 5   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | 4   | 3   | 3   | -   | -   | 2   | 6   | -   | 2   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | 4   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Maiden Erleigh Lake      | 3   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 10  | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 8   | 11  | 6   | 5   | 3   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 3   | 2   | 6   | 3   |
| Prospect Park            | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Twyford GPs              | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Whiteknights Park        | 4   | 3   | 2   | -   | 16  | 2   | 6   | 11  | 15  | 40  | 2   | 8   |
| Windsor Great Park       | 1   | -   | -   | 8   | 6   | 1   | 4   | 185 | 25  | -   | 9   | 6   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 2   | 4   | 3   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 10  |
| No. birds at other sites | 13  | 29  | 68  | 22  | 56  | 17  | 19  | 14  | 10  | 19  | 11  | 9   |
| Number of other sites    | 6   | 6   | 14  | 11  | 18  | 4   | 6   | 4   | 4   | 2   | 4   | 3   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 3   | 1   | 11  | 1   | -   | 8   | 5   | 14  | 6   | 4   | 13  | 16  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 32  | 51  | 86  | 44  | 84  | 36  | 35  | 217 | 63  | 65  | 31  | 36  |

Records came from 14 sites in east Berkshire, 27 in mid Berkshire and 15 in west Berkshire. Breeding was confirmed at nine sites with 11 broods raised. Three broods at Whiteknights Park included a family with 11 ducklings. A feature of late summer is a marked increase in numbers at Great Meadow Pond, usually in August, but sometimes occurring in September or October. The spectacular count of 185 on Aug 19th was the largest recorded there since August 2005, when 194 were counted.

## GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Garganey: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Eton Wick Floods         | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Horton GPs               | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Wraybury GPs             | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 6   | 5   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   |

The fairly large number of reports involved a rather low number of birds, with most birds

occurring in late spring and summer. **Spring:** the only early spring report was of two pairs at Fobney Meadow on Apr 2nd (ABT, AA). There were brief visits by single birds and pairs to various sites from May 7th to Jun 10th: a pair at Horton GPs on May 7th (CDRH); a drake at Great Meadow Pond on May 13th (the observer's first there since 2009); a drake at Hosehill Lake on May 22nd and 26th (JA, RHS); a pair at Fobney Meadow on May 25th (ABT, JCMo); a drake on Jun 7th and a pair on Jun 9th at Moor Green Lakes (RCM); and a pair at Lower Farm GP on Jun 9th and 10th (MO). The last spring report was a female at Lea Farm Lake from Jun 28th to Jul 3rd (BTB *et al.*). **Autumn:** only two birds were reported: a long-staying female at Eton Wick Floods and occasionally at Dorney Wetlands from Aug 12th to Sep 4th (CDRH *et al.*); and another female at Wraybury GPs on Oct 28th and 29th (CDRH).



*Garganey, East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, Jun 7th, Roger Murfitt.*

## 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.

### Shoveler: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 9   | 2   | 4   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 4   | 9   | 9   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 83  | 24  | 24  | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 13  | 9   | 8   | 16  | 12  |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 117 | 27  | 61  | 14  | -   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 19  | 58  | 18  |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 1   | -   | 2   | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 79  | 19  | 22  | 16  | -   | -   | 4   | 3   | 11  | 39  | 27  | 23  |
| Horton GPs               | 15  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 24  | 23  | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 67  | 200 | 140 | 150 | 1   | 4   | 7   | 25  | 70  | 48  | 36  | 31  |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 10  | 8   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 71  | 117 | 101 | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | 2   | 21  | 72  | 60  | 83  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 1   | 16  | 2   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | 7   | -   | -   | 8   | 2   |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | -   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 2   | 3   | 4   |
| Theale GPs               | 10  | 17  | 91  | 7   | -   | 5   | -   | 4   | 4   | 26  | 9   | 29  |
| Twyford GPs              | 30  | 90  | 86  | 12  | -   | -   | -   | -   | 14  | 27  | 12  | 4   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 5   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 8   | 14  | 9   |
| Wraybury GPs             | 10  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 20  |
| No. birds at other sites | 72  | 53  | 51  | 31  | 7   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 24  | 20  | 86  | 152 |
| Number of other sites    | 6   | 4   | 2   | 4   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 2   | 3   | 3   | 4   | 4   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 300 | 206 | 210 | 11  | -   | 6   | -   | 2   | 28  | 127 | 154 | 86  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 578 | 579 | 590 | 252 | 11  | 16  | 16  | 64  | 170 | 302 | 363 | 389 |

**Spring:** wintering birds were distributed across the county at the usual sites, with most departing by the middle of April. **Summer:** as well as scattered reports of brief-visiting single birds and pairs in June and July, a drake remained at Whiteknights Park and up to seven birds were present at Lower Farm GP throughout the summer, but breeding was not suspected. **Autumn:** minor peaks in numbers occurred at several sites in August and early September, indicating passage birds. As well as the regular sites, good numbers of Shoveler built up at Fleethill Farm, Fobney Meadow and Whiteknights Park.

## GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

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

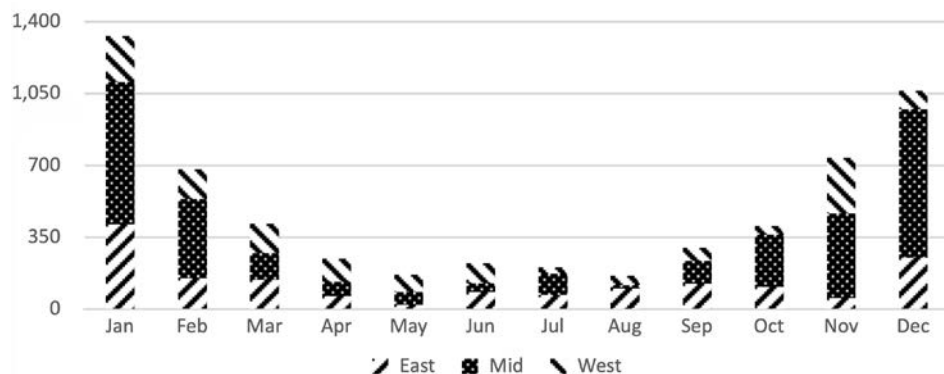
Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Gadwall: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan   | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec   |
|--------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 5     | -   | 5   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 6   | 3   | 5   | 5   | 3   | -     |
| Bray GPs                 | 46    | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     |
| Burghfield GPs           | 249   | 99  | 53  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 30  | 76  | 131   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 161   | 39  | 4   | 6   | 5   | 12  | 40  | -   | 8   | 10  | 54  | 118   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 3     | 12  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 11  | 25  | -   | 4   | -     |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 15    | 18  | 16  | 19  | 14  | 39  | 71  | 70  | 57  | 51  | 18  | 27    |
| Horton GPs               | 173   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 110   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -     | 11  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 7   | 4   | -     |
| Lower Farm GP            | 73    | 90  | 84  | 90  | 35  | 52  | 22  | 26  | 20  | 30  | 130 | 74    |
| Moatlands GPs            | -     | 13  | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 80    | 42  | 55  | 9   | 8   | 15  | -   | 8   | 36  | 48  | 33  | 68    |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 36    | 5   | 4   | 12  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 51    |
| Pingewood GPs            | -     | 8   | -   | 7   | 6   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -     | 3   | 16  | 8   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -     |
| Thatcham Marsh           | -     | 8   | 2   | 5   | 7   | 8   | 1   | 6   | 5   | -   | 2   | -     |
| Theale GPs               | 23    | 23  | 1   | 13  | 14  | 13  | -   | 12  | 36  | 93  | 150 | 281   |
| Twyford GPs              | 203   | 152 | 60  | 1   | 2   | -   | 55  | -   | 45  | 68  | 94  | 98    |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 25    | 28  | 14  | 4   | 3   | 12  | 1   | 10  | 5   | 3   | 16  | 17    |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 62    | 54  | 29  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 20    |
| No. birds at other sites | 166   | 77  | 67  | 68  | 70  | 69  | 8   | 14  | 50  | 61  | 148 | 69    |
| Number of other sites    | 6     | 6   | 8   | 7   | 13  | 6   | 3   | 2   | 4   | 3   | 3   | 4     |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 955   | 350 | 144 | 42  | 18  | 36  | 82  | 17  | 86  | 262 | 395 | 720   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 1,320 | 682 | 415 | 246 | 168 | 224 | 204 | 162 | 300 | 406 | 738 | 1,064 |

Records were received from 51 locations and the numbers reported were fairly typical of recent years. Wintering birds favoured sites in east and mid Berkshire, with the west of the county experiencing less of an influx in the winter months, as can be seen in the chart.

### Gadwall: Monthly Maxima by Region



**First winter:** numbers fell away in early February from the January peak, and by early April had reached the levels seen in summer. **Summer/breeding:** breeding was confirmed at five

sites with six broods observed; the largest comprised nine ducklings at Lower Farm GP on Jun 17th. Pairs of Gadwalls were observed at a further four sites. **Second winter:** from early September, numbers increased gradually until the end of the year.

## WIGEON EURASIANWIGEON *Mareca penelope*

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

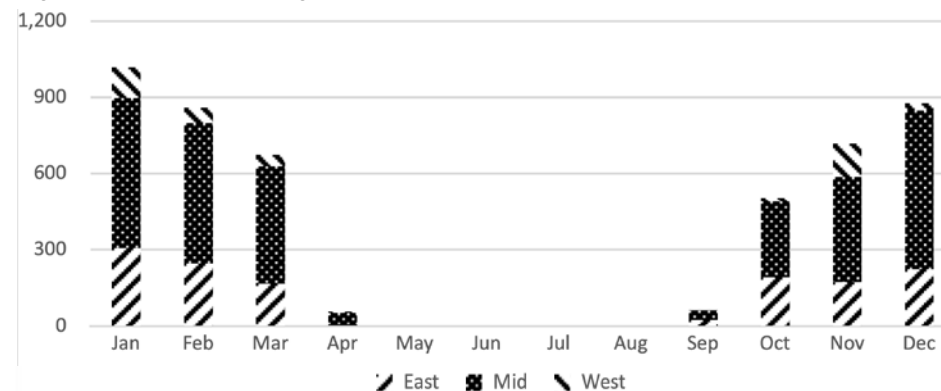
Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Wigeon: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan   | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | 104   | 20  | 13  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 10  | 70  | 150 |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 96    | 50  | 17  | 11  | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 30  | 95  | 82  |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 83    | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 4   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 1     | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 13  | 11  | 7   |
| Horton GPs               | 102   | 65  | 41  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -     | 172 | -   | 15  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 50    | 61  | 38  | 4   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 8   | 25  | 24  |
| Moatlands GPs            | -     | -   | 80  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 120   | 180 | 30  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 19  | 179 | 159 | 208 |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 21    | 10  | -   | 14  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   |
| Pingewood GPs            | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -     | -   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | -     | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| Theale GPs               | 20    | 9   | 100 | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 14  | 27  | 26  | 40  |
| Twyford GPs              | 228   | 49  | 152 | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 66  | 42  | 121 |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 5     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 2   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 1     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 187   | 243 | 197 | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 9   | 168 | 283 | 229 |
| Number of other sites    | 3     | 2   | 6   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 3   | 5   | 5   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 583   | 375 | 228 | 18  | -   | -   | -   | -   | 10  | 102 | 208 | 364 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 1,018 | 860 | 674 | 57  | 2   | 1   | -   | 2   | 63  | 504 | 717 | 877 |

Overall, numbers during both winter periods were 20% to 30% down compared to recent years, based on maximum counts, but within the range of expected fluctuations. The chart shows a preference for sites in mid and east Berkshire.

### Wigeon: Monthly Maxima by Region



**First winter:** numbers fell away after the start of the year and most birds had departed by the end of March. **Summer:** the only reports were of a pair at Lower Farm GP on May 17th and 18th, and a drake at Burnthouse Lane GP on Jun 3rd. **Second winter:** the first returning bird seen was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 23rd. A widespread arrival commenced in early September across the county but only involved small numbers. Larger numbers were noted from the middle of October. A large count of 179 at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 13th included many birds that had flown in from the direction of Fleethill Farm.

## MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Mallard: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug   | Sep | Oct | Nov   | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 30  | 5   | 8   | 6   | 12  | 18  | 60  | 55    | 48  | 28  | 26    | -   |
| Bray GPs                 | -   | -   | -   | -   | 9   | -   | 7   | -     | -   | -   | -     | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 26  | 40  | 20  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 61  | 13  | 29    | 41  |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 59  | 65  | 9   | 11  | 7   | 6   | 7   | -     | 6   | 104 | 119   | 72  |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 20  | -   | -   | -   | 20  | -   | -   | 19    | 20  | -   | 24    | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 30  | 38  | 27  | 29  | 47  | 38  | 57  | 55    | 37  | 122 | 87    | 55  |
| Horton GPs               | 20  | 7   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -     | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 3   | 2   | 4     | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 20  | 11  | 20  | 10  | 50  | 43  | 53  | 27    | 34  | 53  | 11    | 38  |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 10  | 26  | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -     | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 60  | 28  | 69  | 23  | 20  | 22  | -   | 12    | 35  | 44  | 26    | 32  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 30  | 8   | 11  | 11  | 4   | 28  | -   | -     | -   | -   | 17    | 40  |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | 8   | 9   | 2   | 20  | 12    | -   | -   | -     | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 6   | 12  | 13  | 25  | 49  | 53  | 87  | 87    | 93  | 49  | 9     | 3   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 81  | 30  | 31  | 41  | 43  | 47  | 85  | 49    | 73  | 78  | 75    | 66  |
| Theale GPs               | 44  | 45  | 7   | 34  | 8   | 65  | 47  | 18    | 36  | 25  | 61    | 29  |
| Twyford GPs              | 11  | 17  | 23  | 13  | 26  | 1   | 38  | 7     | 26  | 46  | 22    | 33  |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 60  | 30  | 30  | 20  | 20  | 50  | 60  | 90    | 50  | 40  | 40    | 32  |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 49  | 58  | 33  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -     | 50  |
| No. birds at other sites | 340 | 326 | 273 | 239 | 353 | 288 | 167 | 589   | 401 | 329 | 594   | 323 |
| Number of other sites    | 24  | 25  | 33  | 31  | 37  | 24  | 14  | 12    | 13  | 14  | 20    | 19  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 434 | 338 | 285 | 183 | 61  | 256 | 235 | 270   | 335 | 422 | 642   | 367 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 886 | 733 | 605 | 470 | 681 | 661 | 688 | 1,020 | 923 | 933 | 1,144 | 814 |

The recent trend for the winter influx of this species to be smaller continued. On average, the peak winter population exceeded the resident population by just 25%. Mallard remained a common and widespread breeding species. Breeding was noted at twenty sites, resulting in at least 55 broods, including 13 broods at Great Meadow Pond totalling 82 ducklings. At Lower Farm GP, one female was accompanied by 20 ducklings on May 26th. During icy conditions at the Oval Pond, Roundoak Piece, on Mar 4th, a Mallard was watched eating a frog with some difficulty, taking five minutes to complete its meal.

## PINTAIL NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Pintail: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | -   | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Horton GPs               | 3   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 4   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | 8   | 3   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Twyford GPs              | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 1   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 5   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Number of other sites    | 1   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 14  | 9   | 23  | 6   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   |

**First winter:** numbers reported were fairly typical. Most reports in January were from the west of the county, involving six or seven birds. Pintails were virtually absent in February with just one at Fleethill Farm on Feb 19th, but in the short period between Feb 28th and Mar 8th, approximately 23 were reported during cold weather from five sites across the county. There was another influx of around 13 birds between Mar 23rd and Apr 4th. The last birds were single females at Fobney Meadow and Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 22nd. **Second winter:** numbers in this period were very low. The first was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 31st. Two were at Woolhampton GPs on Nov 17th, and the last, a probable first winter, was at Horton GPs from Dec 25th to 29th.

## 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.

### Teal: Monthly Counts by Location

|                        | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs        | 8   | 2   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | 5   | 6   | 16  | -   |
| Bray GPs               | 2   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs         | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Dinton Pastures CP     | 82  | 17  | 64  | 4   | -   | -   | 2   | 7   | -   | 6   | 36  | 23  |
| Dorney Wetlands        | 2   | 28  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | 82  | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond      | 2   | 9   | 15  | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 5   | 27  | 10  | 8   | 6   |
| Horton GPs             | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake          | -   | 41  | -   | 46  | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 17  | 53  | -   |
| Lower Farm GP          | 250 | 400 | 130 | 28  | 2   | 10  | 13  | 26  | 39  | 81  | 210 | 203 |
| Moatlands GPs          | -   | 3   | 11  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes       | 21  | 12  | 36  | 9   | -   | 11  | 9   | 11  | 13  | 34  | 68  | 63  |
| Padworth Lane GP       | 28  | 12  | 19  | 8   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 8   | -   | 2   | 17  |
| Pingewood GPs          | -   | 22  | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir | -   | -   | 1   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 1   | 6   | -   | -   |

|                          |     |     |     |     |   |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Thatcham Marsh           | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1 | -  | -  | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| Theale GPs               | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 1 | -  | 2  | 7   | 4   | 6   | 22  | 30  |
| Twyford GPs              | 1   | -   | -   | -   | - | -  | -  | -   | -   | 2   | 13  | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 1   | 6   | 8   | -   | - | -  | 2  | 3   | 3   | 5   | 2   | 7   |
| Waysbury GPs             | 2   | -   | 2   | -   | - | -  | -  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 282 | 238 | 286 | 99  | 1 | 3  | 1  | 32  | 112 | 153 | 85  | 314 |
| Number of other sites    | 8   | 6   | 8   | 7   | 1 | 1  | 1  | 4   | 6   | 6   | 4   | 8   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 118 | 77  | 39  | 4   | - | -  | -  | 3   | 23  | 43  | 102 | 49  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 685 | 794 | 577 | 204 | 6 | 24 | 34 | 101 | 221 | 326 | 597 | 666 |

**First winter:** after the high wintering numbers reported in 2017, numbers were back to a more typical level in 2018. The peak count was of at least 400 at Lower Farm GP on Feb 10th. Teals can be difficult to count as they easily hide in marginal vegetation, so 150 on the ice at Fobney Meadow on Feb 27th was considered to be an accurate number. The majority of the wintering birds had departed by the middle of March. Bird ringers at Moor Green Lakes were surprised to find a female Teal in their mist net during their session in March [MGLG 2018]. **Summer:** during the summer, Teals were consistently recorded only at Moor Green Lakes and at Lower Farm GP. The counts were generally of males, though one pair was occasionally observed at Lower Farm GP. No evidence was reported to indicate that successful breeding had occurred. **Second winter:** the first returning birds were noted around the middle of August, and numbers steadily increased through the autumn with an influx in the middle of November.

## RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

*Uncommon visitor of presumed feral origin which occasionally breeds*

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Red-crested Pochard: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Theale GPs               | 5   | 2   | 6   | 7   | 6   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 2   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 1   | -   | -   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| No. birds at other sites | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | 1   | 2   | 7   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 8   | 2   | 7   | 14  | 7   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 5   |

**First winter/spring:** the first half of the year saw a continuous presence at the various pits comprising Theale GPs. Other sites reported only brief stays, suggesting these were birds straying from the Theale nucleus. **Breeding:** there was no evidence of breeding this year, though a pair was observed copulating at Main Pit, Theale, on Dec 9th. **Second winter:** after an absence through autumn, the first returning bird was seen at Theale GPs on Nov 1st. A drake was reported regularly at Grove Lake, Moor Green Lakes, from Dec 14th.

## POCHARD COMMON POCHARD *Aythya farina*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Pochard: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 12  | 27  | 12  | 6   | 4   | 6   | 5   | 2   | 8   | 6   | -   | -   |
| Bray GPs                 | 12  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 74  | 58  | 8   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 5   | 17  |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 66  | 9   | 26  | 2   | -   | -   | 5   | 1   | -   | 6   | 22  | 109 |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 1   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 65  | 73  | 41  | 17  | 9   | 36  | 44  | 72  | 18  | 43  | 123 | 212 |
| Horton GPs               | 19  | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 36  | 25  | 24  | 16  | 16  | 30  | 21  | 13  | 21  | 22  | 38  | 26  |
| Moatlands GPs            | 103 | 31  | 65  | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 64  | 168 |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 20  | 13  | 18  | 1   | 2   | 9   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 25  | 24  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 2   | 12  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 20  |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 3   | 6   | 10  | 11  | 18  | 10  | 2   | 1   | -   | 3   | 2   | 9   |
| Theale GPs               | 31  | 16  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 13  | 52  | 39  | 57  |
| Twyford GPs              | 5   | 19  | 9   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 10  | -   | 37  |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 26  | 40  | 70  | 5   | 1   | 1   | -   | 8   | 12  | 6   | 2   | 5   |
| Waysbury GPs             | 18  | 2   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 61  |
| No. birds at other sites | 39  | 3   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 17  | -   | 1   | -   | 1   | 3   | 6   |
| Number of other sites    | 4   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 229 | 214 | 114 | 16  | 2   | 18  | 38  | 4   | 13  | 78  | 195 | 194 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 536 | 334 | 292 | 63  | 51  | 109 | 78  | 102 | 76  | 155 | 330 | 752 |

**First winter:** wintering numbers were relatively low compared to recent years, at about 50% of the level reported for the period 1998 to 2008 [Berkshire Atlas 2013], which is consistent with national trends [WeBS]. The majority of wintering birds had departed by the end of March. **Breeding:** successful breeding was reported from three sites. A female first seen with seven small ducklings on the East Fen at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 7th was thought to have relocated to Colebrook North Lake with three ducklings by Jun 14th then finally to Grove Lake with a sole survivor by Jun 18th; these were all regarded as part of a single breeding attempt [MGLG 2018]. At Lower Farm GP, good numbers of Pochards were present throughout June and a female with six ducklings was seen on Jun 24th. At Thatcham Marsh, a female was found with eight ducklings on Jun 27th. The regular midsummer increase in numbers at Great Meadow Pond peaked with 36 on Jun 24th, which included several juveniles thought to have been raised elsewhere. Pochards had bred at this site many times in the past, but breeding was not suspected this year. **Second winter:** Pochards started to return in good numbers around the middle of October, with numbers building up to levels closer to those for the period 1998-2008. A large flock of 168 at Moatlands GPs were mostly male.

## FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

*Rare winter visitor and passage migrant*

**First winter:** the two ringed drakes that arrived in November 2017 at Dinton Pastures CP were still present at the start of 2018 and remained until Feb 17th (MO). The ring numbers had been read in the autumn and confirmed that these birds originated from the German

re-introduction scheme near Hamburg. Throughout their stay, they were generally to be found on Middle Marsh. **Second winter:** a drake was found at Middle Marsh, Dinton Pastures CP, on Nov 2nd (ABT, RM), and was seen just once subsequently on Nov 10th (RRi). Photographs showed that the bird carried a metal ring on its right leg, so it is likely that this was one of the birds from the first winter period returning.

### RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

*Rare vagrant*

A female was found at Lower Farm GP on Apr 6th and remained there until Apr 20th (NC *et. al*), putting in an appearance at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 12th. This was the twelfth record of this species in Berkshire.



Ring-necked Duck, Lower Farm GP, Apr 6th, Andy Tomczynski.

### TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

#### Tufted Duck: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan   | Feb   | Mar   | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov   | Dec   |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 18    | 18    | 22    | 12  | 6   | 6   | 12  | 11  | 23  | 10  | 10    | -     |
| Bray GPs                 | 175   | -     | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 65  | 150   | 150   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 303   | 289   | 250   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 79  | 193 | 322   | 286   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 78    | 89    | 90    | 15  | 20  | 12  | 5   | -   | 6   | 80  | 115   | 161   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 21    | -     | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 30    | -     |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 32    | 35    | 86    | 61  | 21  | 14  | 28  | 18  | 11  | 11  | 24    | 15    |
| Horton GPs               | 252   | 34    | 17    | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 72    |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -     | 5     | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | 3     | -     |
| Lower Farm GP            | 30    | 37    | 74    | 102 | 30  | 25  | 35  | 33  | 32  | 30  | 21    | 16    |
| Moatlands GPs            | -     | 197   | 123   | -   | 20  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 376   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 122   | 208   | 85    | 99  | 50  | 55  | 8   | 59  | 58  | 66  | 128   | 85    |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 70    | 40    | 18    | 26  | -   | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 17    | 25    |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 8     | 9     | 7     | 22  | 5   | 43  | 104 | 143 | 210 | 362 | 139   | 20    |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 26    | 52    | 23    | 33  | 19  | 14  | 9   | 5   | 7   | 15  | 14    | 25    |
| Theale GPs               | 197   | 262   | 87    | 133 | 77  | 64  | 100 | 15  | 135 | 50  | 863   | 357   |
| Twyford GPs              | 142   | 130   | 119   | 75  | 11  | -   | 4   | -   | 56  | 51  | 93    | 128   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 95    | 130   | 65    | 60  | 70  | 40  | 55  | 45  | 40  | 44  | 108   | 103   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 342   | 170   | 199   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 400   |
| No. birds at other sites | 168   | 144   | 56    | 60  | 44  | 30  | 7   | 7   | 73  | 13  | 188   | 204   |
| Number of other sites    | 11    | 9     | 8     | 12  | 11  | 7   | 2   | 2   | 5   | 4   | 8     | 10    |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 1,679 | 1,267 | 819   | 323 | 144 | 100 | 238 | 107 | 495 | 824 | 1,718 | 1,125 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 2,079 | 1,849 | 1,321 | 698 | 373 | 309 | 367 | 336 | 734 | 990 | 2,225 | 2,423 |

The chart shows that numbers in the west of the county remained roughly constant through the year, while the winter influx impacted mid and east Berkshire only.

**First winter:** wintering numbers, though lower compared to recent years, were around 25% higher than those quoted for the period 1998 to 2008 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. The peak count of 342 was made around the various pits in the Wraysbury GP complex during the

#### Tufted Duck: Monthly Maxima by Region



WeBS count on Jan 21st. Overall numbers in the county fell away gradually and remained above the summer levels until the middle of April. **Summer/breeding:** breeding was reported from seven sites with 13 broods between Jun 30th and Aug 5th, a typical showing. **Second winter:** the main winter arrival started in early September. A large count of 863 was made at Theale GPs during the WeBS count on Nov 11th. The totals of maximum counts over all sites in the county in November and December were around 20% above the 1998 to 2008 average [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

### SCAUP GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

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

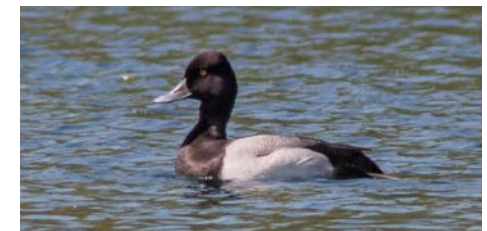
**2016 Correction:** The first winter drake present at Moatlands GP from Nov 17th to 18th was found by DJB.

**2018 First winter:** two birds were recorded. A first winter female was reported at Bray GPs on several dates between Feb 8th and Apr 3rd (CDRH). A first winter in significantly less advanced plumage (so clearly different from the Bray bird) was observed at Wraysbury and Horton GPs between Mar 23rd and Apr 1st (CDRH). **Second winter:** three first winter drakes were present in the county in this period. The first remained at Bray GPs between Nov 20th and Dec 12th (CDRH). Another was found at Horton GPs on Dec 1st (CDRH) (while another was just across the county boundary at Dorney Lake at the same time). The third was found on the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 28th, where it remained into 2019 (RJG *et al.*).

### LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

*Very rare vagrant*

An adult drake was found at Lower Farm GP on May 18th (NC *et al.*). On May 20th, it was relocated at Main Pit, Theale, and it returned to Lower Farm GP for its final day on May 21st. Some good views were obtained, confirming that the bird was not ringed. This was the fourth record of this species in Berkshire.



Lesser Scaup, Main Pit, Theale, May 20th, Marek Walford.

## COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

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

All the reports of this species that were received are presented in the table.

### Common Scoter: All Days When Recorded in 2018

|                        | Mar<br>25th | Mar<br>31st | Apr<br>8th | Apr<br>9th | Apr<br>15th | Jul<br>1st | Jul<br>7th | Jul<br>8th |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Great Meadow Pond      | -           | -           | 7          | -          | -           | -          | -          | -          |
| Lower Farm GP          | -           | 5           | 2          | -          | -           | -          | -          | -          |
| Queen Mother Reservoir | -           | 2           | 8          | -          | -           | 1          | 9          | 1          |
| Summerleaze GPs        | -           | -           | 4          | -          | -           | -          | -          | -          |
| Theale Main Pit        | -           | 2           | 2          | 5          | 1           | -          | -          | -          |
| Woolhampton GPs        | 3           | -           | -          | -          | -           | -          | -          | -          |

2018 was a well above average year for this species as at least 52 birds were reported; all reports related to single day visits so sightings on consecutive dates involved different birds. The average annual total is around 16 birds. The table shows the remarkable concentration of reports on particular dates. Late March and early April saw many Common Scoter at inland waters across England during their northbound migration, with especially high numbers on the dates when the species was observed in Berkshire [BirdGuides]. The flock of five drakes and two ducks at Great Meadow Pond on Apr 8th was probably the first sighting of this species there since Jun 19th 1935.

## GOLDENEYE COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Goldeneye: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | 6   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 1   | -   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Horton GPs               | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   |
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | 6   | 9   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 6   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 2   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 1   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Twyford GPs              | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 41  | 32  | 30  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 25  |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 43  | 9   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 60  | 46  | 42  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 8   | 38  |

The overwhelming majority of reports came from mid and east Berkshire. Indeed, in the west of the county there was only one bird for one day in each winter period. **First winter:** numbers of wintering Goldeneye have been steadily decreasing in recent years in line with national trends [WeBS], and the January peak was 50% of the average January level for the period 2001 to 2010 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. The last birds to be reported were a male and

female at Dinton Pastures CP on Apr 2nd (MFW). **Second winter:** the first returning birds were two first winters or females seen briefly at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 29th (PNe). There were a few additional birds in November, but December saw a more widespread arrival. Nevertheless, the number of Goldeneyes in the county by the end of the year was 50% of the average for Decembers in the period 2001 to 2010 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. At Lea Farm Lake, a pair were observed mating on Dec 31st.

## SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

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

**First winter:** weekly maximum counts of Smew in the first winter period are given in the table. The total number of birds involved probably did not exceed three, and the last record was of a single drake at Wraysbury GPs on Mar 2nd.

### Smew: Weekly Counts by Location

| Week Commencing          | Jan 7th | Jan 14th | Jan 21st | Jan 28th | Feb 4th | Feb 11th | Feb 18th | Feb 25th |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Burghfield GPs           | -       | -        | -        | -        | 1       | -        | -        | -        |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 1       | -        | -        | -        | 1       | 2        | 2        | 2        |
| No. birds at other sites | -       | -        | -        | -        | -       | -        | -        | -        |
| Number of other sites    | -       | -        | -        | -        | -       | -        | -        | -        |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -       | -        | -        | -        | -       | -        | -        | -        |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 1       | -        | -        | -        | 2       | 2        | 2        | 2        |

**Second winter:** for the first time since 1979, no reports at all were received for the second winter period. Numbers wintering peaked in the 1980s followed by a gradual decline, thought to be due to ice-free conditions occurring more regularly in the Baltic Sea closer to their breeding grounds.

## GOOSANDER COMMON MERGANSER *Mergus merganser*

*Uncommon winter visitor though regular at preferred sites, has summered*

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

### Goosander: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bray GPs                 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 1   | -   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | 3   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 30  | 29  | 11  | 4   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 21  | 49  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 3   | 7   | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | 6   | 4   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 5   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 6   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| No. birds at other sites | 5   | 4   | 10  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   |
| Number of other sites    | 2   | 2   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 14  | 6   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 61  | 50  | 33  | 5   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 25  | 71  |

**First winter:** at Moor Green Lakes, Goosanders were reported from the start of the year until the last female on May 2nd (RCM). Numbers here were slightly lower than normal, in line with a gradual long-term reduction though subject to fluctuations that are influenced

by weather conditions. **Second winter:** the first returning bird was a redhead at Lower Farm GP on Nov 7th (BL, GJS), but the main arrival started ten days later. While Grove Lake continued to attract birds from elsewhere to roost, good numbers remained during the days at the various lakes in the Moor Green Lakes complex. Just before the year end, several birds were roosting there on Colebrook North.



*Red-breasted Merganser, Queen Mother Reservoir, Nov 16th, Peter Newbound.*

## RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)*

The only report concerned two adult drakes and a female present at Queen Mother Reservoir on the morning of Nov 16th, departing early afternoon (M McKee, CDRH, PNe). A single female, thought to be an additional bird, was there the next day; it was seen to fly off early morning and apparently land on Wraysbury Reservoir across the Surrey border (CDRH). This continued the trend of barely annual reports of this species.

## NIGHTJAR EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

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

The first Nightjar of the year was seen briefly in flight giving the 'cuick' call at Roundoak Piece on May 9th (PD), a fairly typical first date. This was followed by others on an almost daily basis during the month, usually as either ones or twos but with a maximum of three on May 18th at Roundoak Piece.

In June, churring birds were heard frequently at most of the 12 sites where they were recorded, with maximum counts of six on Bucklebury Common on Jun 7th, five at Caesar's Camp on Jun 28th and four on Greenham Common on Jun 21st. One fortunate observer saw a male on Jun 7th and 19th at a day roost at Sandford Common. Sightings declined markedly in July, and whether this was due to the birds ceasing to call while breeding or to observer inactivity is unclear; the highest count was of four at Roundoak Piece on Jul 4th.

Breeding success as indicated by the number of territories held is summarised in the table.

### Nightjar: Numbers of Territories

| Site                           | Territories (max birds) | Surveyors  | Notes                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Snelmore Common                | 0                       | Clare Sulston <i>et al.</i>  |                           |
| Greenham & Crookham Commons    | 8 (13)                  | Clare Sulston <i>et al.</i>  | Includes Bowdown Approach |
| Bucklebury Common              | 2 (6)                   | RCr, RF, GJS   |                           |
| Padworth Common                | 2                       | ASI  |                           |
| Ufton Nernet Woods             | 3 (4)                   | Many observers   | Includes Roundoak Piece   |
| Mortimer Common                | 1                       | PD   |                           |
| Wellington College, Crowthorne | 1                       | DJS  |                           |
| Wildmoor Heath BBOWT           | 1                       | DJS*   |                           |
| Swinley Forest                 | 29                      | CRG, WAN, DJS*   |                           |
| MoD Camberley                  | 12                      | Ben Habgood (Surrey WT) <i>et al.</i> *                            | Includes Wishmoor Bottom  |
| Swinley Park                   | 3                       | M A Johnstone, SA  |                           |
| South Ascot                    | ?                       | No information received from here or other sites in east of county |                           |
| <b>Total Territories</b>       | <b>62+</b>              |  |                           |

\* We are grateful to Patrick Crowley for compiling these figures. Counts at sites that straddle the county boundary just include birds in Berkshire.

The total number of territories showed a marked increase compared to the preceding three years, probably due to improved coverage, and was similar to the fairly constant level that was maintained up to 2014. The three survey visits in 2018 failed to find Nightjars at Snelmore Common, continuing a run of poor years there. However, the true overall total is likely to have been higher than the figure in the table, as no data was received from some sites in the east of the county where significant numbers have been reported in recent years.

The two final records were of singles at Greenham Common on Aug 11th and in Swinley Forest (DC) on Aug 15th, an average date this century for the final report of the year.

## SWIFT COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

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

**Spring:** the first Swifts of the year were seen on Apr 20th, the latest date this century for the first sighting, and involved one over Eton Wick (KR) and six flying north over Newbury (CF, AEDH), followed by 20 over Caversham early the next day. During April, there were eight further double figure counts from six other sites, with a maximum of 50 on Apr 27th at Main Pit, Theale. In May, there were 15 counts of 20 or more, eight of which were from Lower Farm GP, and 100 at both Lower Farm GP on May 24th and Main Pit, Theale, on May 29th. The highest counts in June were 100 over Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 6th and 130 at Main Pit, Theale, on Jun 17th. One bird was found dead, cause unknown, on a bank at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 1st.

**Breeding:** confirming that Swifts have bred is particularly difficult so evidence of probable breeding is significant, especially with the well-documented decline in Swift numbers. Indeed, the Berkshire Bird Index shows a significant annual decline averaging around 3% per year since 2000 [BBI 2018], which is in line with national trends. Screaming parties were noted at some 15 sites from Kintbury in the west to Winkfield in the east, but predominantly in the Reading and Lower Earley areas. In Newbury, several Swift sightings came from the vicinity of St Nicolas Church and near a school in Enborne Road that holds a regular nest site. Although a pair was seen near a traditional nest site in Palmer Park, Reading, on May 22nd, they were not seen to enter it. At two other sites in west Reading, Waverley Road and Wilson Road, they were seen either swarming around a known nest site or actually entering under house eaves respectively. At Cookham Rise, they were seen on May 24th occasionally inspecting a nest box under the eaves for the first time. It was assumed that fledging had occurred at Eton Wick when the count on Jul 5th had increased by four from the previous day. Peak counts of parties in urban settings are summarised as follows: Bracknell (15), Crowthorne (seven), Hungerford (15), Keep Hatch (five), Lower Earley (60), Maidenhead (40), Newbury (41\*), Pangbourne (12), Reading (79\*), Thatcham (60) and Wokingham (15) (\* indicates a total from multiple locations).

**Summer:** as usual, post breeding, numbers declined; there were only six double figure counts, with a maximum of 40 screaming high over Thatcham on Aug 2nd. The final sightings were of twos at Greenham Common (MO) and Woolhampton GPs (JPM) on Aug 28th, 21 days earlier than the previously reported latest departure date of Sep 18th.

