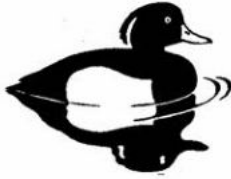


The Birds of Berkshire



Annual Report
2019

Published 2023

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 preeminent site Queen Mother Reservoir for frequent visitors, subject to permit.
- Conservation involvement in important local habitats and species. BOC members are involved in practical conservation work with groups such as Lavell's Wetland Trust, 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/>

Our welcome pack for new members includes copies of *Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire*, *Berkshire's Birdscapes* and the most recent *Birds of Berkshire Annual Report*.

For further details of the Club and membership visit www.berksoc.org.uk or contact the Hon. Secretary:

Jane Campbell, 111 Mays Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 7DG

Telephone 07980 076128

Email secretary@berksoc.org.uk

The Birds of Berkshire

Annual Report for 2019

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

Published in 2023 by

BERKSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

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ISBN 978-0-9553497-6-8

Introduction

This report sadly includes the obituaries of two people who were instrumental in the BOC for many years. Both Renton Righelato and Robert Gillmor died in 2022, and are much missed.

Renton Righelato's contribution to the Club was considerable. He served as Secretary, then Chair, and latterly as President and Chair of the conservation committee. He played a major role in the editing of every Birds of Berkshire Annual Report from the joint 2006-7 issue to the 2016 issue. He wrote many scientific articles on species monitoring and conservation, which were published in the reports. His final articles are in this report. He led the Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group that produced the second edition of *Birds of Berkshire*, the definitive book on the county's birds. He co-authored and produced *Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire* (see page 163), the Club's guide to the best birdwatching sites in the county. And his last major practical contribution to the Club was researching and writing *Berkshire's Birdscapes*, published to celebrate our 75th anniversary (see page 9). An appreciation of his life and his contribution to ornithology in Berkshire is on see page 8.

The 2018 Annual Report was the final report that featured on its front cover a painting specially produced for the Club by Robert Gillmor. The sad passing of Robert means that the uninterrupted series of annual reports with one of his illustrations on the front has come to an end. For this report, we obtained permission from Robert's family to adapt an existing artwork of a pair of Black-winged Stilts, one of 2019's star species, to create an image somewhat reminiscent of the Moor Green sighting. Sharp-eyed critics will notice that the artwork features an adult bird whereas the Moor Green bird was a juvenile, but at least the correct number of birds is displayed, and the cover is based on Robert's handiwork. The back cover of this report features some of Robert's artwork used on covers of past reports. An appreciation of his life is on see page 10.

This report has been produced as in recent years with a team of Species Account Writers (SAWs) writing sections of the Systematic List, the essential component of the annual bird report. My role has been to edit the Systematic List and to augment it with other articles relevant to the county and its birds. Sally Wearing as production manager has overseen the proofreading and liaison with Rob Still our publisher.

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 donation to the Club's Conservation Fund.

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 42. Our thanks also go to Neil Bucknell, Roger Murfitt, Chris Gent, Ken and Sarah White, 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 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.

We are also grateful to Charlie Fayers who adapted Robert Gillmor's artwork of Black-winged Stilts so we were able to publish one final cover created by Robert.

Robert Godden & Sally Wearing

Future Birds of Berkshire Reports

The main aim of these reports is to present the county's bird records from each year in a systematic manner, supported by relevant data and statistics. These publications are for future reference, as well as an interesting record for local birders.

The format of this report has slowly evolved over the years. We are always interested in making improvements; we do not intend to make any radical changes, but please tell us if there is anything you would like to see more of or anything new that you think we could include.

Please send your comments to the editors via chair@berksoc.org.uk.

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) or sent by email to the Recorder records@berksoc.org.uk as an Excel file or as a CSV file.

We also receive records from BirdTrack, Wetland Birds Survey, Newbury District Ornithological Club and Moor Green Lakes Group, so there is no need to submit your records directly if you submit via any of these means.

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 162 to assist with identification. Further details can be found at 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 39).

Photographs for Future Reports

The editors welcome bird photographs taken in Berkshire for future annual reports. We want to increase the number of photographs, as they greatly enhance these reports.

We aim to publish photographs of rare and scarce birds recorded during the year, and hopefully of a good quality. But we also want to include good quality photographs of common species so we can show the wide diversity of birds in the county. Photographs do not have to be of single birds; flocks of birds or birds set in the landscape are also welcome.

All published photographs will be acknowledged and credited to the photographer.

Please send your best resolution images to the Photographic Editor, andy.tomczynski@btinternet.com for consideration, with the following details: photographer’s name, species name, date when the photograph was taken and location.

Many thanks to the photographers who submitted photographs for inclusion in this report.

Andy Tomczynski



Top left: Chiffchaff, R.Loddon, Jan 24th 2023, Andy Tomczynski. Top right: Blackcap, Whistley Lane, Hurst, Apr 15th 2021, Andy Tomczynski. Bottom: Redwing, Garden, Emmer Green, Dec 10th 2022, Andy Tomczynski.

Renton Righelato 1943-2022

Renton was born in Mitcham, south London. His parents were shopkeepers, his father an Italian immigrant. They ran a toyshop in Clapham. Renton attended a local grammar school, going onto Bristol University to study microbiology. He then pursued a career in the food industry, and was also a visiting professor at the Universities of Reading and Kent.

He had a lifelong interest in birds. As a teenager he participated in bird ringing at Beddington Sewage Farm, and first visited the Scillies when he was 15 years old. Later he also became involved in international conservation efforts, becoming a trustee of the World Land Trust, serving on its council between 1997 and 2009, including a term as its chair from 2005. In this capacity he was involved with acquiring land for habitat restoration overseas, particularly in South America. A particular passion was forestry restoration, and he campaigned for a reversal of the tide of deforestation that threatened much of the continent's unique habitats and wildlife.

He moved to Reading, joining the Reading Ornithological Club in 1994. In 2002, he became the Club's Secretary, a post he held for seven years; he subsequently served as its Chair, President and Chair of the conservation sub-committee. He joined the Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group, set up by Chris Robinson to run a second county bird atlas project in 2006, and took over as chair of this when Chris moved to Hereford. He saw the project through, including the completion of fieldwork and subsequent production of the second, much expanded, edition of *The Birds of Berkshire*. Thanks to his knowledge of IT and the expertise of his son, Jason, in this field, the outputs from the project went well beyond updating the book from the second atlas survey work. He was able to obtain habitat information obtained by LIDAR satellite surveys to improve the habitat information presented, and with Jason's help, developed an interactive version of the results which is on the club's website, at <http://berksoc.org.uk/county-atlas/>.

His interest in habitats, and site conservation and restoration manifested itself in his considerable contribution to the promotion and designation of sites locally. He played a key part in the long process of creating the Fobney Island reserve in the Kennet Valley just south of Reading, and in securing and developing the Lea Farm reserve in the Loddon Valley for Lavell's Wetland Trust. At Lea Farm, he steered a successful bid to the fund for mitigation works for the electrification of the Great Western mainline to carry out substantial enhancement works on the site. Sadly one of the projects that he was involved with for many years, the restoration of the Padworth Lane gravel pit site, did not come to fruition within his lifetime.

His final major practical contribution to the Club was Berkshire's Birdscapes. Renton wrote it in 2022 and it was published to celebrate the Club's 75th anniversary. In it, Renton reviewed the changes in Berkshire's breeding birds and habitats since the Club started in 1947. Its well-researched contents will assist and inform people involved in planning and nature conservation in the county.



Renton in Richmond Park 2019.

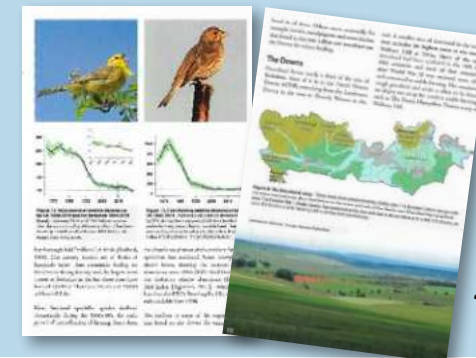
Renton brought a number of personal qualities to bear in his contribution to the club and conservation locally. He was a good organiser, knew how to bring people together to achieve a common goal, and had the patience and good humour needed to live with and overcome the many delays and difficulties that conservation projects invariably encounter. Sadly, he did not complete his term as President. A diagnosis of cancer during the Covid pandemic meant that he could not attend many events during the latter months, and he finally lost the battle with the disease in November 2022. He leaves a considerable legacy that is much appreciated. He is much missed by us all, and our thoughts are with his widow Pat, and his children and grandchildren.



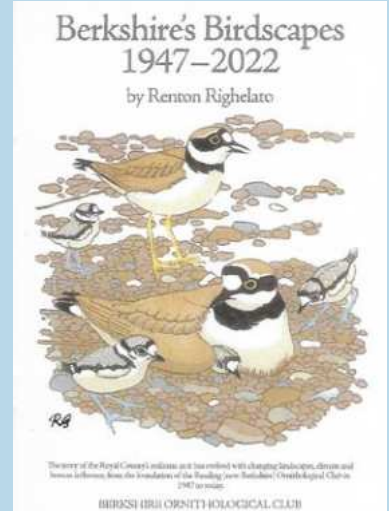
Neil Bucknell Renton coppicing at Lavell's Wetland Trust 2015.

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.



Sample pages



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/berksoc-birdscapes/>

Trade enquiries: Brian Clews, brian.clews@btconnect.com, 01628 526091.

Robert Gillmor, MBE 1936-2022

Robert was born near Reading on July 6th 1936. His grandfather was the renowned wildlife artist Allen William Seaby, and as a boy Robert would often visit his grandfather's studio. He attended Leighton Park School in the town, which at the time had an active birdwatching club, and went on to study fine art at Reading University, returning to his old school to teach art and craft.



Robert Gillmor, photographed by Jody Lawrence.

Encouraged by his grandfather, he soon showed talent as an artist himself. He joined the Reading Ornithological Club (as it was then) as its first junior member in 1949. A teacher at Leighton Park, Duncan Wood, suggested that Robert provide the illustration for the cover for the Club's first annual report. He went on to produce the cover illustration for the Club's reports until his death. A few examples are on the back cover of this report.

From an early age, he was involved in the production of art for publication. As a teenager, he helped his elderly grandfather produce illustrations for Ladybird books, and he provided line drawings for a paper in *British Birds* on Magpies at the age of 15. He illustrated his first book, David Snow's *A Study of Blackbirds*, while still at university.

As his reputation grew, so did the number of commissions he undertook, and in 1965 he took the bold step of resigning his teaching post to become a full-time freelance artist. He was particularly in demand for book illustration. In the days before digital imagery, and when colour printing was expensive, line drawings were used widely and Robert proved a master of this medium, but his versatility as an artist extended to colour work too. He illustrated some of the most popular bird books of the 1960s and 1970s, including James Fisher's *Shell Bird Book*, the popular coffee table *Book of British Birds* published by the Reader's Digest, and the Automobile Association and Tony Soper's *The Bird Table Book*, the latter two remaining in print until 2003 and 2006 respectively. He became probably the best-known wildlife artist in Britain as a result of such work, and as a result of providing many covers for the RSPB's members' magazine.

He also illustrated two of the early Poyser publications: *The Birds of Cape Clear Island* (Sharrock 1973) and *Seventy Years of Birdwatching* (Alexander 1974). He had a reputation for reliability and the ability to organise others. He was therefore a natural choice to be art editor of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1977-1994), the first BTO Atlas and the BTO Winter Atlas that followed in in the 1980s. He also served for many years as the art editor of *British Birds*. When Clifford Ellis, who with his late wife Rosemary had produced the covers for all the *New Naturalist* series of wildlife books since they were first published in the 1940s, died in 1985, Robert was recruited to provide them instead and continued to do so until he retired shortly before his death. Apart from the *New Naturalist* covers, he illustrated over 100 books, mostly with an ornithological subject for a range of authors and publishers.

His contribution to the Reading (now Berkshire) Ornithological Club was considerable, and extended well beyond the provision of covers for the Club's annual reports and its Tufted

Duck logo. He served as the Club's Secretary from 1958 to 1964, then as its Chair from 1965 to 1968. When Eric Watson stepped down as President in 1971, Robert succeeded him, remaining as President until 1998, when he moved to Norfolk with his wife, Sue, for what proved to be a very active "retirement". As a result of his extensive connections, he was able to attract some prestigious speakers, helping to establish the Club's reputation for running a high-quality programme of indoor meetings. He hosted the Club's committee meetings in his front room cum library at Northcourt Avenue and provided artwork for the menus at the various anniversary dinners held over the years. He was art editor for the first edition of the county avifauna, *The Birds of Berkshire*, drawing on the considerable fund of goodwill he had generated over the years for the contributions made to wildlife art to obtain illustrations from many of the country's leading bird artists without payment.



Robert Gillmor in his study in Cley in 2019, photographed by Renton Righelato.

Robert had a fine reputation for giving his time freely to help others. He helped establish the Society of Wildlife Artists, and mentored many young artists, including (locally) Norman Arlott, Richard Allen, John Gale, Ian Lewington and Martin Hallam. He served on the governing bodies of the RSPB, BTO and BOU, designing logos for each of them, and his contribution was recognised by the award of the BTO's Jubilee Medal in 1984, the BOU's Union Medal in 1996 and the RSPB's President's Medal in 2000. In 2015, he received an MBE for his services to art and conservation.

Sadly, the last few years of his life were marred by ill-health, and frequent visits to hospital. He died quietly at home in Cley in the company of Sue and their two children, Emily and Thomas, on May 8th 2022. The Club lost its most illustrious member, and one whose contribution is unmatched, and for which we are deeply grateful.

Neil Bucknell

Mediterranean Gulls at Moor Green Lakes in 2019: first successful breeding in Berkshire

by Roger Murfitt, Moor Green Lakes Group Bird Recorder

Mediterranean Gulls are estimated to have a breeding population of 1,200 pairs in Great Britain [Woodward *et al.*, 2020] and are amber listed due to recent breeding population decline. This species first nested in Britain in 1968 in Hampshire and had yet to successfully nest in Berkshire. In 2018, a pair of second summer Mediterranean Gulls nested and laid eggs in the Black-headed Gull colony at Moor Green Lakes nature reserve, but the eggs were apparently infertile and, despite prolonged incubation, failed to hatch.

In 2019, the Black-headed Gull colony again attracted Mediterranean Gulls. A pair of adults were first seen on April 15th but were then not recorded again until April 22nd, when a pair of second summer birds were also seen. Over the next ten days, both pairs were seen copulating, and they settled down to nest in the gull colony on Tern Island. The adult pair chose a nest site on the north-east corner of Tern Island, which was very difficult to monitor, but fortunately the pair of second summers nested on the southern edge of the fenced area, where they were readily monitored from Colebrook Lake hide. On May 1st, one of the second summers was apparently sitting on eggs, whilst the adults were also believed to be sitting on eggs by early May. On May 27th, the second summer birds were seen to be feeding young and it soon became clear they had hatched two chicks. These chicks were still present and being fed on June 2nd, but by June 7th only one chick remained. This went on to be reared to fledging and was last seen on Colebrook Lake North with a group of Black-headed Gulls on July 7th. This is at least 40 days after hatching and fits well with the fledging time of 35-40 days [BTO BirdFacts].

Some interesting observations on foraging behaviour were made over the breeding season. Chris Gent mentioned to me that he had noticed that one of the adult pair would patrol low



Mediterranean Gull second summer with large juvenile on Tern Island, Moor Green Lakes, Jun 14th, Roger Murfitt.

over Tern Island and on a couple of occasions saw it dive down and seize a young Black-headed Gull chick, which was taken back to the nest area. I also saw this patrolling but no successful predations. There are recorded instances of Mediterranean Gulls preying on chicks, e.g. the Sandwich Tern colony of 550 pairs in 2013 at Scolt Head Island, Norfolk, which failed completely due to Mediterranean Gulls taking newly-hatched chicks, whilst they were reported as probably preying on Black-headed Gulls at the Blakeney Point Sandwich Tern colony [Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2013]. In contrast to the adults, there was no evidence of this kind of predation from the second summer pair at Moor Green Lakes, with one or both birds often absent and apparently foraging further afield.

This represented the first proven, successful breeding by Mediterranean Gull in Berkshire. This was promising for the future, though, depending upon their foraging behaviour, Berkshire's Black-headed Gulls may not be pleased to see them!

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Chris Gent and Roger Milligan for passing on to me their observations of the Mediterranean Gulls and all other observers who submitted their sightings to www.berksbirds.co.uk.

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Woodward *et al.*, 2020. Population estimates of bird in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 113, 69-104.

BTO BirdFacts <https://app.bto.org/birdfacts/results/bob5750.htm>.

Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2013 Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.



Adult Mediterranean Gull on Colebrook Lake North, Moor Green Lakes, May 1st, Roger Murfitt.



Juvenile Mediterranean Gull (second left) on Colebrook Lake North, Moor Green Lakes, Jul 7th, Roger Murfitt.

Black-winged Stilt, September 11th 2019

by Chris Gent

September 11th and my daily morning trip to East Fen at Moor Green Lakes looking for autumn migrants.

So far, East Fen had been great habitat holding double figure counts of Green Sandpipers, but I was still waiting for my first autumn Greenshank. None there, so I made my way on to the New Workings. There was also nothing new there, so I slowly went back to the car, having a last look at East Fen in passing.

Excitement as I could see a long-legged wader stalking the shallows. Perhaps a Greenshank at last? But it looked too big. As soon as I raised my binoculars I knew, but could not believe. A bird I had seen all over the world, but never before in England. Striking red extra-long legs and a black and white body left no doubt that I was looking at a Black-winged Stilt.

I was quickly on the phone to Robert Godden. I was sure it would be one he could add to his UK 1,000 species challenge (which was not just birds!). Message delivered, I rang off before making further calls. At this point, the bird decided to fly eastwards over my head. Panic, no one would believe me, and poor Robert was already on his way. I rushed across to Moor Green hide and was somewhat relieved to see the bird land on the main island.

Luckily, the hide held another watcher, with a camera, so we were able to document the sighting. The bird gave good views for about five minutes, then returned to East Fen just in time for the arriving crowd. I stayed with the first arrivals, enjoying the bird for another hour or so. I continued to enjoy the bird for the next month as it remained there until Oct 8th. The first Berkshire record since 1945, the year before my birth. Definitely the find of a lifetime.

Ironically, I was so entranced with the bird that I failed to notice the Greenshank that arrived with it, until the next day.



Black-winged Stilt, East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, Sep 18th, Mike McKee.

Peregrine Diary, Newbury 2019

by Ken & Sarah White

Prior to the spring of 2019, many observers had recorded single birds, of various ages and genders, on the BT Exchange building in Newbury town centre, invariably in the winter season. These previous sightings of individual birds had included male juvenile-plumaged birds, and both male and female adult birds, all for different time periods, with none staying into the breeding season. Juvenile Peregrines retain their brown and streaky plumage for a year, then start moulting towards adult plumage with barred white breast and blue-grey back. The males (tiercels) are nearly a third smaller than the females (falcons), a regular feature of many raptor species.

April 1st 2019: Sarah observed a pair of adult-plumaged birds together on the building for the first time, on the top girder of the rooftop radio masts. We were then away for two weeks and unable to return to BT until mid-April.

April 17th: Only the male was visible. He repeatedly flew around the building at the height of the rooftop radio masts, each time resting on the highest horizontal top girders **in a very proprietorial way**. Although it was rather misty, the light was good and photos of him revealed a delightful surprise – they clearly showed that he had leg rings and on the left leg was a large coded **colour ring**. The biggest challenge then was to read the code. With the coding we could find out where he came from and his age; a Peregrine with provenance!

April 18th: Initially only the male was visible. However the female appeared on the highest concrete ledge of the tower, the high ledge, and the male then disappeared behind the same ledge; was this **a changeover of incubation duties?** And by observing this behaviour had we **determined the location of the nest?** The male was soon in the air again to prove his ownership of the BT Exchange; a Carrion Crow had soared over, perhaps curious about the Peregrine activity, and the male Peregrine rapidly flew up to an advantageous height to repeatedly dive-bomb the crow, which had to literally fall out of the sky to avoid

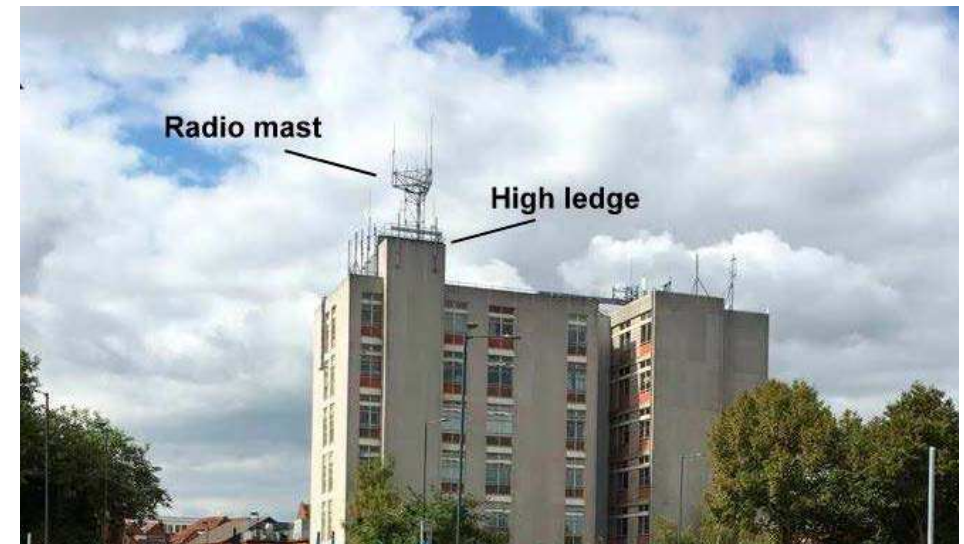


Figure 1: Newbury BT Exchange building from the east side showing the radio mast cluster and the high ledge.

further punishment. Moments later a Buzzard drifted over towards the building and it received exactly the same warning. Despite all the airborne activity, and dozens of photos, we still couldn't read the colour ring coding because his overlapping leg feathers and the distance from our observation point prevented a clear view.