## GREAT BUSTARD *Otis tarda*

*A former resident, not recorded since the 19th century, recent records relate to a reintroduction project in Wiltshire.*

Two first year birds were seen on Newbury Race Course on Apr 6th (DE). They were identified by a pale blue ring on the right leg of one of them as having hatched in May 2017



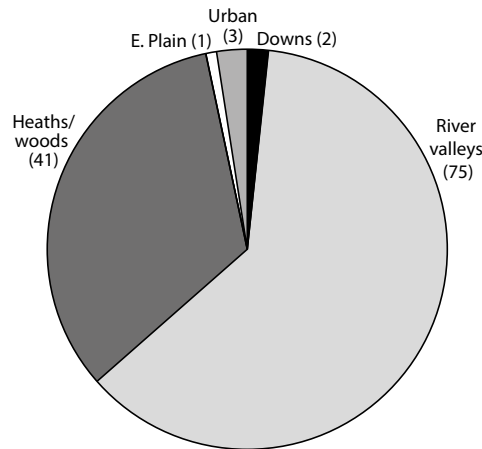
as part of the Wiltshire re-introduction programme. This is the third record this century, and the first since Jun 9th 2012 when there was one on the Downs near Streatley, which was preceded by one on Nov 17th 2011 over Queen Mother Reservoir.

## CUCKOO COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

*Locally common though declining summer visitor (Red Listed)*

Cuckoos were recorded from 63 locations in 2018 (cf. 54 in 2017, 78 in 2016). Of the tetrads in mid Berkshire, 22% recorded Cuckoos, compared to 15% of east Berkshire's tetrads and only 10% of west Berkshire's (perhaps surprising given the more rural nature of that part of the county). However, the chart, showing records according to habitat type, indicates the species' preference for river valleys, heaths and woodlands rather than downland.

### Cuckoo: Distribution of Records by Habitat



The first reported Cuckoo of 2018 was recorded at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 7th (MHu), an average first arrival date, followed by another flying north over Thatcham on Apr 12th. Thereafter, a minimum of 39 individuals (all males apparently) were recorded on a daily basis throughout April at some 30 sites. The highest day counts were three at Lavell's Lake on Apr 19th and at Kintbury on Apr 24th. Similarly, in May three were reported at Hungerford Marsh on May 4th and at Thatcham Marsh on May 18th, while up to four were noted at sites in Kintbury on May 19th and 28th. By June, most of the records were coming from the Kennet Valley; there was also a marked reduction in records and numbers in June, presumably as adult birds returned southwards, with high counts of two at Thatcham Marsh on Jun 1st, 3rd and 5th. Apart from two birds displaying at Lavell's Lake on May 3rd and one apparently holding territory at Crookham Common in late May, there were no records of either breeding or of juveniles seen. The last record was of one at Woolhampton GPs (JBT) on Jun 30th, significantly earlier than the previous earliest departure date this century of Jul 20th. The number of birds reported are summarised on a weekly basis in the table.

### Cuckoo: Weekly Counts

| Week Commencing | Mar 25th | Apr 1st | Apr 8th | Apr 15th | Apr 22nd | Apr 29th | May 6th | May 13th | May 20th | May 27th | Jun 3rd | Jun 10th | Jun 17th | Jun 24th | Jul 1st |
|-----------------|----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Number of sites | -        | 1       | 2       | 17       | 22       | 16       | 21      | 15       | 16       | 15       | 7       | 2        | 2        | 1        | -       |
| Number of birds | -        | 1       | 2       | 24       | 27       | 21       | 24      | 22       | 19       | 20       | 8       | 2        | 2        | 1        | -       |

## ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

*Common urban resident (Wild Rock Dove is Green Listed)*

Rock Doves do not attract much attention from most birdwatchers; in 2018 just 142 records were received from 39 sites across the county. Although a common sight in our town centres, the peak counts of 39 at Hungerford on Mar 15th, 50 in Reading on May 23rd and 32 at Old Windsor on Aug 31st would be underestimates for those urban centres. Higher counts were made at rural locations, including 114 feeding on stubble at Englefield on Sep 13th and 120 in Cookham on Dec 29th. No information was received about breeding.

## STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

*Common resident and winter visitor (Amber Listed)*

Stock Doves were encountered in some 98 sites: 26 in east Berkshire, 24 in mid Berkshire and 48 in west Berkshire. Many reports were of birds attracted to gardens by feeders, particularly in February and March. **First winter:** the highest counts were: 200 at Arborfield on Feb 12th; 90 at Eastbury Grange near Lambourn on Feb 22nd; 100 in Windsor Great Park on May 12th; and 94 feeding on the Smith's Lawn polo pitch in Windsor Great Park on May 20th.

**Breeding:** the earliest sign of probable breeding was of courtship, in the snow, on Mar 2nd at North Ascot. A pair was seen investigating a nest box on Mar 16th at Padworth Common; six pairs were seen at suitable breeding sites in Swinley Park on Apr 16th; and three pairs flew from a barn on May 13th at Shefford Woodlands. Five territories were held at Greenham and Crookham Commons, while a check of a Barn Owl box at Moor Green Lakes in June found two Stock Dove chicks [MGLG 2018]. The population of Stock Doves in the county has increased by about 50% since 2000 [BBI 2018]. **Autumn/second winter:** an observer at Lea Farm Lake commented that 22 Stock Doves on Aug 8th was the biggest number ever seen there; 60 at Englefield on Aug 2nd and 79 there on Aug 28th were the only other notable counts of early autumn. The highest counts came in November, when 176 were recorded at Cow Down on Nov 1st and 130 were recorded at Englefield on Nov 6th.

## WOODPIGEON COMMONWOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

*Abundant resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)*

Wood pigeons were recorded in 119 tetrads: 29% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 34% of those in mid Berkshire and 30% of those in east Berkshire.

**First winter:** there were 14 counts of 100 or more, including 1,000 at West Ilsley on Jan 26th and 27th, and 2,000 at Arborfield on Feb 12th. Other notable counts included: 200 on a brassica crop at Strand Water on Feb 16th; 300 at both Farnborough on Jan 27th and Crookham on Feb 22nd; and 400 in flight at Boxford on Feb 17th. A flock of 156 at Colebrook Lake, Moor Green Lakes, included 116 concentrated on Plover Island. As spring progressed, large flocks were less in evidence; there were only seven counts of 100 or more, including 200 at both Brimpton Common on Mar 6th and Cookham on Mar 19th, while flocks of 400 at Bisham on Mar 23rd and 600 at Cookham on Mar 26th were put to flight by crop protection bird scarers.

**Breeding/summer:** breeding was poorly recorded as always, but the Berkshire Bird Index shows the population to have remained at a constant level since 2000 [BBI 2018]. The species' prolonged breeding season was demonstrated with reports of fledged young on Mar 11th in Maidenhead and one carrying nesting material on Aug 15th, also in Maidenhead. In this period, flocks were reported feeding on pasture or stubble, including: 250 at Cookham

on Jul 13th; 300 at Wokingham on Aug 11th; 450 at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 20th; and 2,000 at Englefield on Jul 21st.

**Autumn/second winter:** there were 14 counts of 100 or more. Woodpigeons were noticeably on the move in late October and early November, generally heading either west or south. These included: a count of 1,290 in several sizeable flocks recorded over Wokingham on Oct 27th; 350 again over Wokingham on Nov 2nd; and a tight flock of 500 high up over Cookham Common on Nov 15th. At the end of the year, the flocks of 180 at Welford on Dec 13th and 328 at Compton on Dec 27th were the only gatherings to exceed 100 birds.

## TURTLE DOVE EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

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

The fortunes of this species in Berkshire are not improving; there were only two records of single individuals. A singing male was seen at West Ilsley on May 9th (ABT) where they had been seen in previous years, but without a mate to respond to his charms. Another one was heard purring at Pingewood on May 20th (RRK).

The decline of this species in Berkshire since 2005 is illustrated in the table.

### Turtle Dove: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year         | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of birds | 59   | 33   | 34   | 27   | 20   | 22   | 21   | 18   | 14   | 11   | 7    | 1    | 3    | 2    |

## COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

### EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE

*Common resident (Green Listed)*

Collared Doves were widely recorded at some 70 1 km squares, from Wraysbury and Slough in the east to Hungerford in the west. This species showed a significant annual decline in the Berkshire Bird Index, which fits with national trends [BBI 2018, BTO BirdTrends].

**First winter:** most counts were of only ones or twos, and no counts before May exceeded four.

**Summer:** the highest counts were nine at both Kintbury on May 28th and Lower Farm GP on Jun 9th, and seven at Brimpton Common on Aug 27th. Like the other doves and pigeons, breeding was very poorly recorded with only two records: nesting material was being collected in Newbury on Mar 15th; and a nest was occupied on the top of traffic lights in Maidenhead on Sep 28th. **Autumn/second winter:** there were eight records of more than ten. The highest count was 37 at Slough STW on Sep 4th. Other high counts included: 23 at Winkfield on Nov 4th; 28 at Brimpton Common on Nov 26th; and 30 at Cold Ash on Dec 8th.

## WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

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

Water Rails were recorded at 30 sites: eight in east Berkshire, ten in mid Berkshire and 12 in west Berkshire. Peak counts at selected favoured sites are summarised in the table.

### Water Rail: Monthly Counts by Location

|                    | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dinton Pastures CP | 4   | 1   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   |
| Dorney Wetlands    | 9   | 3   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | 5   |
| Eton Wick Floods   | 2   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Fobney Meadow      | 2   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |

|                          |    |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |   |    |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|---|----|
| Freeman's Marsh          | -  | 2  | -  | - | - | - | - | - | -  | 1  | - | -  |
| Lea Farm Lake            | 1  | 1  | 1  | - | - | - | - | - | -  | -  | 1 | -  |
| Lower Farm GP            | -  | -  | -  | 1 | - | - | - | - | -  | 1  | - | 2  |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 1  | -  | 1  | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1  | -  | 1 | 1  |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 1  | 2  | 4  | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | - | -  | 2  | 1 | 1  |
| Theale GPs               | 1  | 1  | -  | - | - | - | - | 1 | -  | 1  | 1 | 1  |
| Windsor Great Park       | 2  | 4  | 5  | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 6  | 5  | - | 6  |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 1  | -  | 2  | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1  | 2  | 1 | 1  |
| No. birds at other sites | 4  | 4  | 7  | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | -  | 2  | - | 6  |
| Number of other sites    | 4  | 4  | 7  | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | -  | 2  | - | 6  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 3  | 1  | 1  | - | - | - | - | - | -  | 1  | 3 | 2  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 28 | 19 | 24 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 7 | 25 |

**First winter:** Water Rails were widely distributed, with a minimum of 47 birds in the county. Highest counts were: nine at Dorney Wetlands on Jan 1st; a total of four from various locations at Dinton Pastures CP on Jan 6th; five at Great Meadow Pond on Mar 4th; and four at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 15th. That the species can be enticed into the open was shown by them being seen under feeders at both Lea Farm Lake and Lavell's Lake. **Breeding:** a survey of breeding Water Rails was carried out in the county between 2016 and 2018; in 2018, some sites were covered that had not previously been checked. The survey focussed on detecting birds giving the sharming call, and the detection of sharming (as opposed to other contact calls) was regarded as evidence of probable breeding according to BTO terminology. Despite a sighting of a Water Rail at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 2nd, the survey failed to detect any birds there. On the other hand, two birds were sharming at Bradfield on Apr 4th. Casual reports of Water Rail in this season were also received from Dorney Wetlands, Fobney Meadow, Thatcham Marsh, Lower Farm GP and Great Meadow Pond, involving a total of around eight birds. An article in the 2016 annual report [Righelato, 2016] describes the survey methodology. **Autumn/second winter:** in early autumn, most reports concerned singletons at Eton Wick and Woolhampton GPs. Reports were more widely distributed from the end of October, and by the end of the year there was possibly a minimum county total of 31 birds present. Highest counts were five at Dorney Wetlands on Dec 10th and six at Great Meadow Pond on Dec 16th.

## SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

*Rare passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

This elusive and probably under-recorded species was encountered on the floods at Eton Wick, a site that hosted a well-watched bird in October 2000. One was seen here daily from Aug 27th to Sep 7th (MFW *et al.*), with two present between Sep 2nd and 5th (DAC *et al.*). There was a final sighting of one on Sep 10th. These were only the sixth and seventh records this century and the first of more than one bird; the previous singles came in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2013 and 2014.



Spotted Crake, Eton Wick, Aug 27th, Marek Walford.

## MOORHEN COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

*Common and widespread resident in wetland habitats (Green Listed)*

Moorhens were recorded in 78 sites across the county: 16 in east Berkshire, 27 in mid Berkshire and 35 in west Berkshire. Peak monthly counts at the sites where most Moorhens were reported are given in the table.

### Moorhen: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 5   | 5   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 3   | 3   | -   | 2   | 15  | 18  | 12  |
| Lower Farm GP            | 32  | 26  | 31  | 12  | 10  | 14  | 19  | 23  | 32  | 28  | 25  | 19  |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 6   | 5   | 4   | 4   | 1   | 4   | 2   | 15  | 12  | 3   | 18  | 14  |
| Thattham Marsh           | 32  | 21  | 18  | 10  | 3   | 7   | 9   | 12  | 16  | 25  | 18  | 20  |
| Theale GPs               | 2   | 13  | 4   | 10  | 6   | 4   | 13  | 8   | 18  | 7   | 15  | 12  |
| Whiteknights Park        | 23  | 10  | 18  | 6   | -   | 7   | 3   | 8   | -   | -   | 24  | 25  |
| Windsor Great Park       | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | 10  | -   | 31  | 26  | 8   | 2   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 17  | 18  | 10  | 5   | 2   | 3   | 13  | 10  | 12  | 16  | 10  | 13  |
| No. birds at other sites | 105 | 120 | 72  | 47  | 62  | 55  | 29  | 52  | 79  | 105 | 95  | 56  |
| Number of other sites    | 26  | 27  | 23  | 21  | 23  | 20  | 12  | 11  | 14  | 13  | 17  | 15  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 68  | 62  | 52  | 31  | 10  | 20  | 18  | 26  | 33  | 70  | 134 | 63  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 223 | 218 | 159 | 97  | 87  | 97  | 101 | 128 | 202 | 225 | 231 | 173 |

The highest counts were: 32 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 1st; 32 at Thattham Nature Discovery Centre on Jan 9th; and 31 at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 30th. Numbers were fairly constant through the year at Lower Farm GP, while other sites with lower numbers showed more seasonal variation. Up to the end of the last century, there were considerable winter influxes of Moorhens with some sites reporting over 100 birds [Berkshire Atlas 2013], but this effect is much less apparent in the 2018 data.

**Breeding:** for such a widespread species, there were relatively few breeding records. Breeding was confirmed at seven sites by sightings of broods with parent or of fledged young. These sites were: Great Meadow Pond, Eton Wick, Moor Green Lakes, Green Park, Whiteknights Park, Bottom Lane GP (Theale) and Freeman's Marsh. The earliest brood sighting was on May 23rd at Green Park. A late youngster fledged on Sep 3rd at Eton Wick from a vulnerable nest in Roundmoor Ditch.

### COOT EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra*

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

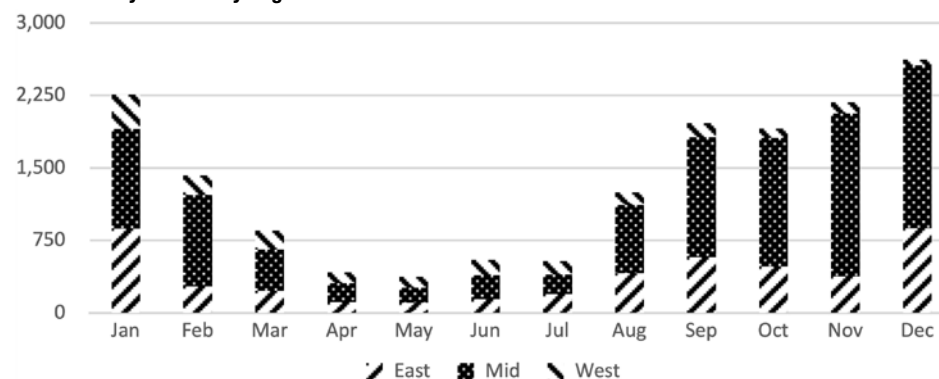
Coots were recorded at 63 sites across the county: 20 in east Berkshire, 22 in mid Berkshire and 21 in west Berkshire. Peak monthly counts at the sites that recorded the largest numbers are given in the table.

### Coot: Monthly Counts by Location

|                        | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov   | Dec   |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| Bray GPs               | 184 | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     |
| Burghfield GPs         | 200 | 225 | 112 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 103 | 161 | 221   | 211   |
| Dinton Pastures CP     | 46  | 88  | 21  | 10  | 6   | 3   | 7   | -   | 31  | 82  | 80    | 162   |
| Great Meadow Pond      | 20  | 42  | 42  | 50  | 50  | 123 | 189 | 180 | 92  | 96  | 52    | 70    |
| Horton GPs             | 332 | 5   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 411   |
| Lower Farm GP          | 125 | 84  | 85  | 48  | 41  | 52  | 35  | 31  | 31  | 29  | 58    | 17    |
| Moatlands GPs          | -   | 102 | 78  | -   | 20  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     |
| Moor Green Lakes       | 129 | 66  | 69  | 38  | 30  | 10  | -   | 83  | 180 | 221 | 261   | 264   |
| Padworth Lane GP       | 44  | 19  | 18  | 20  | 10  | 25  | -   | -   | -   | -   | 64    | 42    |
| Queen Mother Reservoir | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 3   | 95  | 250 | 146 | 8     | 10    |
| Theale GPs             | 475 | 163 | 65  | 74  | 32  | 114 | 108 | 600 | 948 | 912 | 1,042 | 1,047 |

|                          |       |       |     |     |     |     |     |       |       |       |       |       |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Twyford GPs              | 193   | 151   | 73  | 40  | 31  | 5   | 42  | 2     | 106   | 114   | 153   | 156   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 65    | 75    | 70  | 34  | 25  | 40  | 65  | 70    | 60    | 34    | 14    | 20    |
| Wrybury GPs              | 161   | 140   | 107 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | 60    |
| No. birds at other sites | 274   | 264   | 104 | 108 | 131 | 179 | 91  | 189   | 160   | 113   | 225   | 154   |
| Number of other sites    | 18    | 22    | 15  | 25  | 26  | 20  | 7   | 11    | 10    | 9     | 16    | 10    |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 1,694 | 878   | 514 | 208 | 115 | 183 | 175 | 440   | 1,153 | 1,525 | 1,592 | 1,712 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 2,248 | 1,424 | 852 | 423 | 376 | 551 | 540 | 1,250 | 1,961 | 1,908 | 2,178 | 2,624 |

### Coot: Monthly Maxima by Region



Monthly totals by region, showing that autumn and winter arrivals mainly visit waterbodies in central and east Berkshire, are given in the chart.

The January count of 2,248 was a typical number for the first winter period, and included 244 at Horton GPs on Jan 21st and 475 at Main Pit, Theale, the same day. Thereafter numbers declined as winter visitors departed and others moved to preferred breeding grounds elsewhere. In the autumn, numbers began to pick up in August. WeBS counts produced some impressive numbers at Theale GPs, starting with 354 on Aug 18th and at least 600 there on Aug 31st, culminating in the maximum count for the year of 1,047 on Dec 9th.

**Breeding:** breeding was confirmed in 15 1 km squares and was probable in three more. Nest building was first recorded on Mar 4th at Bray GPs; the first occupied nests were seen on Apr 16th at Twyford GPs; and the first young were recorded on Jun 2nd at Woolhampton GPs. The number of broods recorded was 13, indicative of considerable under-recording. A late brood was noted on Aug 25th at Whiteknights Park.

### CRANE COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

*Very rare vagrant (Amber)*

Four Cranes flew north, then east, over Lavell's Lake on Nov 25th (FJC). With Cranes now breeding in several counties in England and attempting to breed in Oxfordshire, sightings of birds overflying Berkshire are on the increase. Cranes have been reported in seven years since the first in 1987, involving 31 birds.

## LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common and widespread resident (Amber Listed)

Records were received from 64 locations: 21 in east Berkshire, 26 in mid Berkshire and 17 in west Berkshire. The monthly maxima are shown in the table.

### Little Grebe: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs          | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 4   | 4   | 2   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | 3   | 2   | 1   | 2   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 6   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 5   | 4   | -   | 8   |
| Fleethill Farm           | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | 3   | 9   | 6   | 8   | 1   | 3   | 2   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | 4   | 1   | 2   | 4   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | 2   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 3   | 1   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 2   | 6   | 10  | 14  | 7   | 13  | 14  | 11  | 10  | 11  | 3   | 2   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 6   | 6   | 6   | 5   | 2   | 4   | 12  | 9   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 4   |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 2   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 7   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | -   | 1   | 4   | 4   | 2   | 4   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 4   | 1   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 1   |
| No. birds at other sites | 25  | 27  | 15  | 20  | 14  | 9   | 4   | 9   | 19  | 8   | 12  | 17  |
| Number of other sites    | 12  | 14  | 9   | 9   | 7   | 4   | 3   | 3   | 8   | 7   | 10  | 10  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 12  | 5   | 2   | -   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 4   | 10  | 5   | 6   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 48  | 45  | 38  | 53  | 29  | 37  | 58  | 54  | 60  | 47  | 33  | 37  |

Lower Farm GP and Moor Green Lakes continued to be the best sites in the county, where the highest counts were 14 on Apr 3rd and 12 on Jul 30th respectively. Elsewhere, seven were at Horton GP on Jul 31st and eight were on the Jubilee River on Dec 10th. **Breeding:** this was confirmed at: Fleethill Farm (broods of four and two); Moor Green Lakes (four juveniles); Lower Farm GP (broods of three and one); Horton GP (four juveniles); and Oval Pond, Burghfield Common (three juveniles). Birds were seen on nests at Burnthouse Lane GP and Prince of Wales Pond, Windsor Great Park.

## RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Scarce and declining winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

One, mostly in summer plumage, was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 14th (CDRH). This is the first record since 2012, when one was at Queen Mother Reservoir from Nov 19th to Dec 18th.

## GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)

Records were received from 85 locations: 28 in east Berkshire, 46 in mid Berkshire and 11 in west Berkshire. The monthly maxima are shown in the table.

### Great Crested Grebe: Monthly Counts by Location

|                    | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs    | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Bray GPs           | 9   | 14  | 12  | 9   | -   | 13  | 13  | -   | 18  | -   | 10  | 7   |
| Burghfield GPs     | 19  | 26  | 24  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 37  | 20  | 34  | 19  |
| Dinton Pastures CP | 20  | 17  | 5   | 7   | 6   | 5   | 6   | -   | 3   | 7   | 10  | 10  |
| Dorney Wetlands    | 8   | 7   | 5   | -   | 6   | -   | -   | 8   | 5   | 1   | 5   | 5   |

|                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Great Meadow Pond        | 4   | 4   | 6   | 12  | 17  | 21  | 27  | 22  | 15  | 12  | 9   | 7   |
| Horton GPs               | 15  | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 1   | 2   | 4   | 4   | 6   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 8   | 2   | 1   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 4   | 8   | -   | 6   | -   | -   | 7   | -   | -   | 8   | 7   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 7   | 6   | 4   | 10  | 10  | 14  | 14  | 24  | 28  | 14  | 13  | 18  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 4   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 5   | 3   | 6   | 9   | 8   | 25  | 78  | 107 | 61  | 22  | 14  | 5   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 1   | 2   | 3   | 3   | 4   | 3   | 2   | 1   | -   | 2   | 1   | 2   |
| Theale GPs               | 7   | 14  | 9   | 34  | 12  | 15  | 26  | 65  | 85  | 91  | 70  | 70  |
| Twyford GPs              | 24  | 33  | 20  | 17  | 13  | 2   | 16  | -   | 24  | 33  | 31  | 30  |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 10  | 16  | 17  | 20  | 20  | 2   | 35  | 40  | 35  | 20  | 7   | 5   |
| Wraybury GPs             | 28  | 20  | 23  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 19  |
| No. birds at other sites | 30  | 31  | 34  | 24  | 24  | 21  | 7   | 18  | 16  | 9   | 28  | 24  |
| Number of other sites    | 11  | 13  | 13  | 11  | 13  | 8   | 2   | 5   | 3   | 3   | 7   | 4   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 146 | 119 | 99  | 80  | 38  | 48  | 112 | 103 | 216 | 211 | 185 | 152 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 188 | 202 | 183 | 152 | 134 | 147 | 232 | 301 | 337 | 234 | 245 | 237 |

Large numbers gathered at Queen Mother Reservoir and Main Pit, Theale, during the autumn and winter, where the highest counts were 107 on Aug 27th and 91 on Oct 14th respectively. At Moor Green Lakes on May 19th, a bird was seen attempting to swallow a "sizeable" Tench. **Breeding:** breeding attempts were reported from 25 locations, where 54 pairs produced a minimum of 70 young. At Great Meadow Pond, seven pairs were present during the breeding season, of which three raised three young each.

## SLAVONIAN GREBE HORNED GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

There were two records, both in the first winter period. One was at Lower Farm GP from Jan 3rd to Jan 10th (BL *et al.*). The second was at Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 6th (ABT), with two there on Jan 9th and 10th (ABT *et al.*).

## BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Uncommon passage and winter visitor (Amber Listed)

A fairly good year with eight records. **First winter:** two birds were found at Lower Farm Trout Lake on Jan 1st (NC) with five there on Jan 2nd (ABT *et al.*), and were seen either there or at the nearby gravel pit until Jan 18th. Three birds remained until Feb 4th and two until Apr 17th, by which time they had attained full summer plumage. Although display was observed on a number of occasions, there was no other evidence of breeding. Closely following the pattern of the Newbury birds, four were found at Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 17th (ABT), and were seen either there or at Moatlands until Feb 8th, with two remaining to Apr 16th. By the end of their stay, these birds had also moulted into summer plumage, but were not seen displaying. Although difficult to tell if there was any exchange of birds between



Black-necked Grebe, Lower Farm GP, Jan 4th, Andy Tomczynski.



*Black-necked Grebe, Main Pit, Theale, Nov 17th, Andy Tomczynski.*

Newbury and Theale, all four birds were seen at Theale on Jan 18th, and all five were seen at Newbury the same day. One was also at British Airways Pit, Wraysbury GPs, on Jan 13th (PNe). **Spring:** a winter plumaged bird was at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, from Mar 3rd to 13th (MFW *et al.*), and two summer plumaged birds were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 29th (CDRH, PNe). **Autumn:** two were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 22nd (CDRH) and a juvenile was at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Sep 1st (BTB *et al.*). **Second winter:** an impressive flock of nine birds were found at Main Pit, Theale, on Nov 17th (per BirdGuides *et al.*).

### 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 record was on Mar 25th, just a week later than the earliest date this century, at a regular site on the Berkshire Downs (NJB). Birds were found at three other locations, including a new one further west than the core area. The only evidence of breeding was of a bird sitting on a nest on May 13th and 20th, but the outcome was unknown. The last record of the year was of two adults in wing moult on Jul 5th (CDRH). There were no records of post breeding flocks, which may be present well into October, but this may reflect observer effort.

### OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

#### EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER

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

Oystercatchers were recorded in every month from January to August, following the first of the year at Lea Farm Lake on Jan 25th. They were encountered in 37 1 km squares; 27% of these were in east Berkshire, 57% in mid Berkshire and 16% in west Berkshire. Of the 268 records, 72% were at sites where breeding would occur or be attempted. At Queen Mother Reservoir, there were three birds on Mar 4th and singles on Mar 6th and Apr 3rd. There was an almost continuous presence there in May, July and August with usually just one bird, sometimes two, and four on Jul 21st, but there was no suggestion of breeding there or locally. The last sighting of the year was of one at Queen Mother Reservoir on the relatively late date of Aug 28th. Birds were occasionally reported at other locations, often seen feeding on grassland or flooded fields, and probably involved birds from nearby breeding sites.

A dead Oystercatcher was found by the Peregrine nest at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 14th.

There were several counts of five birds that included young birds, but six at Hosehill Lake on May 24th were regarded as adults; an impressive 13 were counted at Main Pit, Theale, on their eponymous island. The highest monthly counts at the main sites are given in the table.

### Oystercatcher: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | 2   | 5   | 4   | -   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | 2   | 3   | 3   | 1   | 2   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | 1   | 2   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | -   | 2   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | 1   | 2   | 5   | 4   | 2   | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | -   | 3   | 1   | 2   | -   | 4   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | 2   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 6   | 5   | 13  | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 1   | 1   | 9   | 9   | 5   | 11  | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | 1   | 1   | 5   | 6   | 3   | 6   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 0   | 6   | 4   | 6   | 4   | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 4   | 11  | 31  | 31  | 26  | 27  | 33  | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   |

**Breeding:** this was confirmed at seven sites, where six pairs successfully produced broods to fledging. The first breeding activity was noted at Moor Green Lakes where a bird was sitting on a nest on Tern Island on Apr 2nd. Later in April a second pair turned up on Plover Island, where they were seen mating and nest scraping. Unfortunately, no young were hatched; this may have been due to territorial disputes between the two pairs leaving a nest prone to predation [MGLG 2018]. Single pairs with two chicks were seen at Woolhampton GPs on May 15th, at Loddon NR on May 21st and at Summerleaze GPs on Jun 2nd. At Hosehill Lake, a pair were first seen with three chicks on May 18th and the family group was still intact on Jun 17th. At Main Pit, Theale, despite reports of two pairs in mid-March, reports later in spring concerned a single pair which were seen with two chicks on May 18th. Similarly at Searles Farm Lane GPs, up to five birds were reported in March, but a single pair went on to raise three young which were seen to have reached the flying stage on Jun 9th. A pair was present at Dinton Pastures CP and Lea Farm Lake throughout, but, despite copulation being observed, there was no other evidence of breeding.

### AVOCET PIED AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

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

There were five records involving ten birds, all in spring. The first was at Main Pit, Theale, on Mar 17th (ABM *et al.*), where it stayed most of the day. The next record was four at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 26th (CDRH). Two were at Lower Farm GP on Apr 9th (RRK *et al.*) and one flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 15th (ABT), landing on nearby Horton Brook Quarry. Two were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 14th (ABM).

The yearly status since 2000 is shown in the table.

#### Avocet: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 1    | 2    | 1    | 6    | 4    | -    | -    | 2    | 2    | 3    |
| No. of birds   | 3    | 18   | 1    | 22   | 4    | -    | -    | 2    | 4    | 3    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 3    | 3    | 5    | 3    | 3    | 1    | 3    | 3    | 5    |      |
| No. of birds   | 4    | 4    | 11   | 4    | 4    | 1    | 14   | 5    | 10   |      |

Avocets are less than annual and more often seen in spring. They occasionally turn up in February (e.g. Feb 25th 2003) and December (e.g. Dec 4th 2017 and Dec 14th 2004). For the 19 years this century, they were recorded in spring in 17 years, averaging 5.1 per year, and in autumn in 14 years, averaging 4.3 per year.

## LAPWING NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Lapwings are probably the most numerous wader species in Berkshire, being more closely associated with the land than the shores. They were recorded in every month and in 95 1 km squares, of which 26 were in east Berkshire, 25 in mid Berkshire and 44 in west Berkshire.

The highest monthly counts are shown in the table.

### Lapwing: Monthly Counts by Location

|                             | Jan   | Feb   | Mar   | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct   | Nov   | Dec   |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Bury & Cow Downs            | 1,000 | 500   | 100   | 4   | -   | -   | 19  | -   | -   | -     | -     | -     |
| Crookham & Greenham Commons | 1     | -     | 1     | 1   | 2   | 37  | 52  | -   | -   | -     | -     | 46    |
| Dinton Pastures CP          | 50    | 44    | -     | -   | 1   | 6   | 3   | -   | 100 | 40    | -     | 112   |
| Dorney Wetlands             | -     | 48    | 2     | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -     | -     | -     |
| Englefield                  | -     | 430   | 28    | 28  | 35  | 74  | -   | 152 | 120 | 334   | 100   | 35    |
| Eton Wick Floods            | 55    | 150   | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     | 30    |
| Fleethill Farm              | -     | 110   | -     | -   | -   | 17  | 98  | 23  | 134 | -     | 67    | 118   |
| Fobney Meadow               | 100   | 270   | 300   | 6   | 12  | -   | -   | 50  | 70  | 150   | 200   | 400   |
| Great Meadow Pond           | -     | 182   | 75    | 10  | 13  | 18  | 5   | -   | -   | -     | -     | 6     |
| Lea Farm Lake               | -     | -     | -     | -   | -   | -   | 80  | 45  | 98  | 11    | 148   | -     |
| Lower Farm GP               | 540   | 400   | 100   | 4   | 8   | 17  | 169 | 121 | 60  | 170   | 150   | 126   |
| Moor Green Lakes            | 111   | 232   | 93    | 8   | 4   | 25  | 75  | 105 | 166 | 200   | 100   | 125   |
| Padworth Lane GP            | 51    | 2     | 1     | 8   | 2   | 14  | -   | -   | -   | -     | -     | -     |
| Pingewood GPs               | -     | -     | -     | -   | -   | 7   | 45  | 50  | -   | -     | -     | -     |
| Streatley                   | 630   | 475   | 107   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | -   | 8   | 195   | 350   | 320   |
| Theale GPs                  | -     | 15    | 9     | 18  | 9   | 2   | 73  | 10  | 30  | -     | 1     | 200   |
| Woolhampton GPs             | 80    | 4     | 1     | -   | 2   | 55  | 34  | 19  | 60  | 20    | 25    | 100   |
| No. birds at other sites    | 321   | 2,090 | 390   | 54  | 97  | 47  | 42  | 3   | -   | 220   | 410   | 1,171 |
| Number of other sites       | 6     | 13    | 18    | 17  | 22  | 8   | 3   | 1   | -   | 2     | 5     | 9     |
| WeBS Count Totals           | 16    | 61    | 11    | 18  | 16  | -   | 73  | 10  | 3   | 11    | 149   | 114   |
| Total birds (minimum)       | 2,939 | 4,952 | 1,207 | 141 | 185 | 319 | 700 | 579 | 846 | 1,340 | 1,551 | 2,789 |

**First winter:** All of the counts in 2018 that exceeded 500 birds came from west Berkshire in January and February. These included: 500 at Bury Down on Jan 13th and Feb 22nd; 540 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 14th; 630 at Streatley on Jan 28th; 1,000 at Cow Down on Jan 25th; and 1,500, the year's maximum count, in a field north of the M4 at Bradley Wood Farm, Welford, on Feb 17th. Numbers declined markedly in March, particularly after the last treble figure count of 300 at Fobney Meadow on Mar 14th.

**Breeding:** breeding was confirmed at 12 sites and was probable at a further nine. Display was first noted on Mar 12th at Moor Green Lakes, and the first nests were located on Apr 25th at Englefield, where estate staff counted 20 nests and protected them to prevent destruction by tractor work. The first three chicks were seen on Apr 27th at Hosehill Lake and young were seen at 11 other sites: Aldermaston GPs; Brimpton GPs; Crookham Common; Englefield; Great Meadow Pond; Green Park, Reading; Holme Grange Fishery, Finchampstead; Horton

Brook Quarry; Horton Road GP; Main Pit, Theale; and Woolhampton GPs. These produced in total a minimum of 31 chicks; counts at Englefield revealed young at various stages of development but the tall vegetation made accurate counting difficult, so the peak count of nine chicks from two broods of four and one of a single chick on May 3rd was probably an underestimate. The sites mentioned above are nearly all in the county's river valleys; whereas several birds were present on downland in the breeding season, the only report of breeding was of one sitting at Combe Hill on May 4th. Indeed, Lapwings were watched displaying at Brightwalton and at Woolley Down in early spring, but were not seen on later visits, the fields having been cultivated in the meantime.

**Spring/summer:** most observations in spring were of potentially breeding birds so naturally very few counts exceeded 20 birds. However, 74 at Englefield on Jun 4th included just six young, and 53 Lapwings flew over Woolhampton GPs on Jun 30th. Post-breeding flocks were noted at many sites, including 169 at Lower Farm GP on Jul 25th and 152 at Englefield on Aug 27th.

**Autumn/second winter:** numbers increased slowly during September, then numbers accelerated in early October as birds returned to their wintering grounds. Some 36% of counts during this period were in three figures, but only 13% were fewer than ten; the highest were 438 at Beale Park on Dec 24th and 400 at Fobney Meadow on Dec 28th.

## GOLDEN PLOVER EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

*Locally common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

Golden Plovers were encountered in 28 locations: five in east Berkshire, eight in mid Berkshire and 15 in west Berkshire. It was noticeable that the majority of the treble figure counts were from west Berkshire on or close to the Downs.

The highest monthly counts at the main sites are given in the table.

### Golden Plover: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan   | Feb   | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bury Down                | 150   | 70    | -   | 25  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 23  | 1   |
| Greenham Common          | 60    | -     | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 70  | 175 | 75  |
| Lower Farm GP            | 300   | 300   | 70  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 70  | 300 | 100 |
| Streatley                | 335   | 437   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 9   | -   |
| Woodlands Park Fields    | 400   | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | -   | 13  |
| No. birds at other sites | 151   | 597   | 10  | 97  | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 86  | -   | 100 |
| Number of other sites    | 4     | 6     | 5   | 4   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 4   | -   | 2   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -     | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 1,396 | 1,404 | 85  | 123 | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 232 | 507 | 289 |

**First winter/spring:** there were counts exceeding 200 birds on several dates in January and February at Lower Farm GP, Streatley and Woodlands Park Fields. At the latter site, numbers grew and peaked at 400 on Jan 19th, but then fell away rapidly. Streatley saw the county's highest count of 437 birds on Feb 14th, while there were several counts of 300 at Lower Farm GP between the end of January and mid-February. Elsewhere, significant counts during this period included 250 at Freeman's Marsh on Jan 5th, 150 at East Garston on Feb 4th and 400 at Welford on Feb 17th. Numbers declined significantly during March, and the latest April counts were of around 40 flying over Winkfield on Apr 5th and 43 on the Compton Downs on Apr 8th. The final record for the period was of a late bird over Englefield on May 3rd (RCr). This was the first May record this century, during which period departure dates averaged Apr 18th.

**Autumn/second winter:** the earliest sighting was of two at Englefield on Sep 29th (RCr), the latest arrival date this century and a month later than the average arrival date in that period. The first double figure count came on Oct 13th with ten at Lower Farm GP, where the first treble figure count was recorded with 100 on Oct 24th. Again, the majority of records were from west Berkshire, where the highest count was 300 at Lower Farm GP, which comprised four swirling flocks that landed only briefly before most departed. Apart from the tabulated counts at Woodlands Park Fields, the only counts east of Reading in this period were 50 at Lavell's Lake on Oct 29th, 30 at Bisham on Dec 14th and 70 at Dorney Wetlands on Dec 28th.

## GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

*Uncommon but regular passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

There was just one record this year. A bird in partial summer plumage flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on May 24th, landed in Horton Brook Quarry at 05:48 but had departed by 07:00 (CDRH). This was not the same bird as a Grey Plover at Brent Reservoir the same day, on account of the different plumage stage.

So far this century, 39 birds have occurred in spring, 19 in autumn and just one in winter, on Feb 5th 2012. The table summarises the yearly status of this species, with an average of 3.8 birds per year.

### Grey Plover: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | -    | 3    | 6    | 2    | 4    | 2    | 1    | 3    | 2    | 1    |
| No. of birds   | -    | 3    | 12   | 2    | 8    | 5    | 1    | 4    | 2    | 1    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 1    | 5    | 4    | 1    | 1    | -    | 6    | -    | 1    |      |
| No. of birds   | 1    | 7    | 4    | 1    | 1    | -    | 6    | -    | 1    |      |

## RINGED PLOVER COMMON RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Declining summer visitor, uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

Ringed Plovers were encountered at 13 sites: four in east Berkshire, four in mid Berkshire and five in west Berkshire. Records from Lower Farm GP, Moor Green Lakes, Queen Mother Reservoir and Main Pit, Theale, accounted for 88% of all records received, though the highest counts were made elsewhere. Except for just one week in mid-July, Ringed Plovers were reported each week after their first occurrence on Mar 1st until their last on Oct 6th.

The highest monthly counts at the main sites are given in the table.

### Ringed Plover: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | -   | 3   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | -   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 8   | 1   | 1   | 5   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | 5   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | -   | 3   | 2   | 16  | 3   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | -   | 3   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | -   | 4   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | -   | -   | 13  | 9   | 32  | 10  | 6   | 7   | 3   | 1   | -   | -   |

**Spring:** the earliest record was of one at Heron Lake, Hythe End, on Mar 1st, a typical first date; it stayed until Mar 3rd, and was followed on Mar 4th by singles at Lower Farm GP and Main Pit, Theale. Most March counts were of ones or twos, but three were at Lower Farm GP on Mar 31st and five at Main Pit on Mar 20th. The highest April count was three at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 14th. In May, however, the highest counts were from Horton Brook Quarry where 13 presumed migrants were seen on May 13th, with seven on May 23rd, and 15 on May 25th (the year's highest count anywhere), of which eight were still there on May 27th. Other sites where up to two Ringed Plovers made brief visits were: Green Park, Reading; Greenham Common; Lavell's Lake; Lea Farm Lake; Midgham GP; Newbury Racecourse; and Thatcham.

**Breeding:** there were many reports throughout June of one at Lower Farm GP, increasing to two in July, but there was no evidence of breeding.

**Autumn:** the run of summer records at Lower Farm GP continued until Jul 25th, so presumably by then the birds that had summered had departed. In August most records were from Queen Mother Reservoir, where the highest counts were five on Aug 9th, 13th and 14th. This species was recorded on six dates in September: singles at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 1st and 8th; two at Lower Farm GP on Sep 12th; and then singles there on Sep 22nd and 23rd. The last record for the year was of one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 6th; Ringed Plovers have been recorded on later dates in only six previous years this century.

## LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

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

This species was recorded at 23 sites (1 km squares), with five in east Berkshire, 13 in mid Berkshire and five in west Berkshire. The principal sites were Queen Mother Reservoir and Moor Green Lakes in east Berkshire, and Lower Farm GP in west Berkshire.

The monthly peak counts are given in the table.

### Little Ringed Plover: Monthly Counts

|                 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of sites | -   | -   | 8   | 12  | 13  | 12  | 10  | 6   | 3   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of birds | -   | -   | 16  | 34  | 31  | 40  | 35  | 14  | 3   | -   | -   | -   |

**Spring:** the first record was of two at Moor Green Lakes (RHS) on Mar 14th, a typical arrival date. These were followed by one at Lower Farm GP on Mar 17th, then two on Mar 18th in snowy conditions at Horton Brook Quarry, at Queen Mother Reservoir, and at the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes. Thereafter one to three were recorded on an almost daily basis. Numbers at several traditional sites built up in April to maxima of seven at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 2nd, five at Horton Brook Quarry on Apr 27th and three at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 15th. Away from sites where breeding activity occurred, there were occasional sightings at the gravel pits south of Reading, Fobney Meadow, Lea Farm Lake, Green Park (Reading), Midgham GP and Padworth Lane GP.

**Breeding:** this was confirmed at five sites: Horton Brook Quarry; Moor Green Lakes; Greenham Common; Crookham Common; and Lower Farm GP. It was probable at a further three: Bray Road GP; Fleethill Farm; and Horton Road GP (just to the east of Queen Mother Reservoir). Of the probable breeders, two pairs were seen at Bray Road GP on Apr 6th and three pairs and some nest building activity were observed at Fleethill Farm on Jun 4th, while two pairs were present on many dates in April and May at Horton Road GP and were observed to exchange duties at a nest, but at each of these locations there was no

subsequent evidence of successful breeding. On the other hand, chicks were seen at Lower Farm GP on Jul 4th. Despite the best efforts of irresponsible dog walkers at Greenham Common, an adult was seen with one chick on Jun 29th. Two of the three pairs at Moor Green Lakes were successful and produced broods of three and two chicks. A pair bred at Horton Brook Quarry and two recently fledged young were seen there on Jun 16th. Finally at Crookham Common, a pair hatched three young, of which one had fledged by Jul 4th.

**Autumn:** juveniles, often with adults, were recorded right through July and August but many of these would have been migrants; indeed, a juvenile at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 8th was more likely to have originated elsewhere, its ring suggested Eversley Common in Hampshire. There were four records for September, the final one being from Lower Farm GP (NC) on Sep 12th, a typical last date for this century.

## EURASIAN WHIMBREL

*Numenius phaeopus*

*Uncommon passage migrant (Schedule One and Red Listed)*

What appears to have been quite a good spring for this species involved 22 records for probably 45 individuals.

**Spring:** the first to be seen were four on Apr 10th (CDRH) flying north-east over Queen Mother Reservoir. These were followed on Apr 11th (CDRH) by two more, which also flew straight over to the north-east, and another different individual 30 minutes later (PNe). On Apr 14th, one was seen at Moor Green Lakes (RCM, RJG), another over Datchet flew off south-west, and two at Queen Mother Reservoir (both CDRH) flew off north-east. On Apr 17th, one was heard over Queen Mother Reservoir (ABT) and another flew low over Moor Green Lakes (RFM). Two flew into Horton Brook Quarry on Apr 18th (CDRH) and another was heard high over Queen Mother Reservoir (ABT). On Apr 21st, one at Queen Mother Reservoir was joined by two which flew in from the south-east (CDRH). On Apr 25th, one was heard calling at Englefield (RCr), and another at Lower Farm GP flew over and landed on the racecourse (NC, IW). A flock of seven which dispersed was followed by two more and another was seen later at Wraysbury on Apr 27th (both CDRH). Three were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 29th (CDRH), and the last for the month was one at Lea Farm Lake on Apr 30th (PBT). There were two records in May: on May 6th one flew over Horton GPs; and on May 19th four more there were the last for the spring (both CDRH).

**Autumn:** there were three records. The first two returning migrants on Jul 18th (CDRH) flew over Queen Mother Reservoir and departed northwards. On Aug 8th one was seen over Southcote (AVL), and the final record for the year was of two on Sep 9th seen at Main Pit, Theale, during a WeBS count.

The yearly status of Whimbrels this century is shown in the table and averages 40 per annum.

### Whimbrel: Annual Number of Birds Reported

|                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| No. of records | 4    | 7    | 11   | 21   | 19   | 18   | 15   | 15   | 24   | 24   |
| No. of birds   | 5    | 18   | 18   | 57   | 49   | 29   | 26   | 53   | 54   | 113  |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 14   | 24   | 20   | 12   | 19   | 18   | 9    | 21   | 22   |      |
| No. of birds   | 63   | 36   | 48   | 31   | 30   | 22   | 19   | 45   | 45   |      |



*Whimbrel, New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, Apr 14th, Roger Murfitt.*

## CURLEW EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

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

Although possibly as many as 18 birds were present at traditional locations on the Berkshire Downs in the breeding season, for the second year in a row breeding could not be confirmed.

**Spring:** away from the Downs, ten Curlews were reported on spring migration; many of these flew through without stopping, others touched down for a few minutes or an hour or two, and the observations with just one exception included the bird's departure. The reports comprised the following, all singles unless stated: Queen Mother Reservoir Apr 3rd (the first passage bird) and two there on Jun 16th; three at some allotments in Slough on Apr 10th, of which two flew off while one stayed to feed; Horton GPs on Apr 24th and 27th; Moor Green Lakes on Apr 28th; and one disappearing into the fog over Crookham and Greenham Commons on Jun 10th.

**Breeding:** the first bird in the county was heard in flight at Wellbottom Down on Mar 21st (RJG) and, after mid-April, birds returned widely to sites on the Downs where they have bred in the past. Observations at those sites are summarised in the table.

### Curlew: Breeding Season Summary

| Site            | Breeding Evidence   |
|-----------------|---|
| Compton Downs   | Two on Apr 13th and a pair on May 19th near Churn Halt, but some commuting across Oxon border.                              |
| Roden Downs     | Two on May 13th, but commuting to Aston Upton in Oxon where at least five were seen on May 19th.                            |
| RAF Welford     | Four on Apr 29th, two on Jun 3rd.   |
| East Garston    | One north of Manor Farm on May 31st.  |
| Upper Lambourn  | At least two in Row Down/Farncombe area on May 29th.  |
| Wellbottom Down | Two pairs on Apr 20th, a bird approaching possible nest site on May 13th, but seven birds (possibly four pairs) on Jun 6th. |
| Seven Barrows   | One heard north of Seven Barrows May 13th; this area is close to preceding site.  |

Once again there was no evidence that breeding had occurred for this species, which has undergone a 50% reduction in numbers across England since the mid-1970s, with reduced breeding success cited as the primary cause for this decline [BTO BirdTrends].

**Autumn:** autumn passage involved ten birds mostly seen in flight and comprised the following, all singles unless stated: the first at Clayfield Copse, Emmer Green, on Jul 11th; Lower Farm GP on Jul 13th; Woodlands Park, White Waltham on Jul 23rd; Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 7th, and a flock of five circled there and departed west on Aug 31st; and finally Lea Farm Lake on Oct 29th (RHS).

## BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

*Scarce passage migrant (Schedule One and Red Listed)*

Quite a good year for this annual migrant with a minimum of 61 individuals: 4 in spring and 57 in autumn.

**Spring:** the first was one on the early date of Mar 2nd (CDRH) at Queen Mother Reservoir. Two flew in there on Mar 24th (CDRH), then departed to the north-east. Another three weeks later, one was at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 13th (RCW, CRG). There were no records for May.

**Autumn:** following a period of nine weeks with no records, sightings resumed in mid-June, indicating an early start to the return passage. Birds which may have been failed breeders



included: one of the *limosa* race at Fobney Meadow on Jun 15th (ABT); one at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jun 25th (RCr); three at Dinton Pastures CP on Jun 27th (BJW, DWJ); and a summer plumage bird of the *islandica* race at Eton Wick on Jun 29th (CDRH). Numbers increased in July as migrants passed through. They were recorded on nine dates between Jul 2nd and 30th (MO), and involved a minimum of 16 individuals. The highest counts were of four at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 2nd, while five on Jul 3rd at Lower Farm GP were of the *islandica* race as was one in summer plumage at Eton Wick on Jul 7th. Two more *islandicas* were at Lower Farm GP on Jul 23rd. August started with one on Aug 2nd at Lower Farm GP, five in summer plumage at Queen Mother Reservoir also on Aug 2nd, and another five (three adults and two juveniles) there on Aug 8th. On Aug 10th, two, which had been flushed off Dorney Common (Bucks) by a photographer, eventually landed on the floods at Eton Wick and were still there the next day. On Aug 12th, three of the *islandica* race were present there, including a female in transitional plumage; this bird stayed until Aug 19th. Two sightings in September involved 14 on Moor Green Lakes on Sep 11th (JCMo) and two the next day at Lower Farm GP, where the last bird of the year was present from Oct 8th to 10th (all NC).

The yearly status of this species this century, with an annual average of 38, is given in the table.

**Black-tailed Godwit: Annual Number of Birds Reported**

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 10   | 17   | 13   | 12   | 8    | 8    | 7    | 14   | 18   | 10   |
| No. of birds   | 17   | 19   | 19   | 38   | 25   | 30   | 10   | 63   | 36   | 18   |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 15   | 17   | 9    | 21   | 11   | 19   | 10   | 25   | 34   |      |
| No. of birds   | 52   | 26   | 17   | 69   | 40   | 50   | 22   | 97   | 66   |      |

**TURNSTONE RUDDY TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*

*Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

The only two spring records both occurred on the relatively late date of May 25th. A summer plumage bird was at Lower Farm GP (RRK), and three at Queen Mother Reservoir circled the reservoir and departed early morning on the same day (ABM, ABT, CDRH). The first returning migrant was one at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 30th (RCM). There were three sightings in August, all at Queen Mother Reservoir, with singles on Aug 2nd and 6th, and two on Aug 31st (all CDRH). The last for the year was a juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 17th (CDRH).

The yearly status of this species, with an annual average of 11, is given in the table.

**Turnstone: Annual Number of Birds Reported**

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 8    | 3    | 8    | 12   | 8    | 3    | 3    | 6    | 3    | 4    |
| No. of birds   | 9    | 3    | 10   | 26   | 10   | 4    | 9    | 11   | 3    | 4    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 8    | 11   | 9    | 10   | 4    | 3    | 8    | 2    | 3    |      |
| No. of birds   | 10   | 11   | 12   | 40   | 5    | 3    | 13   | 9    | 10   |      |

**KNOT RED KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor*

There were only two records, both from Queen Mother Reservoir. In spring, one was seen well as it departed north-east on Mar 17th (CDRH) and, in autumn, one in winter plumage

was seen on Oct 2nd (CDRH). This species continues to be less than annual, having been recorded in only 12 years this century, as shown in the table.

**Knot: Annual Number of Birds Reported**

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 0    | 0    | 3    | 4    | 2    | 0    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 0    |
| No. of birds   | 0    | 0    | 3    | 4    | 3    | 0    | 2    | 91   | 34   | 0    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 0    | 3    | 5    | 1    | 0    | 3    | 2    | 0    | 2    |      |
| No. of birds   | 0    | 4    | 15   | 1    | 0    | 3    | 2    | 0    | 2    |      |

Annual numbers are usually low and have not exceeded four, except in three years when the annual totals were boosted by remarkable flocks of 90, 33 and ten at Queen Mother Reservoir in the years 2007, 2008 and 2012 respectively. Excluding these exceptional years, the annual average was 2.9.

**RUFF** *Calidris pugnax*

*Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (Red Listed)*

**Spring:** this started unusually early with one on Feb 28th (CDRH) at Queen Mother Reservoir. This was followed in quick succession by: one on Mar 1st (RM) at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP; another on Mar 2nd (CDRH) at Queen Mother Reservoir, which was still there next day; one at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 4th (RCM); and one more at Lower Farm GP (ABM) on the same day. There were then no more until Jun 28th (RD *et al.*), when a white-ruffed male was seen at Moor Green Lakes. The date of this bird's occurrence was somewhat surprising for two reasons: it was the only June record of Ruff this century in Berkshire; and males in summer plumage usually occur between late March and mid-May, mostly in April. Birds sporting white ruffs (satellite males) typically do not breed, but still participate at leks on the breeding grounds where, even in northern Europe, egg-laying is well underway by early June.



*Ruff, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 8th, Andy Tomczynski.*

**Autumn:** in August a juvenile was present at Queen Mother Reservoir from Aug 7th to 10th (PNe *et al.*), and another was at Lower Farm GP on Aug 31st (DJB *et al.*). In September, singles were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 5th, 16th and finally Sep 24th (all CDRH).

The yearly status of this species, with an annual average of 13, is given in the table.

**Ruff: Annual Number of Birds Reported**

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 9    | 12   | 13   | 9    | 9    | 5    | 4    | 8    | 3    | 5    |
| No. of birds   | 16   | 15   | 21   | 10   | 10   | 15   | 4    | 10   | 4    | 8    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 9    | 10   | 6    | 14   | 7    | 5    | 9    | 8    | 15   |      |
| No. of birds   | 9    | 16   | 19   | 31   | 12   | 9    | 10   | 6    | 19   |      |



Sanderling, Queen Mother Reservoir, May 25th, Andy Tomczynski.

## SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce but regular passage migrant (Green Listed)

**Spring:** the first record for the year was one on Apr 28th (CDRH) at Queen Mother Reservoir. In May, Sanderlings were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir on seven dates: one on May 6th; three on May 11th flew off south-south-east; one in summer plumage on May 12th; two flew through and off north on May 19th; two stayed less than an hour on May 24th (all CDRH); another two, though mobile, remained all day on May 25th (ABT, CDRH, DJB); and finally one in summer plumage on May 27th (CDRH). The only other May record was of one in summer plumage at Moor Green Lakes on May 24th (RCM *et al.*). Two records in June were presumably late migrants: one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 9th (CDRH); and another at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jun 14th (KEM).

**Autumn:** the first returning adult was seen on Jul 23rd (DJB) at Queen Mother Reservoir. In August, all records were from Queen Mother Reservoir: one on Aug 4th (ABT), another on Aug 8th (BTB *et al.*), and finally two adults in transitional plumage on Aug 10th (CRDH).

The status of this species, with an annual average of 22, is given in the table.

### Sanderling: Annual Number of Birds Reported

|                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| No. of records | 5    | 3    | 11   | 11   | 10   | 10   | 11   | 9    | 16   | 10   |
| No. of birds   | 7    | 7    | 16   | 12   | 17   | 16   | 23   | 33   | 33   | 12   |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 13   | 14   | 13   | 18   | 16   | 13   | 10   | 11   | 19   |      |
| No. of birds   | 20   | 46   | 31   | 51   | 27   | 26   | 22   | 20   | 25   |      |

Earliest and latest dates since 2000 are for spring between Apr 24th and May 29th, and for autumn between Jul 21st and Sep 30th.

## DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

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

Dunlins were recorded at 15 sites, but Lower Farm GP, Moor Green Lakes and Queen Mother Reservoir accounted for 60% of all records.

**First winter:** there were two records: two at Lower Farm GP on Jan 9th, and two at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 4th.

**Spring:** one at Lower Farm GP on Feb 28th was probably the first spring migrant. There were frequent sightings of small numbers during a cold spell in the first five days of March,

including seven at Lea Farm Lake on Mar 1st, one on the ice at Moor Green Lakes the same day, up to 13 at Heron Lake by Mar 3rd, and a strange record of one found freshly dead in woodland at Beenham on Mar 5th. After a gap of 12 days, ones and twos were seen on six dates from Mar 17th to 25th. Similarly, in April, ones and twos were noted on nine dates from Apr 8th to 28th, but in May the only record was of two at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 28th.

**Autumn:** the first returning migrant was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 12th. It was followed by nine there on Jul 20th. Up to two were noted at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 15th, 21st and 22nd, while one at Lower Farm GP on Jul 31st was of “robust size and long bill”, suggestive of race *alpina*. August produced: up to three at Lower Farm GP between Aug 10th and 13th; three at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 10th; and records on 12 dates at Queen Mother Reservoir, with a maximum of six on Aug 10th. In September, Fobney Meadow held up to two between Sep 1st and 7th, and up to three were at Queen Mother Reservoir between Sep 6th and 18th. Elsewhere five were at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 25th, and four other sites reported singles making one-day visits. In October there were three or four birds at two sites. There was a late flurry of migrants in November, with two at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 16th and 17th, and two at Lower Farm GP between Nov 16th and 20th.

## WOODCOCK EURASIANWOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

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

**First winter:** in the period up to the middle of April, Woodcocks were found in some 18 sites involving a probable 23 individuals, mostly encountered singly. The majority of these sites were away from the traditional breeding areas, which typically feature areas of woodland in proximity to heathland.

**Breeding:** Woodcocks are shy and mainly nocturnal birds and would be very difficult to detect were it not for the males’ springtime display flights at dusk known as roding. Spring and summer records after the middle of April were all from the traditional breeding areas and generally referred to this roding activity. The counts from west Berkshire derived from a Nightjar survey carried out by teams of around 35 surveyors on three nights between May 25th and Jun 22nd (C Sulston *et al.*). The first report of a roding bird came from Crookham Common on Apr 21st. Woodcocks were then found at eight sites, with peak counts as follows: Snelsmore Common (two); Greenham Common (four); Crookham Common (four); Bucklebury Common (six); Padworth Common (one); Ufton Nervet woods including Roundoak Piece (six); three areas in Swinley Forest (total of three); and Swinley Park (two). Only four reports were received from Swinley Forest, so this figure must have been a serious underestimate. The number of territories implied by these figures (28) could even be a slight overestimate, as roding males are sometimes accompanied by females and reports are not usually sufficiently detailed to discern this. The last report from this period was of a bird roding at Greenham Common on Jul 4th.

**Second winter:** the six reports in this period were also away from the traditional breeding locations. On Oct 28th a local birder was contacted after a bird thought to be a Nightjar had flown into a window of a house in central Reading. It took at least five hours for the bird to recover, but it had disappeared before the birder was able to respond. However, its true identity as a Woodcock was established from a photograph. On Nov 16th in Maidenhead, a Woodcock was photographed on a garden patio before flying off. One was recorded on Nov 26th at The Wilderness, Kintbury. Three records in December were all of singles: at Snowball Hill, Woodlands Park, on Dec 17th; at Woolhampton GPs on Dec 22nd; and at Brimpton GPs on Dec 29th.

## JACK SNIBE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

**First winter:** in January up to eight were seen at Fobney Meadow on Jan 14th and 15th, one was at Lower Farm GP on Jan 22nd, while at Lavell's Lake up to five were recorded on three dates between Jan 22nd and 26th. There were four records in March, all of singles: one at Lea Farm Lake on Mar 1st; another at Lavell's Lake on Mar 11th; one at Hambledon Lock, Remenham, on Mar 18th (seen feeding in the marsh meadow); and at Greenham Common one was almost trodden on by the finder on Mar 25th.

**Autumn:** there were only two records in October, one at Lower Farm GP on Oct 20th and finally one at Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford, on Oct 30th.

## SNIPE COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

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

The highest monthly counts at the main sites for Snipe are given in the table.

### Snipe: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Crookham Common          | -   | 1   | 13  | 3   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 12  | 18  | 26  | 7   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | 15  | 44  | 13  |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 7   | -   | -   | 1   | 11  |
| Eton Wick Floods         | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 11  | 14  | 12  | 16  | -   |
| Fobney Meadow            | 40  | 50  | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 10  | 6   | 3   | 2   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 5   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 2   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 14  | 20  | 28  | 33  | 1   | 2   | 2   | 7   | 19  | 23  | 12  | 6   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 60  | 21  | 10  | 3   | -   | -   | 6   | 7   | 11  | 41  | 31  | 86  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | 3   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 4   | 1   | 2   | 1   |
| Streatley                | 12  | 5   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 6   | 5   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | -   | -   | 4   | 13  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 20  | 4   | 37  | 2   | -   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 4   | 12  | 4   | 6   |
| Number of other sites    | 2   | 4   | 14  | 2   | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 4   | 6   | 4   | 6   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 12  | 10  | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 48  | 3   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 163 | 124 | 134 | 65  | 6   | 4   | 9   | 36  | 62  | 118 | 123 | 130 |

**First winter/spring:** the highest counts in this period were 60 at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 2nd, and at least 50 at Fobney Meadow on Feb 2nd, counted when flushed by cattle. Notable sightings elsewhere included 18 at Sulham Wood on Jan 19th, and 12 to 14 feeding in the marsh meadows next to Hambledon Lock, Remenham, on Mar 18th with some on the Thames towpath where walkers had cleared the snow whilst walking. One was on the R. Lambourn behind the Swan Inn at Great Shefford on Feb 7th, and bad weather possibly accounted for another that was flushed on Walbury Hill on Feb 11th.

**Breeding:** a pair were seen copulating at Padworth Lane floods on Apr 8th, but there was no other evidence of breeding. Snipe continue to be recorded in every month of the year but breeding has not been confirmed in Berkshire since the 1987-89 tetrad survey [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

**Autumn/second winter:** the table shows a widespread increase in numbers in August at the identified sites, but the only other sites to report Snipe were Great Meadow Pond and Woolhampton GPs, with singles on several dates, and Greenham Common, where two on Oct 2nd increased to six on Oct 16th. The peak counts were at Dinton Pastures CP, where 44 were seen on a WeBS count on Nov 10th, and at Moor Green Lakes where numbers

gradually increased through the autumn, reaching an impressive 86 on Dec 24th.

## GREY PHALAROPE

### RED PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

*Rare visitor usually after autumn storms (Not Listed)*



*Grey Phalarope, Main Pit, Theale, Sep 23rd, Andy Tomczynski.*

This enigmatic, often storm-driven, vagrant made another welcome visit following the two of 2017. There were three Grey Phalaropes on Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 22nd, with one remaining on 23rd (ABM *et al.*). There have been a few reports in the past of two birds, but this appears to be the first occurrence of three birds at the same site. On Nov 1st a single bird was seen briefly at Dinton Pastures CP, but was flushed by a Black-headed Gull and flew off north (SDa). These four raised the number this century to 13 and increased the numbers of years seen to eight, as shown in the table.

### Grey Phalarope: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year         | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of birds | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | 2    | -    | -    | 1    | 1    |
| Year         | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of birds | -    | 1    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | 2    | 4    |      |

These records constituted the 33rd and 34th records for the county. This century, the earliest record in autumn was Sep 2nd in 2008, while the latest was Nov 15th in 2009.

## COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

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

Common Sandpipers were recorded at 26 sites. The majority of reports came from Queen Mother Reservoir, Lower Farm GP and Moor Green Lakes, accounting for 186, 96 and 37 bird-days respectively.

**Spring:** spring passage started on Apr 7th with one at Queen Mother Reservoir. The highest monthly counts at the main sites are given in the table, which includes an impressive flock of 14 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 27th, present for just one day. Elsewhere there were just 11 reports, mostly of singles, from sites which would normally deliver many sightings in a year, though one on the banks of the R. Kennet in Northcroft Park, Newbury, was notable. The final two birds of the spring were at Fobney Meadow on Jun 13th.

### Common Sandpiper: Monthly Counts by Location

|                    | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dinton Pastures CP | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | 3   | 3   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Fobney Meadow      | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake      | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | 1   | 3   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP      | -   | -   | -   | 14  | 2   | -   | 2   | 3   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | -   | 2   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Padworth Lane GP   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 3   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |

|                          |   |   |   |    |    |   |    |    |    |   |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|----|----|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | - | - | - | 4  | 3  | 1 | 10 | 6  | 8  | 1 | - | - |
| Theale GPs               | - | - | - | 6  | 1  | - | 5  | 2  | 3  | 1 | - | - |
| No. birds at other sites | - | - | - | 9  | 2  | - | 3  | 6  | 7  | - | - | - |
| Number of other sites    | - | - | - | 7  | 2  | - | 3  | 4  | 6  | - | - | - |
| WeBS Count Totals        | - | - | - | 1  | 1  | - | -  | 1  | 1  | 1 | - | - |
| Total birds (minimum)    | - | - | - | 43 | 13 | 3 | 28 | 25 | 25 | 3 | - | - |

**Autumn:** return passage started with one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 25th; then there was an almost continuous presence there until Sep 21st, with peak counts of eight on Sep 1st and ten on Jul 31st. These ten included a flock of seven on the west bank, which was attacked by a juvenile Peregrine, forcing three to ditch in the reservoir. The Peregrine went after the three birds in the water, but all three dived and the Peregrine departed empty-clawed. Sites not identified in the table accounted for just 16 reports in this period, and included three at Fleethill Farm on Aug 13th and one on exposed gravels on the R. Kennet at Eddington on Sep 11th, following a failure of the sluices at Eddington Mill. The final birds of the year were singles at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 13th, Fobney Meadow on Oct 21st and Main Pit, Theale, on Oct 26th.

## GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

*Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)*

Green Sandpipers were encountered at 30 sites: seven in east Berkshire, 11 in mid Berkshire and 12 in west Berkshire. This species was most frequently observed at two sites: Moor Green Lakes on 94 dates; and Lower Farm GP on 104 dates.

The table gives the maximum monthly counts at the sites where most Green Sandpipers were reported; the overall distribution was in good agreement with the pattern described in the Birds of Berkshire Atlas, in which the lowest numbers are found in May ahead of a return passage starting in June, building up to the highest numbers in August and September [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

### Green Sandpiper: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 9   | -   | -   | 3   | -   |
| Eton Wick Floods         | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 5   | 4   | -   | -   | -   |
| Fleethill Farm           | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 11  | 7   | 4   | 4   | 1   | 2   |
| Fobney Meadow            | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | 1   | 3   | -   | 3   | 4   | 2   | 2   | -   |
| Hungerford Marsh         | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | 3   | 2   | 4   | 3   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | 1   | 2   | 4   | 3   | 1   | 1   | 1   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 5   | 7   | 9   | 7   | 2   | 1   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 1   | -   | 3   | 3   | -   | 1   | 3   | 4   | 6   | 4   | 2   | 1   |
| Pingewood GPs            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 8   | 8   | 5   | 1   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 3   | 6   | 5   | 2   | 2   | 7   | 7   | 8   | 8   | 8   | 4   | 1   |
| Number of other sites    | 3   | 5   | 4   | 2   | 2   | 5   | 4   | 6   | 6   | 7   | 4   | 1   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 7   | 8   | 15  | 9   | 4   | 22  | 46  | 65  | 45  | 23  | 14  | 5   |

**First winter/spring:** the data underlying the table shows that Green Sandpipers were reported only sporadically during January and February, but there was a more continuous presence at Lower Farm GP and Moor Green Lakes during March and April. Elsewhere, singles were also reported regularly at Padworth Lane GP and occasionally at Brimpton

GPs. Singles were also reported at: Welford on Feb 12th; Marsh Benham on Feb 16th; and Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 27th, Mar 20th and May 18th. **Autumn:** there was a clear build-up of numbers at Lower Farm GP during June, with one on the early date of Jun 7th, reaching five by Jun 29th. However, it can be difficult to be sure about when autumn passage starts in Berkshire for species such as Green Sandpiper, so a bird at Lower Farm GP on May 29th (the first there for over seven weeks) may well have been the forerunner. The table shows a marked increase in records through July and August at the main sites. Lower Farm GP held up to six most days. The highest counts were: at least 11 at Fleethill Farm on Jul 25th; eight at Burnthouse Lane GP on Jul 28th; nine at Lower Farm GP on Aug 3rd; and nine on Eton Wick floods on Aug 5th. Numbers gradually declined through September and October. Elsewhere, singles were reported at: Brimpton GPs; Freeman's Marsh; Sulhamstead; and on a gravel pit adjacent to Queen Mother Reservoir.

**Second winter:** most November records were of singles, except for two at Fobney Meadow on Nov 4th and at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 10th and 26th, and three at Dorney Wetlands on Nov 18th. Most had departed by December. Wintering birds included singles: at Lea Farm Lake on Dec 5th; at Welford on Dec 13th; at Moor Green Lakes on five dates from Dec 3rd to 30th; and there were two at Fleethill Farm on Dec 29th.

## 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)*

Redshanks were encountered at 12 sites and the table shows the peak monthly counts at the sites where most were reported.

### Redshank: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | 1   | 2   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | -   | 3   | 2   | 4   | 3   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 3   | 2   | 17  | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | 2   | 3   | 3   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 3   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | -   | 3   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | -   | -   | 9   | 11  | 9   | 7   | 7   | 5   | 17  | 1   | -   | -   |

**Spring:** the earliest record was of one at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Mar 10th; this was followed by sightings at nine sites. With the exception of Moor Green Lakes and the Theale area, which are covered later, occurrences at the other sites were infrequent and all involved singles unless stated: Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 24th, Mar 29th and Apr 11th; Lower Farm GP on Apr 13th; Padworth Lane GP on Mar 17th, with two between Apr 8th and 21st, and one between May 7th and 20th; Fobney Meadow on Mar 26th and Apr 27th; Midgham GP on Apr 21st; Lea Farm Lake on Mar 13th and 16th; and Burnthouse Lane GPs on May 17th.

**Breeding:** Redshanks made extended appearances at just two locations this spring: Moor Green Lakes and in the Theale area. After the initial sighting at Hosehill Lake, up to two Redshanks were reported on Main Pit, Theale, on many dates between Mar 17th and Apr 1st. Two were displaying on an island there on Mar 24th, and there were further sightings of two on Apr 13th and then four on Apr 15th. Meanwhile, a Redshank appeared at Hosehill

Lake on Apr 1st and there were two there the next day. There were no further reports from this location until May 27th, when a surprised observer watched an adult with two well-grown but unfledged young on the island. Where had they been hiding in the meantime? The first Redshank appeared at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 11th, and up to four were reported frequently between late March and early June, with three at nearby Fleethill Farm on Jun 19th. Two pairs were in suitable habitat on Tern Island in Colebrook Lake on May 25th and on two occasions birds entered vegetation on the island and appeared to be nest building, but there was no evidence to suggest that successful breeding had occurred.



Redshanks, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 18th, Peter Newbound.

**Autumn:** one was reported on three dates in June at Lower Farm GP, there were two there on Jul 8th, and reports on one or two dates came from Moor Green Lakes, Dorney Wetlands and Theale GPs. However, most sightings were at Queen Mother Reservoir, with singles on nine dates up to Sep 1st, but with two on Aug 9th and three on Jul 23rd. Compared to spring, the autumn passage of Redshanks is much reduced, so a flock of 17 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 17th was particularly remarkable. It appears that the last time that this number was exceeded at any time of the year was when 18 were at the same site in January 1989 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. The year ended with one at Lower Farm GP on Oct 6th.

## WOOD SANDPIPER

*Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

There were no spring records. In the autumn, two records involved two birds. The first was an adult at Fleethill Farm from Jul 23rd to 31st (RCM, JMC). The second was seen on Sep 1st at Lower Farm GP (IW, JL, NC), but it flew off southeast towards the Trout Lake. It was relocated around 2.5 km away at Crookham Common at 12:40 (ABT), but it was flushed by a dog walker and disappeared off high at 13:12.



Wood Sandpiper, Crookham Pools, Sep 1st, Andy Tomczynski.

These records bring the total number of birds this century to 73, with 62% recorded in autumn. The yearly numbers, which average 3.8 per year, are given in the table.

### Sanderling: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 4    | 7    | 3    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 5    | 3    | 3    | 3    |
| No. of birds   | 3-4  | 6-7  | 3    | 3    | 2    | 7    | 6    | 4    | 3    | 4    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 2    | 6    | 1    | 5    | 4    | 1    | 3    | 2    | 2    |      |
| No. of birds   | 3    | 6    | 2    | 5    | 5    | 2    | 3    | 2    | 2    |      |

## SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber Listed)

The only record was of one seen briefly on Aug 12th (MJD, NC, RRK) at Lower Farm GP, before it departed high to the north-west. This raises the total this century to 22; they usually occur singly, though the six in 2001 included a party of three at Lower Farm GP on Sep 24th 2001. Since 2000, spring records have occurred in four years and autumn records in ten.

## GREENSHANK COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

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

A relatively poor year for Greenshanks involving a probable minimum of 24 individuals: seven in spring and 17 in autumn. They were encountered in only eight locations: five in east Berkshire, one in mid Berkshire and two in west Berkshire. At five of these sites (one in east Berkshire), they were seen on only one date. They were most frequently recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir (ten dates, mostly in autumn).

**Spring:** the first for the year was seen on Apr 3rd at Queen Mother Reservoir; the second was on Apr 15th at Lower Farm Trout Lake. In May there were four records: one on May 5th at Lea Farm Lake; one heard briefly at Moor Green Lakes on May 19th; two there on May 25th; and, finally, the last spring bird was at Dorney Wetlands on May 26th.

**Autumn:** early morning on Jul 2nd, one flew to Crookham Common Pools; two on Jul 10th were seen at Moor Green Lakes; and one on Jul 16th was at Queen Mother Reservoir. Numbers increased, as usual, in August: two juveniles stayed at Queen Mother Reservoir from Aug 7th to 9th; on Aug 13th singles were at Eton Wick and at Queen Mother Reservoir, where the bird stayed to the next day; and two more flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 21st. Four more singles were recorded in August at: Moor Green Lakes on Aug 26th; Queen Mother Reservoir next day; heard at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 28th; and, finally, on Aug 31st a juvenile at Horton GPs. The last three of the year were seen at: Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 1st; Horton GPs on Sep 2nd; and Moor Green Lakes on Sep 7th.



Greenshank, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 8th, Andy Tomczynski.

## KITTIWAKE

### BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE

*Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor  
(Red Listed)

An average year for this species with five birds recorded. The only record away from Queen Mother Reservoir was an adult individual at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 14th (RHS) that sat on the water in front of the Colebrook Lake hide. The first of the other records was a first winter at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 31st (ABT). This bird was only present for a few minutes at dawn before it flew off along the reservoir embankment, due south-west. Single birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 9th and 25th (CDRH) were also short stayers or fly throughs. Two adult birds together, thought to be a pair, lingered on the water at Queen Mother Reservoir for about an hour before departing north-east on Jun 4th (CDRH).



*Kittiwake, Moor Green Lakes, Mar 14th, Roger Stansfield.*

### [SABINE'S GULL *Xema sabini*]

Rare vagrant (Not Listed)

**2016 Correction:** This is the sixth year that this species has been recorded. The birds seen in 1987 were not in a single flock, but occurred as at least 14 individuals.

## BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

Still the commonest gull species in the county. The number of records received was 907, predominantly from wetland sites. Flocks of over a 100 were recorded from 135 sites; the highest count was 5,000 at the roost at Main Pit, Theale, on Mar 18th, where the observer also noted a "stunning leucistic bird". All counts over 1,000 were during the winter months. A less obvious location for a count of 1,000 birds was along a half mile stretch of the river front at Windsor on Nov 24th. An interesting observation was of at least 1,000 birds spread over the entire surface of Main Pit, Theale, picking at the surface, presumably at a hatch of aquatic invertebrates, on Mar 19th. This behaviour was also noted by another observer on Mar 23rd when over 700 birds were estimated to be showing this behaviour.