April 19th: Just as we arrived, the Peregrines were **mating**. The male then flew off eastwards and soon returned with prey, but frustratingly took it round to the west side of the building out of view. Despite many more photos, there was still no clear view of the entire colour-ring code in any of them, until April 20th when the male Peregrine came in with a huge catch, a drake Teal. This weighed more than 50% of the male Peregrine's body weight, but he somehow managed to land on the top girder of the radio mast cluster with it. The female appeared from the nesting area and rushed up to the top girder to join him. She took it from him with her beak, a fairly dignified affair, and proceeded to pluck and eat it balanced on the top girder. With all of their legs in full view during the food exchange, it was clear that while the male was ringed, the female was not. He then flew in a long wide arc to go down to the high ledge and take over incubation while the falcon had her breakfast; he passed almost over our heads, finally revealing the colour-ring code: **Black 69**. In this instant his name was sorted, so we let our imaginations run wild and came up with **Mrs Newbury** for the falcon.

We went home to check the website for colour-ringed birds, [www.cr-birding.org]. Details of the sighting, the code and photos were sent to the registered project ringer. The fabulous reply from Graham Roberts, the ringer, came the same day. Black 69 was ringed as a chick at Chichester Cathedral on May 17th 2016 when he was three weeks old, and this was the first ever record of him since he had left his natal home nearly three years ago. Graham very kindly sent a photo of the moment of ringing (Figure 2a).

April 22nd: When we arrived on site, Black 69 (B69) was not visible, and Mrs Newbury (Mrs N) was perched on the top girder. Then she slipped down to the nest area, presumably to continue incubating. A little while later, some broody Woodpigeons, which were clearly nest prospecting, slowly wandered along the high ledge and dropped down into the nest area. B69



Figure 2a: Peregrine 'Black 69' ringed as a chick at Chichester Cathedral on May 17th 2016 (courtesy of Graham Roberts, the ringer).



Figure 2b: Black 69 flying around the Newbury BT Exchange building three years later, April 20th 2019.

exploded out from behind the high ledge, chasing off the pigeons with feathers flying in all directions. With all the commotion, Mrs Newbury appeared on the high ledge with breast feathers compressed and parted from incubation. Shortly afterwards she settled down again on the nest. B69 sat on the top girder basking in the warm sunshine, keeping an eye out for intruders.

April 25th: After two unsuccessful hunting sorties, B69 came back with prey on his third attempt. He landed next to Mrs N on the high ledge, and she took it from him, plucking and eating it there.

April 28th: Soon after we arrived, B69 seriously chased a Feral Pigeon around the building, the first time we had seen him pursuing one of the many Feral Pigeons that share and nest on the main rooftop alongside the Peregrines. Mrs N was perched on the high ledge initially, but then dropped down onto the nest area out of sight to incubate.

April 29th: Mrs N came off the nest area for a food pass from B69; he then went to the nest and took over incubation while she continued with her breakfast. After 45 minutes, she joined him at the nest behind the high ledge and there was not a Peregrine in sight.

May 1st: Mrs N was perched on the top girder constantly calling and looking down towards the nest; she appeared to be calling Black 69 off the nest, and indeed, eventually he came off and up onto the high ledge, leg and wing stretching as if he had been there some while. She flew around the rooftop verbally remonstrating, dropped onto the high ledge, calling constantly and moving nearer to him until she forced him to fly off. As he flew westwards, she dropped down to the nest to replace him. Nine minutes later he was back with prey, but stopped on the other side of the building with it, out of our sight.

May 3rd: Early morning, B69 flew off hunting to the south-west and five minutes later came back with prey. Mrs N flew up from the nest and joined him on the top girder of the radio masts. After a bit more of a tussle than usual, she took the prey from him and flew to a different girder to pluck it. Very soon, she flew around the rooftop a few times, dropped down to the roof and appeared to cache the prey, returning to the nest straight away without it.

May 4th: It was a cold and windy morning. After much searching, Black 69 was eventually found on an uppermost sheltered window ledge. Later, after a good deal of wing stretching, he set off eastwards at great speed at rooftop height. But soon afterwards he was back on another nearby window ledge. Even perched there the strong blustery wind ruffled his feathers and he was off again soon, as if provoked by the wind, for what proved to be the most impressive demonstration of his flying skills to date. He bowed his wings stiffly and soared up, down and across the sky effortlessly. Then, when at great height, the wings suddenly closed, the familiar Peregrine scimitar shape morphed into a plumb bob silhouette, and the famous Peregrine stoop ensued at a 60 degrees angle. A Red Kite had come drifting in towards the BT building, and within seconds Black 69 was repeatedly dive-bombing it. Last moment dodging by the Kite undoubtedly prevented contact between them.



Figure 3: Black 69 on guard duty on the top girder April 22nd 2019.



Figure 4: Mrs Newbury remonstrating at Black 69 on May 1st 2019. She was in partial moult in the primary wing feathers, and she had a broken central tail feather at this time.

May 5th: Another cold morning followed an overnight frost. Mrs N was on the high ledge, looking around as if waiting for Black 69 to appear; we couldn't find him perched up even after searching all the windows. After quarter of an hour on the high ledge, Mrs N dropped down onto the nest, and continued with incubation.

May 6th: It was still cold, and an afternoon visit found Black 69 roosting on an uppermost window ledge, but before long he was up on the top girder of the radio mast. Meanwhile Mrs N appeared on the high ledge, gently preening. She stayed on the high ledge, and even found a scrap of food to eat that had been lying on the ledge.

May 8th: The weather had deteriorated into heavy rain and strong winds, followed by heavy showers. B69 was again on an uppermost sheltered window ledge. He just gently slumbered for two hours. No sign of Mrs N, presumably she was incubating the eggs.

May 10th: After more heavy rain the day before, it eventually brightened up by mid-morning, which encouraged B69 to sit on the top girder. Still no visible sign of Mrs N; we had to presume that she was incubating.

May 12th: An early afternoon visit found B69 on the top girder again. Three Red Kites and two Buzzards came drifting high over the BT building in a short space of time but with no response from the Peregrines; they were just too high to worry about. It is extraordinary how this BT building acts as a beacon; it might be that the breeding behaviour of the Peregrines suggests to them that there is a potential meal here. Leftover carcasses on the main roof and even young chicks could attract their attention, and this is why B69 and Mrs N had to be on their guard all the time, since Kites and Buzzards both scavenge for carrion. Later, however, a Buzzard did come over BT at rooftop level, which soon had B69 relentlessly dive-bombing it at least six times in rapid succession as the Buzzard flew straight and low eastwards in panic mode.

May 13th: B69 was on the top girder when we arrived. Mrs N came off the nest onto the high ledge, her breast feathers clearly parted and ruffled from incubation, calling at him continuously. Eventually she went back to the nest, and soon afterwards at 06:38 Black 69 flew off northwards hunting; six minutes later he was back with prey, and passed it to her on the top girder. No sooner had she taken it from him to eat, he leapt off the top girder south-eastwards on another hunting sortie straight over our heads. After having a good feed, she seemed to cache the remains of her meal before returning to the nest some 30 minutes later.

May 17th: Alan Parfitt observed B69 come in with prey. Mrs N joined him on the top girder and, after the food exchange, flew down with the prey to the high ledge and then the nest. Was this the first observation of food being taken to the nest and the **possible feeding of chicks?**

May 20th: Alan Parfitt saw both Peregrines at midday. Mrs N came to the BT building carrying prey for the first time; it was in fact the first time since April 1st that she had been seen further than 60 metres away from the BT building! Soon after arriving, she went down to the nest.

May 22nd: Although both birds were visible mid-afternoon when we arrived, neither bird was actually seen to bring in food to the building. However, Mrs Newbury appeared on the high ledge with a food item, took it down to the nest and proceeded to pluck it there, a plume of feathers appearing on the rising air. Had she plundered one of the Feral Pigeon nests?

May 24th: A quick scan at the start of an early afternoon visit initially yielded no Peregrines at all. Eventually Mrs N appeared on the high ledge with ruffled breast feathers. Soon after, B69 arrived without prey and they both flew and circled the rooftop; she alighted on the top girder and he dropped down to the nest to continue incubation. Before long, Mrs N gently took to the air again, gradually drifting eastwards; ten minutes later she returned, without prey, and dropped down to the nest. Moments later B69 appeared from the nest and zoomed off hunting eastwards. About quarter of an hour later Mrs Newbury appeared up on the high ledge and sat there looking around almost as if she was waiting for him to return. He returned to the top girder without prey; she looked up at him calling incessantly. After a while he went off to the north-west, soon disappearing over the roof and tree tops. It was not long before she became agitated, and then purposefully launched herself off in the same northerly direction. She had spotted B69 returning with prey from over a mile away. She repeatedly intercepted him, trying to get the prey from him, and he artfully dodged her at the last second, but **her turn of speed and acceleration after him was astonishing.** Those few moments of seeing her pursuing B69 back to the BT building was worth all the hours of patiently waiting to see something happen. Frustratingly, they returned to the west side of BT out of sight, but ten minutes later B69 arrived on the high ledge with a thoroughly plucked and part eaten prey item. Mrs N came straight up from the nest and finally got the prey from him.

May 25th: A mid-afternoon visit found B69 snoozing on the right-hand end of the high ledge. An hour and a quarter later he suddenly flew off very high and came back ten minutes later empty-handed as far as we could tell (further observations in 2020 led to a different conclusion!). He went straight down to the nest.

May 27th: An early morning visit found Mrs N perched on the high ledge looking inwards to the nesting area. An hour and twenty minutes later, she was still there with no sign of Black 69 at all. Two hours of observation were inconclusive as to what was going on; we had no way of telling until one of the birds appeared to do something! (All along it was very frustrating not being able to see the nest and understand what was going on).

May 28th: Alan Parfitt made a midday visit with no birds visible on arrival. B69 arrived at 12:30 on the high ledge without food. He just sat there looking in towards the nesting area. At 13:15 Mrs N appeared and they both then went up to the top girder and were still there at 14:00. On our mid-afternoon visit, no birds were in sight on arrival. Soon after one appeared on the top girder, and stayed there for two hours despite frequent heavy showers; it was Mrs N, confirmed when she finally preened and showed her ringless tarsi. No sign of B69 at all.

May 30th: An early morning visit found Mrs N on the most extreme north-east corner of the BT building, well away from the nesting area; a new location for her in our observations. She seemed agitated, looking around and calling; 45 minutes later she flew back to the high ledge, looking in towards the nesting area. We could hear two Peregrines calling, but still couldn't see B69; maybe he was on the nest. Both birds later launched into flight, B69 eastwards, the other down towards the ground out of sight. Three minutes later B69 came in high with prey, carrying it in his beak (the food pass mode) and in seconds Mrs N was there flying and calling underneath him, repeatedly trying to grab it from him. **He eventually let go and she made a spectacular catch in mid-air.** As she went to the top girder to eat it, he went down to the nest area. Having eaten half the prey, Mrs N took the remainder of the prey down to the nest area. Only minutes later a Red Kite came soaring in over the nest area, but was once again instantly chased off by B69; we are sure that the Kite saw the food pass and came in because it thought it had a chance of pirating an easy meal. B69 returned to the top girder after he had seen it off.

June 9th: An early morning visit found no birds in sight for an hour, then Mrs N flew around the rooftop and perched on the top girder. She preened and repeatedly wiped her bill, indicating that she had probably just finished a meal. In two hours of observing, this was all we saw, with no sign of Black 69, presumed attending the nest but with no evidence to substantiate that.

June 10th: Visiting early in the morning found both Peregrines chasing the BT rooftop resident Feral Pigeons, in more of a territorial manner than hunting. They were both very restless, flying around the rooftop, going down to the nest, back up on the high ledge. It was difficult to keep tabs on who was where. She eventually roosted on an east facing window ledge. Despite heavy rain showers all morning, we observed from 05:45 until 09:00, and neither bird was seen to brood at the nest or take food in.

June 14th: It was proving to be a very wet week. An early morning visit found both birds perched on east facing window ledges, sheltering from the bad weather. And there they stayed until we had to leave.

June 16th: During a two hour mid-morning visit, we saw that both birds were still briefly visiting the nesting area, the female calling as she did so. Black 69 was active, chasing off a Red Kite, and then hunting over gardens and rooftops to the north-east, but he returned without prey. Mrs N. flew off fast to the east hunting, but also returned without prey. Both ended up on the high ledge as we left.

June 20th: A brief afternoon visit. Both birds were perched up on the top girder; there was no activity to record.

September 7th: Both birds were present late morning. We had arranged a site meeting with Dean Cleall, BT site manager, and Exeter Peregrine expert Nick Dixon, for an inspection of the nest site on the roof top. One complete unhatched egg was found at the exact position (determined by observation) of the nest. No remains of nestlings or juveniles were present. It might sound gruesome but Peregrines have been seen to eat their own unhatched eggs

and dead chicks. Inspection of the other parts of the rooftop produced only fragments of prey carcass leftovers.

Conclusion: the Peregrines had reached the egg stage, and possibly even chicks, which were all destroyed by flooding on the flat rooftop where they had nested.

Dean Cleall kindly agreed to Nick Dixon's recommendation to install a nest box with a deep gravel bed to help overcome any future problems with prolonged wet weather flooding the rooftop, to be constructed and supplied by us.

Both adults were present for the rest of the year and into 2020.

Moorhen Feeding Chicks

by Renton Righelato

On June 23rd at Fobney Island, Reading, my attention was drawn to an adult Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* springing vigorously from the surface of a small pool and beating the flower of a Greater Reedmace *Typha latifolia*. The flowering stalk had been broken at about 1.5 m from the water surface and the male part of the flower was hanging about 1.2 m from the surface. The Moorhen appeared to be beating the flower and caused a cascade of yellow stamens to fall on to the water, where two 2-4 day old chicks were feeding on them. The adult did not appear to be joining in the meal. The Birds of the Western Palearctic lists the seeds of Reedmace as food items for the Moorhen and notes that adults present food to chicks, but the harvesting and use of pollen sacs as food in this way is not reported.



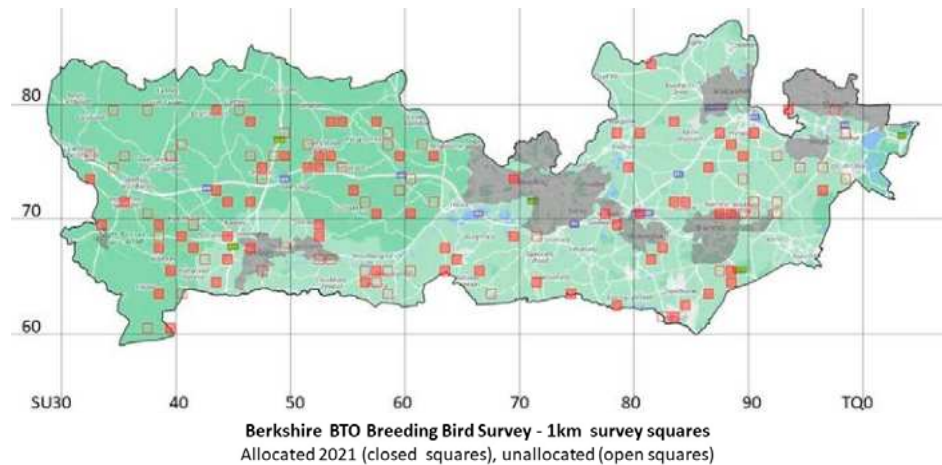
Moorhen, Lower Farm GP, Jul 23rd 2022, Andy Tomczynski.

Twenty-five Years of 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 BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), a partnership jointly funded by the BTO, RSPB and JNCC, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers. 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. The BTO has provided us with the data for Berkshire which this is based on. 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 BBS surveys have been running annually since 1994, except for 2001 when foot and mouth disease prevented most surveying in the countryside, so we now have twenty-five years of data.

As the selection of 1 km squares for surveying is random and the area surveyed is less than 5% of the county, there may be few or no surveys of habitats occupying only a small part of the area of Berkshire. As a result, wetland and heathland species, in particular, are poorly covered or not represented in the data at all. The map shows the squares currently surveyed and those for which surveyors are sought by the BTO.



The annual index is a snapshot for the year of the ratio of a year's abundance to the reference year, which has been set as 2000 except for Buzzard, Red Kite and Ring-necked Parakeet. These three species were present in too few surveys in 2000, so for them a reference year of 2010 has been used. In the graphs below, the index is shown as a cross (+), together with a green band showing the 85% confidence limits of a smoothed trendline calculated by the BTO. More information can be found at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/breeding-bird-survey>.

The reliability of the index falls as the number of survey squares in which a species is recorded falls, so species which have been recorded in fewer than 30 1 km squares are noted with an asterisk * and the data should be treated with caution.

In general, the Berkshire results reflect the national trends shown on the BTO's Birdtrends resource <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birdtrends/2020>. Species covered by the survey that increased significantly in abundance nationally and in

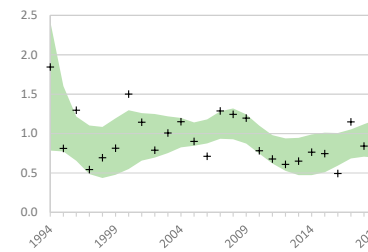
Berkshire over the period 2000 to 2019 are Greylag Goose, Egyptian Goose, Red Kite, Buzzard, Stock Dove, Ring-necked Parakeet, Jackdaw, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Nuthatch and Goldfinch. Species increasing in Berkshire but not nationally are Red-legged Partridge and Cormorant (though nationally the inland breeding population has been increasing).

Species in decline since 2000 both nationally and in Berkshire are Grey Partridge, Sparrowhawk, Lapwing, Collared Dove, Cuckoo, Swift, Kestrel, Green Woodpecker, House Martin, Skylark, Willow Warbler, Starling, Mistle Thrush, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Linnets and Yellowhammer.

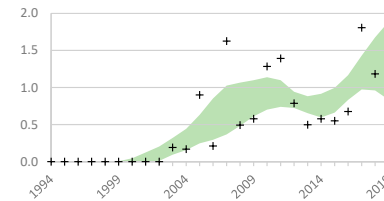
Acknowledgements

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is a partnership jointly funded by the BTO, RSPB and JNCC, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers.

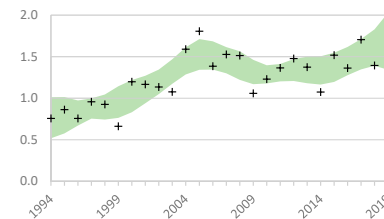
Thanks are due to the British Trust for Ornithology and to Sarah Harris for providing the Berkshire results of the Breeding Bird Survey, to Chris Robinson and Patrick Crowley, who initiated the Berkshire Bird Index, and to all the Berkshire BBS surveyors.



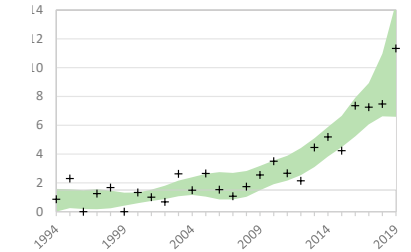
Canada Goose abundance has not changed significantly this century.



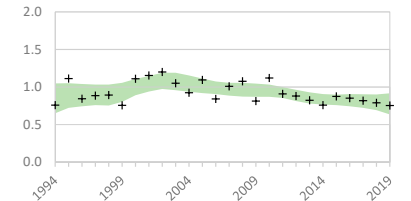
Egyptian Geese are recorded in few of the BBS squares surveyed in Berkshire. However, the limited results suggest that the population has grown dramatically this century.



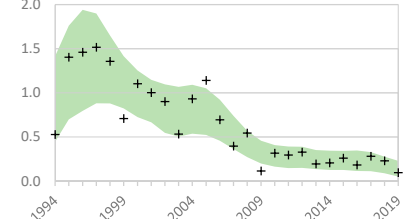
Red-legged Partridge abundance has approximately doubled in Berkshire in the last 25 years, an increase not seen nationally.



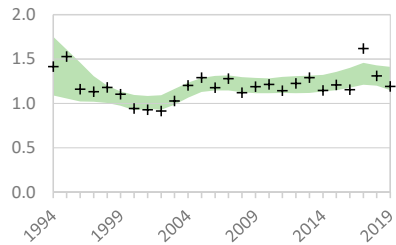
Greylag Geese are recorded in fewer than half of the BBS squares surveyed. However, the limited results suggest that the population has grown substantially this century.



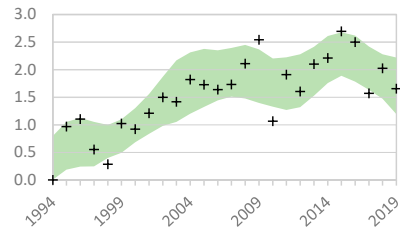
Mallard abundance in the breeding season has not changed significantly over the last 25 years.



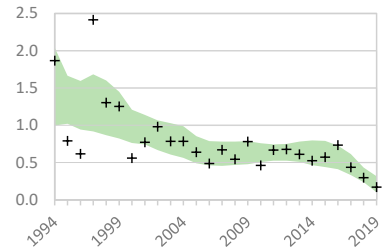
Grey Partridges* are recorded in too few BBS surveys to give reliable estimates of change. Nonetheless, their relative abundance has fallen substantially, in line with national trends.



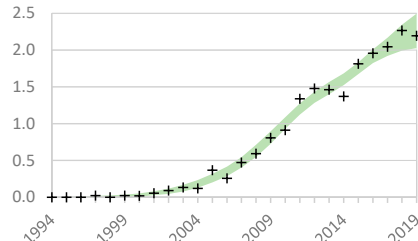
Pheasant abundance, augmented by a large annual introduction of captive-bred birds, has been stable.