Breeding was noted at three locations. At Lodden NR, Twyford, 15 nests were counted on Apr 16th. At Main Pit, Theale, breeding activity occurred on all three main islands but viewing conditions were not conducive to any accurate counts. There were 150 birds, including at least 100 juveniles, there on Jul 15th. The gull colony on Tern Island and the raft at Moor Green Lakes was the most monitored location. On May 10th 144 nests were counted on Tern Island and six on the tern raft. The first chicks were noted on May 19th. A count of 58 juveniles on Tern Island was made on Jun 12th, but the observer thought that there were probably two to three times that number. However, 80 juveniles were counted on Tern Island on Jun 23rd.

A number of colour-ringed birds were noted. In a few cases the details behind the ring number were traced and these generally pointed to local movements; one such bird, ringed at Pitsea Landfill Site on Mar 10th 2012 by the North Thames Gull Group, returned for its seventh autumn on the River Thames at Datchet, being seen on Sep 16th. However, the BTO reported that amongst the Black-headed Gulls that had travelled the furthest, three

ringed in Berkshire had been observed in Ireland in 2018. Another ringed in Ireland in 2016 was found dead at Hawthorn Hill on Jul 14th, one ringed at Hosehill Lake, Theale, in 2015 had been observed in each following winter at Helston Boating Lake, Cornwall, while another ringed at Hosehill Lake in 2015 turned up at Colmenar Viejo, near Madrid, Spain, on Oct 28th [BTO Ringing].

## LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

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

There were 28 records with a total of 56 birds, an above average tally for recent years, from seven waterbodies. There were two distinct movements in spring. The first started early in mid-March with 15 birds seen between Mar 11th and 18th. The next wave began on Apr 4th, continuing until Apr 8th and comprising about 40 birds. Apr 8th provided the highest counts: ten, all adults in winter plumage except one summer plumage bird, at Searles Farm Lane GP West (ABT); 13 birds in a tight flock that flew straight over Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH); and up to nine birds at Main Pit, Theale (SAG *et al.*).

## MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaeus melanocephalus*

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

The number of records submitted for the year was 123 from 23 locations, comprising at least 53 individual birds. The highest single count was of six birds (four adult and two juvenile) at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 13th (CDRH). A flock of four flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on May 19th (CDRH). Differing plumages meant it could be determined that four birds were present at Queen Mother Reservoir during January. Thereafter, there were nine instances where three birds were seen together at different locations.

During the early months of the year most birds were seen at roosts. Photographs of roosting birds at Moatlands GP showed there were three different individuals on each of three days, Feb 7th, 11th and 19th, in the roosts (ABT).

Of particular interest this year was the progress towards achieving breeding in the county. Following breeding attempts in 2013 and 2015, albeit with Black-headed Gulls, this year saw a pair settle down to breed on the Tern Island at Colebrook Lake, Moor Green Lakes. They were present from Apr 26th to Jun 27th (MO). Interestingly, they were joined by a first summer bird from Apr 29th to May 6th that had been ringed at Lobnitz Gravel Pit, Saxony, Germany. The pair built a nest on the island and were observed sitting throughout May and



*Mediterranean Gull (German ringed), Moor Green Lakes, Apr 29th, Roger Murfitt.*



*Mediterranean Gulls, Moor Green Lakes, May 2nd, Roger Murfitt.*

June; the last report of a sitting bird was on Jun 27th (RCM). The breeding attempt had obviously failed.

Elsewhere, an adult summer plumage bird was observed at Main Pit, Theale, continuously flying above 'Pimple Island' over the Black-headed Gull colony from May 16th (ABT) and was last recorded on Jun 8th (WeBS) on 'Oystercatcher Island' which it also frequented. It was observed displaying to a Black-headed Gull on 'Pimple Island' on May 29th (ABT). Perhaps another adult would have led to a successful breeding attempt? A pair in full summer plumage had been observed nearby on Hosehill Lake on Apr 18th (PD, KEM) and stayed to Apr 19th.

July saw an influx of juvenile birds: two at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 4th (CDRH); one at Lower Farm GP on Jul 13th (MJD); two at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 13th (CDRH); one at Bray GPs on Jul 14th (CDRH); one at Main Pit, Theale, on Jul 15th (WeBS); three at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 20th (CDRH); one at Lower Farm GP on Jul 22nd (MJD); and one at Queen Mother Reservoir from Aug 1st to 4th (CDRH). The next record was not until Nov 4th when one was seen flying over Wraysbury GP (CDRH). Thereafter the same observer recorded four different individuals at Queen Mother Reservoir during December.

**Mediterranean Gull: Monthly Counts by Location**

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bray GPs                 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Horton GPs               | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 2   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 3   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 4   | 2   | 3   | -   | 4   | 1   | 6   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | 2   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Wraysbury GPs            | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | 1   | 3   | 3   | -   | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | 1   | 2   | 3   | -   | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 6   | 9   | 12  | 4   | 10  | 6   | 13  | 1   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   |

**COMMON GULL MEW GULL *Larus canus***

*Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

There were 211 records submitted from 52 locations. Eight sites provided counts of 100 or more; 42 sites had counts of ten to 100, and 161 sites had counts less than ten. Of the counts of over a 100 or more, five were at Great Meadow Pond and one at Windsor Great Park.

Following the pattern of past years, the highest counts were in the winter months November to March. The highest count of all was of 1,250 birds feeding in pastures by Great Meadow Pond on Jan 28th. This site also had the highest count at the end of the year, with 600 on Dec 30th. The only record exceeding 100 away from the east of the county was 500 at Main Pit, Theale, on Mar 18th, (WeBS). The highest single count in the period April to September was six. There was only one record for each of May and June. From July to October, each record was generally of one or two birds.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus***

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

There were 35 records submitted from 14 locations which were distributed across the county. Eighty percent of the records were of single birds. There were no records in the months of April, May or July. The highest count was of 13 birds at Knowl Hill landfill on Jan 1st. Six were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 16th and five on Nov 6th. Numbers have declined significantly compared to the counts in treble figures of this species recorded in the first decade of the 21st century [Berkshire Atlas 2013], presumably due to the closure of landfill sites.

**Great Black-backed Gull: Monthly Counts by Location**

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Knowl Hill Landfill      | 13  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 2   | 6   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 1   | 5   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 2   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 2   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 18  | 7   | 3   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | 1   | 4   | 3   | 7   | 3   |

**GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus***

*Rare but annual winter visitor*

The only record was of a first winter seen to fly in from the north-east over Queen Mother Reservoir before turning south-east towards Wraysbury Reservoir on Jan 19th (CDRH). A first winter bird was present in the Knowl Hill area in December 2017 and may have been the same bird seen in January 2018.

**ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides***

*Rare winter visitor (Amber Listed)*

Two birds were seen early in the year. The first was a second winter bird seen very briefly in a Tilehurst garden on Feb 8th (RCr) which was attracted to the observer's back lawn where Black-headed Gulls were feeding on bread. The bird was seen on the ground at relatively close range, and in flight. The second was an adult seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 11th (CDRH). This bird was present for ten minutes after flying in from the south-south-east, with other gulls, before settling on the water. It bathed vigorously, then circled the south end of the reservoir before flying off alone north-north-east.

**HERRING GULL EUROPEAN HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus***

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

There were 221 records from 48 locations. Most counts (58%) were of one or two birds. Only three counts exceeded 100. The highest was 135 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 3rd, presumably non-breeding sub-adults. A 100 were also counted at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 27th and 110 birds were recorded on Colebrook Lake North at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 25th. These two sites accounted for most of the counts between ten and

100 during the year. Generally, the highest counts at Queen Mother Reservoir occurred from June through to January and at Moor Green Lakes from September to December.

It is interesting to note that 60 birds were counted at Moatlands GP on Feb 8th. This was the only count for this site, with most birds arriving very late in the day at dusk. More roost counts would probably increase the count sizes recorded in the year.

The only proven breeding was an adult pair with a juvenile seen at nest on an old chimney stack at the old Carmelite Monastery in Reading on Jun 29th and Jul 7th. Two adults with two juveniles were seen at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 8th and were possibly local birds. Two juveniles were seen at New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on Aug 30th. A single juvenile was seen on Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 9th.

### **HERRING GULL (*ARGENTATUS*)** *Larus argentatus argentatus*

#### **EUROPEAN HERRING GULL (*ARGENTATUS*)**

Birds of this race were noted at Queen Mother Reservoir on the north bank on three occasions. The first was a single bird on Aug 16th, then two birds on Aug 18th, followed by three birds on Sep 1st.

### **CASPIAN GULL** *Larus cachinnans*

*Scarce autumn/winter visitor (Not Listed)*

There were 22 records from three locations with over 90% of the records from Queen Mother Reservoir! Ageing and identifying specific plumage details provides the opportunity to determine the number of individuals of this species. There were about 13 individuals recognised in the county during the year.

The first of the year, a first winter, was at Horton GP on Jan 7th (CDRH). This was followed a few days later on Jan 11th by a different first winter bird, the first to be seen at Queen Mother Reservoir for the year (CDRH).

The only bird seen away from the east of the county was an adult at Lower Farm GP on Feb 1st (KEM per ABM). It was seen again by others on Feb 3rd and photographed. Thereafter all further records came from Queen Mother Reservoir. Two first winter birds were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 8th, 17th, 22nd and 27th (CDRH). There was one further late winter record, a second winter, on Mar 15th (CDRH). Two first summer birds were seen together at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 27th (CDRH). One of these birds was seen at the same location on Jun 3rd (CDRH) and again on Jul 7th and 9th (CDRH). This is significant as it would be the first confirmed summering in the county, as opposed to previous summer sightings which related to isolated sightings or birds that mostly summered outside the county boundary, e.g. the third calendar year bird in the Queen Mother Reservoir/Runnymede/Windsor Great Park area in August 2006.

The first juvenile of the year at Queen Mother Reservoir was on Sep 17th (CDRH). Thereafter several first winter birds were seen during October, none in November, and the last on Dec 1st (CDRH). The only November bird was a second winter with a yellow ring, presumed to be of German origin, seen on Nov 6th (CDRH).

### **YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** *Larus michahellis*

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

A total of 103 records were received from 13 locations, occurring in every month of the year, although most were between mid-summer and the winter months. Over half, 60%, of the records were of single birds. The peak period was from mid-July until early September, with

the highest counts being 16 on Jul 29th and 15 on Aug 10th, both at Horton Brooks Quarry, adjacent to Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH). Most, 88%, counts of more than two birds occurred in the Queen Mother Reservoir/Horton Quarry/Horton area.

#### **Yellow-legged Gull: Monthly Counts by Location**

|                                     | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Colnbrook                           | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 12  | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 16  | 15  | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP                       | 3   | 5   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 2   |
| Moatlands GPs                       | 3   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes                    | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir              | -   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 9   | 13  | 8   | 2   | 2   | 1   |
| Theale GPs                          | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| Wraysbury GPs                       | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites            | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 3   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites               | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals                   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)               | 10  | 10  | 4   | 1   | 3   | 3   | 30  | 40  | 11  | 7   | 6   | 4   |

### **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*

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

There were 513 records from 50 locations. As the species is predominantly a winter visitor, most significant counts occurred from late August to March. Most, 80%, of the records were counts of fewer than ten. Counts of between ten to 100 accounted for 16% of the records and 100 to 1,000 for just 4% of records. The highest count of the year was 8,000 at the Lower Farm GP winter roost on Jan 3rd. There were 1,000 birds near Welford village on Feb 3rd. The only other count of 1,000 was at Bury Down, West Ilsley, on a field being ploughed on Aug 30th, presumably either a flock of birds returning from their breeding areas or migrants moving south. Counts greater than ten and most records were predominantly from west Berkshire, although Moor Green Lakes in the south-east of the county was a roost site; the highest count there was 520 at roost on Oct 25th.

#### **Lesser Black-backed Gull: Monthly Counts by Location**

|                          | Jan   | Feb   | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug   | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -     | 1     | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | -     | -   | -   | 21  | 5   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | -     | -     | -   | -   | 3   | 1   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -     | 1     | 4   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 3     | -   | -   | -   | 1   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 8,000 | 250   | 26  | 8   | 8   | 10  | 10  | 12    | 77  | 18  | 250 | 210 |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 28    | 1     | 1   | -   | 2   | 2   | 5   | 82    | 106 | 520 | 2   | 7   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 7     | 2     | 20  | 4   | 5   | 10  | 30  | 55    | 10  | 5   | -   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 4     | 2     | 2   | 2   | 5   | 3   | 3   | 2     | 2   | 7   | 2   | 1   |
| Theale GPs               | 1     | -     | 250 | 2   | 3   | 10  | 5   | 12    | 30  | 2   | 46  | 1   |
| Twyford GPs              | -     | -     | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | 30  | -   | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 6     | 1     | 2   | -   | 4   | 1   | 2   | -     | 1   | -   | 1   | 10  |
| No. birds at other sites | 697   | 1,417 | 23  | 38  | 9   | 17  | 23  | 1,007 | 520 | 398 | 57  | 131 |
| Number of other sites    | 18    | 11    | 6   | 6   | 6   | 8   | 8   | 5     | 8   | 7   | 5   | 11  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 2     | 3     | 255 | 6   | 3   | 10  | 5   | 13    | 30  | 2   | -   | 2   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 8,743 | 1,675 | 333 | 54  | 40  | 56  | 79  | 1,173 | 776 | 950 | 379 | 366 |

During the summer months, nest sites were observed at two locations. In June, a pair was



seen circling low in Green Park, Reading, with one of the pair initially calling from the flat roof of one of the lakeside buildings. This was followed by a juvenile seen begging food from an adult at the same location on Jul 19th. The other location was at Queen Mother Reservoir where two pairs were seen nesting, one on the Central Tower and the other on the northern 'Lim' Tower. On Jul 7th, one nest was seen to have three chicks and the other two chicks. Less direct breeding evidence was provided by the observation of six adults at Fobney Meadow, Reading, on Apr 27th, with three birds seen carrying off nesting material, presumably to locations in central Reading. At Lea Farm Lake, an adult with two begging juveniles was observed on Aug 14th. Lastly at Moor Green Lakes, two adults with a juvenile were seen on the East Fen on Aug 7th.

An adult with a Darvic ring recorded at Lower Farm GP on Feb 3rd was ringed as a chick at the Port of Felixstowe, Suffolk, on Jul 14th 2011. It had been seen at Gafanha da Nazare, Aveiro, Portugal, on Nov 15th 2011, and then at various locations in Suffolk during 2014 and 2015 [ABT pers. comm.].

## SANDWICH TERN

*Thalasseus sandvicensis*

*Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

Twenty-one records were submitted comprising a total of 27 birds seen on 14 dates. All spring records were from Queen Mother Reservoir, with the first, a summer plumage bird, on Mar 17th (CDRH). This was followed by three on Mar 31st, two on Apr 4th and one on Apr 6th (all CDRH). A single bird on Apr 8th lingered until the following day (CDRH, ABT). A single bird was heard calling, but was not seen, as it flew north over the sailing club in misty conditions on Apr 15th (ABT). Two birds were seen on Apr 22nd (CDRH), and three were present briefly on May 25th sat on a buoy (CDRH, BTB, DJB). Another two birds, the last spring birds, were also seen sat on a buoy in the morning of Jun 1st (CDRH), before departing at 13:00.

The first returning bird was again at Queen Mother Reservoir with a single circling over the car park before gaining considerable height and moving off east on Jul 10th (CDRH). A winter plumage bird was present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 18th (CDRH). Another single bird, also seen on Sep 18th (HRN, RHS, NC), was at Main Pit, Theale, sat on a buoy for some time; this was the only record away from Queen Mother Reservoir during the year. A party of seven (five adults and two juveniles) were present from at least 07:00 until 10:26 on Sep 23rd (CDRH), when a group of five gained height and flew off; the other two (adult and juvenile) remained all day. The last record of the year was of a first winter, present for 15 minutes at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 7th (CDRH).

## COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

There were 439 records submitted, from 48 locations. The first birds of the year were a single at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH) and another single at Main Pit, Theale (MO), both on Mar 31st. The last record of the year was on Oct 13th at Moor Green Lakes (RCM). The largest flock observed was 55 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 29th where they were seen to fly south-west. Peak monthly counts at selected sites are given in the table.



*Sandwich Tern, Queen Mother Reservoir, Apr 9th, Andy Tomczynski.*

## Common Tern: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bray GPs                 | -   | -   | -   | 4   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 6   | 27  | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Dorney Wetlands          | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 29  | 14  | -   | 1   | 6   | -   | -   | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | 4   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | -   | -   | 3   | 10  | -   | 30  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Lower Farm GP            | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 6   | 10  | 6   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 7   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 18  | 13  | 7   | 1   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Padworth Lane GP         | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | -   | -   | 1   | 11  | 20  | 38  | 36  | 55  | 3   | -   | -   | -   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | -   | -   | -   | 5   | 4   | 3   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Theale GPs               | -   | -   | 1   | 10  | 6   | 15  | 18  | 10  | 1   | 1   | -   | -   |
| Twyford GPs              | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 4   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | 5   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | -   | -   | 14  | 58  | 11  | 18  | 7   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 17  | 9   | 11  | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| WeBS Count Totals        | -   | -   | -   | -   | 9   | 18  | 22  | 6   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | -   | -   | 2   | 63  | 169 | 144 | 142 | 84  | 12  | 2   | -   | -   |

Information provided on breeding activity was patchy. Breeding activity was observed from at least eight sites. At Hosehill Lake, Theale, there were two pairs and up to five chicks on Jun 17th. At Lea Farm Lake, 30 birds were present on Jul 9th but no data was received on breeding success. At Lower Farm GP, Thatcham, two fledged chicks were seen on Jun 30th.

At Moor Green Lakes 18 birds were on Tern Island with five to six nests on May 27th but there was competition for space from Black-headed Gulls, and by Jun 9th it was clear that the terns had been evicted [MGLG 2018]. At Queen Mother Reservoir, a pair laid two eggs on a pontoon that was being actively used by sailors; this failed, but a second attempt was successful, with two chicks seen on Jul 22nd and then three chicks on Jul 31st. Two or three pairs attempted to breed on the roof of the pier tower but failed, presumably predated. At Rowney Predator Lake, Woolhampton GPs, three chicks were seen on the raft on Jun 8th, then three juveniles were seen on the wing on Jul 6th. At Main Pit, Theale, seven juveniles were noted on Jul 15th with nine adults.

The negative pressures of human activities on the breeding attempts were clearly exhibited at Summerleaze GPs. On Jun 2nd it was noted that no terns were present on the previous year's breeding island because people were fishing from the island. However, on May 24th a colony of 20-30 birds were holding territory on the central island, but there were none on May 25th due to an angler's tent and rods in the middle of their nesting site!

A second summer bird was present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 17th, also being seen on Jul 19th (CDRH).

A number of reports involved ringed birds, including the following: a bird seen at Dorney Wetlands on May 25th was identified as being originally ringed by the Runnymede Ringing Group as a nestling at Bedfont Lakes, Greater London, on Jul 15th 2005; another at Dorney Wetlands on May 27th was identified as being originally ringed as a nestling at Spade Oak GP, Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire, on Jun 27th 2005 by the Hughenden Ringing Group; and a bird ringed at Thatcham Marsh on Jul 2nd 2005 was found dead at Brandon Marsh,

Warwickshire, on May 29th. These three birds were all in their 13th year, still far short of the longevity record of 33 years for this species [BTO Ringing].

### **ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

*Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

A fairly poor year for this species with only 27 birds seen at four locations on eight dates. There was only one autumn record.

The first of the year was a single bird on a raft at Queen Mother Reservoir with Common Terns on Apr 8th (CDRH). Two were at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 13th (HRN, ABM). A single bird was present for five minutes at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 28th (CDRH).

The peak passage of the year was on Apr 29th with seven birds at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, (BTB) and six at Wraysbury GP (CDRH). Seven birds passed through Queen Mother Reservoir on May 2nd (CDRH) over a three-hour period. Singles were seen on May 5th and 22nd at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH).

The only autumn record was a first summer type associating with four Common Terns at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 29th (CDRH).

### **BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger*

*Uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

Thirty-seven records were submitted from seven locations. Birds were seen on only nine dates during the year, with the 85 seen in the spring being the highest count since 2000, whereas the count in autumn was low, with only five reported.

The first record was of three birds at Padworth GP on May 20th (RJB), which appeared to move east to Main Pit, Theale, (MO). The following day saw the peak passage day of the spring. A flock of 27 birds was present in the morning at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 21st (CDRH) when they moved off across the county boundary to Wraysbury Reservoir. Also on May 21st, a flock of 12 was seen at Main Pit, Theale, at 11:30 (RCW *et al.*) which subsequently rose to a total of 40 birds by mid-afternoon. Lastly a single bird was at Lower Farm GP late afternoon on May 21st (DJB).

On May 24th a single was present at Woolhampton GP (MFW), three at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH) and a single at Wraysbury GP (CDRH). On May 27th, three birds were at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH), two birds at Main Pit (RCr) and two birds at Lea Farm Lake (ABT). The last spring birds were two that made a brief visit to Moor Green Lakes on Jun 26th (RFM).



*Black Tern, Lea Farm Lake, May 27th, Andy Tomczynski.*

The first returning birds were two juveniles at Main Pit on Aug 24th (KEM, ABM, ABT). On Sep 1st, two adults were at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH). Lastly a juvenile bird was present at Lower Farm GP from Sep 10th to 12th (NC, PEH). An interesting anecdote was provided by the observer: "At one point, a male Sparrowhawk flying high over the pit suddenly dived down after the tern causing it to take extreme evasive action by diving into the water. This appeared to be a bad move as the hawk nearly got it but it was saved by a "gang" of Black-headed Gulls that flew across and chased the hawk off".

### **GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua*

*Rare vagrant (Amber Listed)*

The single record of the year was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 22nd (CDRH). It was aged as an adult. It flew in from the east at 07:45, circled the west end and then settled on the water in the centre of the reservoir, where it remained inactive for some time before flying off high south-east at 10:05. This was the 12th record for Berkshire and the first since 2014.

### **ARCTIC SKUA PARASITIC JAEGER**

*Stercorarius parasiticus*

*Rare passage migrant (Red Listed)*

The only record was of two birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 9th (ABT). They were found at 06:25 sat in the middle of the reservoir in rainy and very overcast weather. One was a pale-phase bird, the other was dark-phase. They left the water several times, flying around and landing back on the water. The observer noted both birds were very agile and buoyant in flight, and saw one of the birds flying up and 'hanging' in the air like a Woodpigeon does when displaying. It was thought that the skuas were possibly a pair showing some display behaviours. The observer was distracted by a Sandwich Tern, which was photographed at 07:18, by which time the skuas were gone.



*Arctic Skua, Queen Mother Reservoir, Apr 9th, Andy Tomczynski.*

### **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER COMMON LOON** *Gavia immer*

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

In comparison with recent years, 2018 was a good year with three birds reported. **First winter:** a first winter was found at Woolhampton GPs on Jan 17th and remained there until Feb 3rd, favouring Oxlease Lake (GEW *et al.*). It was seen to feed on crayfish on a few occasions, including one so large that the bird had trouble swallowing it. **Spring:** a bird in full summer plumage circled Queen Mother Reservoir at 05:30 on May 10th before heading off north five



*Great Northern Diver, Beale Park, Dec 24th, Andy Tomczynski.*

minutes later (CDRH). It was thought that this was the same bird that had wintered nearby at King George VI Reservoir and was departing for the summer. Recent years have seen more occurrences in May in line with the tendency for their wintering stays in the county to start earlier and finish later [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. **Second winter:** a juvenile was first reported at the fishing lake at Beale Park on Dec 22nd (NJB *et al.*), though it had possibly been present for a week previously. The bird continued to be reported well into 2019.

## WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

*Rare vagrant, some records are of known escapes*

A single report was received, of two birds flying over Binfield on Jun 28th (S Bell).

## GANNET NORTHERN GANNET *Morus bassanus*

*Rare but increasing visitor (Amber Listed)*

A juvenile was watched from Queen Mother Reservoir flying north-west over Langley at 09:46 on Sep 24th, probably flying over Buckinghamshire as it disappeared into the distance (CDRH). Then 30 minutes later, two more juveniles were seen to arrive from the east, fly around the reservoir and plunge-dive, albeit without success. One departed in a west-north-west direction at 10:30 and the other flew off north at 10:38 (CDRH). On the same day, Gannets were also reported flying inland over Essex and North London.

## CORMORANT GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

Monthly maximum counts of Cormorant at their favoured sites are given in the table.

### Cormorant: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep   | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Aldermaston GPs          | 10  | 10  | 12  | 11  | 12  | 17  | 5   | 7   | 3     | 3   | 1   | -   |
| Bray GPs                 | 17  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -   |
| Burghfield GPs           | 16  | 15  | 18  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 11    | 11  | 26  | 72  |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 31  | 21  | 7   | 4   | 5   | 2   | 5   | -   | 11    | 10  | 11  | 11  |
| Dorney Wetlands          | 9   | -   | -   | 7   | 2   | -   | -   | 5   | 1     | 13  | 16  | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 8   | 6   | 4   | 5   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 6   | 12    | 13  | 31  | 31  |
| Horton GPs               | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -   |
| Lea Farm Lake            | -   | 17  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 4     | 12  | 2   | 1   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 17  | 26  | 26  | 28  | 34  | 23  | 20  | 71  | 71    | 37  | 30  | 40  |
| Moatlands GPs            | -   | 2   | 1   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | -   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 74  | 70  | 33  | 16  | 15  | 10  | -   | 25  | 12    | 29  | 58  | 22  |
| Padworth Lane GP         | 10  | 3   | 7   | 4   | 6   | 6   | -   | -   | -     | -   | 5   | 3   |
| Queen Mother Reservoir   | 3   | 4   | 3   | 4   | 6   | 11  | 230 | 700 | 900   | 29  | -   | 1   |
| Thatcham Marsh           | 7   | 7   | 7   | 7   | 15  | 8   | 4   | 1   | 5     | 13  | 10  | 13  |
| Theale GPs               | 7   | 3   | 9   | 2   | -   | 5   | 23  | 90  | 205   | 70  | 120 | 50  |
| Twyford GPs              | 25  | 21  | 11  | 17  | 4   | 1   | 5   | -   | 3     | 11  | 43  | 58  |
| Woolhampton GPs          | 9   | 14  | 8   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 6   | 37  | 14    | 4   | 8   | 18  |
| Wraysbury GPs            | 18  | 3   | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -     | -   | -   | 15  |
| No. birds at other sites | 62  | 22  | 26  | 44  | 17  | 25  | 15  | 13  | 35    | 64  | 88  | 74  |
| Number of other sites    | 17  | 15  | 13  | 13  | 12  | 12  | 5   | 7   | 8     | 8   | 15  | 15  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 135 | 91  | 68  | 24  | 24  | 20  | 20  | 82  | 881   | 182 | 233 | 215 |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 329 | 244 | 175 | 150 | 122 | 112 | 315 | 955 | 1,287 | 319 | 449 | 409 |

The highest count, an impressive 900 plus, occurred at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 13th. Successful breeding was noted at four sites with a minimum total of 41 nests observed. A bird that was ringed as a nestling in Antwerpen, Belgium, in 2012, and which had been seen at Moor Green Lakes in 2012 and 2014, was reported there again on Jan 31st [BTO Ringing].

## BITTERN EURASIAN BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

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

This was another poor year for Bittern with just three or four birds reported and none remaining for an extended stay. **First winter:** a single bird was present in the reedbed at White Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, from Jan 1st to 6th, and a Bittern was also reported at Lavell's Lake from Feb 9th to 11th (RD). **Autumn:** a Bittern that was seen at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 2nd and 8th (DJB) was the observer's earliest autumn record for the site. **Second winter:** the only report from this period was of one in flight at dusk at Hosehill Lake on Dec 21st.

## CATTLE EGRET WESTERN CATTLE EGRET

*Bubulcus ibis*

*Rare vagrant*

In recent years, Cattle Egrets have been recorded almost annually with one or two birds typically making short appearances, but 2018 saw a marked increase with a total of nine birds present and some making more extended stays. The first was an adult at Hosehill Lake from Sep 8th to 16th (KEM *et al.*). At Lower Farm GP, two appeared to emerge from roost in the willows on Sep 16th (NC *et al.*), and thereafter variable numbers were reported until Sep 23rd. The maximum count there occurred on Sep 18th when a flock of seven flew in from the east, their bill colours indicated six adults and one immature (NC, IW). This was the largest flock ever reported in Berkshire. Five were present on Sep 19th (NC) and an immature was seen on Sep 23rd (NC). Finally, a Cattle Egret was found at Fobney Meadow on Oct 18th (AVL *et al.*). It associated with cattle in the field west of the Matalan car park until Nov 5th, but the next day the cattle had been removed and the bird was not subsequently seen.



*Cattle Egret, Hosehill Lake, Sep 15th, John Absolom.*

## GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

*Locally common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)*

Grey Herons continue to be widely distributed across the county and maximum numbers recorded each month are presented in the table.

### Grey Heron: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Burghfield GPs           | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 6   | 6   | 6   |
| Dinton Pastures CP       | 4   | 4   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 3   | -   | 3   | 1   | 1   | 3   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 4   | 6   | 5   | 3   | 3   | 3   |
| Lower Farm GP            | 5   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 4   | 12  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 6   | 2   | 1   |
| Moor Green Lakes         | 2   | 2   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 2   | -   | 4   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 4   |
| Twyford GPs              | 13  | 20  | 12  | 16  | 9   | 1   | 4   | 2   | 4   | 8   | 9   | 11  |
| No. birds at other sites | 47  | 34  | 43  | 50  | 52  | 55  | 43  | 58  | 63  | 52  | 39  | 35  |
| Number of other sites    | 25  | 19  | 19  | 26  | 26  | 21  | 16  | 19  | 21  | 18  | 19  | 14  |
| WeBS Count Totals        | 37  | 24  | 12  | 24  | 20  | 16  | 9   | 12  | 39  | 35  | 29  | 34  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 73  | 65  | 65  | 78  | 71  | 74  | 70  | 87  | 102 | 79  | 62  | 63  |

As usual, Grey Herons were not well reported during the breeding season. Nesting was recorded at five locations: Aldermaston GPs (two nests, four young); Donnington Grove (at least four adults in the heronry, but nesting had moved to the Yew trees with only one nest visible); Queen Mother Reservoir (four occupied nests but three were abandoned); Theale GPs (at least four nests and four juveniles); and Twyford GPs (15 occupied nests and some fledged young seen). Juveniles observed at Moor Green Lakes and at Whitchurch Lock had actually been raised in nests just across the county boundaries.

## GREAT WHITE EGRET GREAT EGRET *Ardea alba*

*Rare but increasing vagrant*

This species is becoming a more regular sight in the county. In 2018 there were 90 records but just four came from the west of the county. There were two long-staying birds but the remaining reports mostly concerned single day occurrences so it is hard to estimate the numbers of birds involved without understanding their movements between sites. **First winter:** there was just one report, a single bird at Field Farm Landfill on Jan 18th (RHS, KEM). **Spring/summer:** there was a flurry of records in April, all of single birds: near Hungerford on Apr 1st (ABT, J Monkhouse); Padworth Lane Floods on Apr 8th and 12th (KEM, IW); Bottom Lane Floods on Apr 9th (ABT); Dinton Pastures CP on Apr 9th (MFW); flying east over Langley on Apr 17th (ABT); and Lea Farm Lake on Apr 21st (BTB). One flew north over Greenham Common on Jun 7th (AEDH). **Autumn:** a Great White Egret was present almost continuously at Hosehill Lake from Aug 25th to Sep 24th (LBM *et al.*) with occasional appearances at Main Pit, Theale, and Bottom Lane GPs; from Sep 22nd to 24th two birds were present. The only other reports in this period intriguingly refer to birds seen at disparate locations on the same or similar dates: one flew south-west over British Airways Pit, Wraybury GPs, on Sep 1st (CL); three landed briefly at Dorney Wetlands before heading off south-west, also on Sep 1st (DAC); two were at Wigmore Lane GP on Oct 10th (C Painter); and three flew through at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 11th (CDRH), perhaps the same as the group of three in September. Then a single flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 28th and another was at Lavell's Lake on Oct 29th (RCW, R Sajdak). Indeed, this is the first time that as many as three have been recorded together in Berkshire. **Second winter:** the next report was of a bird that flew off from Padworth Lane GP on Nov 6th (KEM). A bird found at Fleethill Farm on Nov 10th made occasional



*Great White Egret, Hosehill Lake, Sep 1st, Marek Walford.*

appearances there and at the various lakes in the Moor Green Lakes complex until Dec 29th (JMC *et al.*). Finally, one was reported at Moatlands GPs on Dec 7th (ABT).

## LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

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

Little Egrets are becoming an increasingly familiar sight in Berkshire. Records were received from 80 locations and several observers noted record counts at their local sites. Double figure counts were made at three locations: at Fleethill Farm 11 were seen on Jul 25th; at Lower Farm GP up to 17 were present between Jul 13th and 25th, and up to 15 occurred there between Aug 31st and Sep 19th; while at Hosehill Lake there were usually 12 to 15 present from Aug 17th to Oct 22nd, but peaking at 27 on Oct 11th. **Breeding:** a pair nested at a site in east Berkshire and four fledged young were observed on Jul 15th. A nest that was watched at a site in mid Berkshire contained two scruffy, well-grown yet unfledged chicks on Jul 3rd. No information was received on breeding at other sites where Little Egrets had nested in recent years.

It was discovered that a colour-ringed Little Egret observed near Theale on Sep 1st was ringed as a nestling in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, in June 2018 [BTO Ringing].

## OSPREY WESTERN OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

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

A poor showing this year with only three records. The first flew north-west high over Lower Farm GP on Apr 7th (IW, JL, NC). The only other spring record was of one circling, drifting west over the Kennet Valley at Brimpton on May 14th (AEDH). The only autumn record was of a juvenile that flew low between Main Pit, Theale, and Hosehill Lake on Aug 27th (RJB).

## **HONEY-BUZZARD EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

*Rare summer migrant*

There was a report of a pale-phase male bird at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire on Jul 18th; the same bird was seen again in the same area on Aug 5th (JMC).

## **SPARROWHAWK EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

*Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)*

As usual, Sparrowhawks were well recorded from across the county with 350 reports, slightly down on last year, following the general trend for this species over the last ten years or so. There did not seem to be any geographical bias, with records seemingly spread across the county. Interestingly, given the number of assaults on garden feeders, the most popular prey species were Starling, Collared Dove, Woodpigeon and Blackbird rather than tits and finches. At Fobney Meadow on Feb 11th, a Sparrowhawk was actively hunting Snipe by stooping over the marsh and spooking them, with three failed attempts in twenty minutes. Successful nests were noted at Hermitage, Sandhurst and Hungerford, though as usual the species is significantly under-reported from a breeding point of view.

## **GOSHAWK NORTHERN GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*

*Rare visitor*

A pair fledged two young at a private site in the west of the county, as described in the article on page 8. Though now well-established in Hampshire, this is the first confirmed successful breeding of this species in Berkshire. Elsewhere an adult female was watched at an undisclosed site in west Berkshire on Dec 14th (CDRH).

## **MARSH HARRIER WESTERN MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus*

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

Only three records were received which represented a very poor year, the worst for some time and at odds with the national picture. The first, a male, flew through the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 3rd (RCM). The second record was of a female or immature at Datchet, which flew in from the west and carried on in the direction of Staines Moor on Apr 2nd (CDRH). The final record was of another female-type which flew low south-east through Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 2nd (CDRH).

## **HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

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

This was a fairly sparse year following a few years of regularly seen wintering birds. The records, all of ringtails, were as follows: the first was watched hunting at East Garston Down on Jan 7th (ABT); the next at Combe, was disturbed from a field and flew away over Combe Wood on Mar 6th (PNe); one was seen being chased briefly by a Short-eared Owl at Lambourn on Dec 4th (CDRH); and the next was at Eastbury Down, Sheepdrove, on Dec 13th (IW). This last bird may well have been in the area for a while as a description of a harrier species was submitted by a non-birder from the same area on Oct 22nd (per MFW).

## **RED KITE** *Milvus milvus*

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

This year saw in excess of 1,300 reports of Red Kites, with only 23 days when they were not recorded. This year also saw what was probably the largest recorded number at a single site

in Berkshire, with a count of at least 160 in trees at Aston on Nov 22nd. There were several other reports of large gatherings, either soaring or following farm equipment. The other counts in excess of 20 were as follows: a minimum of 82 at Jouldings Farm, Farley Hill, on Jan 10th; 42 at Hyde Farm, Bisham, on Apr 23rd; 30 at Woodlands Park Fields on Jun 5th; 27 at Englefield on Feb 21st; at least 25 at Tilehurst on Jun 11th; 25 in Windsor Great Park on Nov 21st; 24 at Streatley on Oct 21st; 22 over Maidenhead on May 20th; 22 over Woodley on May 25th; and 20 over Finchampstead on Mar 4th. A Red Kite appeared to take a fish at Moor Green Lakes on May 21st.

Reports of breeding were typically few, with nesting observed at five sites and probably occurring at another two. Since 2010, Red Kite numbers have increased by around fourfold [BBI 2018], in line with the national trend and the popular impression that the species is continuing to spread and multiply across central southern England.

## **BUZZARD COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

*Common and widespread resident and passage migrant (Green Listed)*

Buzzard numbers seemed to be relatively stable following a steady increase over the last 30 years, at the beginning of which the species was an uncommon passage migrant. After Red Kite, it was easily the next most recorded raptor species in the county with around 800 reports. Most of the reports were of singles and doubles, and although there were a few double figure counts, they were nothing like as gregarious as Red Kites. The largest counts were as follows: 20 at Hermitage on Mar 7th; 15 at Englefield on Jan 1st; and ten at Great Meadow Pond on Dec 9th. Birds were seen across the county, but there was a slight westerly bias with two thirds of the reports coming from west of Reading. There were just nine reports of breeding pairs, though regular surveying showed that Buzzard numbers, which increased rapidly between 2000 and 2010, have changed little since 2010 [BBI 25yr].