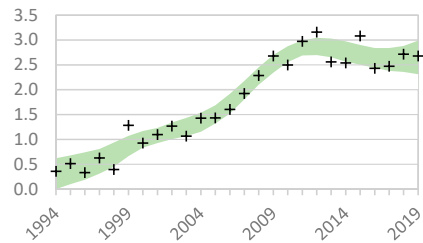
Cormorants are recorded in too few BBS surveys to provide a reliable measure of relative abundance. However, the population has grown over the last 25 years.



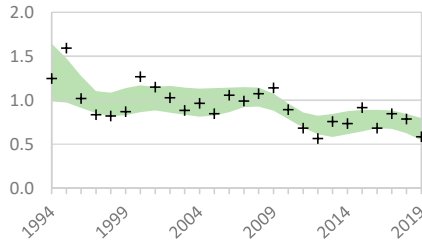
Sparrowhawks are recorded in too few surveys to obtain reliable results; nonetheless the data indicate a rapid decline, reflecting the national picture.



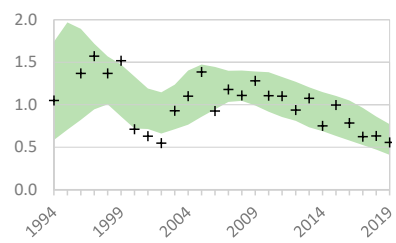
Red Kite – following its introduction in Oxfordshire in 1990, the population in Berkshire grew exponentially to around 2012, since when growth has continued more slowly. Reference year is 2010.



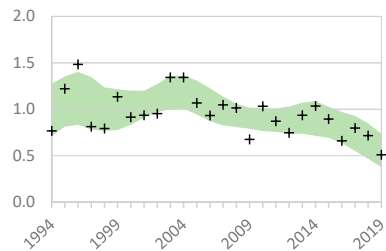
Buzzard – the population grew rapidly from 1990 to 2011 and has since remained stable.



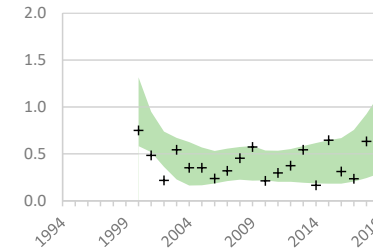
Moorhen – wetland species are not well-covered by the BBS. However, the data suggest a small decline in the last decade, in common with the national picture.



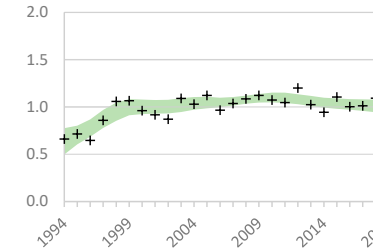
Coot – the suggestion of a decline in its breeding abundance since 2010 should be viewed with caution due to poor coverage of water bodies in BBS surveys.



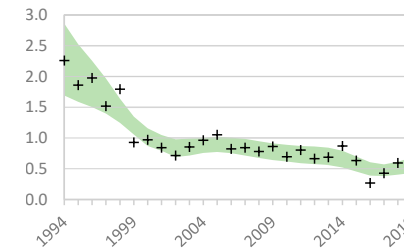
Lapwing – the long-term slow decline in breeding appears to be continuing.



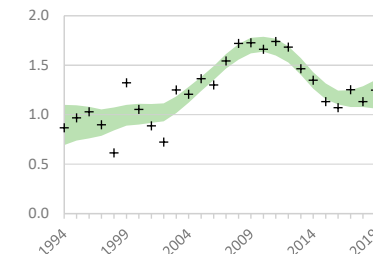
Feral Pigeon abundance shows no significant change. Erratic data prior to 2000 have been omitted.



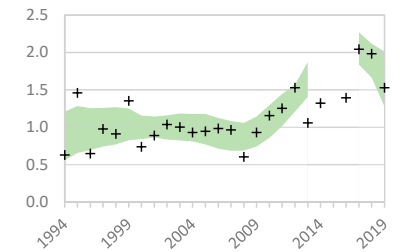
Woodpigeon abundance shows no significant change since 1998.



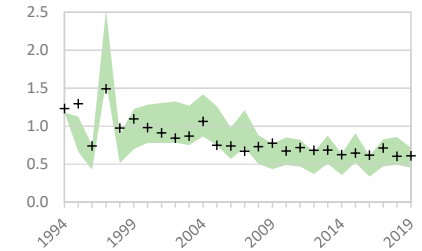
Cuckoo – the rate of decline in abundance has slowed this century.



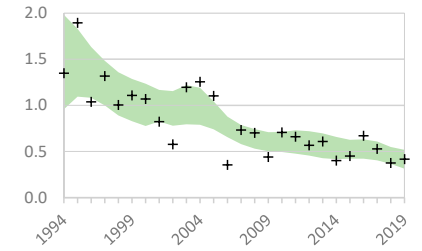
Great Spotted Woodpecker numbers in Berkshire, as nationally, peaked around 2012 and have fallen significantly since by around a quarter.



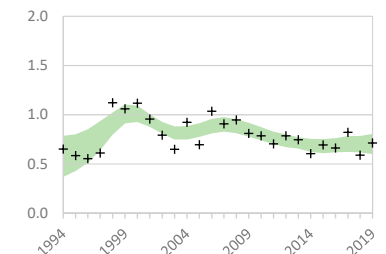
Stock Dove – setting aside a spurious high figure (4) for 2015, abundance appears to have increased by at least half in the last decade, similar to the national increase of 40%.



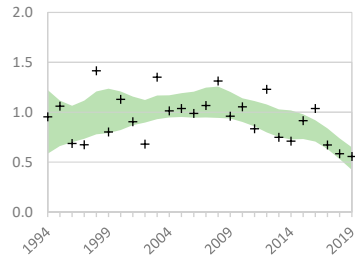
Collared Dove – neglecting the erratic data prior to 1998, the abundance in Berkshire appears to have fallen by around a third since. The national trend shows an approximately 25% fall over the same period.



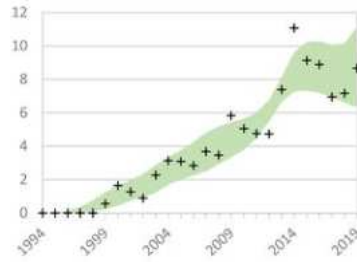
Swift – the abundance index continues inexorably downward.



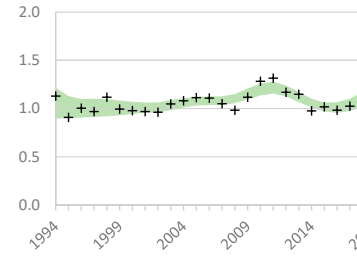
Green Woodpecker abundance shows a small decline since 2000, similar to the national picture.



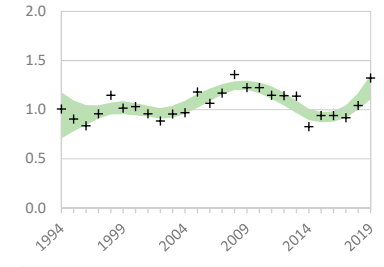
Kestrel – although recorded in too few surveys to give accurate results, the data suggest that abundance has fallen in recent years.



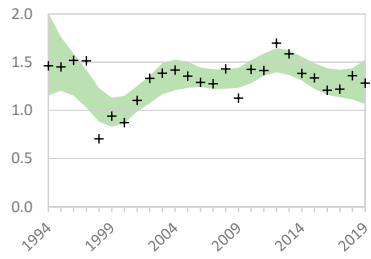
Ring-necked Parakeet numbers have increased rapidly as they spread westwards across Berkshire.



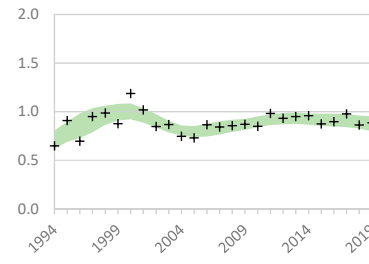
Blue Tit numbers have changed little over the 25-year period.



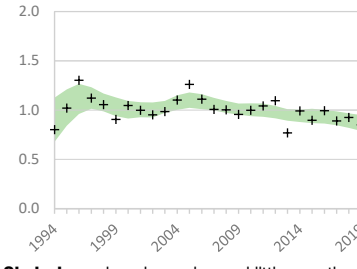
Great Tit numbers have changed little over the 25-year period. The national index, however, grew 50% between 1994 and 2010.



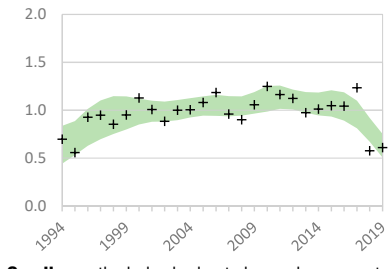
Jay abundance has not changed significantly over the last 25 years.



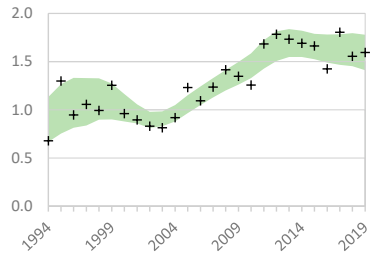
Magpie abundance has not changed significantly over the 25-year period.



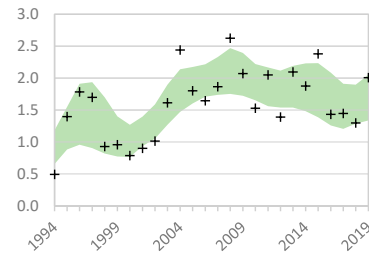
Skylark numbers have changed little over the 25-year period. The suggestion of a small downward trend is consistent with the national index fall of around 20% over the period.



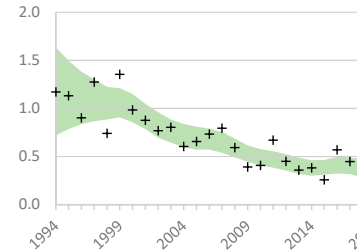
Swallow – the index had not changed over most of the last 25 years but fell by about one third between 2016 and 2017. A similar sharp decrease is shown in the national index.



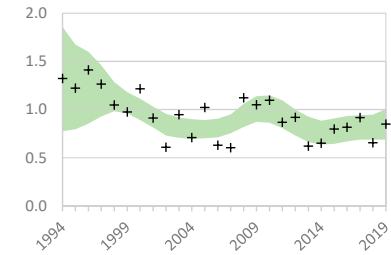
Jackdaw – over the last 25 years, there has been a round a 50% increase in the index, in line with the national trend.



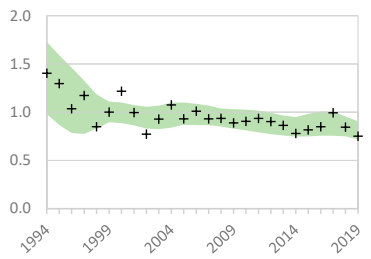
Rook – there is considerable year on year variation in the index, but no clear trend is apparent, though the national index fell 25% between 2000 and 2019.



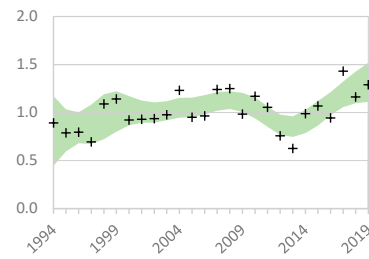
House Martin – the index has fallen steadily, in contrast to that for Swallow, to about 40% of its 2000 value, in common with the national picture.



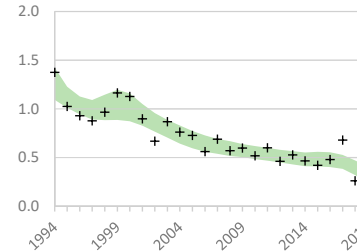
Long-tailed Tits show more inter-annual variation in index than most other similarly abundant species, but no consistent increase or decrease.



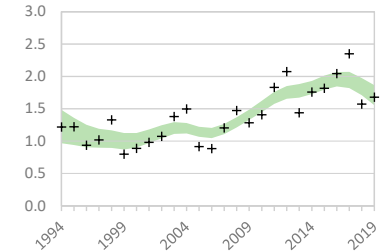
Carrion Crow abundance has not changed significantly in the last 25 years. In contrast, the national index increased by around 35% over the same period.



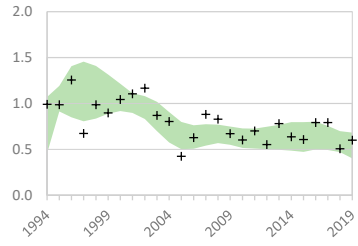
Coal Tit abundance has been stable over most of the period, with a suggestion of increase over the last five years.



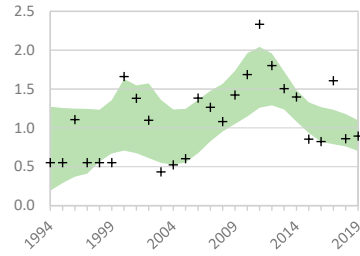
Willow Warblers well-documented, long-term decline in the south of the UK is also apparent in Berkshire, with the index falling 60% in the last twenty years.



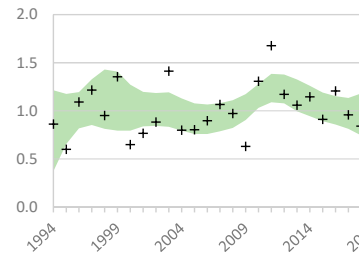
Chiffchaff abundance has increased steadily by nearly twofold this century, in contrast with Willow Warbler.



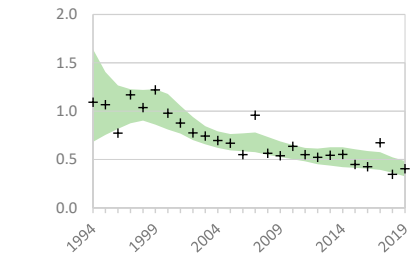
Sedge Warbler – wetland species are not well-covered by the BBS survey. Nonetheless, the data suggest some decline since 2000, in common with the national index.



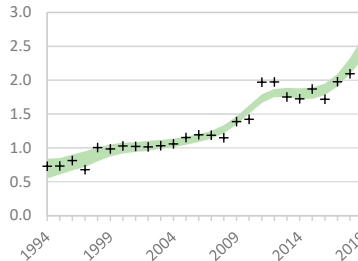
Reed Warbler – wetland species are not well-covered by the BBS survey. Nonetheless, the data suggest an upward trend over the 25-year period, as does the national index.



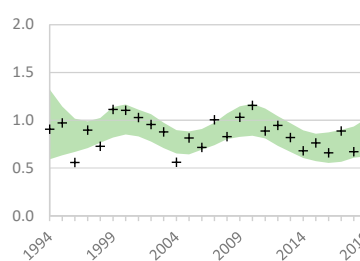
Treecreepers are recorded in too few surveys for a reliable index to be calculated. The data show no trend and considerable inter-annual variation.



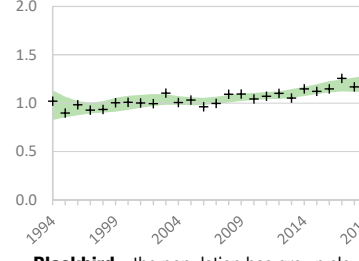
Starlings – continuing a long-term trend, the abundance of breeding birds has fallen steadily over the last 25 years.



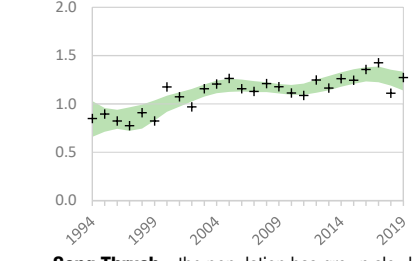
Blackcap – the breeding population has increased steadily over the 25-year period, threefold, as has the national population.



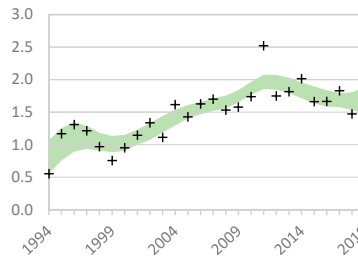
Garden Warbler – unlike the other two common *Sylvia* warblers, the population has remained more or less constant over the period.



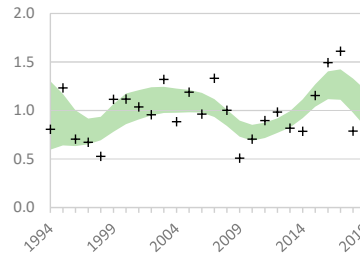
Blackbird – the population has grown slowly, by 10-20%, since 1994.



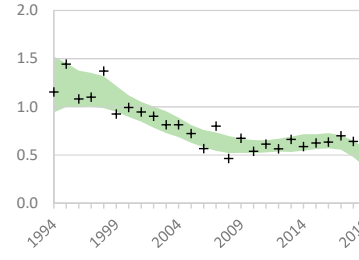
Song Thrush – the population has grown slowly, by 20-30%, since 1994.



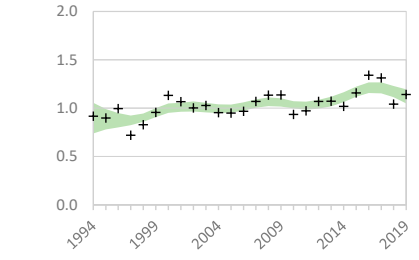
Whitethroat – nationally, the population doubled from the mid-1980s to about 2014. The Berkshire index followed a similar pattern, with little change in the last five years.



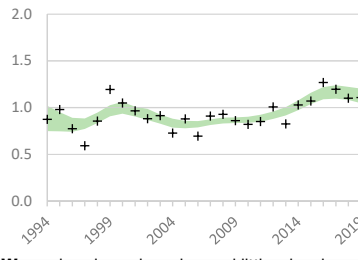
Goldcrest – although abundance shows no long-term trend, like Long-tailed Tit, there is considerable inter-annual variation. The lowest indices appear to follow unusually cold winters.



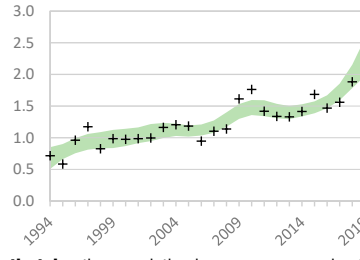
Mistle Thrush – Berkshire's population, which fell by about half between 1994 and 2008, has since changed little. The national picture is one of rapid decline in the south-east.



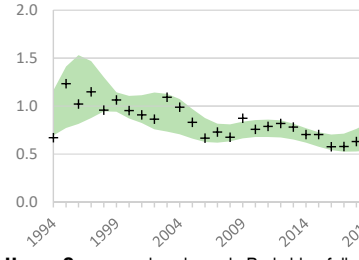
Robins, along with several other common woodland residents (Nuthatch, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Wren), have shown a small population increase since 1994.



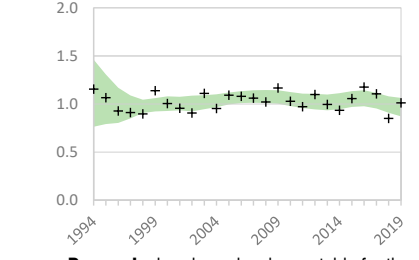
Wren abundance has changed little, showing an increase of 10-20% over the 25-year period.



Nuthatch – the population has grown approximately threefold over the 25-years. In the same period the national index doubled.



House Sparrow abundance in Berkshire, following a long-term decline, appears to have changed little over the last decade.



Dunnock abundance has been stable for the 25-year period.

Birding Highlights of 2019

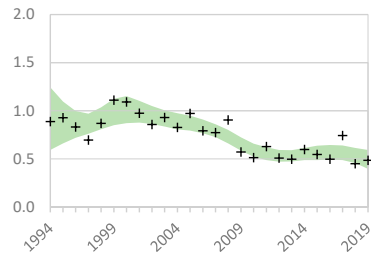
By Robert Godden

January: the **Scaup** found at Moor Green Lakes at the end of 2018 remained into 2019 as did the **Great Northern Diver** at Beale Wildlife Park. However, a **Cattle Egret** in a field by the A4 at Englefield on New Year's Day was new and it would go on to spend the rest of the month in the Theale and Englefield area. Also on New Year's Day, a **Caspian Gull** was an excellent find in the roost at Theale Main Pit, and the next day another was found at Queen Mother Reservoir. Three **White-fronted Geese** that had been found in a mixed goose flock in mid-December in Old Windsor remained until the 9th and were thought to be roosting at Queen Mother Reservoir. A **Common Scoter** was picked out at Bray GPs on the 4th and two **Water Pipits** were at Horton on the 5th. A ringtail **Hen Harrier** flew over Combe Hill on the 8th. A **Scaup** was present at Wraysbury and Horton GPs on Feb 9th and 10th. At Fobney Meadow, **Water Pipits** increased from one on Jan 10th to three by the end of the month. There were flight views of presumably the same **White Stork** over Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) on the 15th and over Beale Wildlife Park on the 17th. On Jan 20th, a drake **Ferruginous Duck** was found at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire, while on the 27th the presumed German ringed individual returned to Sandford Lake, though the presence or absence of a leg ring during its stay until Feb 19th was not determined. The month ended with a **Siberian Chiffchaff** at Bray GPs on Jan 20th (and again on Feb 13th) and at least two **Hawfinches** feeding on Hornbeams in Windsor Great Park on Jan 24th, two **Bearded Tits** at Dorney Wetlands on the 26th and a **Merlin** at Theale on the 27th.

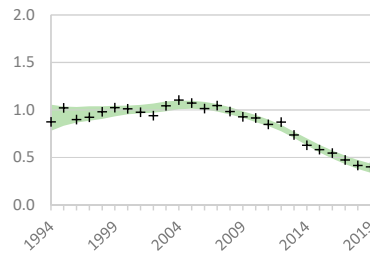
February: the month started with two new **Caspian Gulls** at Queen Mother Reservoir. On Feb 3rd, a drake **Red-breasted Merganser** was found at Horton GPs associating with a redhead **Goosander**. Apart from a visit to nearby Wraysbury Reservoir, they remained together until Feb 10th but it was presumably the same 'pair' that relocated to Lea Farm



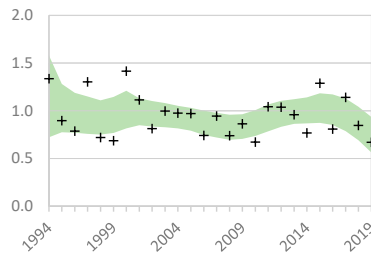
White-fronted Goose, Old Windsor, Jan 9th, Andy Tomczynski.



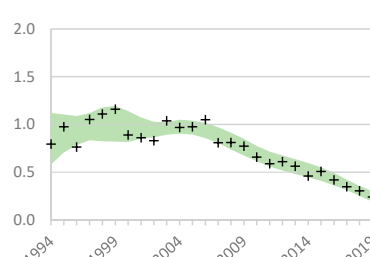
Pied Wagtail abundance has decreased by about one third since 2000. During the same period, national data show a fall of around 20%.



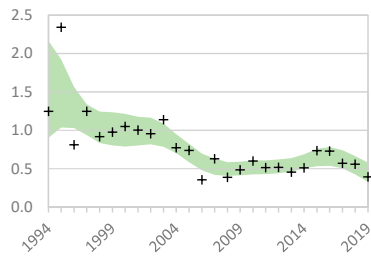
Chaffinch – the steep decline in abundance from 2005 is also seen in the national data. Like Greenfinch, which shows a somewhat larger decline, it is thought to be due to trichomonosis.



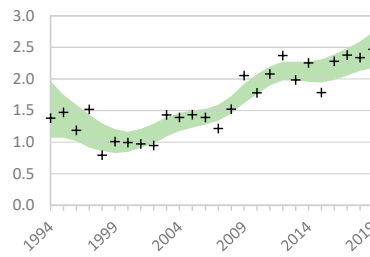
Bullfinch – the population shows no sign of change since 1994.



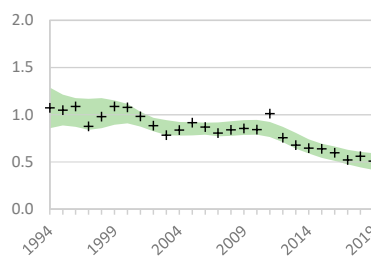
Greenfinch abundance has fallen rapidly since 2005, by about 75%, due in large measure, it is thought, to trichomonosis (BTO Birdtrends).



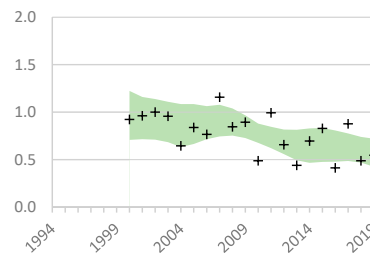
Linnet – following a long-term decline in the second half of the last century, the population has been fairly stable since about 2005.



Goldfinch abundance has doubled since 2000, reflecting a similar increase nationally.



Yellowhammer – the rapid decline in the 1970s and 1980s seen nationally has been followed in Berkshire by a slower, but still substantial, fall of around 50% since 1994.



Reed Bunting, being largely a wetland species, is not well monitored by the BBS and particularly erratic data prior to 2000 have been omitted here. Whilst the data suggest a downward trend, it should not be regarded as significant.



Glaucous Gull, Queen Mother Reservoir, Mar 21st, Andy Tomczynski.

Lake and Twyford GPs where they were present from Feb 16th to the month's end. A **Red-necked Grebe** found at Theale Main Pit on Feb 5th was enjoyed by many birders during its stay until Feb 11th, and, while searching for it on its first day, one observer found two **Shags** on Pimple Island. A ring-tail **Hen Harrier** frequented the Lambourn Downs, while a **Marsh Harrier** received unwelcome attention from **Red Kites** at the Arthur Jacob LNR at Horton on Feb 15th. A pale **Glaucous Gull** was seen daily at Queen Mother Reservoir from Feb 10th to 18th, and possibly the same bird was reported there between Feb 27th and Mar 29th. Three **White-fronted Geese** in a flock of **Greylags** on Feb 13th remained in the vicinity of Queen Mother Reservoir until the 17th, and another was found in a mixed goose flock at Padworth Lane GP on Feb 27th. Sightings of **Bittern** at the regular wintering site of White Swan Lake had ceased by mid-January, but one flying over an east Berkshire reedbed on Feb 24th was the last county report of **Bittern** for the winter.

March: a **Sand Martin** that flew through Lea Farm on Mar 2nd was a very early sign of spring. A visit to Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 5th yielded the long-staying **Glaucous Gull** and a **Caspian Gull**, probably an individual that was seen earlier in the year. A few days later, an **Iceland Gull** was seen to fly in there on the 11th with two more reports later in the month, and another **Caspian Gull** was present on the 20th. By early March, the ever-present **Scaup** at Moor Green Lakes had assumed adult male plumage and was last seen on the 18th. On that date, the three **White-fronted Geese** made their final appearance at Old Windsor, and a male **Merlin** was seen carrying off prey at Brimpton GPs. A pair of **Garganeys** arrived at Lower Farm GP on Mar 22nd and the next day three **Black-necked Grebes**, with two in full summer plumage, were found on Theale Main Pit. Single **Common Scoters** were found at Lea Farm Lake and Queen Mother Reservoir on the 23rd, the latter staying to the next day. An **Osprey** flew over Winter Hill on the 25th, and single **Cattle Egrets** were reported at Theale Main Pit and Moor Green Lakes in the last days of March. At Fobney Meadow, a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was an exciting find on Mar 28th, while ten **Black-tailed Godwits** in summer plumage stayed from Mar 29th to 31st. **Garganeys** featured with a pair at Searles Farm Lane GP from the 29th and a drake at Padworth Lane GP on the 31st.

April: there were some impressive accounts of visible migration including an estimated 800 **Meadow Pipits** passing over Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 2nd and a huge flock of hirundines during heavy rain at Theale Main Pit on Apr 4th, where virtually all were **Sand Martins** – maybe as many as 1,000! The first **Ring Ouzel** of the year turned up

at Greenham Common on Apr 5th. Over the next fortnight at least two more were found there and others were located at Woolhampton and Inkpen. Early April saw a strong **Little Gull** passage, peaking with an estimated 47 across the county on Apr 8th. There was plenty of interest at Queen Mother Reservoir with three different **Caspian Gulls** at various times, a **Rock Pipit** on the 8th and 9th, presumably of the Scandinavian race *litoralis*, two **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** on the 9th, four **Red-breasted Mergansers** on the 9th and a separate pair the next day, and three **Sandwich Terns** on Apr 20th. A **Brent Goose** was also found at Lower Farm GP on the 10th; and Moor Green Lakes also had a **Sandwich Tern** early on Apr 8th. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** drummed at Padworth Lane GP on the 6th, a **White Stork** circled over Thatcham Marsh on Apr 8th and a **Merlin** pursued its prey at Marsh Benham on the 10th. The highest counts of **Brambling** for the year occurred in April and included 150 in Bracknell on Apr 9th. A **Cattle Egret** returned to Theale Main Pit on the 10th, remaining until the 23rd, while another flew over Horton GPs at great height on the 13th. The same day, an **Avocet** was at Lavell's Lake and a **Marsh Harrier** visited Woolhampton GPs. An observer's first ever UK **Black Redstart** sang from a TV aerial at a housing development in Emmbrook on Apr 19th. **Grasshopper Warblers** were reeling at four or five sites in the second half of April; one at Dorney Wetlands showed well on and off from Apr 19th to 21st. On Apr 23rd, a female **Turtle Dove** was in willows by the Roundmoor Ditch at Eton Wick, still present the next morning. **Wood Sandpipers** appeared in synchrony at Fobney Meadow and the Eric Mortimer Rayner Memorial Lakes on Apr 24th, and the month ended with a **Kittiwake** at Black Swan Lake on Apr 28th, a drake **Garganey** at Sandford Lake on the 30th and a **Wood Warbler** singing on Greenham Common the same day.

May: May Day brought more **Wood Warblers** with singles at Dinton Pastures and Winterbourne Holt, and another **Wood Sandpiper** at Burnthouse Lane GP. Sightings of the **Garganey** continued at various lakes at Dinton Pastures until May 6th. A **Great Northern Diver** in full summer plumage was quite a sight as it circled Queen Mother Reservoir on May 4th before flying off north north-west – maybe the same bird that circled the reservoir on May 10th in 2018. Two **White Storks** were mobbed by gulls and crows as they flew over Greenham Common on May 7th and **Wood Warblers** were noted again at Bucklebury Common on the 7th and Greenham Common on the 10th. May 8th was a memorable day for wader passage: two **Grey Plovers**, a **Wood Sandpiper** and a **Dunlin** emerged from the morning murk on the East Fen at Moor Green Lakes with a **Turnstone** turning up there in the afternoon; Queen Mother Reservoir provided sightings of nine **Whimbrel**, five **Knot**, four **Bar-tailed Godwits**, three **Ringed Plover**, a **Grey Plover** and a **Turnstone**; while a **Wood Sandpiper** was reported at Fobney Meadow and a **Knot** flew into Berkshire airspace at Sonning. East Fen hosted two more **Wood Sandpipers** on May 17th and 18th, and just one on the 19th. A **Hoopoe** was in a field at Martin's Heron, Bracknell, on May 19th, and



Black-necked Grebes, Main Pit, Theale, Mar 23rd, Andy Tomczynski.



Avocet, Lavell's Lake, Apr 13th, Andy Tomczynski.

an adult female **Marsh Harrier** dropped into an east Berkshire reedbed on May 22nd. On the Berkshire Downs, a male **Turtle Dove** commenced its lonely eight-week sojourn near West Ilsley on May 23rd. At the end of May, a pair of **Mediterranean Gulls** showed off their two young chicks at Moor Green Lakes, with one surviving to fledge – the first time this species had successfully bred in Berkshire!

June: the Emmbrook **Black Redstart** was seen singing from rooftops, aerials and scaffolding all month despite some disturbance from construction work at times. A **Cattle Egret** was at Eton Wick on Jun 4th, and four **Sandwich Terns** were seen briefly on a raft at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 9th. A **Brent Goose** of the much rarer (in southern Britain) *hrota* race spent 11 days in an east Berkshire field with other geese, but doubts were expressed over its wild origins. **Quail** arrived in west Berkshire at the end of the month and three or four could be heard from Jun 20th in the Compton and Lambourn Downs.

July: **Quail** were heard all through July on the Berkshire Downs with two or three on the Roden Downs and up to four near Sheepdrove Farm, including a pair flushed from beside the path on Jul 21st; however, while checking his moth trap early on Jul 23rd, an east Berkshire observer heard a Quail singing in adjacent fields for a brief 15 minutes. **Common Scoters** called in at Queen Mother Reservoir, with five there on the 5th and two on the 9th, and a flock of 12 summer plumage **Black-tailed Godwits** flew from Eton Wick on Jul 13th. After a quiet period mid-month, there was more activity in the last week of July: a **Marsh Harrier** was reported in Windsor Great Park on Jul 23rd; and from Queen Mother Reservoir there were reports of a **Sandwich Tern** on the 24th and two on the 29th, a **Caspian Gull** on the 25th and an adult **Turnstone** on the 29th and 30th. On Jul 31st, a **Wood Sandpiper** was photographed at Lavell's Lake and Lea Farm Lake.



Grey Plover, Moor Green Lakes, May 8th, Andy Tomczynski.

August: the month started with a run of **Wood Sandpipers**; after one at Crookham Common Pools on Aug 1st, the East Fen at Moor Green Lakes held up to three between Aug 2nd and 5th, and then singles were at Summerleaze GPs on the 10th and

Lea Farm Lake on the 11th. Queen Mother Reservoir accounted for the other reports of scarce waders: **Turnstones** with two on Aug 6th, and flocks of six and two on the 14th flying through just ten minutes apart, and a **Bar-tailed Godwit** on the 9th. Two **Sandwich Terns** dropped in at the reservoir for 25 minutes on Aug 9th and another was present on the 25th, at times heard calling but unseen in the mist. A **Bittern** at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 4th was a surprise visitor, only the second August record since 2003. A **Marsh Harrier** was reported at Lavell's Lake on Aug 5th and a juvenile was on the Roden Downs Aug 12th to 15th. A **Garganey** was around Lea Farm Lake all month. **Black Tern** passage was mainly confined to a three-day period that peaked on Aug 24th with spectacular counts of 45 at Theale Main Pit, 28 at Queen Mother Reservoir and nine at Moatlands GP. Migrant passerines included a **Wryneck** at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 25th, and **Pied Flycatchers** at Wigmoreash Pond on the 26th and at Lavell's Lake on the 29th.



Marsh Harrier, Aldworth, Aug 12th, Andy Tomczynski.

September: last month's **Garganey** hung on at Lavell's Lake until Sep 6th. Apart from an elusive **Pied Flycatcher** at Crookham Common on Sep 3rd and two **Black-necked Grebes** and a **Turnstone** at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 9th, September was off to a quiet start ... until Sep 11th that is! News broke of a juvenile **Black-winged Stilt** on the East Fen, the fourth ever in Berkshire and the first since 1945, but by the end of the day it was on many county birders' lists. Except for an occasional departure to the New Workings, the bird was to be found reliably on the East Fen until the end of the month. On Sep 14th, a **Cattle Egret** was seen to fly off into the mist at Moor Green Lakes, just the second record for the site. A second **Wryneck** was caught and ringed at Greenham Common on Sep 18th, and the third for the area in the year was also trapped and ringed at Crookham Common on Sep 26th. Back at Queen Mother Reservoir, a **Knot** found on Sep 26th was still there the next day.

October: at Moor Green Lakes, a juvenile **Black-necked Grebe**, a scarce species at this site, was present between Oct 1st and 5th, and the **Black-winged Stilt** remained until Oct 8th. Queen Mother Reservoir provided an interesting run of records in early October, including up to two **Caspian Gulls**, a **Rock Pipit** on the 7th, a **Merlin** on the 9th, reports



Black-winged Stilt, East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, Sep 18th, Mike McKee.

of **Ring Ouzel** on the 9th, 12th and 13th, and two **Red-breasted Mergansers** on the 14th. In west Berkshire, a **Ring Ouzel** and a **Merlin** were also reported at Walbury Hill on Oct 20th and 21st respectively, but the biggest surprise of the year arrived on Oct 24th in a ringer's net at Greenham Common – a **Radde's Warbler**! This species turns up in small numbers each year on the south and east coast, but is virtually unknown inland. In central Berkshire, three **Bearded Tits** were a nice find at Lavell's Lake on Oct 21st, and yet there was still more to come in the form of a juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** associating with a flock of **Starlings** in a suburban Calcot street from Oct 24th to 28th, another rare bird for the county with just three previous reports, the last being in 1975. Oct 29th was memorable for thrush migration, observed widely across the county but including impressive counts totalling 568 **Fieldfares** and 2,329 **Redwings**, all before mid-morning.

November: a **Ferruginous Duck** found on Sandford Lake on Nov 1st was presumably one of the birds from the German reintroduction scheme though it wasn't possible to tell if it was ringed; the bird offered infrequent views until mid-December. A **Rock Pipit** and a **Snow Bunting** were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 5th, followed by a **Water Pipit** there on the 8th and a **Great Northern Diver** on the 10th. A **Garganey** visited Lavell's Lake on Nov 6th and 7th, while at Lea Farm Lake on the 7th a small wader that flew through the field of view of an observer's scope settled briefly before flying off three minutes later. That was enough for the bird to be identified as a **Little Stint**, and as the first November record of this species since 2000, a noteworthy find! **Jack Snipe** numbers at Horton peaked with six on Nov 10th. There were reports of **Hen Harrier** at Roden Downs on Nov 10th, and at Lambourn on Nov 13th and 19th. At Padworth Lane GP, a **White-fronted Goose** joined a **Greylag Goose** flock on Nov 14th and was still around on Nov 30th. Barkham hosted a **Black Redstart** for four days mid-month, while a **Lapland Bunting** was an exciting find at Bury Down on Nov 19th. A **Shag** that stayed at Theale Main Pit from Nov 21st to 27th ended the month.

December: the ringtail **Hen Harrier** showed again at Roden Downs on Dec 4th. **Black-necked Grebes** were reported widely from mid-month: the first at Lower Farm GP on Dec 14th, three at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 17th, and one that probably accounted for records at Theale Main Pit and Moatlands GP between Dec 21st and 27th. Two pairs of **Shags** were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 17th and the next day a **Red-throated Diver** circled the reservoir before gaining height and heading off south-east. There had only been



Knot, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

three reports of **Bitterns** from the regular wintering sites of Dinton Pastures and Hosehill Lake so far this autumn, but on three December dates a **Bittern** was in full view in an east Berkshire field before flying into a nearby reedbed. In west Berkshire, a lucky observer had sightings of separate **Merlins** at Bury Down and Upper Lambourn on Dec 18th, and further reports came from South Fawley and up to two in the Aldworth area. In late December, Queen Mother Reservoir had a good spell, with an **Iceland Gull** on Dec 21st, a **Caspian Gull** and five **Common Scoter** on Dec 28th; a drake there the next day was probably additional as the flock had relocated to Wraysbury Reservoir. A **Marsh Harrier** drifted over Lavell's Lake at dusk on Dec 29th and was seen to drift away at first light the next day.



Rose-coloured Starling, Calcot, Reading, Oct 28th, Andy Tomczynski.



Snow Bunting, Queen Mother Reservoir, Nov 5th, Derek Barker.

Weather Summary 2019

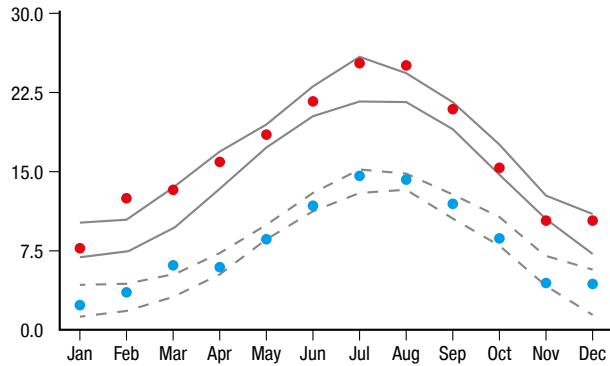
Renton Righelato

This weather summary is based on the Met Office weather reports for Heathrow. Grey lines are shown one standard deviation either side of the average for 2000-2018.

Although monthly average temperatures and rainfall for 2019 were close to the averages for the years since 2000, there was an exceptionally warm period in late February, westerly storms in March and April, and a record-breaking high temperature in July. Atlantic storms brought strong westerly winds and rain in late September and at the end of October.

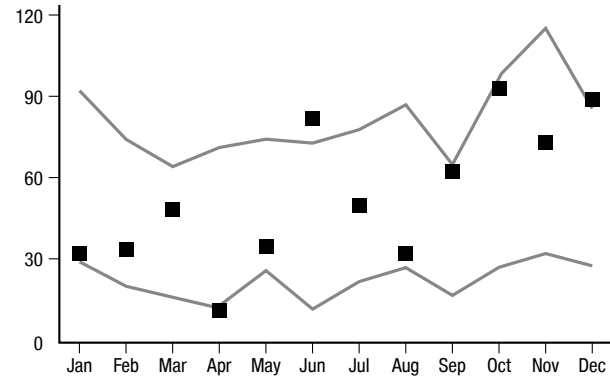
Temperature °C

- average of daily maxima.
- average of daily minima.



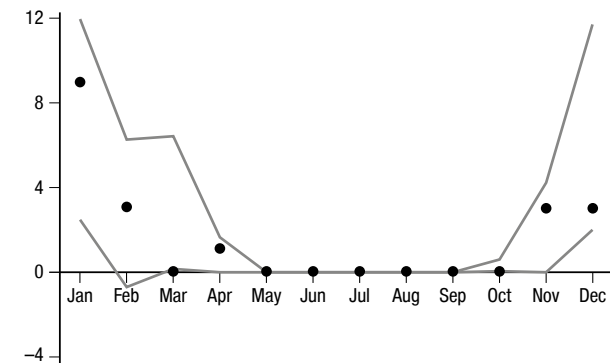
Rainfall

Monthly rainfall (mm).



Days air frost

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



Report for 2019 by the Berkshire Records Committee (BRC)

Committee members when the 2019 records were examined: Marek Walford (County Recorder – non-voting), 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 2019

Great White Egret has been removed from the list of species requiring a description from 2020. There were 141 sightings received in 2020, from all months of the year, including several counts of two birds, and one of three. After the first record at Theale GPs in 2003, there were further records in 2004, 2007, 2009 (three records) before the well-watched bird at Great Shefford in 2010. After which records have increased year on year, with a dramatic increase from 2017. It seems to be only a matter of time before Great White Egret breeds in Berkshire.

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 Crane, 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, 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 2019 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.

Wood Sandpiper, White Place Farm, Cookham, April 20th.

Osprey, Theale GPs, September 12th.

Goshawk, Burghfield GPs, male, February 17th.

Merlin, Berkshire Downs at Aldworth, February 15th.

Merlin, Reading, October 21st.

Wryneck, Emmbrook, September 15th.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Snelsmore Common, March 30th.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Moor Green Lakes, April 5th.

White Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, July 29th to August 5th.

White Wagtail, Datchet, September 1st.

White Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, three, September 12th-20th.

White Wagtail, Brimpton GP, December 2nd.

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.

Whooper Swan, Moor Green Lakes, November 3rd.

Garganey, Holybrook Linear Park, Calcot, two, August 27th.

Black-necked Grebe, Theale GPs, February 3rd.

Quail, Berkshire Downs at Aldworth, July 10th.

Little Gull, Lower Farm GP, August 30th.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, first winter, February 12th-22nd.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, two, February 13th-17th.

Shag, Lavell's Lake, two, April 15th.

Great White Egret, Sulhamstead, February 19th.

Great White Egret, Greenham Common, April 6th-7th.