## **BARN OWL WESTERN BARN OWL** *Tyto alba*

*Uncommon but widespread resident (Schedule One and Green Listed)*

This species was reported during every month in the year, with 114 reports in addition to the information from the Kennet and Pang Valley Barn Owl Group (KPVBOG) and the Bisham Barn Owl Group. This was slightly up on 2017. Undoubtedly some of the birds in these additional reports were from sites monitored by those groups. The first sighting of the year came on Jan 1st at Lavell's Lake when a single bird was seen. Casual sightings of one or two birds continued throughout the year from all parts of the county, with some observers lucky enough to see hunting activity. The severe weather conditions at the end of February (the "Beast from the East") had an impact on breeding seen by both Barn Owl groups. In west Berkshire, it was a late season with breeding two to three weeks later than usual which meant little chance of any second broods, and indeed none were recorded. In spite of this, it was a good year with an estimated 107 chicks fledged. See the table for comparisons with KPVBOG figures for previous years.

### **Barn Owl: Breeding Success in Recent Years (West Berkshire)**

| Year               | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Number of boxes    | 91   | 111  | 123  | 119  | 125  | 136  | 174  | 188  | 187  |
| Successful boxes   | 10   | 18   | 27   | 0    | 45   | 15   | 39   | 40   | 41   |
| Chicks fledged     | 29   | 54   | 72   | 0    | 173  | 31   | 100  | 114  | 107  |
| Average brood size | 2.9  | 3    | 2.7  | 0    | 3.8  | 2    | 2.5  | 2.8  | 2.61 |

It was a similar picture with the Bisham Group where 24 boxes were found to be occupied.

This was the fewest of the last four years, perhaps due to higher than normal adult mortality during the snowy weather. Breeding was attempted at 18 boxes, of which 14 successfully fledged a total of 34 chicks. The average number of chicks fledged per successful nest was 2.4. The final sighting of the year was of a single bird in the Lambourn area on Dec 30th. There were no noteworthy ringing recoveries this year. Three birds were reported in the west of the county having been hit by road vehicles. None had travelled a significant distance from the ringing site. Two were sadly dead but the third was alive and taken into care by the Hawk and Owl Trust at Andover. It made a full recovery and was released close to where it had been found.

### TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

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

As it is almost completely nocturnal, this species is more often heard than seen. There were 160 reports during the year. These were from all areas of the county and in all months with the first record on Jan 1st. The majority of reports were of one or two birds calling, though three birds calling were reported from the Brimpton, Bucklebury Common, Windsor Great Park and Maidenhead areas. One of the few visual reports came on Aug 22nd of an individual sitting in the middle of the road near Aldermaston, causing the recorder to take evasive action to avoid hitting it. Confirmed breeding came from two sites: young were seen branching on Apr 5th and then fledged on Apr 24th at a site in Reading; and a juvenile was found in a Barn Owl box on private land near Peasmore on Jun 1st. The final record of the year of two birds performing a duet came on Dec 31st from Tilehurst.

### LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

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

This species continued to struggle. Reports were received from a total of 25 sites across the county and in every month of the year, which was significantly down on the 37 sites in 2017. Monthly counts are given in the table.

#### Little Owl: Monthly Counts

|                 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of sites | 6   | 7   | 9   | 8   | 5   | 7   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 4   | 4   | 4   |
| Number of birds | 6   | 9   | 10  | 9   | 9   | 9   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 5   | 4   | 5   |

The first sighting of the year came from Lambourn on Jan 7th when a bird that was blind in its left eye was noted. **Breeding:** there was one breeding record from Remenham when a juvenile was seen with two adults in a private garden on Jun 6th. Two birds were also heard calling to each other at several sites across the county. The Kennet and Pang Valley Barn Owl Group have a Little Owl box which has supported breeding over many years. It failed in 2017 as it was waterlogged. This year it contained one broken egg, however, given the date of checking others may have already fledged. Birds were present at the site, being reported on Jan 14th and Feb 16th. The box on the private site in Sulham again contained a roosting adult. The maximum number of birds reported from any one site was four, which were recorded calling at Gorrick Plantation on May 6th. The final sighting of the year was on Christmas Day when two birds were reported calling to each other at 06:30 at a site in Wokingham.

### LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

*Rare resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)*

There was a welcome increase in sightings of this species in 2018. As well as six reports from the traditional west Berkshire sites between Jan 7th and Feb 22nd, with a maximum of four birds recorded, there were three reports from the Maidenhead area. These involved a maximum of three birds which were roosting in a private garden between Jan 10th and Apr 21st, with one bird returning on Nov 14th.

### SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

A total of 30 records were received for this species, a welcome increase on the previous year's total of 14. All but four came from the traditional wintering site on the Berkshire Downs. **First winter:** the first sighting was on Jan 9th when four birds were seen at the traditional site. This site continued to hold birds until Mar 14th. The highest counts were seven flushed by a dog walker on Feb 21st, and nine on Mar 11th. Away from this site, a single bird was watched at Woolley Down on Jan 20th and Feb 17th. The other winter sighting came from Queen Mother Reservoir where a single bird was seen circling very high on Mar 9th. **Spring:** a single bird was reported flying north-west over Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 11th. **Second winter:** the first sighting came from Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 15th when a bird was flushed and flew off. The next bird was found at Pingewood GPs on Oct 26th. Birds were again reported in west Berkshire from Nov 21st to the end of the year, with up to three present in December.



*Long-eared Owl, Cox Green, Mar 31st, Dave Rimes.*

### KINGFISHER COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

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

This unmistakable bird is found wherever its staple diet of small fish (minnows, sticklebacks, bullheads and juvenile larger fish) exists. In Berkshire this could range from a relatively swift moving chalk stream to a gravel pit, lake, slow moving large river or canal. Birds were recorded from 84 locations this year, somewhat down on previous years. This could reflect a decline in observer attention or possibly a result of the hard weather early in the year. Some of these were in adjacent grid squares and could represent some duplication in terms of individuals; again, the geographical spread was county-wide wherever suitable fish-bearing habitat occurs.

The first table shows the monthly status based on maximum site counts.

#### Kingfisher: Monthly Counts

|                 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of sites | 15  | 10  | 15  | 11  | 17  | 14  | 19  | 23  | 29  | 16  | 17  | 17  |
| Number of birds | 16  | 15  | 18  | 14  | 23  | 17  | 26  | 33  | 39  | 19  | 23  | 23  |

The second table attempts to give the number of sites along the main waterways of the county, including areas of still water with an adjacent river where appropriate.

**Kingfisher: Sites on Berkshire Rivers**

| River                         | No. of Sites |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| River Blackwater <sup>^</sup> | 3            |
| The Cut                       | 5            |
| River Dun                     | 2            |
| The Emmbrook                  | 2            |
| River Enborne                 | 2            |
| Jubilee River                 | 4            |
| River Kennet and K & A Canal  | 27           |
| River Lambourn                | 3            |
| River Loddon*                 | 4            |
| Maidenhead Waterways          | 2            |
| River Pang                    | 1            |
| River Thames                  | 17           |
| Other sites                   | 12           |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>84</b>    |

<sup>^</sup> All records from the Moor Green Lakes complex are considered as being from one site

\* All records from Dinton Pastures CP are considered as being from one site.

Nearly all records were of one to three birds. There was one count of four, which did not involve juveniles, at Purley-on-Thames on May 28th. **Breeding:** reports of two or more birds suggesting the presence of a pair came from around 17 locations. Firmer evidence was provided by: two adults and vocal juveniles in a nest hole on a backwater of the R. Thames at Sutherland Grange NR, Windsor, on Jun 21st; two adults and two juveniles at Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead, on Jul 25th; a suspected family party of three together on the lake at Beale Park on Aug 11th; and an adult and juvenile at Lavell's Lake on Aug 12th.

**LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dryobates minor*

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

The situation with this species was even more perilous than the past two years which both yielded records from a mere three sites each. This year there was a single record of a female in a garden at Beenham on Jul 1st (LS) which was photographed. The table vividly shows the disastrous population trend, particularly over the last ten years. The apparent increase in 2010 may have been due to diligent observer work for the Bird Atlas. In 2016 the species had appeared to retreat to the Newbury area but one or two records have since cropped up further east including from the Windsor Great Park area, a significant stronghold in the 1980s [Berkshire Atlas 1996]. It is possible that competition for nest holes from other woodpeckers, parakeets and Jackdaws, which are all increasing, has been one of the drivers for the decline of this species.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: Annual Number of Sites**

| Year         | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of sites | 25   | 18   | 18   | 31   | 29   | 21   | 15   | 15   | 12   | 3    | 3    | 1    |

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major*

*Common resident (Green Listed)*

This is the most common and widespread woodpecker which breeds throughout the county with the exceptions of some of the higher ground in the north-west and south-west, and a few urban areas which lack suitable arboreal breeding habitat, typically deciduous or mixed woodland and copses. The increase in numbers in recent years may have adversely impacted its smaller woodpecker cousin. At a national level, there has been a dramatic five-fold increase in numbers over the 40 years since 1970 with some levelling off since 2010 [BTO BirdTrends], but local surveys show the population to have been stable since 2000 [BBI 2018].

The highest counts were six from Thatcham Marsh on Jun 26th and from Honeybottom, Bagnor, on Dec 19th. Fives were reported at: Barkham on Apr 6th; Enborne on Jun 2nd; RAF Welford on Jun 3rd; and Bagnor on Nov 16th. There were no large counts from the forests in the east of the county, which was possibly a reflection of the species' increasingly common status. However there were still 729 records submitted in total, including a number reportedly taking peanuts in gardens, invariably when offered in hanging feeders. **Breeding:** at least 22 pairs were noted of which 18 were confirmed to have bred, again a comparatively modest tally though care must always be exercised in reading too much into non-survey data for species encountered frequently.

**GREEN WOODPECKER** *Picus viridis*

**EUROPEAN GREEN WOODPECKER**

*Common resident (Amber Listed)*

Records, 630 in all, came from right across the county, except from areas of open downland and some urban centres due to the lack of suitable arboreal breeding habitat. A number of records mentioned the species' liking for areas of short cropped grass when hunting for food. The distinctive far-carrying call also means the species is rarely overlooked for long. In gardens it will occasionally forage on lawns but rarely uses feeders. The highest counts, far lower than recent years, were of four from six locations. These were at: Boxford on Mar 11th; Moor Green Lakes on Mar 31st; Thatcham Marsh on Apr 23rd; Green Park, Reading, on May 23rd; Greenham Common on Jun 12th; and RAF Welford on Aug 5th. There has been a slow decline in numbers in recent years [BBI 2018]. **Breeding:** there were only eight records, well down on some recent years, seven of which were of the distinctively marked juveniles which usually provide the best evidence as the occupied nests are far quieter than those of the Great Spotted Woodpecker. There was one record of an occupied nest, however, at Moor Copse, Tidmarsh, on Jun 16th, where an adult was making alarm calls whilst probably incubating.

**KESTREL COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

*Common and widespread resident (Amber Listed)*

The sight of the Kestrel, once commonplace, hunting for voles on motorway verges has sadly become less frequent in recent years. The trend is still decreasing but not at a statistically significant rate [BBI 2018]. Of 492 records submitted for 2018, 59% of records were from west Berkshire, 14% from mid and 27% from east Berkshire, with 96% of counts being singles or pairs, compared to 78% in 2017. Multiple counts were predominantly family parties and juveniles although in 2018 the maxima only reached five individuals at any one time. These were seen at: Pangbourne on Jun 20th; Windsor Great Park on Jul 17th; Sonning

Meadows on Aug 1st; and Woodlands Park Fields on Aug 1st. At a site in east Berkshire, Kestrels nested in two Barn Owl nest boxes, using the attic compartment of one while the owls raised a family below, and using the main compartment of the other [MGLG 2018].

### MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

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

Five records were received of probably two or three birds. **First winter:** an immature or female was reported at Cow Down and Sheep Down on Jan 10th, 14th and 25th (JCMo *et al.*). **Second winter:** an immature or female was watched chasing Yellowhammers on Lambourn Downs on Oct 5th (CDRH), and a first winter was at Roden Downs on Nov 2nd (ABT). There were no records for mid or east Berkshire in 2018.

### HOBBY EURASIAN HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

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

There were 165 records submitted this year with the first sighting at Searles Farm Lane GPs (JA, DAN) on Apr 12th and the last, a juvenile hawking at Queen Mother Reservoir, on Oct 15th. An amazing count of at least 24 birds were recorded at Moatlands GPs in a feeding frenzy on May 6th. **Breeding:** a pair with one juvenile were seen at Broadmoor Bottom on Aug 5th. Other juveniles recorded were singles at: Great Meadow Pond on Sep 2nd; Finchampstead Ridges on Sep 3rd; Moor Green Lakes on Oct 8th; and on Oct 15th at Queen Mother Reservoir (ADB).

The monthly totals for Hobby by region are given in the table.

**Hobby: Monthly Counts by Region**

|      | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East | -   | -   | -   | 4   | 9   | 6   | 2   | 10  | 9   | 2   | -   | -   |
| Mid  | -   | -   | -   | 2   | 33  | 3   | 4   | 2   | 8   | -   | -   | -   |
| West | -   | -   | -   | 6   | 10  | 8   | 4   | 3   | 7   | -   | -   | -   |

### 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 56 1 km squares with some long-staying birds at their usual sites, totalling 247 reports submitted. Records were county-wide but predominantly at: Lower Farm GP; Theale GPs; Fobney Meadow; Queen Mother Reservoir; and Moor Green Lakes. **Breeding:** activity was noted at Queen Mother Reservoir when an adult settled inside the nest box on May 5th; the female's behaviour in the box suggested that a chick had hatched on May 11th and finally four young were seen on May 30th. Single juveniles or immatures were also recorded at: Lea Farm Lake on Feb 12th; Lower Farm GP on Jul 20th; Horton Brook Quarry on Jul 23rd; and at Great Meadow Pond on Oct 21st. Two juveniles were with an adult at Fobney Meadow on Aug 23rd. The BT building in Newbury had an active roost with numerous prey items detected on the ground below, ranging from Fieldfare to Little Grebe, but no records of breeding there as yet...!

The BTO reported two colour-ringed Peregrines in Berkshire in 2018 that had been ringed as nestlings more than 100km away: a female at Streatley on May 28th ringed in Brighton in 2014, and a bird at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 28th ringed at Ipswich Dock in 2017 [BTO Ringing].

### RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

#### ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET

Common resident in the east of the county, uncommon elsewhere

This unmistakable bird was seen in the highest numbers in the vicinity of the roost by the M4 near the Slough STW, with a peak count of 2,500 on Dec 14th. In total, 156 records were submitted this year, with the majority (59%) being in the east of the county, 40% from mid Berkshire and under 1% from west Berkshire, where a lone individual was seen in a Newbury garden on Apr 10th. There were regular sightings in mid Berkshire around Dinton Pastures CP with a slight increase of numbers from 2017; 11 flew over on Jul 12th and two were seen on the feeders at Bittern Hide, Lavell's Lake, on Jan 25th, Feb 4th and Mar 9th. Although this species' numbers appear to be increasing, their spread across the county does not.

### GREAT GREY SHRIKE

*Lanius excubitor*

Scarce winter visitor (Not Listed)

The Great Grey Shrike is an elusive bird in Berkshire. Just one individual was recorded this year at Cow and Bury Downs (situated close together on the Ridgeway); this bird, an adult, was first recorded on Jan 13th and remained until Mar 14th (EN *et al*), sometimes venturing into south Oxfordshire. It is likely that this is the same bird that was reported at the same location in the previous year, when it arrived one day later, on Jan 14th 2017, and left on the same date as in 2018, Mar 14th.



Great Grey Shrike, Bury Down, West Ilsley, Jan 14th, Andy Tomczynski.

### JAY EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident (Green Listed)

There were 570 reports of Jay for 2018, a 78% increase from the 492 reports in 2017. However, the Berkshire Bird Index suggests abundance to be fairly stable [BBI 25yr]. The majority of records were of lower numbers, but 13 were reported at Searles Farm GP on Mar 26th, and there were reports of nine at Remenham on Feb 1st, Long Moor on May 4th, and along the Thames between Ham Island and Albert Bridge on Nov 1st. Only two juveniles were reported, at Green Park, Reading, on Jul 12th. Perhaps the most interesting records were of an individual chasing juvenile Dartford Warblers on an east Berkshire heath on Jun 8th and a group of six males having an altercation whilst following a female in Winkfield on Mar 22nd.

### MAGPIE EURASIAN MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Abundant breeding resident (Green Listed)

Although their trend is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, Magpie has shown a decreasing trend and consistently falling indices over the last five years. As mentioned in the 2017 report, this may be due to the breeding success of the 1990s stabilising [BTO BirdTrends]. Unsurprisingly the species was recorded throughout the year, with no activity of any significance reported. The maximum counts for Berkshire were: 44 seen together in



a horse field at Hurst on Apr 7th; 32 at Dorney Wetlands on Sep 1st; and 29 reported both at Slough SF on Feb 16th and at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 24th. No information was received on roost counts this year, and very little on breeding. However, nesting was observed right in the centre of Reading, with one pair choosing a location next to a well-known takeaway outlet!

## **JACKDAW WESTERN JACKDAW** *Coloeus monedula*

*Abundant breeding resident (Green Listed)*

Jackdaw is doing well with a significant increasing trend of 7.32% per year from 2000 to 2018. Out of 935 records, 55% were in single figures. There were 34 counts exceeding 50 birds of which 36% were from east Berkshire, 9% from mid Berkshire and 55% from west Berkshire. The maximum count for the year was 1,500 in a mixed flock of corvids and Starlings at Upper Lambourn on Jan 4th. Other large counts were associated with roosts: 300 at Woolhampton GPs on Aug 18th; 250 at Warren Row on Jun 5th; and 200 at Green Park, Reading, on Jul 12th.

## **ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

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

Found predominantly in the west of the county, a total of 280 records of Rooks were received, an increase of 19% from 2017, with 69% coming from west Berkshire, 20% from mid and 11% from east Berkshire. However, the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey showed no significant change in abundance [BBI 2018]. Thirteen rookeries were reported throughout the county, with some established ones needing to be rebuilt and repaired due to winter storms. Larger rookeries comprised: 100 birds and 59 nests at Pinkneys Green on Mar 22nd; 140 birds at RAF Welford on Apr 29th; and 100 birds at an established rookery at Boxford on May 8th. The remainder are summarised as follows: M4 near Dorney Reach (15 nests); Upper Basildon (five nests); Leckhampstead (47 nests); Fawley (eight nests); Hungerford Newtown (56 nests); Sonning (20 birds); Odney Club Sports Ground (nine nests); Holyport (eight nests); M4 Junction 8/9 (20 nests); and Stag Meadow, Windsor Great Park (26 nests). Large counts of rooks were noted, including 1,000 flying into Berkshire at Upper Lambourn on Jan 1st and up to 300 at Bury Down on a number of occasions between Jan 22nd and Feb 22nd.

## **CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

*Abundant breeding resident (Green Listed)*

Records were up again for this species in 2018, with 1,042 compared to 897 in 2017; the Berkshire Bird Index shows no significant change in abundance [BBI 2018]. Usually found alone or in pairs, they form family parties and occasional flocks when feeding and roosting. Maximum counts were: 100 at Windsor Great Park on Nov 21st; 55 at Widbrook Common on Jan 28th; and 50 birds both at Ockwells Park on Apr 20th and at Great Meadow Pond on Aug 5th. Carrion Crows are opportunistic feeders and have a wide and varied diet. This was demonstrated by the following observations: individuals picking up and dropping mussels to break the shells at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 19th (see the article on page 7); three feeding on molluscs at Green Park on Feb 8th; a Canada Goose chick that was taken at Whiteknights Park on Feb 10th; and finally a family of four crows attacking and killing an escaped, exhausted cockatiel, also on Feb 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)*

With 345 records submitted, 2018 showed a slight decline compared to the 375 records in 2017. West Berkshire remained the stronghold with 63% of all records. Mid Berkshire saw only 12% of records and east Berkshire 25%. There were several high counts at the established site of Walbury Hill, with a remarkable 40 on Jul 27th, while 11 were at Combe Gibbet on Apr 6th and Sep 25th. In mid Berkshire, most records were of singles and pairs seen in flight, but three were seen at Hosehill Lake on Aug 31st and three at Searles Farm GPs on Oct 7th. In east Berkshire, there were sightings most months at Windsor Great Park and Swinley Forest. **Breeding:** a good number of records came from east Berkshire this year: an individual at an established nest on Mar 8th; two confirmed nests west of Maidenhead on Apr 2nd; a pair at a nest in Knowl Hill on Jun 5th; two adults with two or three fledged young at Bisham Woods on Jun 5th; and also a nesting pair at Fifield on Jun 7th. No breeding records were received for mid Berkshire, but in west Berkshire a pair was noted on an established nest in Kintbury on May 20th and a family of two adults and five juveniles were watched kettling at Brimpton on Jul 7th.

## **COAL TIT** *Periparus ater*

*Common and locally abundant resident (Green Listed)*

Records were received from 92 different locations right across the county wherever pines or coniferous trees occur. Coal Tits were regular visitors to garden feeders at all times of the year. Monitoring at Swinley Park, Bracknell, produced a count of 51 on Apr 16th including 45 singing birds (DJB). **Breeding:** the only reported evidence was of a family party of four including two juveniles seen at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Jun 23rd. The Berkshire Bird Index reveals no significant change in the population since 2000 [BBI 2018].

**Ringling data:** the BTO Ringing Report quotes 119 juveniles and 90 adults ringed, 108 re-traps and one recovery. One re-trap was D873942 which was originally ringed on Nov 5th 2014 at Crookham Common as a first year and was caught again on Nov 14th at the same site this year, making it over four years old.

## **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)*

Marsh Tits were reported from many sites, predominantly west of Reading, often attracted to garden bird feeders. The table shows the geographical distribution of reported individuals per month and the number of different sites.

### **Marsh Tit: Monthly Counts by Region**

|                     | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of sites        | 20  | 13  | 14  | 9   | 5   | 9   | 8   | 5   | 12  | 13  | 9   | 12  |
| No. of birds (East) | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   |
| No. of birds (Mid)  | 11  | 5   | 1   | 3   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | 5   | 1   | 2   | 3   |
| No. of birds (West) | 27  | 18  | 22  | 11  | 5   | 23  | 11  | 11  | 17  | 16  | 16  | 18  |

The situation in mid Berkshire is more serious than the table suggests, as virtually all the records derived from Hosehill Lake and sites further west, i.e. the most westerly six kilometres of the region. The exceptions were a single record at Southcote on Feb 14th and singles reported at Clayfield Copse, Caversham, on Jan 6th and Sep 13th. The east Berkshire

record concerns a single at Ashley Hill, Warren Row, on Oct 24th in a part of the county where reports were already sparse in 2013 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. The second table shows the number of birds per month in different habitats.

**Marsh Tit: Monthly Counts by Habitat**

|               | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Downs         | 10  | 4   | 5   | 2   | -   | 6   | 4   | 8   | 4   | 3   | 4   | 3   |
| River Valleys | 14  | 7   | 9   | 6   | 3   | 6   | 5   | 3   | 9   | 10  | 6   | 10  |
| Heaths/Woods  | 16  | 11  | 9   | 6   | 3   | 12  | 2   | -   | 8   | 5   | 8   | 8   |
| E. Plain      | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Urban         | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   |

**Breeding:** reports of breeding came from just two sites. **Ringling data:** the BTO Ringling Report records that 25 juveniles, 14 adults and three unaged birds were ringed, 27 were re-trapped and there were no recoveries. One individual, Y881279, which was originally ringed as an adult female on Aug 18th 2012 at The Wilderness, near Kintbury, was trapped again on Dec 22nd at the same site, making it at least seven years old.

**WILLOW TIT** *Poecile montanus*

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

Twelve reports came in from six locations and again only from the area close to Combe in west Berkshire, the majority in Combe Wood itself. Whereas in the previous couple of years there has been the odd report of a hanger-on or straggler in an outlying location, this time all reports came from the core area, pointing to this species' continuing decline. The maximum number was of six on Sep 13th at Wigmoreash Pond when a family party, calling to each other and seen clearly, appeared from the edge of the wood to the immediate south-east and moved gradually west along the tall hedges next to the Test Way (I L Ralphs). No evidence of breeding was reported this year and no ringling data was recorded on the BTO website.

**BLUE TIT EURASIAN BLUE TIT** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Abundant resident (Green Listed)*

Blue Tits were reported from 146 different locations across the county, and the Berkshire Bird Index indicates no significant change in population levels since 2000 [BBI 2018]. Many of the highest counts, aside from post-breeding family parties, occurred in November and December with a maximum count of 46 on Nov 25th at Snelsmore Common CP. **Breeding:** many observers reported breeding in their garden nest boxes including a clutch of nine successfully reared young at Moss End on May 30th, while at Great Meadow Pond nine breeding pairs were recorded, with 36 birds seen on Jun 13th. **Ringling data:** the BTO Ringling Report recorded 1,704 nestlings, 1,239 juveniles, 737 adults and two unaged ringed, 938 re-traps and nine recoveries this year. The oldest bird reported was X597772, which was ringed as a first year on Jan 30th 2010 at Lower Basildon and was caught again this year on May 7th at the same site, making it over eight years old. The individual that had moved the greatest distance was a female, D904284, originally ringed as a juvenile on Aug 18th 2014 at Langford RSPB Reserve, Nottinghamshire, and netted this year on Apr 20th in Silwood Park, Windsor, having travelled 193km [BTO Ringling].

**GREAT TIT** *Parus major*

*Abundant resident (Green Listed)*

Reports of Great Tits came from 138 different locations across the county. There were many high counts outside the breeding season with a maximum of 35 on Nov 11th at Snelsmore Common CP. The Berkshire Bird Index indicates no significant change in population levels since 2000 [BBI 2018]. **Breeding:** several accounts of breeding were received but they did not involve garden nest boxes to the same extent as for Blue Tits. Four family parties comprising 20 birds were seen at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 13th. **Ringling data:** the BTO Ringling Report showed that 620 nestlings, 728 juveniles and 401 adults were ringed, 602 were re-trapped and four were recovered this year in the county. The oldest live individual encountered this year was V817858, a first year male ringed on Aug 06th 2010 at Hungerford and caught again on Feb 1st at Harvey's Meadow, making it over seven years old.

**WOODLARK** *Lullula arborea*

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

An increase in territories at Greenham Common, where it was recorded in all months save December, established this locality as the dominant haunt of the Woodlark in Berkshire. In contrast, a decrease in territories in the east of the county probably reflects a decline in the population rather than under-reporting. The reason for this pattern is not clear.

**First winter:** most reports concerned Greenham/Crookham Common, where the first returning bird was recorded on Jan 22nd. Numbers built to five on Feb 1st and ten on Mar 25th, with six territories being held in March. Of note elsewhere were: two at Padworth Common, one in song, on Feb 4th; two at Caesar's Camp on Mar 14th; two in song at the Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne, on Mar 21st; and two in song at Wishmoor Bottom on Feb 18th. **Spring/summer:** the information for breeding localities is summarised in the table (for details of the Swinley Forest part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, see [Crowley *et al.*, 2012]).

**Woodlark: Breeding Season Summaries**

| Locality                                | Number of Territories | Max Count inc young | Notes                                      |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| West Woodhay                            | 1                     | 1                   |  |
| Greenham/Crookham Common                | 9-10                  | 10                  | Breeding confirmed in 5 territories (AEDH) |
| Padworth Common                         | 1?                    | 1                   |  |
| Ufton Nernet                            | ?                     | ?                   | No reports received                        |
| <b>Thames Basin Heaths SPA:</b>         |                       |                     |  |
| Crowthorne Woods                        | 2?                    | 2                   | Based on the report from Mar 21st          |
| Wishmoor Bottom                         | 2                     | 4                   |  |
| Sandhurst RMA                           | ?                     | ?                   | No reports received                        |
| Swinley Forest (areas not listed above) | 6?                    | 7                   |  |
| Swinley Park                            | 1?                    | 2                   |  |
| South Ascot                             | 1?                    | 1                   |  |
| Buttersteep, South Ascot                | 1?                    | 2                   |  |

**Second winter:** reports were confined to Greenham/Crookham Common, where the highest monthly counts were of 12 in September and three in October. The last stragglers recorded were four on Nov 13th when, unusually, one was in song.

## SKYLARK EURASIAN SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

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

Although still common, the Skylark has declined in Berkshire by roughly 25% since 2000 [BBI 2018], a statistically significant reduction. Numbers remained lower than normal until the autumn, suggesting the decline in the breeding population is continuing. As usual, it was more widespread in the west of the county and in summer (see table).

### Skylark: Number of Sites by Region

|                | Jan - Mar | Apr - Aug | Sep - Dec |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| West Berkshire | 19        | 46        | 24        |
| Mid Berkshire  | 17        | 10        | 6         |
| East Berkshire | 7         | 8         | 3         |
| Total          | 43        | 64        | 33        |

**First winter:** flocks were smaller than normal; the largest were 30 at Englefield on Mar 11th and 60 there on Mar 25th. Song was noted from Jan 19th. **Spring/summer:** although many in song were reported, breeding was only confirmed at Winter Hill. Diligent surveying found twelve territories at Greenham/Crookham Common (AEDH), and around 50 birds singing at Englefield (RCr). **Autumn/second winter:** the arrival of migrants and winter visitors considerably inflated the numbers. Treble figure counts were received from: the Compton Downs, with 155 on Oct 19th; Englefield, where ten counts over 100 included 400 on Oct 24th; and Remenham, where counts included 114 on both Oct 30th and Nov 4th.

## SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

*Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

Numbers decreased again this year. **Spring:** a poor passage (see table) began a little late on Mar 17th with two at Lower Farm GP (MO), three at Wraybury GPs (CRDH) and at least eight in small parties at Main Pit, Theale (ABT, KEM). Peak passage was reached in the last week of April. Just a few counts of 100 or more were reported, all at the end of April in the same area: 300 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 27th had fallen to 100 on Apr 30th; and there were 150 at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre on Apr 29th.

### Sand Martin: Weekly Counts in Spring

| Week         | Mar  | Mar  | Mar  | Apr | Apr | Apr  | Apr  | Apr  | May | May  | May  | May  |
|--------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|
| Commencing   | 11th | 18th | 25th | 1st | 8th | 15th | 22nd | 29th | 6th | 13th | 20th | 27th |
| No. of sites | 2    | 3    | 5    | 7   | 8   | 3    | 11   | 4    | 5   | 4    | 1    | 3    |
| No. of birds | 10   | 10   | 46   | 93  | 122 | 11   | 508  | 271  | 29  | 13   | 5    | 79   |

**Breeding:** breeding information was received from just the following few sites: birds were observed using nesting-holes in the artificial bank at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre; several holes were in use in the soil heap at Searles Farm Lane GP; a pair nested in a drainage pipe in the Kennet wall behind Katesgrove Lane, Reading; nearby, at least four adults and two young were seen using pipes in the side of the railway bridge at Kennet Mouth, Reading; nesting in the riverbank at Marsh Meadow, Cookham; and in holes in the Black Potts Railway Viaduct. **Autumn:** gatherings were small in July and passage was again weak (see table). Counts of 100 or more were made only at Hosehill Lake, Theale, with 400 on Aug 24th, 100 on Aug 25th and 300 on Aug 27th, and at Main Pit, Theale, with 200 on Aug 27th. A somewhat unusual observation was of one over Streatley Warren, Aldworth, on Aug 22nd. As in 2017, the final departure date was very early, marked by ten at Lower Farm GP (IW), on Sep 23rd.

### Sand Martin: Weekly Counts in Autumn

| Week         | Jul | Jul  | Jul  | Jul  | Aug | Aug  | Aug  | Aug  | Sep | Sep | Sep  | Sep  |
|--------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|
| Commencing   | 8th | 15th | 22nd | 29th | 5th | 12th | 19th | 26th | 2nd | 9th | 16th | 23rd |
| No. of sites | 2   | 3    | 3    | 1    | 1   | 3    | 5    | 7    | 2   | 2   | 5    | 1    |
| No. of birds | 11  | 35   | 62   | 4    | 10  | 57   | 436  | 396  | 20  | 43  | 27   | 10   |

As with all these tables, the numbers are the highest counts in the time period, so for migrant species at times of passage the figures are conservative, as birds at each site are assumed to be the same ones all week.

## SWALLOW BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

Following the dismal year in 2017, numbers both on passage and reported breeding remained low. A sharp decrease in abundance in 2018 was also apparent in the Berkshire Bird Index [BBI 25yr]. **Spring:** Mar 31st was an unusually late date for the first birds of the year, two at Lower Farm GP (BJH), to be reported. Passage (see table) reached its height in the last week of April when the highest counts included: 300 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 27th; 800 at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 28th; and 500 there on Apr 29th.

### Swallow: Weekly Counts in Spring

| Week         | Mar  | Apr | Apr | Apr  | Apr   | Apr   | May | May  | May  | May  |
|--------------|------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|------|
| Commencing   | 25th | 1st | 8th | 15th | 22nd  | 29th  | 6th | 13th | 20th | 27th |
| No. of sites | 1    | 13  | 17  | 15   | 16    | 23    | 16  | 13   | 9    | 11   |
| No. of birds | 2    | 48  | 251 | 47   | 1,473 | 1,081 | 99  | 53   | 25   | 39   |

**Breeding:** in a very disappointing season, the only confirmations of breeding were for Emmer Green and Odney Club, Cookham. Some juveniles seen at Stand Water, Cookham, in July were probably from the stable's nest-site and juveniles at Winkfield in August may have been raised locally. **Autumn:** passage (see table) was far below normal. The highest counts were: c.100 at Moor Green Lakes on dates between Aug 19th and 26th; c.100 at Lower Farm GP on Sep 8th and again on Sep 23rd; and 500+ passing south through Southcote Meadows on Sep 19th, with many more at nearby sites. In October, a few sightings of one to three birds were reported until the final observation of one at Queen Mother Reservoir (MFW) on the very early date of Oct 14th.

### Swallow: Weekly Counts in Autumn

| Week         | Jul | Jul  | Jul  | Jul  | Aug | Aug  | Aug  | Aug  | Sep | Sep | Sep  | Sep  |
|--------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|
| Commencing   | 8th | 15th | 22nd | 29th | 5th | 12th | 19th | 26th | 2nd | 9th | 16th | 23rd |
| No. of sites | 10  | 9    | 7    | 12   | 7   | 7    | 13   | 17   | 9   | 11  | 17   | 9    |
| No. of birds | 72  | 24   | 15   | 53   | 106 | 59   | 123  | 189  | 263 | 65  | 588  | 113  |

## HOUSE MARTIN COMMON HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

*Locally common summer visitor and common passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

This species has shown a steady decline in Berkshire to about half its 2000 breeding season abundance [BBI 2018]. As for migration, it looked like being another disappointing year until a spike of 7,000+ birds occurred on Sep 21st!

**Spring:** the arrival time was normal, with one at Shaw, Newbury, on Apr 7th (SAI). Passage was light although better than in 2017 and showed a clear peak in the last week of April. Most of the flocks were small, consisting of fewer than 50 birds. The exceptions were: 75 at Hungerford Sewage Works on Apr 24th; 50 at Lower Farm GP on Apr 26th, with 100 the

following day; 200 at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 28th; 61 at Thatcham Marsh the same day; 50 at Main Pit, Theale, the same day; and 80 at Moor Green Lakes on May 2nd.

#### House Martin: Weekly Counts in Spring

| Week         | Apr 1st | Apr 8th | Apr 15th | Apr 22nd | Apr 29th | May 6th | May 13th | May 20th | May 27th | Jun 3rd |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Commencing   | 1       | 10      | 8        | 13       | 13       | 10      | 12       | 9        | 9        | 12      |
| No. of sites | 1       | 10      | 8        | 13       | 13       | 10      | 12       | 9        | 9        | 12      |
| No. of birds | 1       | 54      | 16       | 527      | 166      | 75      | 86       | 34       | 82       | 86      |

**Breeding:** indications of breeding were reported at 11 sites: Greenham and Crookham Commons; Pangbourne Police Station; Odney Club, Cookham; Canon Court Farm near Bisham; Moor Green Lakes; Winkfield; Eton Wick; the farm cottages at Windsor Great Park; the Royal School at Great Meadow Pond; and near Datchet Station. **Autumn:** numbers on passage (see table) were reasonable until an astonishing spike of 6,000 to 8,000 birds at Main Pit, Theale, at 08:30 on Sep 21st (RCr). The observer noted “conservative estimate, huge numbers right across the pit and above, the true total may easily have surpassed 8,000 birds!” At 07:15 the same day, the same observer reported 300 at the adjacent Moatlands GP, then at 08:10 he counted 500 at the adjacent Hosehill Lake. Later the same day there were 600 at Lower Farm GP while 200 were reported that day at Moor Green Lakes. It appears there was an influx of a minimum of 7,000 birds into Berkshire on Sep 21st, which in fact probably involved over 10,000 birds. The following day, roughly 150 birds were reported at Main Pit, Theale, indicating the birds had moved on, although there were 400+ at the site on Sep 23rd. Just two reports were received for October, a very low number: 19 at Lower Farm GP on Oct 6th; and the final departure of three at College Glen, Maidenhead (A Roberts), on Oct 28th, a typical date.

#### House Martin: Weekly Counts in Autumn

| Week         | Jul 15th | Jul 22nd | Jul 29th | Aug 5th | Aug 12th | Aug 19th | Aug 26th | Sep 2nd | Sep 9th | Sep 16th | Sep 23rd | Sep 30th |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Commencing   | 8        | 7        | 7        | 6       | 9        | 8        | 10       | 7       | 14      | 13       | 8        | 1        |
| No. of sites | 8        | 7        | 7        | 6       | 9        | 8        | 10       | 7       | 14      | 13       | 8        | 1        |
| No. of birds | 125      | 98       | 123      | 111     | 171      | 430      | 239      | 758     | 561     | 7,757    | 1,026    | 19       |

### CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

*Locally common resident (Schedule One, Green Listed)*

First recorded in 1971, the Cetti's Warbler is regularly heard in Berkshire in its specialised habitat of dense cover near water. There were many reports for sites along the Kennet valley between Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford and Fobney Meadow. Elsewhere, it was recorded along the River Lambourn at Bagnor and Boxford, and in the areas of Dinton Pastures CP, Twyford, the Jubilee River and Great Meadow Pond, where breeding was confirmed. The highest counts were for Thatcham Marsh with 22 on Apr 23rd and 12 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Apr 19th; these counts were significantly higher than at the other forty locations from which it was reported.

### LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

*Common and widespread resident (Green Listed)*

This species shows quite wide year-to-year variation in abundance as measured by the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey in Berkshire, with numbers in 2018 on the low side [BBI 2018], but it remained so common and widespread that many observers did not report it and little of note was received. Higher counts above 25 comprised: 28 at Wraysbury GPs on Feb 11th; a flock of 30 at Streatley on Aug 1st; about 30 at Woolhampton GPs on Dec 4th; and about 30 at Wraysbury GPs on Dec 31st.



Wood Warbler, Dinton Pastures CP, Apr 28th, Andy Tomczynski.



Yellow-browed Warbler, Dinton Pastures CP, Nov 2nd, Marek Walford.

### WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

*Formerly an uncommon summer visitor, now an increasingly rare passage migrant (Red Listed)*

The only record was of a male at Dinton Pastures CP on Apr 28th (J J Taylor *et al.*). It was seen and heard singing for about an hour, before it flew across the R. Loddon and was lost to view. The fortunes of this species as a migrant are not improving and it appears to be becoming less than annual. Its status in the county this century is given in the table.

#### Wood Warbler: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year           | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of records | 7    | 1    | -    | 2    | 1    | 1    | 2    | 4    | 3    | 5    |
| No. of birds   | 10   | 1    | -    | 2    | 1    | 1    | 2    | 5    | 3    | 5    |
| Year           | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of records | 2    | 1    | 1    | 2    | -    | -    | -    | 2    | 1    |      |
| No. of birds   | 2    | 1    | 1    | 2    | -    | -    | -    | 2    | 1    |      |

Most records this century have been of spring migrants (there have been no breeding records) but single autumn migrants were recorded in 2001, 2003, 2008 and 2017.

### YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

*Rare but increasingly recorded vagrant (Not Listed)*

There were three autumn records: one at Greenham Common on Oct 16th (NC, JL, IW) was ringed; a longer stayer was at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, from Oct 24th to Nov 2nd (FJC *et al.*); and another was at Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Oct 29th (J J Taylor *et al.*). These constitute the 15th, 16th and 17th county records.

Records for the past decade confirm that this species is being increasingly recorded and becoming almost annual. Its status this century is given in the table.

#### Yellow-browed Warbler: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year         | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of birds | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 1    | 1    |
| Year         | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of birds | -    | -    | 1    | 2    | 2    | -    | 3    | 2    | 3    |      |

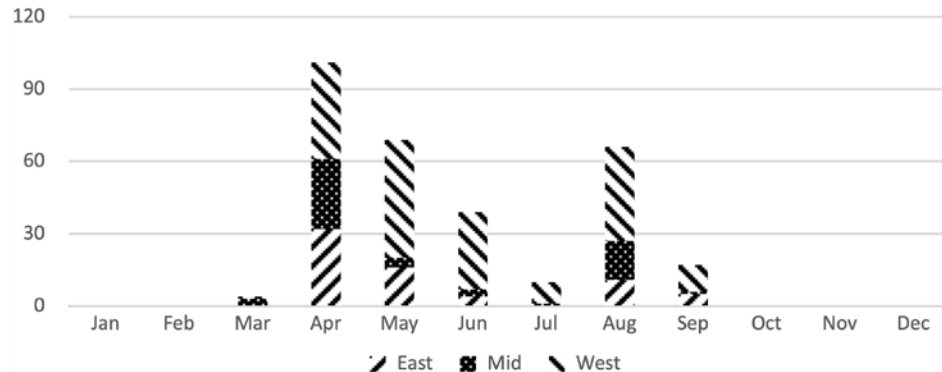
## WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

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

The 303 records (cf.421 in 2017) were distributed across the county, with the number of sites (1 km squares) in parentheses, as follows: east Berkshire 46 (19); mid Berkshire 43 (23); and west Berkshire 214 (42). The Berkshire Bird Index 2018 shows the long-term decline of this species continuing at about 2% per year [BBI 2018].

The first arrivals were recorded relatively late on Mar 30th with single birds at Dinton Pastures CP (BTB, KSeY) and Main Pit, Theale (RCr), two weeks later than the earliest this century (Mar 17th 2013). Thereafter, the monthly distribution across the county's regions was as shown in the chart, with a pattern more typical of a passage migrant.

### Willow Warbler: Monthly Maxima by Region



**Spring:** the highest counts in spring were nine at Snelsmore Common CP on Apr 21st and May 9th. Other locations where counts of five or more were made were: Searles Farm Lane GPs; Greenham Common; Lower Farm GP; Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford; and across Swinley Forest. Numbers in the county reached a peak in the week commencing Apr 15th. In east Berkshire, no reports were submitted for July!

**Breeding:** there were 58 records of some sort of breeding activity including 48 of birds singing, i.e. possible breeding only. Detailed monitoring at Crookham and Greenham Commons revealed that at least nine territories were held between Apr 18th and Jul 4th, and that six of these resulted in successful breeding (AEDH). Juveniles were noted at: Prospect Park, Reading, on Jul 27th; Crookham Common on Aug 4th; and one was ringed at Crookham Park on Aug 12th. However, they might not have all bred locally.

**Summer/autumn:** peak counts in the autumn were: 15 at Combe Gibbet, Inkpen Hill, on Aug 1st; nine at Greenham Common on Aug 1st and 8th; five at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 19th; six at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Aug 26th; and six at Hosehill Lake on Aug 29th. The last record for the year was of a bird attracted to a kitchen window in Maidenhead (SMe) on Sep 19th, one of the earliest final dates this century.

## CHIFFCHAFF COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

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

The distribution of the 787 records (cf.989 in 2017) across the county during six two-monthly periods, with the number of sites and minimum number of birds, is summarised in the table.

### Chiffchaff: Regional Distribution

|           | East Berks |       | Mid Berks |       | West Berks |       | All Berks |       |
|-----------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
|           | Sites      | Birds | Sites     | Birds | Sites      | Birds | Sites     | Birds |
| Jan - Feb | 7          | 46    | 9         | 62    | 7          | 10    | 23        | 118   |
| Mar - Apr | 25         | 102   | 40        | 172   | 32         | 137   | 97        | 411   |
| May - Jun | 21         | 74    | 22        | 75    | 34         | 169   | 77        | 318   |
| Jul - Aug | 9          | 37    | 12        | 49    | 22         | 93    | 43        | 179   |
| Sep - Oct | 11         | 61    | 18        | 41    | 23         | 97    | 52        | 199   |
| Nov - Dec | 11         | 23    | 8         | 9     | 7          | 8     | 26        | 40    |

**First winter:** the number wintering was an estimated minimum of 118, over twice as many as for Blackcaps (q.v.). It is often the case with this species that they like the relative warmth and insect availability at sewage treatment works but only two such facilities featured in the records: Sandhurst STW accommodated three on Jan 10th and Streatley STW one between Jan 10th and 14th. High counts during this period included 30 at Dorney Wetlands on Jan 6th and 40 feeding along the water's edges between Kennet Island and the K&A Canal, Reading, on Feb 2nd, many of which remained in the area into early spring.

**Early spring:** the first true spring migrant, observed at a site not recorded in February, was probably one on Mar 2nd at Braywick Nature Centre, Bray; this was followed by another on Mar 9th at Eton Wick. A bizarre sight at Kennet Island, Reading, on Mar 1st was many of the 15 counted hawking for insects in driving snow! High counts during this period included: 17 singing males at Swinley Park, Bracknell, on Apr 16th; c.17 at Twyford GPs on Apr 11th; 17 at Burghfield GPs on Mar 31st (49 had been recorded there in 2017 but only two-thirds of the area was covered due to floods); 18 at Thatcham Marsh on Apr 23rd; and 15 at Enborne on Apr 22nd. Totals for this period obviously reflect the arrival of migrants, many of which would be passing through; the drop in numbers in late spring presumably reflects those staying to breed.

**Breeding:** there were no records of confirmed (or even probable) breeding at any site, unlike the 12 sites in 2016 and 13 in 2017. However, the figures in the table for the May - June period support the view that Chiffchaff remains a widespread and common breeding species. Although there is considerable year to year variation in counts, the Berkshire Bird Index suggests abundance has increased by at least 50% since 2000. [BBI 2018].

**Summer/autumn:** a possible decline seen during the summer months was puzzling as this is when numbers should have increased due to the juveniles of the year; the highest count during this period was of 25 at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 25th when there were also 13 at Lower Farm GP. The subsequent slight increase in the autumn surely included many migrants passing through. The highest count of this period was of 15 at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 9th. An interesting first for one observer was of Chiffchaffs drinking from a garden pond at Winkfield on Oct 8th.

**Second winter:** most counts were of ones or twos; the highest was seven in a mist net at Dorney Wetlands on Dec 11th. A minimum of forty individuals appeared to be wintering, mostly at waterside sites.

## SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

Records were received from 44 locations: 7 in east Berkshire, 17 in mid Berkshire, and 20 in west Berkshire. **Spring:** the first records of the year were on Apr 8th, when birds were recorded at: Searles Farm Lane GP (JA); Southcote Lock, Reading (AVL); Thatcham Marsh

(JL, JPM, IW); and Main Pit, Theale (SAG). There were no further records until Apr 13th, after which records became more widespread. High counts included: 13 at Hungerford Marsh on May 5th; eight at Winkfield on Apr 22nd; and eight at The Wilderness, Kintbury, on May 14th and 19th. Of interest, two birds were heard singing from an Oilseed Rape field at Englefield on May 3rd. **Summer:** there was just one record of breeding, but this reflected observer effort more than anything else. At Fobney Meadow, 12 birds on Jun 22nd included six juveniles and six adults carrying food. **Autumn:** the first migrant was an adult along the airstrip at Englefield on Jul 25th. There was very little evidence of migration during August and only four counts greater than one, with the highest count being four at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 26th. Birds were recorded on ten dates during September up to 16th when one was at Great Meadow Pond. A late bird was recorded on Oct 7th, also at Great Meadow Pond (DJB).

## REED WARBLER EURASIAN REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)*

Records were received from 44 locations: 12 in east Berkshire; 12 in mid Berkshire; and 20 in west Berkshire. The first report was from Fobney Meadow (RCW) on Apr 3rd following which birds were distributed across the county as shown in the table.

### Reed Warbler: Regional Distribution

|            |              | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East Berks | No. of birds | 47  | 55  | 53  | 41  | 33  | 5   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | 7   | 5   | 5   | 6   | 4   | 2   | -   |
| Mid Berks  | No. of birds | 17  | 36  | 33  | 26  | 4   | 1   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | 6   | 9   | 4   | 4   | 1   | 1   | -   |
| West Berks | No. of birds | 25  | 48  | 56  | 36  | 14  | 16  | 2   |
|            | No. of sites | 8   | 14  | 12  | 9   | 4   | 5   | 2   |

**Spring:** the highest counts in double figures were: in west Berkshire at Thatcham with 26 on Jun 3rd; in mid Berkshire at Green Park, Reading, with 21 on Jul 12th, and 14 at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jun 25th; and in east Berkshire with 15 at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 22nd, 10 at Englemere Pond on Jun 3rd, and from Great Meadow Pond where numbers built up to 37 on May 27th. However, in west Berkshire another 31 birds were found at around 12 sites strung along the Kennet & Avon Canal, while the Lambourn and Thames valleys were less favoured with just single records of one and two birds singing respectively.

**Breeding:** the majority of spring records were of singing birds. Singing was heard as late as Jul 2nd at Moor Green Lakes and Jul 30th at Dorney Wetlands. Evidence of confirmed breeding came from several sites: on Jun 3rd two nests were noted at Strand Water, Cookham, and young were being fed there on Jul 13th; birds carrying food to nests were observed at Hosehill Lake on Jun 8th, and at Green Park on Jun 18th and Jul 12th; at Great Meadow Pond the high numbers of the spring were maintained and many birds were seen carrying food to unseen young in June and July. An interesting observation at the same site was of a bird singing from a hedgerow 100 m from any suitable breeding habitat.

**Autumn:** after the end of August, there were counts of ten at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 2nd and 9th, and many locations reported ones and twos until the final bird at Thatcham Marsh (IW) on Oct 7th. A juvenile Reed Warbler ringed at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 5th was caught by a ringer at Saint Froult on the coast of Charente-Maritime, France, on Aug 12th, having covered 612 km in seven days [BTO Ringing].

## GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

### COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

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

The 15 records came from two sites in east Berkshire, one in mid Berkshire and six sites in west Berkshire. Of these, only three sites in west Berkshire generated sightings on multiple dates. A minimum of ten birds was estimated: seven in spring and three in autumn.

**Spring:** the first records of the year came on the same date, Apr 22nd, at Wraysbury GP (CL) and at Burnthouse Lane GPs (SRi), but no birds were reported from there subsequently. There followed a series of reports from adjacent 1 km squares along the Kennet & Avon Canal close to Hungerford. At Hungerford Marsh, one was reported on four dates between Apr 23rd and Jun 28th. At Harvey's Meadow, up to two were reported on two dates between May 7th and 23rd, while another was found in the vicinity of Lower Denford and Avington Manor on Apr 25th. At Crookham Common, one was singing in tall vegetation in an uncultivated field between May 31st and Jun 6th, and singing was reported at a location just 100 m away on Jun 5th. Unsurprisingly, many of the reports cited singing birds, but there was no evidence to suggest that breeding might have occurred.

**Summer/autumn:** single birds were recorded along the Kennet & Avon Canal near Kintbury on Jul 19th, at Brimpton GPs where a juvenile was ringed on Aug 13th, and, finally, a first winter at Great Meadow Pond (DJB) on Sep 16th.

The yearly status of Grasshopper Warblers this century is given in the table.

### Grasshopper Warbler: Annual Number of Birds Reported

| Year                  | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of birds (Spring) | 7    | 11   | 6    | 6    | 13   | 12   | 10   | 14   | 20   | 11   |
| No. of birds (Autumn) | -    | 3    | -    | 2    | 4    | 1    | 4    | 3    | 5    | 3    |
| Year                  | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |      |
| No. of birds (Spring) | 16   | 14   | 8    | 9    | 10   | 7    | 13   | 17   | 7    |      |
| No. of birds (Autumn) | 3    | 1    | 2    | 2    | 1    | -    | 2    | -    | 3    |      |

## BLACKCAP EURASIAN BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

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

The distribution of birds across the county during six two-monthly periods, with the number of 1 km square sites and minimum number of birds is summarised in the table.

### Blackcap: Regional Distribution

|           | East Berks |       | Mid Berks |       | West Berks |       | All Berks |       |
|-----------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
|           | Sites      | Birds | Sites     | Birds | Sites      | Birds | Sites     | Birds |
| Jan - Feb | 9          | 12    | 10        | 21    | 8          | 11    | 27        | 44    |
| Mar - Apr | 29         | 103   | 37        | 146   | 31         | 177   | 97        | 426   |
| May - Jun | 29         | 143   | 27        | 146   | 40         | 250   | 96        | 539   |
| Jul - Aug | 4          | 23    | 7         | 39    | 13         | 71    | 24        | 133   |
| Sep - Oct | 5          | 10    | 5         | 13    | 17         | 140   | 27        | 50    |
| Nov - Dec | 6          | 9     | 13        | 17    | 4          | 4     | 21        | 30    |

The totals for the early spring months of March and April would have included many passing through on passage while those for late spring, May and June, largely represented the breeding population. The Berkshire Bird Index shows a significant increase for this species with abundance approximately doubling since 2000 [BBI 2018].

**First winter:** a wintering population of a least 44 was evident from the data. Most counts were of ones or twos with four feeding on Mistletoe at Emmer Green on Feb 8th. Many were actively feeding on provided bird foods, demonstrating the alacrity with which this species has taken to supplementary foods as an aid to survival in the winter months and for bodybuilding prior to breeding. With so many recorded in gardens during March, identifying the date when the first true migrant arrived was impossible. **Spring:** the first bird regarded by an observer as a summer migrant was on Mar 23rd at Searles Farm Lane GPs. The highest counts were: in east Berkshire 15 at Ockwells Park and Thrift Wood on Apr 20th, and 18 at Ashley Hill Forest, Warren Row on May 19th; in mid Berkshire 40 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Apr 8th and 40 at Moatlands GP on May 10th; in west Berkshire 26 at Thatcham Marsh on Apr 23rd and 20 at RAF Welford on Apr 29th.

**Breeding:** there were eight records where breeding was confirmed: a pair was feeding young at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 17th; and of the seven records of fledged birds the earliest was on Jun 9th at Woosehill and the latest on Jul 8th of three families at Great Meadow Pond. **Summer/autumn:** although overall totals were lower in July and August, there were still some high counts: in east Berkshire there were 12 at Woodlands Park Fields on Aug 17th; in mid Berkshire 30 at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 25th; and in west Berkshire 17 at Greenham Common on Aug 28th. There were 45 at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 2nd, and 41 were ringed in two hours at Greenham Common on Sep 12th. **Second winter:** most counts in this period were of ones or twos but three were seen in a garden at Earley on Dec 31st. In mid Berkshire, Blackcaps were recorded on five dates in November and 15 in December. The minimum total of 30 suggested that a sizeable wintering population had taken residence.

## GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green Listed)*

The monthly distribution of birds by region is given in the table.

### Garden Warbler: Regional Distribution

|            |              | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East Berks | No. of birds | 18  | 18  | 9   | -   | 2   | -   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | 6   | 9   | 4   | -   | 2   | -   | -   |
| Mid Berks  | No. of birds | 4   | 34  | 4   | 6   | 1   | -   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | 4   | 13  | 3   | 3   | 1   | -   | -   |
| West Berks | No. of birds | 16  | 53  | 29  | 21  | 14  | 1   | 2   |
|            | No. of sites | 7   | 24  | 17  | 7   | 4   | 1   | 2   |

**Spring:** the first arrival occurred on Apr 15th at Dorney Wetlands (BJH), a date close to the average for recent years. Thereafter there were daily records from Apr 18th to Apr 30th mostly of ones or twos, but six males were singing at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 28th. In east Berkshire eight were singing at Moor Green Lakes on May 8th; in mid Berkshire 13 were singing at Moatlands GPs on May 10th; and the highest count in west Berkshire was nine at Greenham Common on May 17th.

**Breeding:** Garden Warblers were widely reported from around 50 locations during May and June. The only reports providing evidence of breeding were of a bird seen carrying nesting materials at Field Farm Landfill site on May 9th and of two recently fledged young at Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford, on Jun 30th.

The last bird of the year was recorded on the relatively early date of Sep 3rd at Brimpton GPs (JPM).

## LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

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

The first arrival was on Apr 10th at Waterloo Meadows, Reading (PD), equalling the earliest date this century. They were then recorded on 13 of the remaining 18 days of April, usually singly or occasionally two, but there were three at Hungerford Marsh on Apr 23rd. The 93 records (cf.123 in 2017) were distributed at 12 sites in east Berkshire, 12 in mid Berkshire and 16 in west Berkshire, with the sightings summarised in the table.

### Lesser Whitethroat: Regional Distribution

|            |              | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
|------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East Berks | No. of birds | 9   | 6   | 3   | -   | -   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | 8   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   |
| Mid Berks  | No. of birds | 5   | 5   | 1   | -   | 5   | 1   |
|            | No. of sites | 5   | 3   | 1   | -   | 4   | 1   |
| West Berks | No. of birds | 8   | 14  | 6   | 2   | 6   | 4   |
|            | No. of sites | 5   | 10  | 5   | 2   | 4   | 4   |

**Breeding:** there were 24 sites where birds were recorded in April or May but not subsequently, confirming their status as a passage migrant, but as Lesser Whitethroats rarely sing once eggs are laid, it is possible that some may have remained without being detected. Birds were reported at nine locations in June and July, and breeding was confirmed at two sites. A very agitated pair was watched at Fifield on Jun 21st, obviously nesting in the same Blackthorn bush that was used in 2016, and two were seen at Greenham Common on Jun 2nd carrying caterpillars, possibly feeding young. **Summer/autumn:** as in spring, numbers were usually ones or twos, but three were noted at Greenham Common on Aug 22nd (a site where breeding probably occurred earlier). The final record for the year was of one at Crookham Common (MJD) on the early date of Sep 10th. Nearly all records in this period were from the western half of the county.

## WHITETHROAT COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)*

The 312 records (cf.425 in 2017) were distributed across the county, with the number of sites (1 km squares) in parentheses, as follows: east Berkshire 70 (25), mid Berkshire 80 (27) and west Berkshire 162 (39). The first bird was reported on Apr 14th at Wraybury GPs (CL) the latest arrival date this century. Thereafter, the monthly distribution at 1 km sites across the county's regions was as shown in the table.

### Whitethroat: Regional Distribution

|            |              | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
|------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East Berks | No. of birds | 13  | 54  | 22  | 1   | 12  | 2   |
|            | No. of sites | 8   | 18  | 9   | 1   | 8   | 2   |
| Mid Berks  | No. of birds | 31  | 48  | 49  | 44  | 25  | 3   |
|            | No. of sites | 12  | 13  | 13  | 6   | 6   | 2   |
| West Berks | No. of birds | 23  | 108 | 47  | 39  | 33  | 5   |
|            | No. of sites | 13  | 25  | 14  | 11  | 11  | 3   |

The Berkshire Bird Index shows little change in recent years [BBI 2018].

**Spring:** in April, most counts were in single figures, but numbers built up with high counts of: 16 at Enborne on May 3rd; 20 at Englefield on May 5th; 11 at Crookham Common

on May 7th; and 20 between Aldworth and Blewbury on May 19th, which the observer considered to be a decline in numbers for that section of the Downs.

**Breeding:** Whitethroats were reported from around 65 locations throughout the county during the breeding season. Breeding was confirmed in ten records. Young in a nest were being fed at Moor Green Lakes on May 20th, and adults were seen carrying food at Fobney Meadow on Jun 22nd and at Green Park, Reading, on Jul 17th. There were six records of fledged birds: three being fed by a male at Brimpton on Jun 5th; three with an adult at Greenham Common on Jun 17th; three family parties (with three, three and four juveniles) amongst an impressive total of 31 birds at Englefield on Jul 7th; a family party including three juveniles at Burnthouse Lane GP on Jul 22nd; a mixed family group of 16 at Englefield on Jul 25th; and two family parties at Walbury Hill on Jul 27th.

**Summer/autumn:** during August, there were several reports of seven or more birds at Greenham and Crookham Commons, with a maximum of ten on Aug 21st. At Englefield, following a count of 13 on Aug 11th, numbers dropped markedly and the observer considered most birds to have departed by Aug 15th. Elsewhere reports generally involved counts of one or two birds. The last record was of one at Greenham Common (JL) on Sep 12th, the earliest final date this century.

## DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

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

The 58 records (cf.154 in 2017) comprised six records relating to post-breeding dispersal while the remainder were associated with the two breeding strongholds: Crookham and Greenham Commons in west Berkshire and Swinley Forest in east Berkshire. The records are summarised in the table.

### Dartford Warbler: Regional Distribution

|            |              | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East Berks | No. of birds | 6   | 6   | -   | 1   | 6   | 2   | 5   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 8   |
|            | No. of sites | 4   | 4   | -   | 1   | 3   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 3   |
| Mid Berks  | No. of birds | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | -   |
| West Berks | No. of birds | 3   | 2   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 1   | -   | 5   | 1   | 3   | 2   | -   |
|            | No. of sites | 1   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | -   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 1   | -   |

The situations at the two main breeding areas have been summarised below.

East Berkshire: in the first winter period, one was at Wellington College, Crowthorne, on Feb 3rd and two were at South Ascot on Feb 7th. Wishmoor Bottom was receiving a lot of attention at that time with the Parrot Crossbills in residence and several observers reported between one and three Dartford Warblers between Jan 1st and Feb 1st. Sadly, 21 visits to Wishmoor Bottom by one surveyor between Apr 1st and May 15th resulted in no sightings at all (MHu), and no other reports were received from there during the spring despite being well-watched. However, breeding was confirmed elsewhere: adults were seen feeding young in the nest at Wellington College on May 13th; at Edgbarrow Woods LNR on May 18th; and up to two birds were frequently heard singing nearby at Wildmoor Heath. Later in the year, one was at Caesar's Camp on Nov 29th, four or five were in the South Ascot area on Dec 4th, and three had returned to Wishmoor by Dec 12th.

West Berkshire: all records relate to Crookham and Greenham Commons. From January to March there were several reports of one to three birds. In the spring, birds were reported at

three locations, two territories were identified and breeding was confirmed at one of these when fledged young were seen on Jul 5th. Subsequently, three adults and two juveniles were seen on Aug 30th, and thereafter sightings of one or two were reported up to the end of the year.

Non-breeding locations: away from the main breeding sites, a male was found at Colnbrook on Jan 12th associating with Stonechats, and the same observer found another the same day at Bray, concluding that this suggested a recent dispersal. That theory was supported a couple of days later when a first winter Dartford Warbler was found in a fodder crop at Great Meadow Pond on Jan 14th, the first record at this site for this observer. A male was found on the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on Feb 12th. In the second winter period, a bird found at Fobney Meadow, Reading, on Nov 4th, gave the finder an OMG moment as it finally got the species onto his local list after 36 years! At the end of the year, another male was found on landfill at Colnbrook on Dec 27th.

## FIRECREST COMMON FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

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

Firecrests continued to be seen in their few favoured locations across the county, with occasional sightings elsewhere, which probably signifies under-reporting of this elusive bird. In all, there were 84 reports of sightings from 21 locations. **First winter:** Finchampstead Ridges and Whiteknights Park attracted most attention from birders as they are reliable winter locations for Firecrests. Up to two birds were reported from each site on many dates until Feb 15th at Whiteknights Park and until Mar 4th at Finchampstead Ridges. Most of the remaining records in this period derive from the south-east corner of the county. Elsewhere one was at Silwood Park, Sunninghill, on Feb 8th and another was at Burghfield GPs on Mar 26th, while the only reports for west Berkshire in this period came from Thatcham Marsh on Jan 1st and Winterbourne on Mar 20th, where one was feeding on fat balls. **Breeding:** one or two pairs appeared to be holding territories at Little Sandhurst, Finchampstead, Finchampstead Ridges, Crookham and Greenham Commons, various sites in Swinley Forest, Ashampstead Green and Kintbury. In Windsor Forest on Jun 28th, a fledged juvenile and two separate pairs that were probably nesting were seen. Other birds were present at Lambourn Woodlands and Wokefield Common. **Post-breeding:** after June, there was a significant decline in the numbers of records; the majority came from west Berkshire, with well-reported birds at Greenham Common in mid-July and mid-October, and at Thatcham Marsh in mid-September. Firecrests were reported on single dates at Inkpen, Woolhampton GPs and Maidenhead, and a male was ringed at Brimpton GPs on Sep 29th. Reports resumed at the regular wintering sites of Finchampstead Ridges and Whiteknights Park from the start of November.

## GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

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

There were over 450 reports of Goldcrests in 2018 from around 96 locations, 43% of which were in west Berkshire. The Berkshire Bird Index reported no significant change in population levels since 2000 [BBI 2018]. Reports of one or two birds accounted for 75% of the total; some larger counts referred to wider area estimates such as 22 at Speen Moor Plantation on Apr 28th but most counts exceeding two birds involved parties (sometimes in tit flocks) attracted to riverine locations and sewage treatment works in cold conditions during the winter months. Their willingness to visit garden sites and tolerate people was evident at Foudry Brook on Mar 1st when a bird landed on an observer's arm.



Goldcrests were reported from around 40 locations in the breeding season but as usual there was little direct evidence of breeding. At Brimpton, a nest that was being observed was found to have been predated on Apr 30th, and a family party with begging young were watched at Finchampstead on Jun 7th.

### WREN EURASIANWREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*An abundant resident (Green Listed)*

There were approaching 1,000 reports of Wrens over the year from nearly 150 locations, with approximately two thirds from the west of the county, and only 10% from the east. This lack of reports in the east was hopefully due to under-reporting. Wrens have adapted to human habitation, with a number of sightings in gardens and allotments. There were 15 counts of 20 or more birds, with 34 being the highest, significantly down on the previous year's high count. The level of reporting was reasonably constant throughout the year, with a slight emphasis on the early months.

Evidence of breeding was limited, with only eight reports, several of which were family parties rather than nest activity.

The Berkshire Bird Index shows abundance to have changed little this century [BBI 2018].

### NUTHATCH EURASIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

*Common and widespread woodland resident (Green Listed)*

The Birds of Berkshire notes the similarity between Nuthatch and Treecreeper in habitat requirements, resulting in similar distribution across the county [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. In 2018, Nuthatches were found in 15% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 16% of those in mid Berkshire and 22% of those in east Berkshire. The number of Nuthatch sightings was at least double those of Treecreepers, which may have reflected the availability of food sources as Nuthatches rely on nuts and seeds during winter, as opposed to the Treecreeper's insect diet. Nuthatches are also reported as a regular visitor at garden feeders.

Successful breeding was observed at Swallowfield, Brimpton and Lower Earley. At the latter, a potential nest site was being checked out in February, the nest hole had been reduced with mud in April, and, after fighting off the attentions of a Grey Squirrel in May, three fledged young were seen in early June.

The upward trend in Nuthatch abundance shown in the Berkshire Bird Index continued, with the index almost doubling since 2000 [BBI 2018].

### TREECREEPER EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

*Common resident (Green Listed)*

Although sightings of Treecreepers were down by 10%, the number of locations where they were seen, 87 this year, was nearly the same as in the previous year, which hopefully indicated a stable population. Treecreepers were found in around 15% of tetrads right across the county. There were just six reports of confirmed breeding, mainly involving family parties with juvenile birds. There were some reports of Treecreepers being seen in gardens, as well as birds joining flocks of tits in autumn.

### STARLING COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Concern over the numbers of Starlings nationwide is twofold: the reduction in occurrence and size of the large winter flocks, and the reduced numbers seen visiting urban gardens. BTO research suggests that fewer juveniles are surviving their first winter, with the probable cause the change in farming methods, specifically a reduced availability of tipulids (Crane Flies) which are an important food source for the young birds [BTO BirdTrends]. In Berkshire historically there were large winter murmurations on the Downs, with smaller but significant flocks in the larger towns and other locations. In 2018, the counts on the Downs were similar to 2017, but reports of 2,500 birds seen along the Thames were not repeated.

**First winter:** counts of 1,000+ were reported in January through to March from the Downs. The largest flock reported from the east of the county was just 100 birds at Queen Mother Reservoir. All other reports of over 100 were from the west of Reading. **Spring/summer:** amongst reduced reporting during the summer, a flock of 520 at Rowney Predator Lake, Woolhampton, on Jun 27th was a stand-out event. **Second winter:** flocks of 100+ started to reappear from September onwards, although none much above 300 were reported before the end of the year.

The Berkshire Bird Index shows the slow decline in breeding season abundance continuing at around 2-3% per year. [BBI 2018].

The table shows the regional and monthly variations across the county.

**Starling: Monthly Counts by Region**

|      | Jan   | Feb   | Mar   | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East | 370   | 57    | 110   | 15  | 250 | 82  | 28  | 120 | 490 | 260 | 420 | 740 |
| Mid  | 200   | 22    | 340   | 18  | 21  | 310 | 51  | 120 | 50  | 210 | 400 | 130 |
| West | 1,700 | 1,300 | 1,800 | 69  | 230 | 750 | 71  | 110 | 120 | 610 | 740 | 270 |

### RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

*Scarce passage migrant (Red Listed)*

A fairly typical year for Ring Ouzel sightings, although a bit thin during the autumn migration. No birds stayed long in the county.

**Spring passage:** a maximum of seven birds were reported. There were two females and one male at Greenham Common between Apr 4th and Apr 16th (PD *et al.*). One of the females had a deformed mandible, so was quite distinctive. A single male bird was reported in the Inkpen and Combe area between Apr 15th and Apr 23rd (JHa *et al.*). In the east of the county, all records were at Queen Mother Reservoir. There was a single male reported on Apr 16th staying until 24th (CDRH, DJB). Another male, distinguishable from the first, was also sighted on Apr 24th (ABT, CDRH), and a female was seen on Apr 29th and 30th (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** there was just one sighting in the autumn passage, a single female at Greenham Common on Oct 16th (IW, JL).



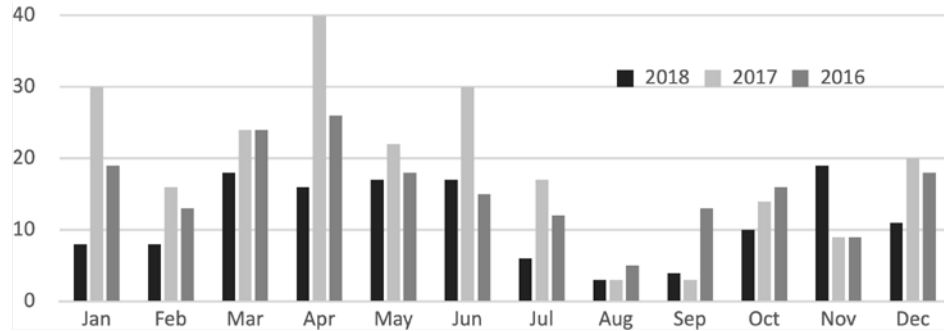
*Ring Ouzel with deformed bill, Greenham Common, Apr 5th, John Absolom.*

## BLACKBIRD COMMON BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

*Abundant resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)*

The Blackbird is one of the commonest birds in Berkshire, able to flourish in a wide variety of habitats, and very much at home in urban surroundings. Because it is so common, it becomes difficult to assess fluctuations in population. The bird is undoubtedly under-

### Blackbird: Maximum Monthly Counts at Greenham Common



reported; the 2007-11 Atlas Survey estimated around 48,000 birds in Berkshire. The graph attempts to track the seasonal and annual fluctuations in Blackbird populations, comparing the maximum number of birds reported each month from Greenham Common, which was chosen because of the larger numbers reported and the large number of reports.

The graph indicates that 2018 numbers were slightly down on previous years, although the overall seasonal trend was similar. The Berkshire Bird Index shows little change in the abundance of Blackbirds this century [BBI 2018]. There were four reports of flocks of over 30 birds (similar maximum counts as in 2017), and three reports of over ten birds winter feeding in gardens.

Ringing recoveries involved several birds that had remained faithful to one site over many years, while on the other hand a bird that was ringed as an adult in Grembergen, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium, in October 2017 was found unwell in Newbury on Jan 21st [BTO Ringing].

## FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

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

The first table illustrates the seasonal variation in distribution, and also shows that the west of the county sees the greater numbers of Fieldfares.

### Fieldfare: Monthly Counts by Region

|      | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov   | Dec   |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| East | 150 | 340 | 560 | 32  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 130 | 770   | 810   |
| Mid  | 260 | 260 | 350 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 190 | 350   | 110   |
| West | 510 | 680 | 770 | 54  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 810 | 2,100 | 1,600 |

**First winter:** there were several reports of flocks of up to 200 birds, with a maximum of 400 at Colnbrook on Mar 3rd and 4th. The last sighting was 14 birds in Windsor Great Park on Apr 14th (KPD), which is ten days earlier than in 2017. There were several reports of birds visiting gardens and bird tables, with a taste for apples, especially towards the end of the season, when presumably other food was becoming scarce. **Second winter:** the first bird of the winter was

sighted at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 2nd (TC), and numbers increased from Oct 7th. Flock sizes were larger than the previous spring, peaking at 1,000+ birds on Cow Down on Nov 21st, with other reports of up to 500 birds, sometimes in mixed flocks with Redwings.

The second table shows the maximum number of birds recorded at the sites reporting the largest flocks. This shows the Fieldfare's preference for more open locations.

### Fieldfare: Locations with Highest Counts

| Location                  | Max count | Location                | Max count |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Cow Down                  | 1,000     | Great Meadow Pond       | 300       |
| Eastbury Down             | 550       | Greenham Common         | 250       |
| Compton                   | 500       | Searles Farm Lane GPs   | 200       |
| Streatley                 | 400       | Bury Down               | 200       |
| Dorney Wetlands           | 400       | Manor Farm, Crookham    | 200       |
| Colnbrook                 | 400       | Spray Road, Lower Green | 200       |
| Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) | 360       | Queen Mother Reservoir  | 200       |
| Compton Downs             | 300       | Combe                   | 200       |

## REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

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

The Redwing is another winter visitor, strongly associated with the Fieldfare, with which it frequently forms feeding groups. The table shows the seasonal and regional distribution.

### Redwing: Monthly Counts by Region

|      | Jan   | Feb   | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec   |
|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| East | 1,300 | 530   | 650 | 3   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 370 | 440 | 1,200 |
| Mid  | 760   | 1,000 | 470 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 310 | 69  | 260   |
| West | 260   | 260   | 150 | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 1   | 570 | 520 | 710   |

**First winter:** the table shows an easterly shift in population, not reflected in the distribution of Fieldfares. Flock sizes peaked at 350 in Ruscombe on Feb 6th, with several reports of 200 or more. The last report was on Apr 8th (DJB). **Second winter:** the first bird was reported on Sep 30th (AEDH), with significant sightings from a week later. The monthly counts continued to increase into December, with the initial emphasis on the west of the county changing to favour the east.

The second table shows the maximum numbers seen at favoured locations. This shows substantial numbers in all parts of the county, although flock sizes were smaller than those for the Fieldfare.

### Redwing: Locations with Highest Counts

| Location                    | Max count | Location                              | Max count |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Ruscombe                    | 350       | Basildon Park                         | 175       |
| Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill)   | 330       | K&A Canal, Hampstead to Drewetts Lock | 175       |
| Great Meadow Pond           | 300       | Ascot Gate, Windsor Great Park        | 150       |
| Greenham Common             | 205       | Winkfield                             | 150       |
| Bowsey Hill, Cockpole Green | 200       | Moor Green Lakes                      | 150       |
| Dorney Wetlands             | 200       | Newbury                               | 140       |
| King's Meadow, Reading      | 200       | Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford           | 120       |
| Wargrave                    | 200       | Eastbury Down, Sheepdrove             | 110       |

There were no reports this year of the Icelandic *coburni* sub-species.

## SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

*Common resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)*

Although most reports of Song Thrushes came from the west of the county – roughly three times as many as both the central and east parts – the number of sites reporting was more uniform across the regions, although still favouring the west. After a consistent first half of the year, Song Thrushes seemed to disappear in June, and made only a partial recovery in terms of sightings (or hearings) by the end of the year. Despite a lot of activity being recorded, there were only six cases of confirmed breeding, mainly parents carrying food to unseen nests. There was a report of a singing thrush mimicking a Ring-necked Parakeet.

The Berkshire Bird Index shows little change in abundance this century [BBI 2018].

## MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

*Common though declining resident (Amber Listed)*

The eye-catching feature for Mistle Thrushes was a number of reports of large groups of birds: 20 at Langley Mead, Shinfield, on Jul 13th, and another 20 at Eddington on Sep 12th. There were five other reports of ten or more birds, and numerous counts of up to ten birds. The two counts of 20 were particularly interesting as they occurred in the months when sightings of Mistle Thrushes, as with Song Thrushes, were at a low ebb. The west of the county again produced the majority of sightings, double both the central district and the east, although the balance of locations was fairly even, from 37 in the east to 46 in the west. Confirmed breeding was reported on only two occasions.

The Berkshire Bird Index reflects the national picture of decline, slowing in recent years [BBI 2018, BTO BirdTrends].

## SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

*Declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red Listed)*

In common with most years, birds arrived in the middle of May and occupied their breeding sites. The first record was at St Laurence's Church, Hungerford, on May 7th (CF), followed by sightings at nine locations by the end of the month. Apart from single passing birds at Brimpton and Lavell's Lake, most records came from the breeding sites in the Swinley Forest area and Swallowfield Church. **Breeding:** breeding evidence came from: Combe Church; Kintbury (at least four pairs); Hoe Benham; Bowdown Woods; Swallowfield Church; Wishmoor Cross; and elsewhere in Swinley Forest. Being relatively late breeders, Spotted Flycatchers are sometimes seen feeding fledged young in August, as was reported this year at Combe Church on Aug 1st. It was reported that no birds were seen this year at Temple, Remenham, a site that had been regularly occupied in previous years\*. **Post-breeding:** from August onwards, records were more widespread, usually of one or two birds, from a total of 18 sites across the county from Walbury Hill in the west to Colnbrook in the east. The great majority of records were from mid-August to the end of the first week of September, with many found at well-watched sites such as: Moor Green Lakes; Dinton Pastures CP; and Fobney Meadow. The last record of the year was of a single bird on Oct 1st at Walbury Hill (IW).

\*[Recorder's note: We welcome negative records such as the one above, as they are particularly valuable for monitoring population changes.]

## ROBIN EUROPEAN ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

*Abundant resident (Green Listed)*

Typically, Robins attract many more records than, for example, the similarly abundant and widespread Wren. For 2018 there were 1,191 records of Robins submitted, fairly evenly spread through the year though with a bias towards the spring and early summer when territorial activity was greatest; many records noted their aggressive behaviour towards conspecifics. As noted in previous years, densities can be quite high in suitable habitat. Some examples were: 32 at Thatcham Marsh in March and 33 in October; 20 at Twyford GPs in March and 25 in October; 20 at Crookham Common Pools in January and again in October. The best measure of abundance we have is from the BTO's annual Breeding Bird Survey, which for 2018 shows no significant change over the last eighteen years [BBI 2018].

## NIGHTINGALE COMMON NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

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

The first Nightingales were recorded on a typical date of Apr 7th at Burghfield GPs (JA) and, by the end of the month, birds were singing at most of the usual breeding sites (see table). Richard Crawford, who monitors Nightingales in the Burghfield and Theale area, noted that birds were slow to take up territory and that numbers were well down in 2018. The total number of territorial males recorded was 29, lower than in recent years: 45 in 2017, 67 in 2016, and 53 in 2015. However, in none of these years was a structured survey carried out of this important Lower Kennet population. The last record of the year was at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Jul 14th (JA).

### Nightingale: Singing Males at All Sites

|                              | April | May | June | July |
|------------------------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| River Kennet west of Newbury | -     | 1   | -    | -    |
| Greenham/Crookham Commons    | 4     | 5   | 6    | -    |
| Woolhampton GPs              | 1     | 1   | -    | -    |
| Brimpton GPs                 | 2     | 2   | 1    | 1    |
| Theale Main GP               | 1     | 3   | 1    | -    |
| Moatlands GP                 | 2     | 5   | -    | -    |
| Burghfield GPs               | 6     | 10  | 5    | 1    |
| Dinton Pastures              | 1     | -   | -    | -    |

Sites occupied in 2017 but with no records in 2018 were: Thatcham Marsh; Midgham GPs; Wigmore Lane GPs; and Hosehill Lake. Birds recorded on single dates near Hermitage on Apr 26th and at Eton Wick on Jun 3rd are not included in the table.

## PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

### EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER

*Scarce and declining passage migrant and very rare summer visitor (Amber Listed)*

There were two records in 2018. The first was a male at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 19th (RFM), the only spring record. There was a single autumn record of a juvenile at Dinton Pastures CP, first seen with two Spotted Flycatchers on Mortimer's Meadow on Sep 12th (AM, BTB) and staying to Sep 13th.

## BLACK REDSTART

*Phoenicurus ochruros*

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

Again, there were no breeding records, and only three passage birds, two in spring and one in autumn. **Spring:** the first was of a first winter male at a building site at Woodhurst Park, Bracknell, from Mar 30th (DMac) to Apr 1st, when it was heard singing. A female was at the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, from Apr 11th (RJG) to 15th. **Autumn:** a moulting male was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 14th (ABT).



Black Redstart, Bracknell, Apr 1st, Andy Tomczynski.

## REDSTART COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Localised summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant (Amber Listed)

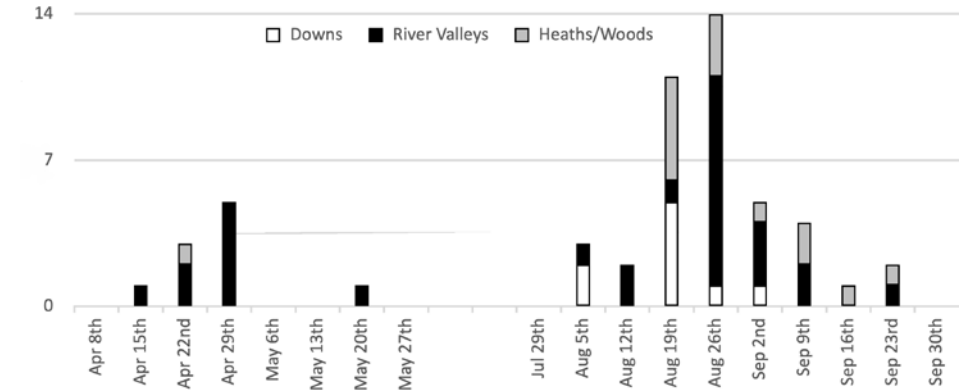
Records of Redstarts followed the usual pattern of spring birds arriving directly at their breeding areas on the Thames Basin Heaths and a widespread autumn passage across the county. **Spring/breeding:** the first record was of a male and female at Wishmoor Cross on Apr 15th (MHu). Thereafter, most records were in the Swinley Forest area, involving at least six territorial males; without a structured survey, this was probably a substantial underestimate of the population. There were passage birds on Apr 25th at Moor Green Lakes and at Brimpton. On May 8th a single bird was seen at Walbury Hill, where one was also recorded on Jul 4th, and on May 28th there was a singing male at Greenham Common. **Autumn:** records came from seven sites across the county from Colnbrook in the east to Lambourn in the west, involving 15 to 25 birds. Notable records were: three together at Upper Lambourn on Aug 28th; three at Crookham Common on Sep 13th; and at Colnbrook a total of four different birds were seen on dates between Aug 22nd and Sep 6th. The last record of the year was of a single bird at Cookham on Oct 7th (P J Webster)

## WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

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

**Spring:** male Whinchats in breeding livery are spectacular birds, as noted by the observer of the first to be seen this year on Apr 20th at Burnthouse Lane (KEM). Over the next few days there were records at: Fobney Island; Fobney Meadow; Wishmoor Bottom; and then three birds at Burnthouse Lane on Apr 30th. Passage was over by the end of the first week of May, there being only one later record, on Fobney Island on May 26th. **Autumn:** the main passage in Berkshire peaked in the second half of August and was largely over, unusually early, by mid-September. The total number of birds seen, around 35, was a lot lower than in recent years (2014-7 average approximately 90). A third of the birds recorded were at Crookham and Greenham Commons, where four were seen on Aug 24th. Other records came from sites across the county, from Queen Mother Reservoir in the east to Wigmoreash Pond, Inkpen, in the west, where there were three on Aug 24th. The majority of sites on which birds were found, other than Greenham and Crookham Commons, were open agricultural areas in the river valleys and on the Downs. The latest record for the year was of a single bird at Woolhampton GPs on Sep 24th (JBT). The chart shows the weekly totals of maximum counts in the passage periods by the main topographic areas.

## Whinchat: Weekly Minima

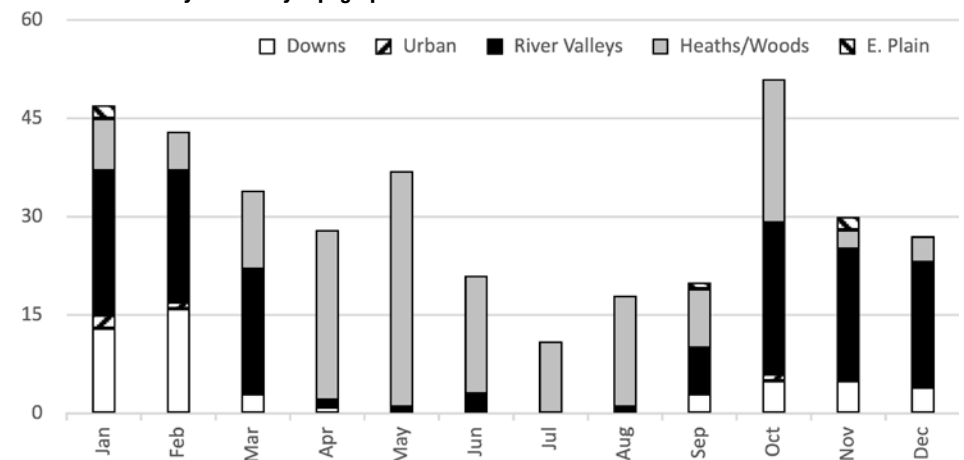


## STONECHAT EUROPEAN STONECHAT *Saxicola rubicola*

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

Although the numbers of Stonechats at the beginning of 2018 were similar to those at the end of 2017, numbers recorded in the breeding season and after were well down on the previous few years. **First winter:** birds were typically widespread in the winter, with 37 sites occupied in the January-February period, nearly half of them in the lower lying river valleys. The January-February total of around 50 birds was close to the previous two months total of 58 in November-December 2017. This suggests a low attrition rate during the early winter, though a period of frosts in February and March may have contributed to the lower numbers recorded on the breeding grounds in 2018 compared to 2017. **Breeding:** during April and May, Stonechats were recorded at 13 sites, almost all heath areas. The total number of birds recorded was around half of that in 2017. Greenham and Crookham Commons accounted for approximately one third of the birds recorded in the breeding season and, in a survey, Adrian Hickman recorded confirmed breeding at twelve places on the Commons. The other main breeding area was the Thames Basin Heaths, including Swinley Forest, Crowthorne and South Ascot. Breeding was not confirmed at any other sites though single birds were

## Stonechat: Monthly Minima by Topographic Area



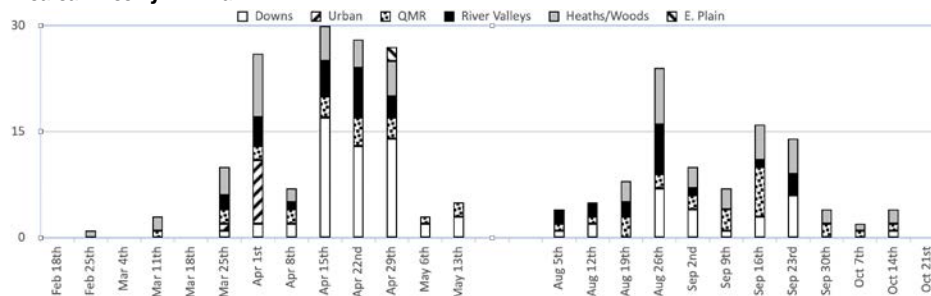
present at Bury Down, West Ilsley and Moor Green Lakes in April and May. **Second winter:** typically, the peak month for numbers of birds is October, when migrant birds may augment the wintering population. The numbers of birds recorded in November and December were around half those in 2017 (though similar to those of the preceding three years) and they were distributed over twenty sites, mostly in the river valleys. The chart shows the monthly totals of maximum counts by the main topographic areas.

## WHEATEAR NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* Common passage migrant (Amber Listed)

2018 was a fairly typical year for both spring and autumn passages. Wheatears were recorded at 35 sites across Berkshire, with about 62% of birds in the west of the county, 12% in mid and 26% in east Berkshire in both seasons. **Spring:** the first bird of the year was found at Greenham Common on Mar 3rd (NC), followed later in the month by further arrivals at Greenham and Crookham Commons, Queen Mother Reservoir and Wishmoor Bottom. The main passage came in April, with at least five on a building site at Woodhurst Park, Bracknell, on Apr 1st and six at Crookham Common on Apr 2nd. In the first week of May there were still good numbers on the Downs, with nine birds in one field at Compton Downs on May 3rd, then numbers fell quickly, the last being two at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 16th. Males tend to arrive earlier than females, thus in March, 13 of the 17 birds whose sex was recorded were male; in the last week of April, 12 of the 22 whose sex was recorded were female. **Autumn:** passage began in the first week of August with birds at Welford on Aug 5th and Englefield and Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 6th. Mostly, birds were seen in ones and twos, though there were five birds at Coombe Gibbet on Aug 26th and at least six at Crookham Common on 28th. The last birds of the year were at Queen Mother Reservoir (PNe) and Compton Downs (DJB) on Oct 19th.

The chart shows the weekly totals of maximum counts in the passage periods by the main topographic areas.

### Wheatear: Weekly Minima



## GREENLAND WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*

On spring passage, a male of this race was identified at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 27th (CDRH). On May 3rd four males were reported together with six of the nominate race in a field at Compton Downs (NC), and a party of eight Wheatears including five males thought to be of this race were in the same area on May 5th. In the autumn, birds were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 20th (ABT) and at Englefield on Sep 29th (RCr).

## HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common but declining resident (Red Listed)

The House Sparrow is one of the most well-known bird species resident in the UK. This is mainly due to its habit of breeding in urban areas, as well as its bold and noisy character. It will generally nest in colonies in suburban or rural areas, often choosing any available crevices in buildings. This species was moved from the Green to Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern in 2002. The Berkshire Bird Index shows a weakly significant decline for this species, whose abundance has been fairly stable in recent years [BBI 2018]. The House Sparrow is another species that is certainly under-reported, so analysis of the reports requires caution; in fact the 40% increase in number of records to 234 (still a very low number) between 2017 and 2018 hardly represents any increase in number of locations as large numbers of these records derive from the same locations. The records indicate that this species occurs uniformly across the county in about 11% of tetrads, no doubt also an under-estimate.

**Breeding:** surprisingly only 16% of sightings were from urban areas during the breeding season, with river valleys the most favoured habitat, followed by heaths and woodland, according to the reports received. There were very few reports of nest building or nests with young; recently fledged young were reported at six locations: Hungerford; Welford; Brimpton; Maidenhead; Winkfield; and Eton Wick. The highest counts of the year were 40+ birds at Woodlands Park Fields on Jun 5th and a similar number at Eton Wick Floods on Sep 3rd; both flocks contained good numbers of recently fledged young.

Only 13 locations registered counts of 20 or more birds, compared to the 17 locations recorded in 2017.

## TREE SPARROW EURASIAN TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Formerly a not uncommon resident, now a rare visitor (Red Listed)

A welcome record of this species with one (possibly more) seen at Bridge farm, Arborfield, on Jan 28th (RRi) and again on Feb 24th (RRi, BTB, KEM) with Reed Buntings and Yellowhammers in a Blackthorn hedge close to a feed strip. One or more Tree Sparrows had been seen by BTB a few days earlier.

## DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Common though possibly declining resident (Amber Listed)

A common and unobtrusive species, the Dunnock is found throughout the county. A ground feeder, its preferred habitat is wide-ranging but most commonly includes hedgerows, dense scrub, woodland, parks and urban areas.

With Dunnocks being such a common species and featuring frequently in observers' BirdTrack Complete Lists, drawing inferences from numbers of records can give a misleading picture of their status, so it is safer to look at the locations where they were recorded. Dunnocks were recorded in 20% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 16% of those in mid Berkshire and 14% of those in east Berkshire. The abundance of Dunnocks in Berkshire estimated from the BTO's breeding bird survey has been stable over the last twenty years [BBI 2018]. Nationally the species was moved from the Green to Amber list of Birds of Conservation Concern due to a substantial decline in the breeding population between 1969 and 1985. Since that time the numbers nationally have steadily improved, however the species still currently meets the Amber List criteria.

Counts above ten birds were recorded on only seven occasions during the year. A significant proportion of the higher counts were recorded during the spring months when their

distinctive song allows for easier counting. The counts above ten were: 13 at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 2nd; 13 at Enborne on Mar 10th; 11 at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 15th; 11 at Clare's Green Field, Shinfield, on Mar 23rd increasing to 14 on Apr 20th; 11 at Boxford on May 8th; and the only winter high count of 12 birds at Cold Harbour on Dec 4th.

**Breeding:** the ideal habitat at Greenham and Crookham Commons received some excellent coverage, allowing an insight into the territories claimed during the spring and summer period. A very impressive total of 68 territories were recorded across the area between Mar 20th and Jul 5th (AEDH). Otherwise, breeding was significantly under-recorded, with reports coming only from Brimpton, Great Meadow Pond, Hungerford, Walbury Hill and Winkfield.

## YELLOW WAGTAIL WESTERNYELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

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

Yellow Wagtails overwinter in sub-Saharan Africa and are seen locally, on passage, during the spring and autumn periods. The race *flava* breeds predominantly in the UK and some parts of the nearby European mainland. The confirmed numbers of breeding records for the county have declined significantly over a prolonged period, with a switch from their traditional wet meadow and marshland areas to downland and cultivated land. In 2009 the race was moved from Amber status to Red on the list of Birds of Conservation Concern.

Between March and September, a total of 94 records were received from across the county, with 50 in west Berkshire, 13 in mid Berkshire and 31 in east Berkshire. The Yellow Wagtail counts in the tables are based on totals of weekly maximum site counts from the first week in April until the final record in September.

### Yellow Wagtail: Weekly Counts in Spring

| Week Commencing | Apr 1st | Apr 8th | Apr 15th | Apr 22nd | Apr 29th | May 6th | May 13th | May 20th | May 27th | Jun 3rd | Jun 10th | Jun 17th | Jun 24th | Jul 1st |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| No. of sites    | -       | 2       | 2        | 5        | 1        | 2       | 3        | 6        | 3        | 3       | 1        | 2        | 1        | -       |
| No. of birds    | -       | 4       | 2        | 5        | 1        | 2       | 4        | 12       | 4        | 5       | 1        | 2        | 1        | -       |

### Yellow Wagtail: Weekly Counts in Autumn

| Week Commencing | Jul 1st | Jul 8th | Jul 15th | Jul 22nd | Jul 29th | Aug 5th | Aug 12th | Aug 19th | Aug 26th | Sep 2nd | Sep 9th | Sep 16th | Sep 23rd |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| No. of sites    | 1       | 1       | 1        | 1        | 3        | 4       | 1        | 5        | 8        | 8       | 4       | 2        | 1        |
| No. of birds    | 1       | 2       | 4        | 1        | 11       | 5       | 1        | 11       | 22       | 93      | 7       | 2        | 7        |

**Spring passage:** a very poor spring passage began with an early sighting of a single bird at Green Park, Reading, on Mar 22nd (PW). Only a handful of reports were received for individual birds in April, except for three seen flycatching on the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on Apr 10th. Numbers barely improved through May with the only multiple counts being two pairs on a muck pile at Brightwalton Common on May 20th, and two males and a female at Compton Down on May 26th.

**Breeding:** it was an extremely poor year for this species in the county. During the breeding months of May and June there was only one sighting of an adult bird heading into a possible nest site, at Ruscombe on Jun 10th. A single juvenile was recorded at Swallowfield on Jun 1st, but with no other sightings of this species at the site breeding activity could not be confirmed. Otherwise, the only records were of single birds and the occasional pair in suitable habitat at five sites in the west of the county, namely Wellbottom Down, Woolley Down, RAF Welford, Brightwalton Common, and Compton Down; while at Starveall Farm, Farnborough, two adults and a juvenile on Aug 19th were suspected to be a pair with a second brood. This is

the third year in a row where there have been no confirmed reports of successful breeding in the county. Lack of coverage may be a factor but the absence of confirmed reports continues to indicate that this species is in significant decline as a breeding species in Berkshire.

**Autumn passage:** the first few weeks of the autumn period continued the poor trend in records of recent years. There was a slight upturn in records when five birds were reported at Starveall Farm, Farnborough, on Jul 31st. The increase in numbers continued with between five and seven juveniles being reported at Englefield on Aug 2nd. Low numbers, of between one and three birds, continued throughout the month with a gradual increase towards the final week of August when four birds were seen at Englefield on Aug 27th. The same number were reported at Starveall Farm on Aug 30th and at Greenham Common on Aug 31st. The first week in September proved to be the most significant in terms of numbers seen, with four birds at Lower Farm on Sep 1st. The largest count of the year was of 40+ birds in a recently harrowed stubble field above Starveall Farm on Sep 3rd. Approximately 40% of these were first winter birds. The increased passage was confirmed by a further 15 being reported at Greenham Common on Sep 4th and 22 feeding around the cattle on Dorney Common, Eton Wick, on Sep 6th. Seven birds were reported at Wraysbury GPs on Sep 8th and four more were seen at Lower Farm GP on the same day. The numbers decreased for the remainder of the month, with the final sighting being of a group of seven birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 25th (ABT).

## GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

*Locally common resident and winter visitor (Red Listed)*

A widespread and moderately common species that is resident throughout the year. The county provides many areas of suitable habitat with the preferred nesting sites being riverbanks, and especially under bridges and other structures near waterways. The Grey Wagtail was moved from Green to Amber on the list of Birds of Conservation Concern in 2002 following a continued decline in the UK, but has now been moved to the Red list because of the breeding population decline (BTO BirdTrends). Records were received from 90 locations across the county but with a higher concentration in mid Berkshire where Grey Wagtails occurred in 31% of tetrads compared to 18% of the tetrads in east Berkshire and 13% of those in west Berkshire. As expected, river valleys provided the habitat for the majority of reports received. The monthly status of recorded sightings by habitat type is given in the table.

### Grey Wagtail: Monthly Distribution by Habitat

|               | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Downs         | -   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| River Valleys | 21  | 17  | 27  | 29  | 35  | 30  | 3   | 14  | 20  | 20  | 16  | 14  |
| Heaths/Woods  | 3   | 5   | 7   | 4   | 8   | 3   | 2   | 2   | 6   | 7   | 4   | 3   |
| E. Plain      | -   | -   | 2   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Urban         | 1   | 3   | 9   | 3   | 1   | 9   | 8   | 4   | 4   | 5   | 3   | 1   |

The totals were largely down when compared with the numbers recorded in recent years; indeed the monthly total for all months but one was significantly less than the corresponding figure for 2017, averaging 65% of the 2017 level.

High counts: the first high count of the year was six birds along the River Blackwater at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 3rd. Five adult birds were at Streatley on May 12th. Subsequent high counts related to family parties.

**Breeding:** between April and July there was evidence of breeding at 11 locations, with nest building recorded at Moor Green Lakes, at Winnersh, and possibly along the Jubilee

River. Reports of young birds or family parties included: two young being fed by adults at Hungerford Marsh on May 26th; five at Fobney Meadow on Jun 22nd; two adults and eight juveniles at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 29th; and six at Donnington Grove Country Club the same day. Young birds were also reported during the breeding season at Streatley STW, Fobney Meadow and Maidenhead.

**Autumn passage:** Grey Wagtails are known to disperse during the autumn period, and regularly move away from areas of running water to ponds, flooded meadows and sewage farms. This year there were no large groups recorded during the autumn and winter months. However, of the 90 locations where records were submitted, 36 concerned birds being only present outside the spring and summer seasons. This therefore indicated that small numbers moved to new areas between September and March.

## WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

*Uncommon passage migrant*

The nominate race *Motacilla alba alba* is a common and highly migratory species which breeds throughout continental Europe, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. In the UK it is an uncommon passage migrant, with birds likely to be from the breeding grounds in Iceland and eastern Greenland areas passing through. This species was reported on 19 occasions from six locations across the county during the spring and autumn passages. The bulk of the sightings were recorded from two sites: on five occasions at Moor Green Lakes in mid Berkshire and eight times at Queen Mother Reservoir in the east, with a handful of sightings from the other four locations.

**Spring passage:** a small spring passage was recorded between March and May with lower numbers than in 2017. There were 14 sightings submitted, totalling 11 different birds; the first of these was a first summer male at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 23rd and 24th (CDRH). Then followed single birds at Borough Marsh on Apr 1st (ABT), Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 5th (CDRH, PNe), and Moor Green Lakes from Apr 10th to May 2nd, with two birds there on Apr 19th and 25th (GDu, RCM). Another two were watched at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 17th (ABT), with a female there between Apr 24th and 27th (CDRH, DJB). A single male was reported at Englefield on Apr 25th (RCr) and the last sightings of the spring were of a male at Lower Farm on May 8th and 10th (NC, P Chotai).

**Summer:** a notable sighting of a male with worn summer plumage was recorded during the summer at Queen Mother Reservoir, the moult continuing throughout its long stay between Jul 3rd and Aug 31st (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** five birds were reported during the autumn period. The first report was of a male at Fobney Meadow on Sep 4th which was joined by a second on Sep 6th. The only other sightings, all from Queen Mother Reservoir, were of an adult male on Sep 15th (CDRH) and a first winter on Oct 7th (CDRH).

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

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

The dark backed race, *yarrellii*, is almost entirely restricted to the UK and Ireland, and thus sightings are of great significance in a global context. Berkshire has a good mix of its preferred habitats: lowland grassland, wetlands and large suburban areas. The availability of suitable habitat and the vocal nature of this species should lead to it having a high level of reporting. However, since 2000 there has been a 50% decline in abundance of the species in the county [BBI 2018]; this reduction does not reflect the national trend for Pied Wagtail, which is still Green listed.

A species that occurs across most of the county, Pied Wagtails were reported by 56 observers

recording a total of 382 sightings from 80 locations during the year. The locations were evenly spread across all regions, with 31 in west Berkshire, 25 in central Berkshire and 24 in east Berkshire. The monthly status of recorded sightings is given in the table. Although the number of reported sightings this year were slightly up compared to 2017, the counts were down for nearly every month, indicating that the species is likely to have had a poor year.

### Pied Wagtail: Monthly Counts

|                 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of sites | 15  | 22  | 19  | 15  | 16  | 14  | 8   | 11  | 10  | 15  | 19  | 10  |
| Number of birds | 100 | 87  | 60  | 33  | 46  | 58  | 39  | 89  | 113 | 72  | 63  | 79  |

The majority of the records were in single figures; this year there were very few large flocks with the year's highest count being 50 birds gathered near the sewage treatments works at the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on Jan 1st. At the end of the year, gatherings peaking at around 40 birds on Dec 28th were reported at Woolhampton GPs. Another notable sighting was of 24 birds feeding at half time on the pitch at the Madejski Stadium on Dec 8th, though sadly their support did not help, as Reading lost 0-2. In autumn, 31 birds were reported at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 9th. The New Workings at Moor Green Lakes had a count of 20 birds on Sep 3rd, with 19+ being reported on the floods at Eton Wick on Oct 14th. Otherwise, it was a disappointing year for records of large flocks of this species, although no winter roost counts were submitted.

**Breeding:** there was a significant decrease in reports for breeding activity, with only a single report of an adult bird carrying food for its young at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 13th. The lack of reports was more likely to be as a result of under-reporting rather than there being no breeding activity within the county, especially as there were ten reports of young being present later in the breeding season. The first confirmed report of juveniles was on May 25th at Queen Mother Reservoir, when a pair was seen feeding three young. Later in May there were two reports from Moor Green Lakes of up to four juveniles being seen. This site provided six of the ten records of young, with the highest count being that of eight juvenile birds on Jul 21st. Other reports received were: a pair with two young at Brimpton on Jun 7th; an adult with two juveniles at Upton Court Grammar School on Jun 21st (a location where they were believed to have fledged a few weeks earlier); and finally at Winkfield where two adults and five young were reported on Aug 23rd. It was still likely that such a widespread species with significant areas of suitable habitat has more breeding success, but overall, the figures showed that it had been a poor year.

## MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

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

Numbers and overhead movements fell below normal. Sadly, this species no longer summers in central or east Berkshire and is declining in the west.

**First winter/spring:** flocks were modest and spread across the county. The highest count was of 50 at Purley Meadows on Feb 5th, followed by counts of 40-45 at Lower Farm GP in February. One at Eton Wick on Mar 2nd landed on KR's patio and stayed for a few minutes no more than six feet from a window. Unusually, no movements were reported.

**Summer/breeding:** in a very poor season, breeding was only confirmed at Lambourn and Greenham Common; elsewhere, the only suggestions of breeding related to Bury Down and Compton Downs. There were no summer or breeding records for central or east Berkshire.

**Autumn/second winter:** suggestions of autumn movement began with one seen at the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on Aug 29th. Moderate movements in September included: 80 over south-east at Woose Hill, Wokingham, on Sep 22nd; 150+ at Woodlands Park Fields

on Sep 24th; 82 at Englefield on Sep 24th; and 100 there on Sep 30th. This site provided the highest counts for October, with 60+ on Oct 7th, 200+ on Oct 8th, and 60 on Oct 10th; very few overhead movements were noted. Counts struggled to pass 30 in November and December, but included: c.30 at Warren Row on Nov 27th; 31 at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Dec 20th; c.40 at Woolhampton GPs on Dec 22nd; and c.50 there on Dec 28th.

### TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

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

The healthy recovery that occurred in 2017 was not evident this year. A survey in the Swinley Forest, Swinley Park and South Ascot areas that had found 33 territories in 2017 revealed just 22 territories in 2018 (DJB). The Tree Pipit is struggling in the west of the county, including at Greenham Common, where in contrast the Woodlark is thriving.

**Spring/summer:** the first appearance was at a breeding site, with two at Buttersteep, South Ascot, on Apr 5th (DJB), a normal arrival date. Single migrants visited Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 18th and Moor Green Lakes on Apr 22nd. The information is summarised in the table (for details of the Swinley Forest part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, see Crowley *et al.*, 2012, *The Birds of Berkshire 2012*, 9-16).

#### Tree Pipit: Breeding Season Summaries

| Locality                                | Number of Territories | Max Count inc young | Notes                |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Walbury Hill/Combe                      | ?                     | 1                   | 1 report             |
| Snelsmore Common                        | 1?                    | 1                   |                      |
| Greenham/Crookham Common                | 1?                    | 2                   |                      |
| Bucklebury Common                       | 1?                    | 2                   | 1 report             |
| Padworth Common                         | 1                     | 1                   |                      |
| <b>Thames Basin Heaths SPA:</b>         |                       |                     | Berkshire areas only |
| Crowthorne Woods                        | ?                     | ?                   | No reports           |
| Wildmoor Heath                          | 1?                    | 1                   |                      |
| Wishmoor Bottom                         | 2-3                   | 4                   |                      |
| Sandhurst RMA                           | ?                     | ?                   | No reports           |
| Swinley Forest (areas not listed above) | 11                    | 11                  |                      |
| Swinley Park                            | ??                    | 7                   |                      |
| South Ascot                             | 3?                    | 3                   |                      |

**Autumn:** a modest passage was observed, mainly in the west of the county. Seven reports consisted of: one at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Aug 3rd; three at Greenham Common on Aug 17th; five there on Aug 21st and three on Aug 29th; one at Colnbrook on Aug 24th and again on Sep 2nd; and the final departure of one at Greenham Common on Sep 13th (IW).

### WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber Listed)*

A good number of reports came largely from two observers and two sites. **First winter:** a succession of records for Horton GP (all CDRH) began with one from Jan 7th to 10th, then two Jan 17th to 19th, followed by three Jan 31st to Feb 3rd, falling to one on Feb 4th, 16th and 18th. **Spring:** one



*Water Pipit, Fobney Meadow, Nov 5th, Andy Tomczynski.*

frequented the Foudry Brook near Kennet Island, Reading, on Mar 1st and 2nd (AVL, ABT), and one was at Padworth Lane GP on Mar 10th (KEM). **Autumn/second winter:** a run of regular sightings at Fobney Meadow, Reading, began with one on Oct 27th (ABT), increasing to two between Nov 4th and 6th (JA), and three on Nov 19th and Dec 8th (ABT), then back to one on Dec 14th (ABT). Elsewhere one was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 25th (ABT) followed by two on Nov 21st (DJB), and one at Horton on Dec 25th (CDRH).

### ROCK PIPIT EURASIAN ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

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

A paltry number of records involved a single site, Queen Mother Reservoir: one on Sep 25th and 26th (CDRH), two on Oct 14th (MFW), and one, or possibly two, the following day (ADB).

### ROCK PIPIT (LITTORALIS) *Anthus petrosus littoralis*

#### SCANDINAVIAN ROCK PIPIT

This scarce race repeated the recent pattern, with one that showed quite a strong pink suffusion on the breast at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 6th (CDRH).

### CHAFFINCH COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

*Common resident and winter visitor (Green Listed)*

Chaffinches were seen across the county but were reported from more than double the number of locations in west Berkshire compared to mid and east Berkshire, as was found in 2017. However, higher counts were recorded in 2018 as follows: 100 in a Sunflower crop at Englefield on Jan 1st; 60 at Boot Farm, Brimpton Common, on Feb 10th, then 150 there on Feb 11th; 40 at Combe Church on Mar 16th; 40 at Boot Farm, Brimpton Common, on Aug 27th; 45 at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Nov 5th; 40 at Englefield on Nov 17th; 150 at Aston on Dec 12th, then 200 there on Dec 15th; and 41 at Dennisford Road, Compton, on Dec 27th. There were four reports of singing birds between February and May, but no reports of nest building or juveniles. This may not reflect the breeding status accurately as the Chaffinch is a familiar bird in Berkshire and is surely under-reported.

The Berkshire Bird Index shows a very significant decline for this species over the last ten years [BBI 2018], which reflects the national trend and may be related to trichomonosis [BTO BirdTrends].

### BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

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

This finch species was reported from throughout the county, at 16 sites in east Berkshire, 15 in mid Berkshire and 13 in west Berkshire. It was often seen on garden feeders and in the company of other finches. Five times as many reports were submitted for the first winter period compared to the second, and the last sighting of the first winter period was at Swinley Forest on May 4th (CRG). The highest counts were: 70 at Englefield on Jan 1st, then 24 here on Jan 9th; 20 at Arborfield on Feb 12th; 20 at Boot Farm, Brimpton Common, on Feb 14th; 40 at Combe Church on Mar 16th; and 20 again at Boot Farm, Brimpton Common, on Mar 21st. There were also ten reports of groups of between ten and 15 birds. The first sighting for the second winter period was at Crookham Common on Sep 13th (MHu); no significant counts were reported, the maximum count being only four. It is to be expected that numbers will vary between winters depending on food supplies, and thus the winter of 2017-2018 saw higher numbers of this migrant than was seen for the second winter period of 2018.





Hawfinch, Basildon Park, Feb 25th, Andy Tomczynski.

### HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

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

After the irruption of Hawfinches in the autumn of 2017, sightings continued for the first winter period of 2018 with over 150 reports submitted from 26 sites across the county. However Combe, perhaps the site offering the best chance of seeing this species in a normal recent year, was largely untouched by the invasion, with six on Jan 11th reducing to a single bird that was last seen on Jan 18th (and just a single on one day the preceding autumn). Elsewhere, highest counts were all made at Basildon Park during January, as follows: 60 on Jan 1st; 111 on Jan 2nd; 81 on Jan 6th; 51 on Jan 9th; 35 on Jan 12th; 50 on Jan 25th; and at least 130 on Jan 28th (MO). They were not seen at Basildon Park after Feb 3rd but were seen regularly in February and March at other locations. The most notable was in the trees above the bicycle sheds at Shaw House, Newbury, which then saw the highest counts: 14 on Mar 8th; 22 on Mar 9th; 18 on Mar 10th; 12 on Mar 11th; 16 on Mar 14th; 20 on Mar 17th; 13 on Mar 31st; 14 on Apr 1st; and 11 on Apr 2nd and 5th (KTa *et al.*). Other locations reporting significant numbers or lengths of stay were the following, with peak numbers in parentheses: Hurst Church (eight); Lavell's Lake (eight); Moor Green Lakes (five); Padworth Church and College (11); Streatley (12); and Windsor Great Park (six). A Hawfinch at Stanford Dingley on Apr 13th (HRN) was the last sighting of this finch for the year as there were no reports for the second winter period.

### BULLFINCH EURASIAN BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

Reports were received from 30 locations in east Berkshire, 29 in mid Berkshire and 54 in west Berkshire. This striking but unobtrusive finch species was frequently seen in pairs or in small groups outside the breeding season, and occasionally on feeders in gardens. The 15 counts of six birds or more were fewer than last year, primarily coming between January and March, and from just five locations, where the peak counts were as follows: six at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Jan 8th and 30th; 12 at Greenham Common on Jan 9th; six at Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 11th; eight at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 22nd; and six at Welford on Feb 12th. Later in the year 11 were seen at Greenham Common on Nov 22nd.

The Berkshire Bird Index suggests little change in Bullfinch abundance since 2000 [BBI 2018]. Adrian Hickman's detailed surveys at Crookham and Greenham Commons identified

nine distinct territories between mid-March and early July but there was no further evidence of breeding outcomes there. There was just one report indicating successful breeding in 2018: a juvenile female was seen at Twyford on Jun 10th.