Great White Egret, Kintbury, April 16th.

Great White Egret, Earley, April 17th.

Osprey, Newbury, March 8th.

Osprey, Kintbury, April 14th.

Hen Harrier, Bury Down, January 28th.

Rough-legged Buzzard, Hurley, September 29th to October 8th.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Silwood Park, January 29th.

Willow Tit, Kintbury, two, March 29th.

Willow Tit, Welford, three, May 11th to November 16th.

Black Redstart, Woolhampton GPs, September 14th.

Blue-headed Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, April 21st.

White Wagtail, Bracknell, December 4th.

Mealy Redpoll, Winkfield, March 11th-16th.

Introduction to the 2019 Systematic List

by Robert Godden

The Systematic List that follows provides a summary of the status of the bird species recorded in Berkshire in 2019; 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 2019 this amounted to over 59,000 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 they can be used for writing the annual report or provided 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 162 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 Black Tern	Andy Tomczynski
Chaffinch to Reed Bunting	Anne Harrison
Goldcrest to Mistle Thrush	Brian Hackett
Owls, Wood & Radde's Warblers, Chiffchaff (<i>tristis</i>), Grasshopper Warbler, Blackcap, Dartford Warbler	Cathy McEwan
Confidential Species, Escapes and Hybrids	Marek Walford
Egyptian Goose to Teal	Mike Taylor
Kestrel to Raven	Paul Bright-Thomas
Spotted Flycatcher to Wheatear, Coal Tit to Bearded Tit	Renton Righelato
Woodlark to Long-tailed Tit, Pipits	Peter Gipson
Water Rail to Coot, House Sparrow to Pied Wagtail	Richard Gilham
Great Northern Diver to Little Egret	Rick Dawson
Red-crested Pochard to Red-breasted Merganser, Nightjar to Collared Dove, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Sedge & Reed Warblers, Garden Warbler to Whitethroat, Firecrest	Robert Godden
Oystercatcher to Greenshank	Roger Murfitt
Red-legged Partridge to Pheasant, Hoopoe to Green Woodpecker	Sean Murphy
Osprey to Buzzard	Steve Ricks
Brent Goose to Mute Swan, Grebes	Val Brown

To strike a balance between conciseness, readability and recognising observers' efforts in the field, observers' initials are applied in only these cases: to records of scarce and rarer species; to reports of significant survey work; to accompany reports of first and last migrants; and (newly introduced for 2019) where the species account makes reference to all received records of the species irrespective of its status.

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. For certain species, the tables incorporate 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 elsewhere 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, 199 species were recorded in a wild state in the county, with a further seven less usual subspecies identified and another 15 species of unknown or escaped origin. The reports indicated that 103 species were confirmed to have bred, with another ten species probably breeding.

Location abbreviations used in the Systematic List

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

Other abbreviations used in the Systematic List and elsewhere in this report

BB	British Birds Journal	BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
BBI	Berkshire Bird Index	JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
BBOWT	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust	RBBP	Rare Breeding Birds Panel
BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
BOC	Berkshire Ornithological Club		
BRC	Berkshire Records Committee		

2019 SYSTEMATIC LIST

Edited by Robert Godden and Marek Walford

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Common resident with numbers inflated annually by releases of captive-bred birds for shooting

A species that was commonly reported throughout the county with sightings in all months of the year. Most sightings were of singles or groups of two to three birds, but records of higher counts were reported in January and from September through to December. These coincided with the time that numbers of the species are supplemented annually with those reared and released for shooting in the autumn. The high counts were largely from west Berkshire where, in a few cases, very large groups were seen: 50 were at Welford, Farnborough Downs, on Sep 18th; and approximately 40, in two groups, were at Westridge Green, Compton Downs, on Nov 8th. In general, the west Berkshire area is where the bird was most common with 23% (41) of tetrads supplied one or more records. Comparable figures for mid and east Berkshire were 12% (11) and 10% (12) respectively. Records of pairs, indicative of probable breeding, were reported from several locations in west Berkshire, largely in the months of April and May, but one record came from mid Berkshire and two from east Berkshire in the same months. Breeding was confirmed at Cold Ash, Curridge, Hermitage and Bucklebury Plateau in west Berkshire, where one adult and at least nine newly-hatched were sighted on Jul 21st, and from Englefield, Lower Kennet in mid Berkshire, where an adult with four medium-sized young were seen on Aug 22nd. Active breeding is certainly more common than these records suggest as numbers of these birds in the county have approximately doubled in the last 25 years [BBI 25yr].

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Scarce and declining resident (Red)

This species was present across the county but the numbers reported remained critically low in most areas. Reports came from ten locations in west Berkshire, three in mid Berkshire and five in east Berkshire. As in recent years, the only location where the bird was reported regularly throughout the year in relatively high numbers was Englefield in mid Berkshire. Here, one or more coveys totalling 20 to over 40 birds were frequently seen during a visit (RCr). So, as previously noted in 2018, this location remains a stronghold for the species and likely a result of good habitat management by the land owners. At only one other location was a high number reported and this was 30 in the Frost Folly Park area, Warfield, on Oct 31st. Probable breeding was likely at three locations in west Berkshire where sightings of single pairs were reported. Pairs were also reported from Englefield with one or more pairs present per visit from late January to March, and breeding was confirmed when pairs with juveniles were observed in July and again in August. Nonetheless, data indicates that sadly numbers continue to fall; their current abundance is now less than 25% of that in 2000 [BBI 25yr].

QUAIL COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce summer visitor in varying numbers (Schedule 1, Amber)

2018 Missing Record: a Quail at Streatley Hill on May 29th (ATa) was the only record for 2018.

2019: reports of this rare bird, which were encouragingly up on the last two years, came between late June and early August from several sites in two general areas in the north-west Berkshire Downs: Lambourn and Compton; elsewhere there was a single report of a bird that sang briefly after dawn on Jul 23rd but was not heard again at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire (DJB). Downland, with its natural grassland habitats and extensive cereal fields, is the traditional stronghold for this species; many reports were of birds calling from cereal fields, particularly barley.

The earliest record was of two birds calling at Washmore Hill near East Garston on Jun 20th (JSL). Also within the Lambourn Downs, the area around Sheepdrove Farm produced several records up to Aug 2nd (MO), with four birds heard on two occasions (ABT, RHS), and a pair were flushed from the side of the path on Jul 21st (HRN). Further west, one was calling from a wheat field below Weathercock Hill on Jun 21st (CDRH), and two were singing at Wellbottom Down on Jun 30th (RJB). In the Compton area, there were reports of single Quails calling from the fields south of the Ridge Way between Roden Downs and Starveall Farm between Jun 22nd and Jul 12th (ABT, RD, RCo), with two or three birds in that area on Jul 28th (PBT), and one closer to Lowbury Hill on Aug 3rd (ABT), the last of the year.

PHEASANT COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Very common resident with numbers inflated annually by releases of captive-bred birds for shooting

This common and widespread species was reported in all months with records coming from 23% (41) of tetrads in west Berkshire, 20% (18) of tetrads in mid Berkshire and 15% (19) in east Berkshire. The largest counts were made in west Berkshire, most likely resulting from releases for shooting; these included 150 at Welford, Farnborough Downs on Sep 18th. Breeding was poorly recorded but the Berkshire Bird Index shows no real change in population over the survey period [BBI 25yr]. An all-white bird was at Frogmill on Sep 30th, while on Sep 25th a female spent an hour on the windowsill of the second floor of Reading Bridge House in central Reading!

BRENT GOOSE BRANT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

This year, four birds from three sightings were reported, including one of the pale-bellied *hrota* race seen in east Berkshire on Jun 9th (DJB). The time of year and the fact that the bird remained in fields with other geese for at least ten days suggested to the observer a feral rather than a wild origin. Of the dark-bellied subspecies, a pair of adults were reported from Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 9th (CDRH) and a single individual was seen at Lower Farm GP on Apr 10th (DJR).

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Common feral resident

As in 2018, Lower Farm GP was host to the highest numbers, with an impressive 1,000+ birds reported in September. Like Greylag Geese, with which Canada Geese often associate, large numbers were also reported from Queen Mother Reservoir (750 in September), Moor Green Lakes and Windsor Riverside in August (375 and 361, respectively), and 593 were counted feeding in the Englefield stubble fields on Sep 4th. For reference, the monthly maximum counts from sites across the county are included in the table; the species is commonly encountered on rivers or open bodies of water in both rural and urban areas.

Canada Goose: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	31	42	86	-	-	-	-	-	138	-	38	43
Dinton Pastures CP	30	25	22	10	35	7	33	100	18	148	50	24
Great Meadow Pond	-	51	63	24	42	11	-	6	1	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	7	17	-	-	-	-	23	-	31	128	36
Lower Farm GP	600	131	65	10	44	22	42	198	1,000	76	120	55
Moor Green Lakes	80	61	50	46	50	121	81	375	25	294	69	93
Padworth Lane GP	27	6	16	6	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	20
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	2	4	-	6	430	750	-	2	20
Sandhurst GPs	10	100	109	-	-	-	-	-	32	56	63	19
Thatcham Marsh	102	30	20	23	27	45	28	45	51	25	33	42
Theale GPs	172	28	73	54	25	40	101	65	208	12	2	41
Twyford GPs	59	84	29	24	17	32	3	78	200	32	83	32
Windsor Riverside	90	53	29	-	298	-	268	361	-	135	159	158
Woolhampton GPs	-	35	20	4	13	-	31	-	46	-	21	-
No. birds at other sites	385	404	480	279	420	348	289	462	829	398	440	485
No. other sites	12	19	25	24	20	13	7	9	10	17	10	11
WeBS Count Totals	549	582	646	249	156	176	205	494	1,015	678	611	436
Total birds (minimum)	1,586	1,057	1,079	482	975	636	882	2,143	3,298	1,207	1,208	1,068

Breeding activity was reported from 16 sites, with a total of 106 goslings from a minimum of 24 pairs. As in previous years, this may be an underestimate of breeding success.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Scarce and localised feral resident and very rare wild vagrant (wild population Amber)

The resident feral flock remained at Moor Green Lakes throughout the year, with a maximum of 32 individuals reported between January and March. Of note was a flock of 83 birds seen flying over Swinley Forest on Jan 15th (ABT), for which the time of year could suggest a wild origin although the possibility that they came from a feral UK or continental population cannot be ruled out. Whether or not these birds landed anywhere in Berkshire is not recorded. Apart from a group of 14 birds seen at Borough Marsh in November, no more than four birds at a time, always associated with Canada Geese, were reported from sites elsewhere, including: four at Remenham on Jan 7th; two at Windsor Great Park on Apr 14th; and single individuals at Lea Farm Lake (Jan-Feb), Streatley (Apr-May) and Bray on Dec 22nd.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common feral resident (wild population Amber)

For the first time since 2016, the highest numbers were not recorded on Great Meadow Pond; instead, Queen Mother Reservoir became the favoured location, with 500 birds reported in August and 433 in September. Once again, large numbers gathered to feed in Englefield stubble fields, with 475 seen on Sep 4th. Counts of more than 200 birds were reported from several sites, mostly in the autumn and winter months (see monthly maximum table) and the species remains widespread in wetland areas throughout the county.

Greylag Goose: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	13	4	44	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	230	173
Caversham Bridge	50	52	39	41	73	82	128	99	80	94	112	74
Dinton Pastures CP	7	14	4	2	16	-	-	30	-	30	50	12
Great Meadow Pond	-	35	104	51	73	209	-	119	259	37	1	1
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	59	3	-
Lower Farm GP	38	31	3	5	10	20	33	26	19	39	30	103
Moor Green Lakes	7	-	10	2	6	7	-	50	29	233	70	7
Padworth Lane GP	154	105	46	4	-	23	-	-	-	-	73	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	69	-	3	-	-	-	500	433	-	-	80
Streatley	172	155	98	9	14	109	156	-	-	-	-	120
Thatcham Marsh	1	1	2	4	3	12	-	-	-	-	-	9
Theale GPs	223	226	145	66	35	21	36	6	456	42	167	249
Twyford GPs	3	4	9	17	3	48	-	5	128	-	3	118
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	2	4	29	-	35	-	-	-	5	-
No. birds at other sites	256	259	60	87	73	216	40	2	649	101	52	325
No. other sites	7	12	8	14	7	5	3	1	5	5	6	3
WeBS Count Totals	337	127	307	182	184	370	164	540	726	246	484	388
Total birds (minimum)	924	955	566	295	335	747	428	848	2,058	635	796	1,272

Breeding was reported from 12 sites but detailed records were provided for only a few of these. The clustering of goslings in creches makes accurate recording of 'families' difficult. A total of 126 goslings were reported from a minimum of 30 broods.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Anser albifrons

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Very scarce winter visitor (Red)

Early in the year, two adults and one juvenile of the Russian race *A.a.albifrons* were seen on several occasions in the vicinity of Queen Mother Reservoir and surrounding gravel pits (CDRH *et al.*), having initially been recorded in Windsor Great Park on Jan 6th (CDRH). Always associated with a flock of Greylag Geese, these three birds continued to be reported until Mar 18th. Elsewhere a White-fronted Goose was found in a mixed goose flock at Padworth Lane GP on Feb 27th (KEM). In the autumn one bird, also associating with Greylags, was seen at Padworth Lane GP between Nov 14th and 30th (KEM).



White-fronted Goose, Old Windsor, Jan 9th, Andy Tomczynski.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common resident (Amber)

Reflecting the picture in the UK, the Mute Swan population has remained relatively stable in

the county since 2000, having increased dramatically in the preceding 12-15 years following the regulation of lead fishing weights [BTO BirdTrends]. Monthly maximum counts from the usual sites are shown in the table. As in previous years, the highest numbers were seen throughout the year on the Windsor Promenade, with 281 recorded in July. The Wetland Bird Survey reported a total of 106 birds on the Thames at Caversham Bridge at the beginning of August.

Mute Swan: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	7	15	17	-	-	-	8	-	29	-	66	35
Caversham Bridge	53	67	68	79	75	73	83	106	84	78	65	90
Dinton Pastures CP	13	4	11	2	24	2	9	20	2	22	17	16
Dorney Wetlands	-	9	10	17	7	14	3	7	30	-	6	4
Fleethill Farm	21	22	17	4	16	-	24	21	-	44	31	21
Great Meadow Pond	16	2	2	4	4	6	-	6	8	29	39	37
Lower Farm GP	17	17	9	6	6	12	14	18	7	19	22	18
Moor Green Lakes	11	15	11	17	10	3	4	4	7	6	7	10
Padworth Lane GP	26	22	25	7	10	22	-	-	-	-	13	8
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	2	2	3	1	2	5	4	1	1	2
Sandhurst GPs	74	66	49	-	-	-	-	-	45	44	42	35
Thatcham Marsh	5	6	4	6	4	3	6	3	1	5	2	17
Theale GPs	24	9	9	5	5	10	14	9	29	6	26	6
Twyford GPs	31	15	13	5	3	6	-	7	26	44	50	34
Windsor Riverside	165	189	140	186	206	-	281	188	-	187	196	235
Woolhampton GPs	5	5	3	2	6	6	6	-	5	-	13	-
No. birds at other sites	65	42	39	76	72	28	25	24	46	60	23	36
No. other sites	18	11	19	22	18	9	4	4	10	11	10	12
WeBS Count Totals	257	222	225	123	107	96	127	158	281	307	359	312
Total birds (minimum)	535	505	429	418	451	186	479	418	323	545	619	604

Breeding activity, such as nesting, was recorded at 24 sites, although details of outcome were not always reported. A minimum of 130 cygnets were hatched by approximately 26 pairs, with predation of young reported at several sites.

In general, Mute Swans do not venture far from their fledging grounds, so two ringing recoveries of more intrepid birds were of interest. A bird ringed in South Yorkshire in August 2018 was recovered in Windsor at the end of May 2019, having travelled 222 km; another ringed at Old Windsor Lock in 2011 was recovered at the end of August 2019, 197 km away in Lincoln [BTO Ringing].

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common feral resident

Numbers appeared to be relatively stable, after a rapid increase in numbers over the last 25 years. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Numbers were greater in mid Berkshire and east Berkshire, reflecting the number of water bodies, including the River Thames. The highest counts were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir, with 114 on Jun 29th, many of which were in wing-moult, and Moor Green Lakes, where 82 birds came into roost from the west on Aug 20th. High counts at other sites included: 70 at Ham Island on Jul 24th; 68 feeding in stubble at Englefield on Sep 4th; and 60 at Streatley on Oct 18th.

Breeding was reported from 21 locations with at least 32 broods, including four pairs with broods at Great Meadow Pond, at least three pairs with broods at Moor Green Lakes, and two pairs raising three broods at Whiteknights Lake. At Queen Mother Reservoir, a female was observed sitting on a nest in a Peregrine nest box on many dates from Apr 20th until Jun 29th, but no young were seen. The earliest goslings were seen on Feb 7th at Whiteknights Lake.

Egyptian Goose: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	4	-	62	-	24	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	3	2	2	8	6	2	8	2	2	3	10	4
Englefield	41	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	68	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	4	5	4	9	5	2	-	-	-	2	15	8
Lower Farm GP	4	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	5	4
Moor Green Lakes	2	4	10	13	5	34	30	82	60	72	8	12
Queen Mother Reservoir	5	5	4	4	97	114	74	27	4	3	5	3
Thatcham Marsh	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	-	2	2
Theale GPs	10	7	6	10	29	14	26	10	7	8	14	34
Windsor Riverside	1	2	2	-	14	-	41	17	-	-	-	3
No. birds at other sites	85	60	105	107	81	49	122	78	44	228	72	71
No. other sites	17	17	23	14	15	9	9	8	7	17	10	11
WeBS Count Totals	41	41	43	40	36	106	93	36	35	26	67	46
Total birds (minimum)	157	111	137	159	241	282	308	246	189	318	131	141

SHELDUCK COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor (Amber)

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Shelduck: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	2	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Dorney Wetlands	2	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	2	4	6	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	3	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Lower Farm GP	-	2	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	2	1	4	7	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	1
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	5	5	7	13	9	-	-	2	-	1	6
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Woolhampton GPs	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	1	10	15	25	22	1	1	-	-	-	2	10
No. other sites	1	3	6	6	8	1	1	-	-	-	1	3
WeBS Count Totals	4	5	10	13	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total birds (minimum)	13	26	42	48	51	16	1	-	2	1	5	19

First winter: numbers started off low in early January, gradually increasing until April and May, with most of the birds in the east of the county. Apart from those sites listed in the table, up to three birds were present at Slough Sewage Farm, up to four birds were seen at Heron Lake, Wraysbury GPs, and 12 birds were seen at Horton Brook Quarry on the east side of Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 12th.

Summer/breeding: up to 20 pairs were observed during the breeding season at 12 sites, including five pairs at Horton Brook Quarry and up to three pairs at Moor Green Lakes. At the latter site, a pair was seen prospecting and entering the nest tunnel on Plover Island on several occasions during April and early May, but no young were seen. Investigation of the Shelduck chamber on Plover Island in the winter showed a clutch of eggs had been laid but were sitting in water so may have failed due to leakage, or for other reasons with flooding occurring later [MGLR 2019]. The only evidence of successful breeding was a pair with a single duckling at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire on Jun 5th.

Second winter: as usual, the summering Shelduck population departed for moulting grounds (in the Wadden Sea or estuaries around Britain) from Jul 2nd, with the first returning on Oct 30th. Unusually, an adult and a first-winter bird were present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 9th. Single birds were observed at various locations until the end of the year, and a group of six birds was seen at Horton GPs and over Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 28th.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Fairly common but localised feral resident

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Mandarin Duck: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	10	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	3	3	-	-	4	-	2	24	6	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	2	-	5	-	-	1	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	23	10	6	4	4	1	1	1	2	12	2	9
Prospect Park	3	5	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Whiteknights Park	4	-	2	2	9	-	-	4	4	13	-	2
Windsor Great Park	13	-	3	2	1	1	2	2	-	3	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	5	17	7	3	3	3	1	6	-	6	-	3
No. birds at other sites	21	25	17	33	30	13	19	25	5	20	3	6
No. other sites	4	7	8	12	7	5	5	3	1	5	2	2
WeBS Count Totals	13	20	7	2	1	1	3	7	6	8	4	3
Total birds (minimum)	79	60	44	51	49	24	27	38	14	79	11	20

This species was reported mainly from mid Berkshire and east Berkshire, with a small number in west Berkshire as far west as Woolhampton GPs and along the River Thames as far as Lower Basildon. It is likely that the species is under-recorded, due to its elusive nature. The highest counts were 24 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Oct 2nd, and approximately 23 in four groups flying west above the River Blackwater by the STW at Moor Green Lakes at dusk on Jan 27th. Double figure counts at other sites included ten visiting a garden by the Holy Brook near Fobney Meadow on Apr 6th and ten at Horton GPs on Oct 9th.

Summer/breeding: eleven broods were seen at 11 sites, with broods of ten ducklings seen at Aston on May 25th and at Fobney Meadow on Jul 23rd; 12 pairs were reported at a further ten sites during the breeding season. A group of 15 birds on the Oxfordshire bank of the R. Thames just upstream of Pangbourne included some juveniles.

Mandarin Ducks are not generally regarded as long-distance travellers, but an adult ringed at Lower Basildon on Nov 27th 2016 was observed at Loch Spynie, Moray, on Apr 18th, 700 km away [BTO Ringing].

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

Scarce passage migrant, has bred (Schedule 1, Amber)

2018 Correction: the report of a drake at Great Meadow Pond on May 13th should have given the observer as DJB.

2019: this was a relatively poor year, with eight birds reported. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Garganey: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	5	3	1	-	-	2	1	-	1	-

Spring: the first report came from Lower Farm GP, where a pair was present on Mar 22nd (NC *et al.*). A pair was present at Searles Farm Lane GPs from Mar 29th until Apr 2nd (RAGP *et al.*). A drake was seen at Padworth Lane GP on Mar 31st (RJB), and another drake was found at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Apr 30th, which stayed until May 5th (JJT *et al.*). A single bird reported from Lavell's Lake on May 6th is presumed to have been the same bird (KSeY).

Autumn: just two birds were reported. A juvenile female was discovered at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 6th (ABT *et al.*), and stayed in the area until Aug 31st; this, or possibly a second bird, was reported at Lavell's Lake between Aug 26th and Sep 6th (PNE *et al.*). A first winter drake was present at Lavell's Lake on Nov 6th and 7th (ABT, FJC), unusually late in the year.



Garganey, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Apr 30th, Dave Rimes.

SHOVELER NORTHERN SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Shoveler: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	14	12	21	8	-	-	-	-	-	7	6	13
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	37	5	-
Burghfield GPs	60	200	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	24
Dinton Pastures CP	83	12	76	10	2	1	1	2	9	40	25	14
Fleethill Farm	16	34	81	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	8	8
Great Meadow Pond	12	5	18	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	9	1
Lower Farm GP	56	42	66	18	1	4	7	14	30	45	14	17
Moor Green Lakes	46	55	40	12	-	-	-	1	12	21	16	84
Padworth Lane GP	8	10	25	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	7
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Sandhurst GPs	12	20	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	6	11
Thatcham Marsh	4	2	-	2	2	-	-	-	4	7	1	9
Theale GPs	36	6	25	7	-	-	1	-	18	1	13	37
Twyford GPs	95	65	38	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	3	13
Whiteknights Park	52	30	16	-	-	-	1	-	-	40	56	98
Wraysbury GPs	95	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	10	27	-	2
No. birds at other sites	144	23	8	26	-	-	2	4	17	34	55	162
No. other sites	5	5	3	4	-	-	1	2	1	3	3	7
WeBS Count Totals	413	198	239	2	-	-	-	-	21	119	106	148
Total birds (minimum)	735	545	420	88	5	8	13	23	124	313	242	500

First winter: wintering birds were widely distributed across the county, mostly on gravel pits, with numbers declining from January until late April. Apart from those sites listed in the table, there were good numbers at Fleethill Farm, Fobney Meadow and Whiteknights Park.

Summer/breeding: as usual there was a scattering of summer records, with birds present throughout the summer at Dinton Pastures CP and Lower Farm GP, but there was no evidence of breeding at these sites. The only indication of successful breeding was a fledged juvenile at Wraysbury GPs from Jul 20th to 28th, which may have bred locally.

Second winter: numbers again built up from the end of August until the end of the year.

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

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

Gadwalls were present across the county, mainly on the larger gravel pits, but were also found in small numbers on smaller waters. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Gadwall: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	6	6	15	13	-	8	-	-	4	2	4	5
Burghfield GPs	152	29	6	-	-	-	-	-	20	70	170	240
Dinton Pastures CP	92	2	11	4	4	17	3	2	10	24	33	37
Dorney Wetlands	-	2	-	3	5	2	-	1	25	-	30	2

Eton Wick	7	7	12	21	5	17	-	2	8	35	18	30
Fleethill Farm	17	34	13	-	6	-	1	2	-	29	49	76
Fobney Meadow	-	-	4	4	1	9	-	-	-	8	12	20
Great Meadow Pond	10	10	31	9	4	39	-	42	68	40	3	4
Horseshoe Lake	34	11	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	65	64
Horton GPs	55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	6	6	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	113	174	113	72	26	28	19	16	80	127	64	65
Moor Green Lakes	86	56	20	19	7	5	2	-	13	17	9	49
Padworth Lane GP	40	13	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	18	40
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	1	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sandhurst GPs	88	60	6	-	-	-	-	-	7	25	70	72
Thatcham Marsh	4	1	2	7	13	4	6	4	4	6	2	25
Theale GPs	295	46	20	15	9	7	-	2	12	27	18	6
Twyford GPs	132	29	8	10	2	7	-	36	68	72	119	183
Woolhampton GPs	30	43	20	2	12	-	-	-	5	-	32	-
Wraysbury GPs	198	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
No. birds at other sites	107	99	44	20	11	2	-	1	13	70	25	18
No. other sites	5	7	8	8	5	1	-	1	2	5	2	6
WeBS Count Totals	1,017	342	121	40	21	46	1	83	189	233	599	779
Total birds (minimum)	1,468	629	336	202	107	146	31	138	337	556	741	961

First winter: wintering birds gradually declined in numbers from January until late April. Apart from those sites listed in the table, there were good numbers at Eton Wick Floods, Fleethill Farm and Sandhurst GPs.

Summer/breeding: summering birds were present at many sites. Single broods were seen at nine sites, with the largest broods being seven ducklings at Eton Wick and five ducklings at Lower Farm GP. A female was on a nest at Loddon NR, Twyford, on Apr 19th. Broods of two and three ducklings were recorded at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire.

Second winter: numbers started to increase in August and continued to do so until the end of the year.

WIGEON EURASIANWIGEON *Mareca penelope*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, has bred (Amber)

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Wigeon: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	30	-
Burghfield GPs	185	250	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	41	51
Dinton Pastures CP	18	50	37	2	-	-	-	2	-	24	17	76
Fleethill Farm	276	192	175	-	-	-	-	-	-	79	89	155
Fobney Meadow	8	15	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	25	25
Horseshoe Lake	32	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	50
Lea Farm Lake	45	118	31	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	2	6
Lower Farm GP	62	170	13	9	-	-	-	3	3	21	14	21
Moor Green Lakes	168	52	54	4	-	-	-	1	11	110	42	177
Padworth Lane GP	9	26	10	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4	30

Sandhurst GPs	39	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	32	46
Theale GPs	56	7	10	2	-	-	-	-	10	8	23	36
Twyford GPs	228	22	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	20	47	44
No. birds at other sites	91	528	120	53	-	-	1	2	18	16	17	18
No. other sites	4	6	2	2	-	-	1	2	7	5	3	1
WeBS Count Totals	947	452	235	-	-	-	-	-	4	172	370	629
Total birds (minimum)	1,217	1,463	484	70	-	-	1	8	49	395	483	735

First winter: numbers were higher than in the equivalent period in 2018 but lower than in 2017. Away from the sites listed in the table, treble figure counts were recorded at Fleethill Farm, Horton Brook Quarry, Summerleaze GPs and Widbrook Common. Numbers peaked in January, and all had departed by Apr 11th.

Summer: a single bird was flushed from Dorney Common and flew to Dorney Wetlands with a female Gadwall on Jul 2nd. An eclipse drake was present on Colne Mere, Wraysbury GPs between Aug 10th and 13th.

Second winter: numbers were lower than for the equivalent periods in 2018 and 2017. Small numbers were recorded from late August onwards, with numbers beginning to build up from late September. The only treble figure count away from the main sites was at Fleethill Farm on Dec 14th, although these birds may have been moving between there and Moor Green Lakes.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident and winter visitor (Amber)

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Mallard: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	22	12	10	15	7	21	-	-	20	20	14	12
Burghfield GPs	34	23	32	-	-	-	-	-	34	-	55	56
Dinton Pastures CP	80	7	65	7	26	5	47	80	14	70	87	46
Dorney Wetlands	-	13	8	7	7	6	1	14	150	-	300	5
Eton Wick	11	5	15	21	20	31	4	21	17	-	20	31
Fleethill Farm	27	55	27	-	34	-	43	10	-	30	65	60
Great Meadow Pond	19	14	10	12	19	30	-	10	-	17	4	16
Lea Farm Lake	-	8	5	-	-	-	-	25	-	10	5	7
Lower Farm GP	32	46	13	15	17	26	30	29	22	37	42	20
Moor Green Lakes	40	30	23	18	20	41	17	40	30	25	28	71
Padworth Lane GP	9	33	22	7	-	25	-	-	-	-	10	19
Queen Mother Reservoir	8	8	34	14	31	20	40	36	57	15	11	7
Sandhurst GPs	93	88	89	-	-	-	-	-	96	157	117	161
Thatcham Marsh	74	30	47	41	27	62	9	37	45	49	43	71
Theale GPs	36	16	20	14	19	23	29	38	55	20	48	31
Twyford GPs	23	28	29	17	12	5	8	50	56	10	18	13
Woolhampton GPs	9	13	12	-	10	-	15	-	10	-	12	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	2	-	34	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
No. birds at other sites	252	110	224	290	279	179	92	106	63	194	173	244
No. other sites	23	16	31	35	27	15	8	5	9	11	14	14
WeBS Count Totals	648	403	412	100	144	120	155	198	423	415	622	616
Total birds (minimum)	769	541	685	512	531	474	335	496	669	654	1,052	875

This species is a common resident across the county with a relatively small influx during the winter months, following the trend of recent years. Overall, the resident county population has remained stable over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr]. Being a familiar species, which can occur anywhere there is water, it has traditionally been under-recorded away from well-watched sites but, with the increasing use of BirdTrack, observers are submitting more records of this and other common species as part of 'complete' lists.

Broods were reported at 21 sites, with at least 45 broods. The earliest brood recorded was at Burnthouse Lane GPs on Mar 28th. The largest reported brood was 13 ducklings at Green Park on Apr 23rd.

PINTAIL NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

Numbers were down compared to recent years. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Pintail: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Horton GPs	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Queen Mother Reservoir	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
No. other sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
WeBS Count Totals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	11	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	5	2	9



Pintail, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Aug 31st, Andy Tomczynski.

First winter: on Jan 1st, a drake and three females were at Horton GPs, and a group of two drakes and one female were present at Colne Mere, Wraysbury GPs. On Jan 5th, a group of two drakes and two females circled over Queen Mother Reservoir and headed off south-south-east. Other records were of single birds. A female at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 13th was the only record outside east Berkshire in the first winter period. Finally, a female passed through Queen Mother Reservoir on May 10th.

Second winter: a female present at Lea Farm Lake during July and August was later identified as an escape due to the presence of a yellow ring, but an un-ringed first winter bird was discovered at nearby Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Aug 31st. Apart from a few records of single birds, a group of three birds were at Lower Farm GP on Oct 6th, and three drakes and a female were at Padworth Lane GP on Dec 29th, with two drakes and female still present the next day. Two drakes and a female were on flooded fields north of the K&A Canal just west of Newbury on Dec 29th.

TEAL EURASIAN TEAL *Anas crecca*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Teal: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	16	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	5	18	5
Dinton Pastures CP	32	34	29	9	-	1	-	-	5	15	15	35
Eton Wick	50	110	32	28	-	-	7	14	34	90	170	132
Fleethill Farm	45	43	34	-	-	-	2	-	-	15	46	74
Fobney Meadow	80	70	40	30	-	-	-	-	4	30	25	45
Great Meadow Pond	6	-	2	4	1	-	-	1	2	-	1	8
Lea Farm Lake	12	52	8	-	-	-	1	4	-	11	7	4
Lower Farm GP	200	364	100	16	4	7	12	39	50	82	128	112
Moor Green Lakes	66	46	8	15	1	10	27	39	45	9	14	9
Padworth Lane GP	8	7	2	5	-	-	-	-	54	-	9	21
Slough Sewage Farm	-	50	9	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Streatley	9	5	10	2	-	-	-	2	8	20	20	3
Thatcham Marsh LNR	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	11
Theale GPs	25	2	12	4	-	-	-	2	-	2	11	2
No. birds at other sites	72	92	71	14	1	3	1	-	55	38	145	28
No. other sites	11	9	6	5	1	2	1	-	2	2	6	3
WeBS Count Totals	159	145	66	12	1	-	2	3	39	54	85	122
Total birds (minimum)	623	877	359	132	7	21	50	102	259	317	609	497

First winter: numbers were marginally down compared with the equivalent period in 2018. Away from the sites listed in the table, counts exceeding 20 birds were recorded at Slough Sewage Farm and Widbrook Common. Numbers peaked in February and most birds had departed by late April.

Summer: birds were present throughout the summer at Lower Farm GP and Moor Green Lakes, with a few records at other sites. There was no evidence of breeding.

Second winter: birds started to return from the end of July, and numbers increased to the end of the year, with an influx in November. Numbers in this period were similar to those for 2018. Away from the sites listed in the table, counts exceeding 20 birds were recorded at Streatley, Thatcham Marsh, West Woodhay and Widbrook Common.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Fairly common feral visitor or escape, occasionally breeds

The highest monthly counts are given in the table, including a remarkable 32 at Main Pit, Theale, on Feb 3rd. Recent years have seen a significant arrival of Red-crested Pochards at gravel pits in the Theale and Burghfield area in the early part of the year, but the 2019 influx was well above average. Breeding was confirmed at Hosehill Lake, Theale, when a pair was seen with four small ducklings on Jun 2nd. Breeding was also suspected at the Hobby Lake, Wigmore Lane GPs, where regular sightings of a pair in April and May, followed by sightings of just the drake suggested that the duck was on a nest nearby. Similar evidence suggested probable breeding at Summerleaze GPs. After the breeding season, there were several reports of one or two birds at Theale and Burghfield GPs into the autumn, sometimes referring to a juvenile which was probably raised locally. The only notable report at the end of the year was of nine at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Nov 17th.

Red-crested Pochard: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	2	-	4	5	2	-	-	-	-	1	9	-
Dinton Pastures CP	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	10	32	21	10	10	11	2	1	1	-	-	2
Woolhampton GPs	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	6	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	-	22	14	6	4	1	2	1	-	-	9	2
Total birds (minimum)	21	33	32	20	14	11	2	1	1	1	9	2

POCHARD COMMON POCHARD *Aythya farina*

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

Maximum monthly counts are given in the table.

Pochard: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	6	17	8	5	-	21	-	-	2	-	7	4
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	-
Burghfield GPs	22	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	12
Dinton Pastures CP	51	70	5	6	-	-	-	-	-	8	16	47
Dorney Wetlands	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Great Meadow Pond	4	94	22	5	5	16	-	21	23	2	2	9
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	27	110	75	-
Lea Farm Lake	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-
Lower Farm GP	22	19	16	10	6	12	12	9	4	31	26	28
Moatlands GPs	34	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	131	133
Moor Green Lakes	26	16	12	3	4	6	2	2	3	13	16	19
Padworth Lane GP	120	20	2	-	1	-	2	-	6	-	19	15
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	17	12	12	18	12	4	2	1	1	2	7	15

Theale GPs	106	15	8	-	-	1	-	1	2	13	202	183
Twyford GPs	19	19	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	5	50	26	14	14	20	4	1	2	5	3	8
Wraysbury GPs	11	4	-	-	-	2	-	1	10	-	-	3
No. birds at other sites	28	8	9	-	3	1	1	2	-	4	16	7
No. other sites	2	3	2	-	2	1	1	1	-	1	4	3
WeBS Count Totals	327	285	42	10	5	16	-	22	24	23	276	276
Total birds (minimum)	476	362	126	61	47	83	23	44	80	189	591	484

First winter: peak counts were 120 at Padworth Lane GP on Jan 13th and 100 at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jan 20th. Very few remained after the end of March except at the sites where Pochards breed. **Breeding:** successful breeding resulting in six broods was reported from four sites, all in the west of the county. At Aldermaston GPs, seven drakes and two females were accompanied by broods of five and seven ducklings on Jun 2nd. At Woolhampton GPs, a female was seen with possibly as many as 13 small ducklings on May 22nd. On Jun 2nd, there were nine ducklings and these gradually decreased until the final report on Jul 6th when two half-grown young remained. At Lower Farm GP, a pair were seen with two small ducklings on Jun 6th, and a second brood of four small ducklings were located on Jun 26th. A brood of three ducklings was reported at the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre on Jun 21st. Despite being present throughout this period at Moor Green Lakes, there was no evidence of breeding.

Second winter: there was a small increase in numbers in August and September as usual at Great Meadow Pond, but generally there were few reports away from the breeding locations until October. Numbers quickly built up to a peak of 110 at Horton GPs on Oct 27th, and there was a more widespread arrival in November with 178 recorded on the WeBS count at Theale GPs on Nov 17th.

A bird that had been ringed as an adult male at Thatcham in March 2018 was shot at Lake Selezyan, Chelyabinsk Oblast, in the Russian Federation, 4081 km away [BTO Ringing].

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Rare vagrant

In previous years, one or two drake Ferruginous Ducks have occurred in winter months at Dinton Pastures CP. Occasionally it has been possible to read the details on the birds' leg rings which has linked them to a reintroduction programme in Germany, but even when it is not possible to see whether a bird carries one of these rings, the fidelity to the Dinton Pastures location still suggests that a German origin is most likely.

First winter: a drake was found amongst a flock of Pochards at a site in Windsor Great Park on Jan 20th (DJB). At Dinton Pastures CP, where a drake had been seen on two dates in November 2018, a drake was present on several dates between Jan 27th and Feb 19th (MFW *et al.*). After prolonged viewing, this bird was seen to have a metal ring on its left leg and presumably was the bird first seen in 2015 and assumed to be from the German reintroduction programme.

Second winter: a drake was found at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures, on Nov 1st and was reported on several dates around the Dinton Pastures complex until Dec 15th (ABT *et al.*). Although the legs were not seen on this bird, it was presumably the same returning bird.

The Windsor Park record was the only one submitted to BBRC but was placed in appendix two, "Records where identification accepted, but origin is uncertain or known not to be wild" [BB Rare Bird Report Oct 2021]. At the 2020 BBRC AGM a stricter set of criteria for the acceptance of rare ducks and geese was agreed. The following is reproduced from

British Birds, May 2021: "They must: be seen to be fully-winged; be seen to be unringed (or have been ringed in the wild in its natural range); behave as a wild bird; be at a location frequented by wild ducks; arrive at an appropriate time of year for a vagrant, not linger through the summer; be with an appropriate carrier species (applies for Eurasian ducks and all geese)" [BBRC News May 2021]. It seems it is going to become a lot harder to get a Berkshire Ferruginous Duck accepted by BBRC!



Ferruginous Duck, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Feb 3rd, Marek Walford.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Common resident and very common winter visitor (Green)

Maximum monthly counts are given in the table.

Tufted Duck: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	16	21	24	9	4	6	-	-	8	2	11	16
Bray GPs	-	-	-	39	-	-	-	-	-	-	150	-
Burghfield GPs	304	262	191	-	-	-	8	-	47	-	242	268
Dinton Pastures CP	193	52	80	32	28	11	27	22	9	105	120	164
Dorney Wetlands	51	633	27	4	-	5	-	-	-	-	200	6
Great Meadow Pond	3	38	95	35	18	16	-	3	2	2	-	10
Lea Farm Lake	4	7	11	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	9	1
Lower Farm GP	28	29	54	37	24	26	37	43	68	14	13	19
Moor Green Lakes	225	121	209	107	20	44	65	50	59	80	130	224
Padworth Lane GP	30	26	35	12	-	13	-	-	-	-	33	24
Queen Mother Reservoir	17	26	15	6	2	6	110	300	704	117	20	14
Sandhurst GPs	110	122	79	-	-	-	-	-	28	63	169	167
Thatcham Marsh	35	33	26	32	21	16	16	49	19	35	22	30
Theale GPs	200	99	98	91	52	52	71	92	309	358	338	301
Twyford GPs	121	142	156	33	17	6	-	21	18	16	80	113
Woolhampton GPs	101	100	90	90	70	60	50	27	40	40	110	27
Wraysbury GPs	441	16	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	90
No. birds at other sites	153	147	167	34	20	23	98	15	39	91	318	279
No. other sites	7	7	8	8	5	6	8	3	2	6	8	10
WeBS Count Totals	1,390	1,071	1,096	253	101	111	149	359	1,249	743	1,403	1,331
Total birds (minimum)	2,032	1,874	1,357	565	276	284	482	624	1,350	926	2,015	1,753

First winter: the highest counts of the period were 441 at Wraysbury and Horton GPs on Jan 31st and 633 on the Jubilee River on Feb 2nd when many other waters in the area were frozen. **Breeding:** this was reported from 12 locations with 17 broods raised, but Tufted Ducks were reported multiple times from a further 11 locations in the period May to July. **Second winter:** in common with many recent years, there was an early autumn temporary peak in numbers at Queen Mother Reservoir, with exceptionally high counts around 700 on Sep 15th and 20th. At Hosehill Lake, Theale, 309 were counted on Sep 29th and numbers remained around that level at Theale GPs till the end of the year. Other high counts included 200 at Dorney Wetlands on Nov 11th and 268 at Burghfield GPs on Dec 15th.

SCAUP GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Red)

2016 Correction: the erratum in the 2018 report is incorrect and should be deleted. A confusing situation occurred in the Burghfield area from mid November 2016 with Scaups and *Aythya* hybrids resembling Scaups present. The following birds were involved (including the hybrids for clarification).

Hybrid male, Nov 16th to 18th, Moatlands GP (JA, RCr *et al.*).

Juvenile or first winter female, Nov 17th to Mar 11th 2017, Moatlands GP (DJB *et al.*).

Adult male moulting out of eclipse, Nov 27th to Dec 7th, Hotel Lake, Burghfield (ABM *et al.*).

Hybrid male, different bird, Nov 24th, Moatlands GP (DJB).

2019: this was another poor year for this species with just two birds recorded, including one long-staying and well-watched individual. The first winter drake that had been found on the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes during the last days of 2018 remained into the new year and was reported almost continuously until Mar 18th (RCM *et al.*). Towards the end of its stay, it had acquired adult-like plumage and was spending more time on Colebrook North associating with the Tufted Duck flock. Another first winter drake was found on the Village Pit, Wraysbury GPs, on Jan 9th and was seen there on three subsequent dates until Feb 2nd (CDRH). The observer regarded this as the same bird that was seen on Horton GPs on Jan 12th, Feb 9th and 10th, each time noting an apparent adult plumage but with dark upperwing coverts indicative of a first winter (CDRH).



Scaup, Moor Green Lakes, Mar 5th, Andy Tomczynski.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

After the excellent year in 2018 when 41 birds occurred in spring and another 11 in July, there was an average showing of Common Scoters in 2019, with one in the first winter, two or three in spring, seven in July and six in the second winter period.