### GREENFINCH EUROPEAN GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Common and widespread resident and winter visitor, has shown signs of a decline in recent years (Green Listed)

This finch species was reported at 90 locations across the county, with almost half of the locations being in west Berkshire. Although there is a significant decreasing breeding season abundance measured by the Berkshire Bird Index [BBI 2018] and national data [BTO BirdTrends], some larger flocks were seen compared to the last few years: 50 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 2nd; 24 at Greenham Common on Jan 26th; and at least 50 at the Forbury Gardens, Reading, on Feb 10th. The highest was an amazing 265 which flew in to roost in a Holm Oak in Town Hall Square in Reading on Feb 11th; others were already in the tree so the total may have been closer to 300. The later part of the year saw 24 at Greenham Common on Nov 4th and 33 at Lower Farm GP on Nov 18th. There were 24 reports of counts of between ten and 20.

There were six reports of breeding activity with juveniles seen between June and August, along with a pair feeding young at the nest.

### 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 reported from across the county but with by far the most reports coming from west Berkshire. The table gives the counts from the most favoured locations.

#### Linnet: Monthly Counts by Location

|                             | Jan   | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Brimpton                    | -     | 120 | 20  | 20  | 2   | -   | -   | 2   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Bury & Cow Downs            | 200   | 12  | 500 | 35  | -   | -   | -   | -   | 200 | -   | 70  | -   |
| Crookham & Greenham Commons | -     | -   | 7   | 29  | 33  | 32  | 25  | 17  | 23  | 8   | 2   | 20  |
| Englefield                  | 500   | 30  | -   | 12  | -   | -   | 26  | 23  | 250 | 280 | 320 | 52  |
| Woodlands Park Fields       | -     | -   | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | 10  | 60  | -   | 100 | -   |
| No. birds at other sites    | 742   | 237 | 260 | 252 | 145 | 57  | 39  | 83  | 109 | 141 | 103 | 625 |
| Number of other sites       | 18    | 5   | 13  | 22  | 21  | 12  | 10  | 10  | 8   | 8   | 6   | 12  |
| Total birds (minimum)       | 1,442 | 399 | 787 | 348 | 180 | 92  | 90  | 135 | 642 | 429 | 595 | 697 |

The table includes the highest count, an impressive 500 at Englefield on Jan 1st, but there were also high counts elsewhere: 120 at Woolley Down, South Fawley, on Jan 27th; 200 at Cranes Farm, East Garston, on Jan 7th; and 300 at Aston on Dec 10th. In addition, there were 31 reports of counts between 40 and 84. **Breeding:** the table also shows increased numbers at Crookham and Greenham Commons in the breeding season, unlike the other sites. Adrian Hickman's surveys identified 39 territories there, holding an estimated 59 pairs between mid-April and early July. Elsewhere, there were three reports of two or more juveniles and one report of an adult feeding a fledgling. This low number of breeding records probably did not show the true picture, as breeding of this finch species is not always easy to detect.

The abundance of Linnets shown by the Berkshire Bird Index, which declined rapidly up to 2008, appears to have been stable over the last decade [BBI 25yr].



Common Redpoll, Sulhamstead, Mar 30th, Andy Tomczynski.

### COMMON REDPOLL *Acanthis flammea*

Scarce winter visitor, numbers vary from year to year (Green Listed)

There were only two records submitted for this species. A first winter female, with no pink in the plumage, was seen with a flock of c.45 Lesser Redpolls feeding in birches by Ascot Gate, Windsor Great Park, on Jan 20th (CDRH). Up to three birds were present amongst a flock of Lesser Redpolls coming to feeders in Peter Hickman's Sulhamstead garden during March. ABT visited on Mar 30th and photographed them. It was difficult to determine exactly how many birds were involved as they kept coming and going, but the photographs appeared to show three individuals (PH, ABT).

### LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

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

Sightings were submitted from 59 locations across the county, with the large number of records showing that this finch species was seen frequently on garden feeders. The majority of records and the highest counts were submitted for the first winter period, with the following being the peak counts at favoured sites: 30 at Wishmoor Bottom on Jan 28th; 20 at Paices Wood, Wasing, on Feb 4th; 60 at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 10th; 30 at Fleethill Farm on Feb 27th; 20 at Combe Church on Mar 16th; and 30+ on MoD land at RMA Sandhurst on Apr 19th. One observer reported between 17 and at least 25 on garden Niger feeders at Sulhamstead almost daily in the second half of March. The last sightings of the first winter period were in Swinley Forest on Apr 23rd. In the breeding season, singles were seen at the RMA, Sandhurst rifle ranges, on May 24th and Jun 1st, close to a large area of heathland where Lesser Redpolls have been found and even confirmed to breed in previous summers. This species was not seen again until the second winter period, when 11 flew over Lavell's Lake on Oct 16th. Peak counts in this period were 25 at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 12th and 35 at Greenham Common on Nov 16th.

The table summarises counts of Lesser Redpoll on a monthly basis.

#### Lesser Redpoll: Monthly Counts

|                 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of sites | 22  | 19  | 20  | 19  | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 8   | 4   | 8   |
| Number of birds | 164 | 195 | 140 | 179 | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | 35  | 77  | 37  |



Parrot Crossbill, Wishmoor Bottom, Jan 5th, Roger Murfit.

### PARROT CROSSBILL *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Rare vagrant

All sightings for this rare vagrant came from Wishmoor Bottom in the first winter period. The flock of 16, which were initially discovered in late November 2017 at this site, was reported by several observers on eight dates during January, with smaller numbers seen on seven other occasions (ABT, PD *et al.*). There were fewer sightings during February with the highest count being ten, and only three reports in March, with four birds on Mar 11th being the last sighting for the year (LRB). During their stay, they favoured the Scots Pines towards the north of the open heath at Wishmoor Bottom, often feeding quietly and unnoticed at the top of these trees but also dropping down to drink at puddles. The Wish Stream, the county boundary, passes through this location so the birds' mobile nature also resulted in many reports from Surrey ([www.goingbirding.co.uk/surrey](http://www.goingbirding.co.uk/surrey)).

### CROSSBILL RED CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

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

There were fewer records (38) this year, mainly from ten sites in east Berkshire which contain the forested locations favoured by this species. Outside of east Berkshire, Crossbills were reported from Padworth and Ufton Nervet in mid Berkshire, and Kintbury and Greenham



Common Crossbill, Ufton Wood, Feb 27th, Andy Tomczynski.

Common in west Berkshire. The highest counts were: seven at Wishmoor Bottom on Feb 5th; 23 at Swinley Park on Apr 16th; 20 at Windsor Forest on Nov 4th; and nine there on Nov 26th. There were no sightings in July, August and September, and only a single bird was seen in October. There were no sightings of juveniles.

## **GOLDFINCH EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Abundant and widespread resident (Green Listed)*

This familiar finch species was reported from 141 locations throughout the county. The highest counts were as follows: 55 at Reading on Jan 20th; 50 at Station Road, Thatcham, on Jan 29th; 55 at Green Park, Reading, on Feb 13th; 50 at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury, on Apr 28th; 50 at Folly Farm, Sulhamstead, on Jul 11th; 55 at Moatlands GPs, Theale, on Jul 22nd; 70 at Englefield on Aug 15th, then 100 there on Aug 17th and Aug 27th, 82 on Sep 3rd, and 74 on Sep 13th; 50 at Winkfield on Oct 7th; 50 at Englefield on Oct 10th; 50 on the Compton Downs on Oct 19th; and 60+ at Speen Moor Plantations, Newbury, on Oct 27th. Thirty-three reports of flocks of between 30 and 45 were submitted in January to March and from July onwards.

**Breeding:** there were only six records of small numbers of juveniles or a family party, but notably a count of at least 100 at Englefield on Aug 17th were nearly all juveniles. However, Goldfinches continued to maintain a significant increase in population with a trend of 12.55% per year according to the Berkshire Bird Index [BBI 2018].

## **SISKIN EURASIAN SISKIN** *Spinus spinus*

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

Siskins were seen at over 90 locations across Berkshire, and there were over twice as many records submitted for the first winter period compared to the second. Many records came from observers' gardens as this species commonly visits bird feeders. They were seen in all months of the year, although there were only two sightings in both June and July, four in August and five in September.

The table shows the number of sites where Siskins were reported in each month, and the total number of birds at those sites.

### **Siskin: Monthly Counts**

|                 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of sites | 22  | 28  | 31  | 10  | 3   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 10  | 8   | 21  |
| Number of birds | 325 | 379 | 458 | 86  | 12  | 3   | 3   | 6   | 11  | 43  | 93  | 127 |

The first winter period saw the highest counts as follows: 127 were at Bradfield on Jan 6th; 50 at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 8th and 55 there on Jan 20th; two observers noted 100 and 300 in several flocks at Speen Moor Plantations on Jan 27th; 100 at Bottom Lane GP on Feb 14th; 65 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Feb 18th; 43 at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 15th; 55 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Mar 18th; and 50 at Shaw, Newbury, on Mar 31st. Counts in the second winter period were lower, with: 28 at Bagnor on Nov 16th; 30 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 1st; and 45 there again on Dec 18th. There were five counts of 20 birds from Nov 23rd to the end of the year.

There were a few reports of birds in the breeding season, in or close to traditional breeding locations. In Swinley Forest, eight or nine birds were found with some in song on May 1st. A pair were watched there on May 9th; the observer remarked on the male's lovely display flight. A male and female were surprise visitors to garden feeders in North Ascot on Jun 16th.

## **CORN BUNTING** *Emberiza calandra*

*Locally common resident on the downs of NW Berks, now possibly extinct in the rest of the county (Red Listed)*

The main source of records came from 29 locations in west Berkshire, but this year saw the first sightings of this species outside of the Downs in the west of the county since 2013, with one report from mid Berkshire and another from east Berkshire. The peak monthly counts from the locations yielding the majority of records are summarised in the table.

### **Corn Bunting: Monthly Counts by Location**

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Compton Downs            | 2   | 1   | 35  | 12  | 38  | 14  | 12  | 23  | 31  | 78  | 10  | 33  |
| Cow & Bury Downs         | 160 | 100 | 50  | 8   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 20  | 20  |
| East Garston Down        | 30  | 38  | -   | -   | 10  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Eastbury Down            | 34  | 56  | -   | -   | 4   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 12  |
| Lambourn Downs           | 50  | -   | -   | -   | 10  | 9   | 20  | 18  | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| No. birds at other sites | -   | -   | 14  | 6   | 17  | 8   | 5   | 10  | -   | -   | 5   | 3   |
| Number of other sites    | -   | -   | 2   | 1   | 3   | 1   | 2   | 1   | -   | -   | 1   | 1   |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 276 | 195 | 99  | 26  | 83  | 31  | 37  | 51  | 31  | 78  | 35  | 68  |

The highest count of 160 was at Cow Down on Jan 25th. Outside west Berkshire, three were seen at Hennerton Golf Club, Wargrave, on May 8th (KSeY), and a juvenile was at Colnbrook on Aug 27th, which was the first sighting in north-east Berkshire (Datchet/Horton/Colnbrook/Wraysbury) this century (CDRH). Apart from this, there were no reports of breeding although there were 28 reports of singing birds.

## **YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

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

This species favours farmland and downs in the west of the county, so the main source of records was west Berkshire with 42 locations. The 17 sites in mid Berkshire were Englefield and farmland areas near the R. Thames, but south of Reading just four reports (including three in summer) were received: from Shinfield, Arborfield and Pingewood GPs. One lucky observer was delighted to report that Yellowhammers had returned to his garden in Caversham Park, Reading, for another winter, with a peak count of eight on Mar 28th. The 11 in east Berkshire were mainly around Twyford, including an impressive count of 60 at The Rhododendrons, Ruscombe, on Nov 25th, and areas north of Maidenhead. Fewer records were submitted in 2018 compared to the previous two years. It appeared that this species was continuing its slow decline especially in mid and east Berkshire; the Berkshire Bird Index shows a continuing steady decline of around 2% per year [BBI 2018]. In west Berkshire, high counts were as follows: 35 at Eastbury Down on Jan 18th; an impressive 100 at Cow Down on Feb 2nd and 4th; 30 at Bury Down on Feb 11th; 24 at Cow Down on Apr 5th; and 20 at Aldworth on May 19th. Smaller numbers were seen during the summer and autumn, while the second winter period saw: 23 at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Nov 5th; 20+ at Several Down, East Ilsley, on Nov 13th; 29 at Walbury Hill, Combe, on Nov 26th; and 26 at Compton on Dec 27th.

Breeding evidence was scarce, with only 13 reports of singing, three sightings of juveniles, and one report of a pair seeming to be nesting on ground next to a reed bed.

## REED BUNTING COMMON REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

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

This species was reported from 83 locations across the county with the majority in west Berkshire. During January to March, there were many records from gardens as Reed Buntings were attracted to feeders, and tended to form flocks with other buntings and finches. The highest counts were seen during the first winter period with a maximum of 30 at Cow Down, West Ilsley, on Jan 26th. The table summarises the peak monthly counts at the sites that produced the highest numbers. Counts of ten at Aston on Dec 10th and 31 nearby at Remenham the same day, and ten at Green Park, Reading, on Dec 27th contributed to an apparently dramatic peak in December, though not significant owing to the few records involved.

### Reed Bunting: Monthly Counts by Location

|                          | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bury & Cow Downs         | 30  | 6   | 1   | 1   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | 2   |
| Englefield               | 10  | 5   | 8   | -   | 3   | 9   | 14  | 12  | 12  | 6   | -   | 6   |
| Fobney Meadow            | -   | -   | 4   | 6   | 4   | 8   | -   | 6   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| Great Meadow Pond        | 18  | 1   | 4   | 5   | 4   | 5   | 9   | 2   | 3   | 2   | -   | 6   |
| Southcote                | 6   | 20  | 12  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| The Wilderness, Kintbury | -   | 1   | -   | -   | 11  | 12  | 1   | -   | 1   | 2   | -   | -   |
| Woolhampton GPs          | -   | 2   | 4   | 5   | 3   | 8   | 8   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 3   |
| No. birds at other sites | 37  | 42  | 68  | 57  | 53  | 39  | 16  | 12  | 16  | 17  | 29  | 94  |
| Number of other sites    | 14  | 18  | 31  | 24  | 22  | 19  | 10  | 5   | 10  | 9   | 11  | 18  |
| Total birds (minimum)    | 101 | 77  | 101 | 74  | 78  | 81  | 48  | 34  | 34  | 28  | 30  | 111 |

There were 31 reports of singing birds from Feb 18th to Jul 7th, but fewer records of probable or confirmed breeding. There were six reports of small numbers of juveniles: a bird carrying food at Fobney Island on May 23rd; a bird carrying nesting material at Pangbourne Meadow on May 25th; and two birds at Strand Water, Cookham, taking food into a Rape crop, presumably to feed young on Jun 3rd.

## ESCAPES

### Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

*Resident and widespread in Africa*

Three were at Midgham on Jun 3rd.

### Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

*Breeds in central Asia; winters in north India*

Long-staying birds were at Dinton Pastures CP from Feb 6th to Nov 28th and Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park, from Feb 17th to Nov 10th. Elsewhere, singles were at: Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead, on Feb 18th; Widbrook Common, Cookham, on Feb 20th and Mar 7th; Whiteknights Lake, Reading, on Mar 11th; Moor Green Lakes on Jun 16th; and Loddon NR, Twyford, on Sep 10th.

### Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

*Breeds in north North America; winters in south and west USA and north Mexico*

The only surviving member of the Eversley flock was seen at Moor Green Lakes and Fleethill Farm from Apr 6th to Dec 29th. Elsewhere, one was at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Jul 22nd.

### Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

*Resident in Australia and New Zealand*

Singles were: on the R. Thames at Maidenhead on Jan 2nd, Feb 6th and 8th, ranging between Boulter's Lock and Ferry Bridge, Cookham; on the R. Thames at Windsor on Jan 19th and Mar 14th; and at Main Pit, Theale, from Sep 1st to Nov 11th.

### Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

*Breeds from south Europe to central Asia, north-west Africa and Ethiopia; winters in north Africa and the Oriental region*

Two flew over Horton Brook Quarry on Apr 27th.

### Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

*Resident in North and Middle America and in South America from south Texas to north Argentina*

One was at Lands End GP, Twyford, on May 28th.

### Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*

*Resident in Australia*

One was at Woodlands Park, White Waltham, on Aug 4th. A family party of four Carrion Crows attacked and probably killed an exhausted Cockatiel at Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Aug 11th.

## HYBRIDS

### Geese

#### Canada Goose × Greylag Goose

Singles (unless specified otherwise) were at: Woolhampton GPs on Jan 23rd (WeBS) and 26th (MFW); Streatley on Feb 11th, with seven on Oct 13th (NJB); and Main Pit, Theale, on Feb 18th, Mar 18th and Aug 18th (WeBS).

#### Canada Goose × Barnacle Goose

One was reported at Padworth Lane GP on Feb 18th (RJB).

#### Greylag Goose x Snow Goose

One was at Streatley on several dates from Feb 11th to Dec 26th (NJB).

### Aythya Hybrids

#### Lesser Scaup type (Tufted Duck × Pochard)

One was at Bray GPs on Nov 19th (ADB).

#### Scaup type (Tufted Duck × Scaup)

One was at Lower Farm GP on Apr 1st (NC).

### Falcons

#### Peregrine type

An adult escaped bird (wearing jesses) with russet tone to crown/nape, recalling Barbary Falcon, was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 7th (CDRH).

### Gulls

#### Herring Gull × Glaucous Gull

A first winter bird was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 14th (CDRH). The same bird was seen at Island Barn Reservoir, Surrey, on Jan 30th and Feb 5th.

#### Herring Gull × Lesser Black-backed Gull

An adult was at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 27th (CDRH).

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## Extreme Dates of Summer and Winter Migrants

The tables give the earliest arrival and latest departure dates of selected migrant species in 2018. The layout is different to that of previous years; locations and observer's initials are not included but can be found in the Systematic List. This creates space to include the extreme dates for these species this century. Where the 2018 date is also an extreme date this century, this is indicated in the table with highlighting. There have been a few instances of winter migrants over-summering, and these records are excluded from the tables.

| Extreme Dates for Summer Migrants this Century |        |               |         |               |        |               |         |               |
|--|--------|---------------|---------|---------------|--------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Arrival  |        |               |         | Departure     |        |               |         |               |
|  | 2018   | Earliest      | Average | Latest        | 2018   | Earliest      | Average | Latest        |
| Quail  |        | 21-Mar        | 15-May  | 16-Jun        |        | 06-Jul        | 14-Aug  | 08-Oct        |
| Garganey                                       | 02-Apr | 11-Mar        | 10-Apr  | 18-May        | 29-Oct | 16-Aug        | 06-Oct  | 22-Nov        |
| Nightjar                                       | 09-May | 23-Apr        | 05-May  | 15-May        | 15-Aug | 12-Jul        | 17-Aug  | 28-Sep        |
| Swift  | 20-Apr | 30-Mar        | 14-Apr  | <b>20-Apr</b> | 28-Aug | <b>28-Aug</b> | 13-Sep  | 01-Nov        |
| Cuckoo   | 07-Apr | 01-Apr        | 08-Apr  | 16-Apr        |        | 20-Jul        | 22-Aug  | 25-Sep        |
| Turtle Dove                                    | 09-May | 04-Apr        | 25-Apr  | 17-May        |        | 17-Jul        | 28-Aug  | 24-Sep        |
| Stone-curlew                                   | 25-Mar | 18-Mar        | 01-Apr  | 05-May        |        | 08-Sep        | 26-Sep  | 18-Oct        |
| Little Ringed Plover                           | 14-Mar | 03-Mar        | 12-Mar  | 19-Mar        | 12-Sep | 18-Aug        | 08-Sep  | 06-Oct        |
| Common Tern                                    | 31-Mar | 24-Mar        | 03-Apr  | 14-Apr        | 13-Oct | 05-Sep        | 04-Oct  | 13-Nov        |
| Osprey   | 07-Apr | 13-Mar        | 29-Mar  | 12-Apr        | 27-Aug | 08-Jul        | 22-Sep  | 15-Nov        |
| Hobby  | 12-Apr | 04-Apr        | 13-Apr  | 22-Apr        | 15-Oct | 02-Oct        | 12-Oct  | 04-Nov        |
| Sand Martin                                    | 17-Mar | 28-Feb        | 12-Mar  | 21-Mar        | 23-Sep | 19-Sep        | 05-Oct  | 24-Oct        |
| Swallow  | 31-Mar | 12-Mar        | 22-Mar  | 01-Apr        | 14-Oct | <b>14-Oct</b> | 31-Oct  | 01-Dec        |
| House Martin                                   | 07-Apr | 10-Mar        | 26-Mar  | 08-Apr        | 28-Oct | 06-Oct        | 27-Oct  | 10-Dec        |
| Willow Warbler                                 | 30-Mar | 17-Mar        | 24-Mar  | 13-Apr        | 19-Sep | 16-Sep        | 30-Sep  | 14-Nov        |
| Sedge Warbler                                  | 08-Apr | 15-Mar        | 31-Mar  | 12-Apr        | 07-Oct | 22-Sep        | 04-Oct  | 17-Oct        |
| Reed Warbler                                   | 03-Apr | 02-Apr        | 11-Apr  | 19-Apr        | 07-Oct | 24-Sep        | 10-Oct  | 29-Oct        |
| Grasshopper Warbler                            | 22-Apr | 04-Apr        | 14-Apr  | <b>22-Apr</b> | 16-Sep | 16-Jun        | 17-Aug  | 27-Sep        |
| Garden Warbler                                 | 15-Apr | 03-Apr        | 13-Apr  | 21-Apr        | 03-Sep | 01-Sep        | 15-Sep  | 05-Oct        |
| Lesser Whitethroat                             | 10-Apr | <b>10-Apr</b> | 18-Apr  | 26-Apr        | 10-Sep | 08-Sep        | 21-Sep  | 02-Oct        |
| Whitethroat                                    | 14-Apr | 31-Mar        | 07-Apr  | <b>14-Apr</b> | 12-Sep | <b>12-Sep</b> | 26-Sep  | 21-Oct        |
| Ring Ouzel                                     | 05-Apr | 12-Mar        | 04-Apr  | 20-Apr        | 16-Oct | 17-Sep        | 11-Oct  | 29-Oct        |
| Spotted Flycatcher                             | 07-May | 23-Apr        | 04-May  | 16-May        | 01-Oct | 12-Sep        | 23-Sep  | 05-Oct        |
| Nightingale                                    | 07-Apr | 28-Mar        | 05-Apr  | 12-Apr        | 14-Jul | 04-Jul        | 03-Aug  | 05-Sep        |
| Redstart                                       | 15-Apr | 18-Mar        | 06-Apr  | <b>15-Apr</b> | 13-Oct | 05-Sep        | 27-Sep  | <b>13-Oct</b> |
| Whinchat                                       | 20-Apr | 04-Apr        | 19-Apr  | 29-Apr        | 24-Sep | <b>24-Sep</b> | 12-Oct  | 25-Nov        |
| Wheatear                                       | 03-Mar | <b>03-Mar</b> | 12-Mar  | 26-Mar        | 19-Oct | 14-Oct        | 26-Oct  | 27-Nov        |
| Yellow Wagtail                                 | 22-Mar | 10-Feb        | 27-Mar  | 09-Apr        | 25-Sep | <b>25-Sep</b> | 18-Oct  | 17-Dec        |
| Tree Pipit                                     | 05-Apr | 16-Mar        | 03-Apr  | 14-Apr        | 13-Sep | 23-Aug        | 13-Sep  | 15-Oct        |

| Extreme Dates for Winter Visitors this Century |           |          |         |               |         |               |         |               |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|
|  | Departure |          |         |               | Arrival |               |         |               |
|  | 2018      | Earliest | Average | Latest        | 2018    | Earliest      | Average | Latest        |
| Goldeneye                                      | 02-Apr    | 28-Mar   | 17-Apr  | 13-May        | 29-Oct  | 13-Aug        | 08-Oct  | 30-Oct        |
| Goosander                                      | 02-May    | 24-Mar   | 20-Apr  | 17-Jun        | 07-Nov  | 16-Sep        | 26-Oct  | 16-Nov        |
| Golden Plover                                  | 03-May    | 23-Feb   | 18-Apr  | <b>03-May</b> | 29-Sep  | 02-Aug        | 28-Aug  | <b>29-Sep</b> |
| Bittern  | 11-Feb    | 23-Jan   | 14-Mar  | 24-Apr        | 02-Sep  | 18-Aug        | 23-Oct  | 19-Dec        |
| Fieldfare                                      | 14-Apr    | 02-Apr   | 19-Apr  | 19-May        | 02-Oct  | 03-Sep        | 01-Oct  | 18-Oct        |
| Redwing  | 08-Apr    | 02-Apr   | 17-Apr  | 09-May        | 30-Sep  | 14-Sep        | 26-Sep  | 06-Oct        |
| Brambling                                      | 04-May    | 11-Apr   | 30-Apr  | 31-May        | 13-Sep  | <b>13-Sep</b> | 12-Oct  | 05-Nov        |

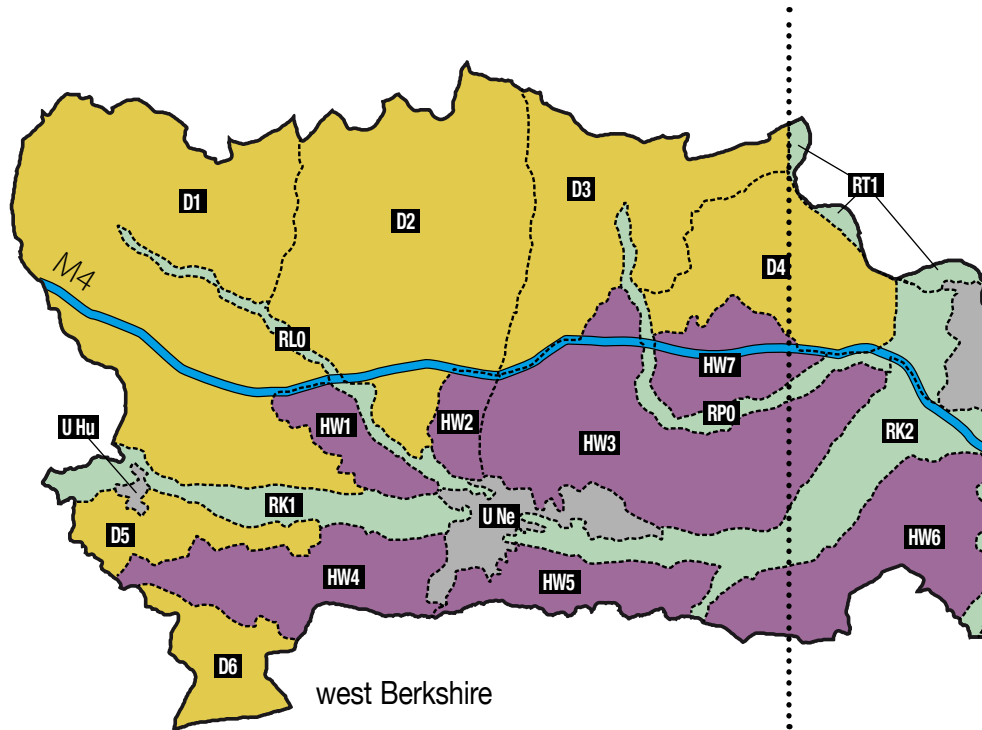
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| Gartshore N           |       | King G J.....       | GJK  | Norris P R            |      | Smith M J.....    | MJS  | Tyler D.....        | DTy  | Young R                  |       |
| Gent C R.....         | CRG   | Kirby A J           |      | North S               |      | Smith W           |      | Vaughan J           |      |                          |       |
| George C M.....       | CMG   | Kirby M             |      | O'Brien J.....        | JOB  |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Gilham R.....         | RGi   | Kirsopp G           |      | Oldcorn I.....        | IO   |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Gipson P.....         | PG    | Klair B             |      | Olive P M             |      |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Godden R J.....       | RJG   | Kujawa S            |      | O'Neil P.....         | PO   |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Godden N R.....       | NG    | Lambeth C           |      | Ouseley D G           |      |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Goodey J.....         | JG    | Lamsdell C.....     | CL   | Owen G M              |      |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
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| Hampton D W.....      | DWH   | Long D F.....       | DL   | Proddow S K.....      | SKP  |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Hardy R.....          | RHar  | Lund M.....         | MLu  | Puttock B             |      |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
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| Harris N G.....       | NH    | Mackenzie D.....    | DMac | Ralphs I L            |      |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Harris S              |       | Mann L.....         | LMa  | Rampton N.....        | NR   |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Harrison A.....       | AHarr | Mann L B.....       | LBM  | Randall G.....        | GR   |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |
| Hastings D.....       | DH    | Mannion P.....      | PM   | Rayner J R            |      |                   |      |                     |      |                          |       |

## 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

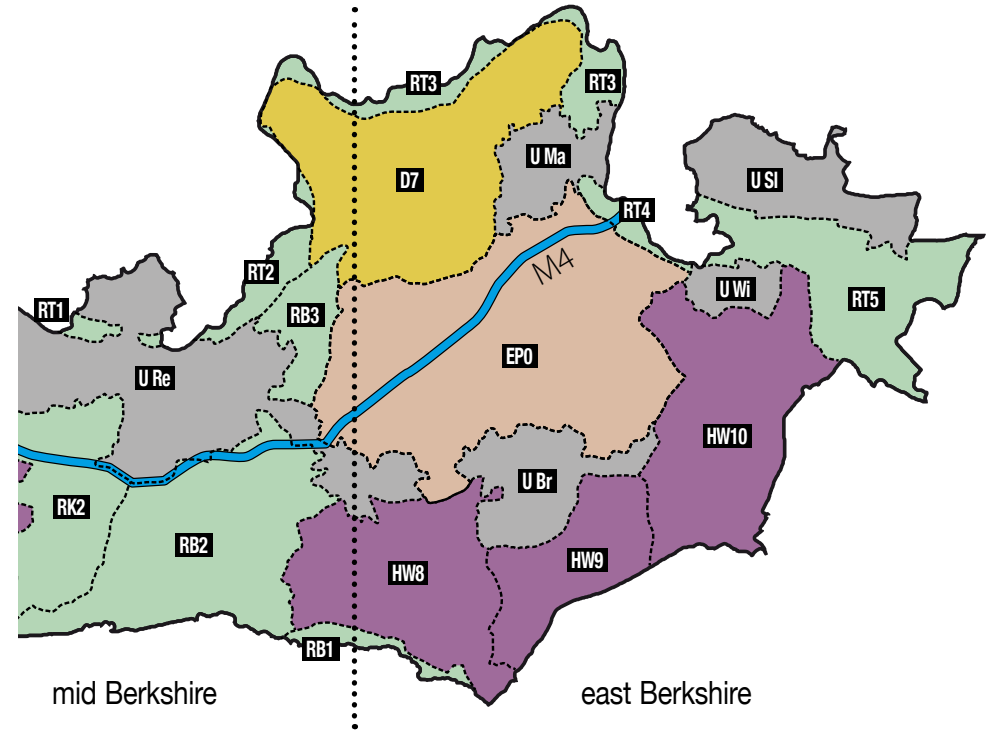
|   | DC |
|---|----|
| Lambourn Downs                                | D1 |
| Farnborough Downs                             | D2 |
| Compton/Aldworth/Isley Downs                  | D3 |
| Eastern Downs & Woods                         | D4 |
| North Hampshire Downs - S Hungerford          | D5 |
| North 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

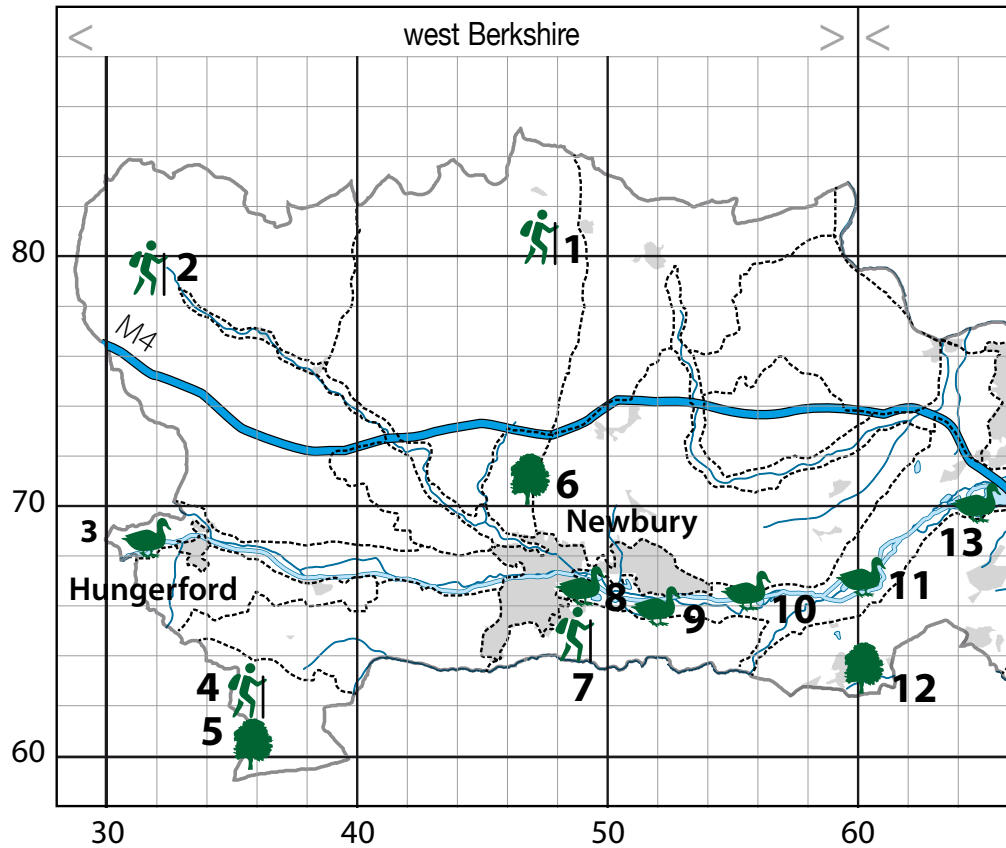
|                                | EP  |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Twyford/Binfield/Windsor Plain | EPO |

### 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 |

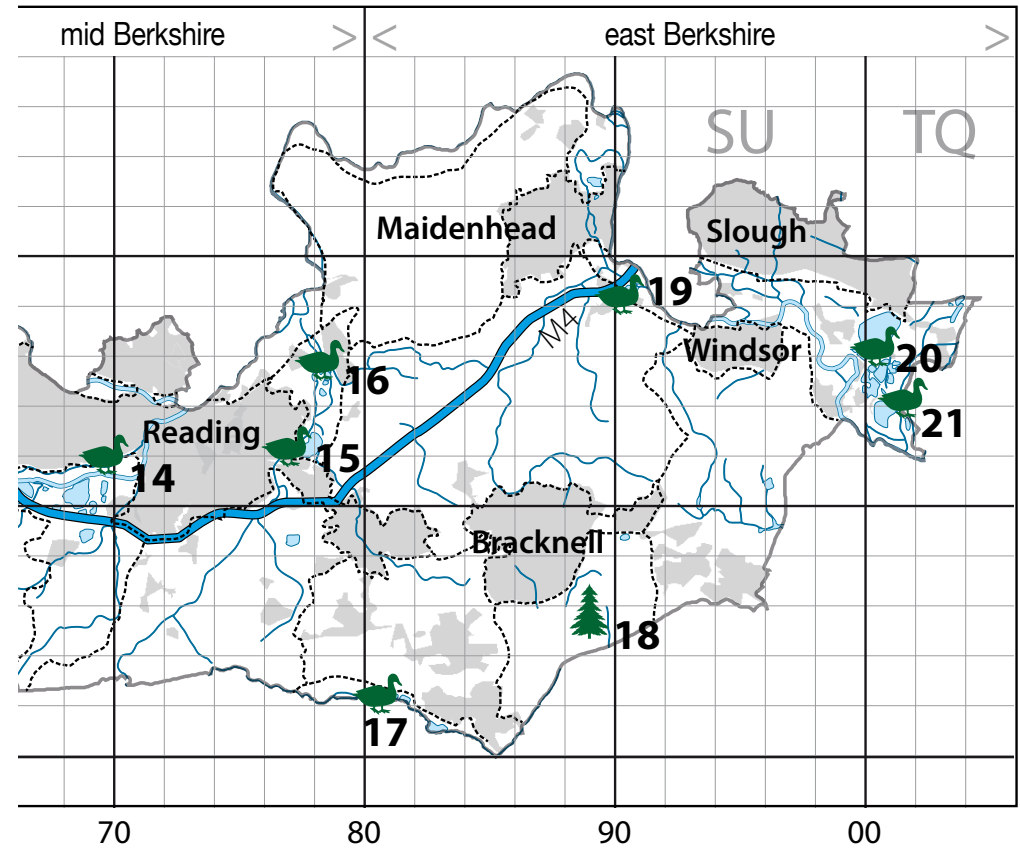






## Some Birdwatching Sites in Berkshire



- |                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 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    |                                       |

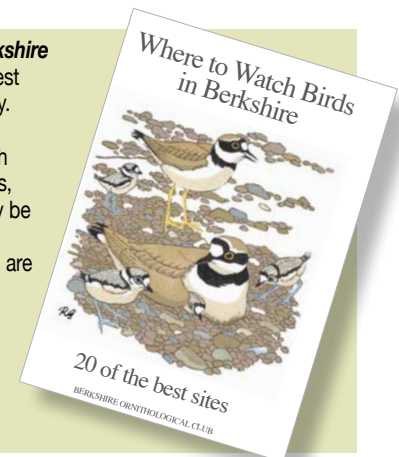
Some of the better-known birding sites in the county are shown here.  
For access details and more information visit <http://berksoc.org.uk/countysites/>



- 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](mailto: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](mailto:records@berksoc.org.uk)

### BERKSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB [www.berksoc.org.uk](http://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](mailto:secretary@berksoc.org.uk)

### NEWBURY DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB [www.newburybirders.co.uk](http://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 "Field Views" 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](mailto: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](mailto:conservation@berksoc.org.uk) or telephone Neil Bucknell on 07767 207401.

### 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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/](http://www.rspb.org.uk/)

or directly from:  
Reading RSPB Local Group  
<https://group.rspb.org.uk/reading/>

Wokingham and Bracknell RSPB Local Group  
<https://group.rspb.org.uk/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. The Countryside Code for England and Wales was updated in February 2022 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](mailto: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.