First winter/spring: the year started with a female or first winter at Bray GPs on Jan 3rd (CDRH). A female was at Lea Farm Lake on Mar 23rd (BTB *et al.*) and an adult drake was found at Queen Mother Reservoir the same day, remaining to the next morning (DJB, CDRH, PNe). A drake present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 27th was possibly the same bird again (DJB).

Autumn/winter: all reports in this period were from Queen Mother Reservoir. A party of three drakes and two females were found



Common Scoter, Lea Farm Lake, Mar 23rd, Andy Tomczynski.

at the centre of the reservoir on Jul 5th (CDRH), as were a pair on Jul 9th (CDRH). At the end of the year, five including three drakes were present on the morning of Dec 28th but relocated to Wraysbury Reservoir in the afternoon (CDRH). A drake that flew in on Dec 29th was regarded as a separate individual (CDRH).

GOLDENEYE COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Fairly common winter visitor (Amber)

Maximum monthly counts are given in the table.

Goldeneye: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Dinton Pastures CP	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Horton GPs	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Moatlands GPs	5	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Moor Green Lakes	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Theale GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Twyford GPs	4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	37	-	21	3	-	-	-	-	-	6	14	25
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	6	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total birds (minimum)	56	14	31	4	1	-	-	-	-	9	22	35

First winter: the highest numbers continue to come from Wraysbury GPs, where 37 on Jan 12th was the maximum count; even so peak counts at Wraysbury GPs had fallen by almost 50% since the start of the century, in common with the county as a whole and the national situation. Two drakes were watched displaying to a female at Lea Farm Lake on Mar 3rd. The last birds were three at Wraysbury GPs on Apr 1st and one at Lea Farm Lake on Apr 10th, while there was an isolated report of a drake at Horton GPs on May 6th (CDRH).

Second winter: the first returning birds were two females at Wraysbury GPs on Oct 1st (CDRH), and numbers there built up to the peak count of 25 on Dec 29th. The only record from west Berkshire during the year concerned a female at Lower Farm GP on Dec 28th.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

Very scarce winter visitor (Amber)

As with 2018, Smews were only reported in the first winter period but this year their records spanned an even shorter duration of just fourteen days. Records related to a minimum of four birds, including three adult drakes. The first bird was a redhead that flew in at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire on Jan 20th and was last seen on Jan 27th (DJB). Two adult drakes were present at Wraysbury GPs between Jan 24th and 30th, with three on Jan 31st and at least one on Feb 2nd, on which date there was a separate adult drake at Horton GPs (all CDRH).

GOOSANDER COMMON MERGANSER *Mergus merganser*

Fairly common winter visitor, has bred (Green)

Maximum monthly counts are given in the table.

Goosander: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dorney Wetlands	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	2	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Moatlands GPs	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	58	59	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	16	36
Padworth Lane GP	6	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Sandhurst GPs	19	10	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Thatcham Marsh	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	15	26	7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9
Twyford GPs	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	16	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
No. birds at other sites	10	18	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	-
No. other sites	4	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
WeBS Count Totals	69	35	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	20
Total birds (minimum)	134	149	31	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	29	61

First winter: significant counts at sites not identified in the table include 19 at Sandhurst GPs on Jan 18th, five at Fleethill Farm on Feb 3rd and six at Lower Farm Trout Lake also on Feb 3rd. The last bird of this period was seen at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 10th (RHS).

Second winter: the first returning bird was at Maiden Erlegh Lake on Oct 23rd (SLy). Eight were at Heath Lake on Nov 11th and the highest count came from Moor Green Lakes with 36, including 20 drakes, on Dec 16th.

At Moor Green Lakes, Goosanders can be seen on any of the lakes in the complex and sometimes on the R. Blackwater by day, but their numbers continue to be boosted by arrivals around dusk with birds coming in to roost on Grove Lake or Colebrook North.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Compared to recent years, 2019 was a good year with eight or nine birds reported during the year including a long-staying drake in the spring. **Spring:** a drake was present at Horton GPs between Feb 3rd and 10th. During its stay, it was always seen with a redhead Goosander, though on Feb 9th they flew together to nearby Wraysbury Reservoir in Surrey. On Feb 10th, it was seen displaying to two redhead Goosanders before flying off south (CDRH).

The dates and this bird's behaviour suggest that the same bird was next located at Lea Farm Lake on Feb 16th, with several reports from Lea Farm Lake, Hurst Green GP and Twyford GPs until Feb 28th, again in close association with a redhead Goosander (FJC *et al.*). This is the first record of this species for the Dinton Pastures area since 1985. Also in spring, four birds including a drake were at Queen Mother Reservoir for 20



Red-breasted Merganser, Hurst Green Lake, Feb 18th, Andy Tomczynski.

minutes on Apr 9th (CDRH), and a pair flew in at Queen Mother Reservoir on the morning of Apr 10th and departed 25 minutes later (ABT, DJB, PNe). **Autumn:** a first-winter drake and a female were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 14th before flying off south (CDRH).

NIGHTJAR EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Scarce summer visitor (Amber)

In Berkshire, Nightjars are restricted to the areas of heathland in the south-west and the south-east of the county. As in previous years, a large part of these areas was the subject of careful surveying, coordinated by Clare Sulston on behalf of BBOWT in the Greenham area and Patrick Crowley in south-east Berkshire. The results gave an accurate estimate of the population which can be compared with other years. However, some locations fell outside the scope of these surveys, namely Bucklebury Common, Padworth Common and Ufton Nerve Woods to the west of Reading, but these were well covered by casual reporting. The survey in south-east Berkshire just covered the Berkshire part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, excluding some areas that have traditionally held Nightjars. In particular there was a notable report of 14 birds including 12 churring males at Buttersteep on May 30th. The observer only covered about a third of all the available habitat and estimated that there may have been up to 30 territorial males in the whole South Ascot area, indicating a very good year for this species. Counts of territorial males are given in the summary table.

Nightjar: Numbers of Territories

Site	Territories (max birds)	Surveyors	Notes
Snelsmore Common	2 (4)	Clare Sulston <i>et al.</i> , MJT	
Greenham & Crookham Commons	8 (13)	Clare Sulston <i>et al.</i>	
Bucklebury Common	2 (5)	Many Observers	
Padworth Common	1	RCr, SAG	
Ufton Nerve Woods	3 (5)	Many Observers	Includes Roundoak Piece
Buttersteep	12 (14)	DJB	Possibly up to 30 territories in the whole South Ascot area
Swinley Park	3	M A Johnstone, SA	
Thames Basin Heaths SPA:			Berkshire areas only
Wildmoor Heath BBOWT	3	DJS*	
Swinley Forest	26	CRG, WAN, DJS*	
MoD Camberley	17	Ben Habgood (Surrey WT) <i>et al.</i> *	
Total Territories	77+		

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

Despite the increase in the total number of territories from 62 in 2018 to 77 in 2019, the overall situation for 2019 was similar to that for 2018 or slightly better; the increase was mainly due to the inclusion of figures for Buttersteep which were not available for 2018. Nightjars made a welcome return to Snelsmore Common, while on the RMA training area near Camberley there was an increase from 12 to 17 territories. The number of territories in 2018 and 2019 at most other sites was very similar, possibly indicating that these sites had achieved their capacity.

The first reports of the year came from the first session of the BBOWT survey on Apr 24th (Clare Sulston *et al.*) when Nightjars were recorded from six locations in the Greenham Common area; a male and female were at Bishop's Green Heath, but other reports were of a single male with possibly a single individual accounting for multiple records. This is an

especially early first date, with the only earlier date this century being Apr 23rd 2011. The last bird of the year was observed in Swinley Forest on a more typical date, Aug 27th (SS).

SWIFT COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

The Berkshire Bird Index reports that the abundance index for Swifts continues inexorably downwards, with the population around a third of the 1994 level [BBI 25yr]. Swifts were well reported in 2019 with 535 records coming from potential breeding areas in towns and more rural areas supporting feeding birds, but proof of breeding is often hard to observe.

Spring: the first bird of the year was seen at Cookham Rise on Apr 21st (Derek Fry), flying close to a nest box installed two years before, and by the end of the month small parties had been seen in other urban settings and over some of the larger waterbodies, with 18 at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 27th. Thereafter, numbers increased with counts of 50 at Moor Green Lakes, Moatlands GPs and Main Pit in early May and 100 at Lower Farm GP on May 3rd. In June there were peak counts of 200 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 8th, 100 at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 14th and 150 at Fobney Meadow on Jun 18th. The table shows totals of peak monthly counts at locations categorised by habitat, showing how favourable the river valleys are as feeding locations.

Swift: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Downs	-	-	-	1	4	38	-	6	-	-	-	-
River Valleys	-	-	-	33	429	826	637	206	16	-	-	-
Heaths/Woods	-	-	-	-	12	53	12	19	-	-	-	-
E. Plain	-	-	-	-	7	13	44	11	-	-	-	-
Urban	-	-	-	10	145	159	480	27	1	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	44	597	1,089	1,173	269	17	-	-	-

Summer/breeding: Swifts returned to traditional breeding locations upon arrival and there were many reports of tight flocks screaming at low level around buildings, an indication that breeding occurs in the vicinity. This was noted at Aldworth, Bracknell, Calcot, Dedworth, Eton Wick, Hungerford, Kintbury, Lower Earley, Pangbourne, Streatley, Thatcham, Wokingham and various streets in central Reading, in many cases involving 30 to 40 birds. Swifts take four years to reach maturity so many of the birds in these flocks would have been non-breeders learning the ropes. Sometimes the screaming was in response to recorded Swift calls being played close to a Swift nest box, a technique used to advertise the presence of these boxes, especially in places where there is no resident Swift population. There were also a few instances where birds were seen entering possible nesting sites: one disappeared under a roof tile at King Edward's Hospital, Windsor, on Jun 24th; another entered a hole on the seventh floor of the BT Exchange building in Newbury on Jun 10th; and many of the 20 flying around Kintbury on Jul 26th were seen entering houses, as were 12 at Lower Earley on Jun 18th. Multiple records came from traditional nesting sites at Dedworth, and from the South Street and Norfolk Road areas in Reading, and fledged young were observed at Hungerford and Thatcham.

Autumn: by August, relatively few birds remained in urban locations and most reports concerned small parties feeding or moving south. Largest counts were 45 at Main Pit on Aug 14th, around 60 feeding over fields at Colnbrook between Aug 13th and 21st and 40 similarly feeding at Shinfield on Aug 19th. The last bird of the year was seen with about 200 hirundines at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 9th (CDRH).

CUCKOO COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Fairly common but declining summer visitor (Red)

In 2019, 229 reports of Cuckoos were received, coming from 64 tetrads (16%): 30 (17%) in west Berkshire, 16 (18%) in mid Berkshire and 18 (14%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to the total number of tetrads in each region. The majority of reports related to males singing and other activity was rarely observed. **Spring:** the first bird of the spring was heard at Lower Farm on Apr 9th (RRK), a fairly average first date amongst years this century. Maximum numbers of Cuckoos at sites on a weekly basis are given in the table, showing a peak around the middle of May.

Cuckoo: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Mar 31	Apr 07	Apr 14	Apr 21	Apr 28	May 05	May 12	May 19	May 26	Jun 02
Number of sites	-	4	13	11	20	12	24	22	17	7
Number of birds	-	4	13	14	27	18	32	35	25	12
Week Commencing	Jun 09	Jun 16	Jun 23	Jun 30	Jul 07	Jul 14	Jul 21	Jul 28	Aug 04	Aug 11
Number of sites	12	4	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	-
Number of birds	16	5	6	2	-	-	-	-	1	-

The vast majority of reports concerned one or two birds, but four were at Thatcham Marsh on May 12th, there were five birds in the vicinity of Dorney Wetlands on May 21st, while at Wishmoor Bottom four birds were flying together before splitting up and singing at each other on May 31st. **Breeding:** birds were present for several weeks possibly holding territories at The Wilderness, Kintbury, and at Horton GPs. At Fobney Island on May 22nd, a Cuckoo at a Bramble bush was causing panic among the resident Dunnocks. The Berkshire Bird Index reports that the decline of Cuckoos in Berkshire has continued in the 20th century, though less rapidly than earlier [BBI 25yr]. **Autumn:** the last birds of the year were singles at Fobney Meadow on Jul 3rd, an adult at Great Shefford on Jul 4th, and a final immature at Lower Farm on Aug 9th (NC, IW).

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Common feral resident (wild population Green)

Reports of this familiar species were few in number as usual (cf. Woodpigeon) and generally lacking in accompanying notes. Even the largest counts from urban areas probably fall far short of the resident populations there, namely Reading (100), Newbury (73), Wokingham (12) and Windsor (11), and breeding was confirmed at just one location – Eton College on Jun 17th. According to the Berkshire Bird Index, the Feral Pigeon population shows no significant changes this century [BBI 25yr]. Slightly more than half of all records came from rural areas and most of these involved small flocks of one to five birds, but there were a handful of larger flocks. There were 31 at Hungerford Marsh on Feb 4th; 45 at Enborne on Mar 17th; and a couple of very large flocks feeding on stubble – 150 at Englefield on Oct 20th and 612 at Cookham on Sep 13th.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common resident and winter visitor (Amber)

In 2019, Stock Doves were recorded in 72 tetrads (18%): 36 (21%) in west Berkshire, 17 (19%) in mid Berkshire and 19 (15%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to the total number of tetrads in each region. Most reports were of one to five birds, usually in rural locations, but some observers reported birds regularly visiting their gardens. **First winter:** in this period there were only three reports of counts in double figures: 26 on a on maize game crop at Farley

Hill on Jan 27th; 11 on Eastbury Down, Sheepdrove, on Feb 14th; and ten at Winkfield on Mar 9th. **Spring/summer:** some larger flocks were seen: 135 on Smith's Lawn, Windsor Great Park, on May 18th; 100 at Winkfield on May 14th; 34 at Lea Farm Lake on Jul 21st; and 20 at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 7th. Evidence of probable breeding was noted at ten locations and at Herschel Park LNR, Slough, a pair were using a Kestrel nest box on Apr 21st. The Berkshire Bird Index reports that numbers have increased by about half over the 25 years, similar to the national increase of around 40% [BBI 25yr]. **Second winter:** apart from Greenham Common where 20 Stock Doves flew from their roost in the bunkers on Oct 24th, the only other location to report double figure counts was Englefield, with 243 on Sep 21st and 420 on Sep 30th.

WOODPIGEON COMMONWOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

With 1,268 records, Woodpigeon accounted for more records in 2019 than any other species, and they were reported from 35% of the county's tetrads. **First winter:** the highest counts in this period were: 545 at Bagnor on Feb 19th; 500 at Arborfield on Jan 23rd; 300 at Farley Hill on Jan 27th; 280 at Cookham on Mar 14th; 235 at Warfield Church on Feb 2nd; and 230 at Fifield on Feb 25th. **Breeding/summer:** breeding was confirmed at nine locations, including an adult on a nest in Cookham Rise on Oct 26th with one dead half-sized squab on the ground below, presumably blown out by overnight gales. A pair were seen mating at Upper Bucklebury on Dec 29th. According to the Berkshire Bird Index, Woodpigeon abundance in the breeding season has been quite steady for the last twenty years [BBI 25yr]. Flocks of 700 and 200 were feeding on cereal crops at Englefield on Jul 10th. **Second winter:** no large-scale migration was observed, but small flocks moving south totalling 120 were seen at Finchampstead on Oct 20th and totalling 125 over Woose Hill on Oct 28th. The largest flocks, presumably sedentary, included: 2,000 at Roden Downs, Compton, on Dec 4th; 400 at Boxford on Nov 6th; 250 at Cookham on Oct 26th; 200 at RAF Welford on Nov 16th; and 200 at Walbury Hill, Combe on Dec 27th.

TURTLE DOVE EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Very scarce and rapidly declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

The desperate situation with this species continued and its decline 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	2019
No. of birds	59	33	34	27	20	22	21	18	14	11	7	1	3	2	2

As with last year, there was a single report of a passage bird and a series of observations at a summering location. A female, originally found on Dorney Common, Buckinghamshire, on Apr 23rd, flew across the border into Berkshire and landed in trees by the Roundmoor Ditch (DCI). It was later seen to fly to Dorney Wetlands and also back to Dorney Common to feed (DAC, CDRH), and was still present the next day (DWH).

On the west Berkshire Downs, a single bird was watched and photographed on May 23rd (RHS). Subsequent visits to this location were made, and a male was found singing and displaying on Jun 3rd. The next visit drew a blank but on Jul 16th, after a long wait, a male was heard singing again and undertook a display flight. No sightings were made on a final visit on Jul 29th (all ABT). Despite this territorial and display activity in suitable habitat, there was no evidence to suggest that breeding had occurred. Indeed, the last confirmed record of breeding in the county was in 2013.

COLLARED DOVE EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Very common resident (Green)

In 2019, Collared Doves were recorded in 61 tetrads, occupying 16% of the tetrads in east, mid and west Berkshire in each case. The highest counts came from Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre in January and from September to December, with birds seen flying to the island to roost. Peak counts there were 111 on Nov 26th and 94 on Dec 3rd. The only other double figure counts were 22 birds attracted to a feeding station at Winkfield on Feb 5th and ten in Calcot on Oct 28th. Successful breeding was reported in Reading and Whitley Wood, but this species is greatly under-recorded. The Berkshire Bird Index reports that since 1998 Collared Dove numbers have shown a slow decline [BBI 25yr].

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Fairly common winter visitor and scarce resident (Green)

Following the increased monitoring carried out for the Berkshire Breeding Water Rail Survey, 2016-2018, there was a significant reduction in the number of records received during 2019. A total of 133 sightings were reported being distributed as 42 in west Berkshire, 66 in mid Berkshire and 25 in east Berkshire. Analysis from the Berkshire Breeding Water Rail Survey estimated that over 100 tetrads in the county contained suitable habitat for the species. This year, Water Rails were recorded in 11 (6%) of the tetrads in west Berkshire, six tetrads (7%) in mid Berkshire and ten (8%) in east Berkshire. These 27 tetrads represent around a quarter of all suitable habitat. The percentages relate to the total number of tetrads within each region.

Winter: the majority of records for this secretive species normally occur during the winter months, with a significant proportion of the records being heard only. This was true for this year with the largest distribution of sightings occurring between November and February, as shown in the table.

Water Rail: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	1	2	1
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1
Eton Wick	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	2	2	2	1	1	-	-	3	1	1
Freeman's Marsh	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1
Lower Farm GP	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Moor Green Lakes	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Windsor Great Park	-	-	-	-	4	5	-	1	1	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
No. birds at other sites	11	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	10
No. other sites	9	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	6
Total birds (minimum)	18	9	7	4	6	7	3	4	2	9	22	18

Breeding: records were received from seven locations between April and August. There were only a handful of records related to breeding activity, the first evidence being two birds heard singing at Fobney Meadow on May 18th. On the same day, a pair were seen with two young at Windsor Great Park, which increased to three young by Jun 5th. One juvenile

bird was seen at this site through until Sep 7th. The only other report concerned a pair that responded to playback on a survey, singing vigorously at Burnthouse Lane GP on Jun 12th.

MOORHEN COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident (Green)

A common and often overlooked species that can be found in many locations across the county wherever water is present. Moorhens were recorded in 71 tetrads (18%), with 24 (14%) in west Berkshire, 28 (31%) in mid Berkshire and 19 (15%) in east Berkshire. The percentages relate to the total number of tetrads within each region. Since 1994, records have indicated a modest decline in numbers for this species which is in line with the national trend [BBI 25yr]. The table gives an indication of the distribution of the species, showing the monthly high counts from a number of well watched sites. Overall, the pattern of monthly variation was similar to recent years though the totals were slightly reduced.

Moorhen: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	2	2	2	2	1	1	-	-	2	2	1	1
Burghfield GPs	7	8	3	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	4	2
Dinton Pastures CP	14	5	12	5	4	2	4	6	2	10	3	3
Dorney Wetlands	-	4	4	1	1	1	-	16	25	-	14	4
Eton Wick	15	10	8	5	11	4	-	9	4	-	9	3
Fleethill Farm	2	5	2	-	-	-	4	10	-	3	5	4
Harvey's Meadow	7	3	2	2	-	2	2	-	5	-	6	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	8	-	2	-	-
Lower Farm GP	21	15	15	9	11	8	20	18	27	24	23	13
Moor Green Lakes	19	6	4	7	8	5	11	3	16	23	13	9
Padworth Lane GP	2	8	11	2	-	7	-	-	-	-	4	4
Sandhurst GPs	14	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	22	28	29	15
Thatcham Marsh	20	15	13	9	5	4	5	11	11	19	9	11
Theale GPs	8	9	12	9	-	2	10	17	15	13	9	6
Twyford GPs	12	8	4	3	-	-	-	3	2	3	1	6
Whiteknights Park	13	-	5	7	8	-	10	7	2	16	8	-
Woolhampton GPs	8	5	5	1	1	-	10	-	11	-	8	-
No. birds at other sites	62	41	53	40	19	22	11	6	13	20	46	59
No. other sites	16	12	20	19	10	10	6	4	5	8	12	13
WeBS Count Totals	101	62	63	24	-	4	14	39	68	87	89	69
Total birds (minimum)	228	156	167	102	69	58	87	114	169	163	192	140

High counts: there were counts in excess of 20 at seven sites in the east and west of the county. The highest totals were 29 recorded during a WeBS count at Sandhurst GPs on Nov 18th and 27 at Lower Farm GP on Sep 16th.

Breeding: there were 41 reports of breeding activity during the year, with the majority (26) concerning recently fledged young. These reports related to 20 locations spread evenly across the county. The first evidence of breeding activity was an adult at a nest site at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 13th, with the first sign of young being a single chick at Eton Wick on May 5th.

COOT EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green)

A common resident species that is distributed across the county wherever lakes, gravel pits or large rivers are present. Coots were recorded in 65 (17%) of tetrads across the county, with 12 (7%) in west Berkshire, 28 (31%) in mid Berkshire and 25 (20%) in east Berkshire. The percentages relate to the total number of tetrads within each region. During the winter, there can be inward migration from the continent with some of the local breeding birds relocating further south [Berkshire Atlas 1996]. The table shows the monthly high counts for several key sites, showing significant increases in numbers in early autumn and again in winter. The year's highest count of 953 birds occurred at Main Pit, Theale, during a WeBS count on Oct 6th.

Coot: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	7	10	12	10	5	10	-	-	8	9	10	6
Bray GPs	-	-	-	8	-	1	-	84	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	197	117	80	-	-	-	-	-	266	-	272	319
Dinton Pastures CP	168	14	84	7	9	3	78	39	11	112	163	92
Dorney Wetlands	-	18	23	14	14	6	30	32	100	-	52	15
Fleethill Farm	51	66	57	3	37	-	45	35	-	67	98	101
Horseshoe Lake	73	37	24	15	-	-	-	-	38	78	104	102
Horton GPs	128	-	-	5	-	3	2	-	-	-	22	-
Lea Farm Lake	8	9	8	-	-	-	-	20	-	40	26	13
Lower Farm GP	120	139	102	35	32	32	28	26	38	33	15	31
Moor Green Lakes	221	164	64	46	14	30	46	70	67	116	138	150
Padworth Lane GP	65	29	31	14	-	13	-	-	-	-	60	65
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	150	141	90	4	3
Sandhurst GPs	197	113	111	-	-	-	-	-	156	145	185	191
Thatcham Marsh	24	20	8	14	16	21	17	22	17	22	18	53
Theale GPs	856	176	150	45	13	175	123	334	616	953	421	266
Twyford GPs	161	84	67	35	28	29	3	38	92	90	162	157
Woolhampton GPs	36	45	20	-	20	-	19	-	79	-	21	-
Wraybury GPs	602	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55
No. birds at other sites	172	49	108	62	86	48	60	39	24	40	33	63
No. other sites	10	11	16	13	15	12	8	7	6	6	6	8
WeBS Count Totals	2,192	933	748	181	96	230	180	465	1,598	1,735	1,754	1,565
Total birds (minimum)	3,086	1,090	949	330	274	371	457	889	1,653	1,795	1,804	1,682

Breeding: there were a relatively high number of breeding records received (100), with just over half relating to fledged young (51 records). These records came from 39 sites with the distribution being: eight in west Berkshire, 16 in mid Berkshire and 15 in east Berkshire. A very early sign of breeding was of a pair mating at Woolhampton GPs on Jan 26th, with the first occupied nest being found at White Waltham on Mar 23rd. Reports of birds on nests continued through the spring and summer period, with a late entry being recorded at Brimpton GPs on Aug 11th. The apparent decline since 2010 shown by the Berkshire Bird Index data is probably not statistically significant [BBI 25yr].

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

Birds were reported from 51 sites across Berkshire, with the majority of sightings in the west of the county. As in previous years, the main sites for Little Grebe were Lower Farm GP,

Newbury, and Moor Green Lakes, with maximum counts, respectively, of 17 on Sep 28th and 11 on Sep 21st. The Wetland Bird Survey recorded 12 birds at Fleethill Farm, Finchampstead, on Oct 11th. Overall, numbers reported are slightly higher in the autumn and winter months, when the resident population may be joined by overwintering birds from elsewhere.

Little Grebe: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	4	2	2	3	2	4	-	-	5	4	2	1
Dinton Pastures CP	3	1	3	2	-	1	-	-	1	2	1	2
Dorney Wetlands	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	6	3
Eton Wick	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	2	1
Fleethill Farm, Finchampstead	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	-	12	-	1
Lea Farm Lake, Hurst	2	2	1	-	5	2	-	-	1	2	-	1
Lower Farm GP, Newbury	3	6	16	16	12	10	8	13	17	7	5	2
Moor Green Lakes NR	7	2	5	4	7	3	4	4	11	2	4	4
Padworth Lane GP	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1
Sandhurst GPs	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	6	3	2	2
Thatcham Marsh LNR	3	-	5	3	4	3	3	4	6	3	1	1
Theale GPs	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	2
Woolhampton GPs	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	-
No. birds at other sites	36	10	13	6	7	6	5	1	10	8	14	8
No. other sites	14	7	7	3	3	3	3	1	4	6	7	7
WeBS Count Totals	19	8	10	5	2	-	-	1	9	25	15	13
Total birds (minimum)	70	33	54	34	39	29	22	28	63	49	42	29

Although breeding was confirmed by the presence of chicks at four sites, only six chicks were recorded this year, compared with 2018 when 20 juveniles were reported.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant (Red)

As in 2018, just one bird was reported this year, a winter plumage bird found at Main Pit, Theale, on Feb 5th (DJB *et al.*). The bird was subsequently seen in the same location by several recorders until its departure on Feb 11th. Red-necked Grebes have been recorded in eight of the years this century, with never more than one bird in a year.



Red-necked Grebe, Main Pit, Theale, Feb 6th, Andy Tomczynski.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Fairly common resident and winter visitor (Green)

A familiar sight on larger ponds, lakes and rivers throughout the county, records were received from 46 sites this year. As in previous years, large numbers gathered at Queen Mother Reservoir in late summer and autumn, with sightings of 75 reported in August, 77 in September and 121 in October. The table shows the monthly counts for all locations.

Great Crested Grebe: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	11	-	2	-	3	-	11	-	-	15	14
Burghfield GPs	20	26	25	-	-	-	10	-	29	-	21	13
Dinton Pastures CP	13	5	6	3	4	2	5	6	5	10	6	13
Dorney Wetlands	9	12	10	7	8	6	4	6	2	-	6	7
Great Meadow Pond	1	4	8	4	6	6	-	6	14	16	4	2
Horseshoe Lake	10	7	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	4	3
Lea Farm Lake	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	2	1
Lower Farm GP	-	3	4	5	5	4	5	10	7	7	4	-
Moor Green Lakes	7	8	15	15	6	12	11	7	8	8	3	6
Padworth Lane GP	12	6	8	7	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	8
Queen Mother Reservoir	5	15	12	10	10	26	32	75	77	121	18	20
Sandhurst GPs	15	15	12	-	-	-	-	-	8	7	4	10
Thatcham Marsh	1	5	3	3	4	2	3	4	2	2	-	-
Theale GPs	29	29	19	16	10	11	29	34	32	24	27	13
Twyford GPs	24	28	25	13	12	8	1	15	19	17	25	26
Woolhampton GPs	9	7	3	2	8	4	21	5	35	-	19	-
Wrysbury GPs	35	-	-	2	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	12
No. birds at other sites	11	18	15	16	18	23	11	8	11	11	15	11
No. other sites	4	7	8	9	9	9	6	4	4	5	8	5
WeBS Count Totals	161	157	144	74	49	54	64	102	242	161	140	121
Total birds (minimum)	203	201	170	108	99	109	132	190	249	225	179	159

Breeding was reported from 20 sites although evidence of courtship was recorded at several more. The breeding season is long, with nesting behaviour starting in February and birds still sitting on eggs in August. Pairs with attendant young from at least two broods were also reported.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

This was an above average year for sightings of this species in Berkshire, with a total of 11 birds reported, most of which were seen in the autumn and winter. Occurrence over the previous 19 years is shown in the table.

Black-necked Grebe: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of reports	8	3	10	3	5	8	4	2	6	5
No. of birds	8	6	10	3	9	10	4	2	7	9
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	7	3	5	11	3	4	2	5	8	6
No. of birds	8	7	6	19	5	5	3	7	24	11

The only sighting in spring was of three birds – one in summer plumage, two mid moult –

on Main Pit, Theale, on Mar 23rd (ABM *et al.*); on one occasion two birds were seen displaying and engaging in parallel swimming (ABT). In the autumn, one adult in winter plumage and a juvenile were seen on Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 9th (CDRH, PNe, ABT), and one juvenile spent at least 11 days on Colebrook Lake in the Moor Green Lakes complex, from Sep 25th to Oct 11th (M G Philpott *et al.*), the first Black-necked Grebe recorded there since 2013 [MGLG 2019]. On Dec 14th an adult in winter plumage visited Lower Farm GP (JL, IW) and another, or possibly the same bird, stayed for a week on Theale and the nearby Moatlands GPs from Dec 21st to 27th (ABM). Three birds in winter plumage, possibly first winters, were seen on Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 17th (DJB, CDRH).



Black-necked Grebe, Moatlands GP, Dec 22nd, Andy Tomczynski.

STONE-CURLEW EURASIAN STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oedicanus*

Scarce and localised summer visitor (Schedule 1, Amber)

Spring: the first record of the year was of a pair at a traditional site on the Downs on Apr 21st, somewhat later than the average first arrival date of Apr 3rd. **Breeding:** pairs were present at four locations during the breeding season. At three of these locations, birds were seen sitting, but only one was successful, fledging one juvenile. **Autumn:** by late July, autumn roost flocks started to form, peaking at 13 birds on Aug 21st. The last record of the year was one on Sep 4th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce summer visitor, first bred in 2010 (Amber)

The maximum monthly counts of Oystercatchers are shown in the table.

Oystercatcher: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	1	3	3	5	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	2	3	2	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	2	3	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	2	3	6	4	4	4	2	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	1	3	1	2	3	1	-	-	-	-
Summerleaze GPs	-	1	2	2	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	1	5	5	3	4	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	2	2	5	4	2	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	1	1	6	10	9	7	4	1	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	1	1	3	6	5	3	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	3	15	28	39	38	28	24	5	-	-	-	-

Spring: the first record of the year was a single at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Jan 23rd followed by singles at Burghfield GPs on Jan 25th and Loddon NR, Twyford, on Jan 26th. On Feb 3rd there were five on Main Pit, Theale, spaced as two pairs and a single each on

separate islands, the highest count of adults for the year from any site. From Feb 11th, this species was recorded on an almost daily basis during February and March at some 15 sites.

Breeding: successful breeding was confirmed at eight sites and breeding behaviour was observed at a further two, similar to both 2017 and 2018. At each of the eight sites, a single pair bred successfully. At Main Pit, up to five adults were reported on two occasions and there were reports of a pair with a small chick on an island on Apr 22nd, two adults with two young on May 11th and then a family party of three on Jun 14th. At Moor Green Lakes, three chicks were seen on Apr 29th with two eventually fledging successfully. At Woolhampton GPs, three chicks were seen on May 21st and two were surviving at Jun 26th. One juvenile was seen on May 20th and then again on May 30th on the island at Loddon NR, Twyford. A pair nested on the British Airways Pit, Wraysbury GPs, hatching two chicks which were unfortunately quickly predated. At Searles Farm Lane GPs, three very small chicks were reported on Apr 21st and May 10th, and then as having fledged on Jun 8th. An adult was feeding a single chick on Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on May 23rd which was last seen begging for food from an adult on Jul 8th. At Hosehill Lake, a pair were seen with two well-grown young on May 21st of which at least one survived as a full-size juvenile and was seen from mid June to early July. At Summerleaze GPs, a pair were apparently on territory over the March/April period with single adults seen in May and June, but there was no proof of breeding this year. At Battlemead Common, Cookham, a pair were twice seen mating in late April and early May, and suspected of nesting but there was no proof. During this period, Oystercatchers were noted at several other sites but many were likely to be the same breeding individuals moving around.

Autumn: at the start of this period, many reports related to lingering birds at the breeding locations (until late July), but at the same time other reports would have been of passage birds, including up to three at Queen Mother Reservoir on four dates from Jul 12th. The only August records were: two at Moor Green Lakes on the Aug 2nd; one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 12th; and one at Lower Farm GP and, presumably the same bird, over Thatcham on Aug 15th.

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

Very rare vagrant

A juvenile found on East Fen at Moor Green Lakes on the morning of Sep 11th (CRG; see also finders account in this report on page 14) was only the fourth record for the county and the first since 1945 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. It is likely to have been the same bird that was



Black-winged Stilt, East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, Sep 18th, Mike McKee.

present in Nottinghamshire earlier in September. The bird was recorded almost daily until Oct 8th but then disappeared. Intriguingly, a juvenile of this species spent the day on the beach at Fair Isle, Shetland, on Oct 9th. Since there were no others reported in the UK at the time, it may be that this was the Berkshire bird relocating north to Fair Isle.

AVOCET PIED AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Véry scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Amber)

One was on Lavell's Lake on Apr 13th (FH, ABT). This species had been an annual visitor to Berkshire for the last 13 years but just one bird was somewhat below average. The yearly status of this species this century 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	2019
No. of records	3	3	5	3	3	1	3	3	5	1
No. of birds	4	4	11	4	4	1	14	5	10	1



Avocet, Lavell's Lake, Apr 13th, Andy Tomczynski.

LAPWING NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Fairly common but declining resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

Lapwings were recorded throughout the year in the county and from 78 sites. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Lapwing: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Crookham Common	14	18	1	4	8	36	42	40	1	1	13	-
Dinton Pastures CP	40	24	1	4	-	1	3	35	5	45	1	40
Dorney Wetlands	180	45	3	-	2	7	-	30	-	-	-	-
Englefield	-	78	84	28	39	46	-	-	124	169	-	70
Fleethill Farm	170	120	6	-	2	-	6	15	-	35	29	12
Fobney Meadow	400	300	25	6	11	20	50	45	40	25	16	37
Lea Farm Lake	30	11	-	-	-	-	24	28	-	33	10	-
Lower Farm GP	92	95	10	6	6	37	43	95	57	32	188	118
Moor Green Lakes	80	32	3	6	6	89	127	122	97	77	102	28
Padworth Lane GP	-	75	10	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	148
Theale GPs	1	3	8	4	7	2	1	1	-	1	1	-
No. birds at other sites	1,523	1,641	54	40	61	161	84	26	30	252	680	282
No. other sites	10	17	12	13	17	13	5	2	2	5	7	7
WeBS Count Totals	266	215	19	10	7	-	7	44	72	76	97	29
Total birds (minimum)	2,530	2,442	205	100	142	399	380	437	354	670	1,040	735

First winter: away from the regular sites, some significant counts were recorded: 620 at Streatley Farm and 350 at Datchet to Ham Island, both on Jan 27th, and 700 at Elcot on the Lambourn Downs on Feb 14th. **Breeding:** breeding behaviour was noted at 13 sites (down compared to 2017 and 2018) with three sites in east Berkshire, five in mid Berkshire and five in west Berkshire. This apparent decline as a breeding species is consistent with the trends shown in the Berkshire Bird Index and also national trends shown by BTO BirdTrends. There were at least 29 pairs recorded and display flights were first noted at Eling on Mar 17th over an area of recently harvested Christmas trees, unusual habitat for this species. The first chicks were seen on Apr 24th when two were recorded at Hosehill Lake, Theale, and at least a further 12 more broods were seen across all sites though no information on numbers fledged was recorded. Breeding activity at Greenham and Crookham Commons was confined to the area around Crookham Pools, where vegetation had been cleared to improve the habitat for breeding waders; despite six pairs making ten nesting attempts, none was ultimately successful, with predation of eggs and young chicks by Carrion Crows the likely cause [AEDH 2019]. **Autumn/second winter:** post breeding flocks began to build up as early as mid June, with 70 at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 14th for example. Significant counts away from the main sites shown in the table during this period were 400 at Ufton Nervet on Nov 15th and 215 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 27th.

GOLDEN PLOVER EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Golden Plovers were recorded at 14 sites, nine in west Berkshire, three in mid Berkshire and two in east Berkshire. Peak counts were relatively low across the year compared to recent years. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.



Golden Plovers, Greenham Common, Apr 6th, Andy Tomczynski.

Golden Plover: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bury Down	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	40	-
Englefield	3	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	-
Greenham Common	75	97	120	65	1	-	-	-	-	28	100	50
Lambourn	-	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120
Lower Farm GP	150	-	30	4	-	-	-	-	-	55	1	70
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	30
No. birds at other sites	35	251	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	209	15	-
No. other sites	2	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-
Total birds (minimum)	293	413	150	71	1	-	-	-	1	319	158	270

First winter: the majority of records in this period were from Greenham Common with consistent records through March and April of up to 120 until the last record in this period of a summer plumage individual on May 2nd (AEDH). Away from Greenham Common, the only counts of 100 or more in this period were 150 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 2nd, 150 over East Garston Down in the Lambourn Downs on Feb 13th, and 100 heading high to the west over Windsor Great Park on Feb 17th.

Autumn/second winter: the first returning winter visitor was one at Englefield on Sep 30th (RCr) but the next were not seen until Oct 8th when 19 were at Crookham Common. Again, Greenham Common had the most regular reports of this species, though observer effort may play a part in this. Away from this site, the only other counts of 100 or more were 100 over Slough Sewage Farm on Oct 30th and 120 over Lambourn on Dec 25th.

GREY PLOVER

Pluvialis squatarola

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were two records involving three birds, all in the spring. Two birds moulting into summer plumage dropped into East Fen at Moor Green Lakes on May 8th (RJG, ABT) and on the same date one in winter plumage flew over Queen Mother Reservoir to the north-north-east with four



Grey Plover, Moor Green Lakes, May 8th, Andy Tomczynski.

Bar-tailed Godwits (CDRH). The yearly status of this species this century is shown in the table.

Grey Plover: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of records	0	3	6	2	4	2	1	3	2	1
No. of birds	0	3	12	2	8	5	1	4	2	1
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	1	5	4	1	1	0	5	0	2	2
No. of birds	1	7	4	1	1	0	6	0	2	3

RINGED PLOVER COMMON RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce summer visitor (Red)

This species was recorded at ten sites across the county, three sites in west Berkshire, two in mid Berkshire and five in east Berkshire. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Ringed Plover: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields	-	-	1	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	2	1	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	1	3	3	-	-	3	2	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	2	3	9	10	6	1	1	7	3	-	-

Spring: Ringed Plovers were recorded at ten sites across the county in the spring, principally at Queen Mother Reservoir and Lower Farm GP. The first for the year, and the only record in February, was two at Lower Farm GP on Feb 25th. Most records were of single birds on passage but a peak of three was recorded at three sites: Greenham Common, Queen Mother Reservoir and Horton Brook Quarry. Two at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 8th were considered to be of the northern breeding *tundrae* race (CDRH).

Breeding: the only suggestion of breeding activity was at Horton Brook Quarry where one was considered to be holding territory in late April but there were no indications of successful nesting.

Autumn: Ringed Plovers were found at five sites in the autumn, with the vast majority of reports coming from Lower Farm GP, Moor Green Lakes and Queen Mother Reservoir. At Lower Farm GP one was present from Jul 2nd to 30th. At Moor Green Lakes one was seen on Aug 20th and then one or two were present on East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, from Sep 2nd to Sep 13th. At Queen Mother Reservoir, one was present on Sep 8th and then up to three from Sep 18th to Oct 4th, with one probably of the *tundrae* race there on Sep 25th. The autumn records were completed with a single first winter at Lea Farm GP on Sep 9th and 15th, and the last of the year was one at Main Pit, Theale, on Oct 5th.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Green)

This species was recorded at some 21 sites across the county: six sites in west Berkshire, ten in mid Berkshire and five in east Berkshire. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Little Ringed Plover: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	7	13	12	9	7	6	3	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	17	44	45	37	50	18	10	-	-	-

Spring: the first record was of one at Horton Brook Quarry on Mar 8th (CDRH), which is five days earlier than the mean first arrival date this century. This was followed by two seen at the same site on Mar 10th and 17th. By the end of March, there had been records from seven sites, with up to 16 birds in total. Numbers increased to a peak spring weekly count of 26 at eight sites in both of weeks beginning Apr 21st and 28th.

Breeding: display was first seen on Mar 30th at Greenham Common. Thirteen breeding pairs were on territory at ten sites in the county. Chicks were noted at five of these sites, with a total of ten broods. After seven years with no breeding at Greenham and Crookham Commons, 2019 saw successful breeding for the second consecutive year with an encouraging four pairs making five nesting attempts. Just one brood was raised, with predation and disturbance by visitors with dogs cited as factors in the other cases [AEDH 2019]. At the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, there were an estimated three pairs which produced at least five broods. An interesting breeding record was of one on the groundworks for a house construction site at Emmbrook, Wokingham, from Jun 15th to 22nd, and apparently sitting on a nest scrape here on Jun 19th. There was no indication of successful breeding though.

Autumn: the peak weekly count of the autumn was 41 in the week beginning Jul 14th. This was heavily influenced by the highest site count of 28 at Moor Green Lakes: 23 on East Fen and a pair with three chicks on the New Workings on Jul 17th. There were two other double figure weekly counts at this site, with 13 in the week beginning Jul 7th and ten in the week beginning Jul 21st. The highest autumn count at any other site was eight at Lower Farm GP on Jul 13th. Numbers dropped off steadily during August and September until the last sighting at Summerleaze GP on Sep 25th (CDRH). This is 17 days later than the mean last date this century and only in one year (2007) this century has there been a later sighting in Berkshire.

WHIMBREL EURASIAN WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Red)

A total of 25 records of 35 birds was a fairly typical annual showing for this species (see table).

Spring passage: the first birds of the year were migrants grounded by rain on Apr 9th, with one on Tern Island at Moor Green Lakes (RJG) and one roosting with a Curlew at Lea Farm Lake (ABT). The majority of records were from Queen Mother Reservoir and all of these involved birds flying over. Three were there on Apr 15th and 17th, and then a single on Apr 18th (all CDRH), four on Apr 24th, and one on Apr 25th (both PNe). Also at this site were three on Apr 26th, two on Apr 29th, and nine flew over, as two singles and flocks of three and four, on May 8th (all CDRH). The last spring records at Queen Mother Reservoir were of one on Jun 7th and two on Jun 11th (both CDRH). At Horton Brook Quarry/Horton Fields, two flew over on Apr 25th and one flew over on Apr 30th (both CDRH). One was present at Lea Farm Lake from Apr 26th to 27th (MO) and two birds visited Moor Green Lakes on May 8th, with one on Tern Island briefly before departing around 09:00 (ABT) and then one arriving onto East Fen at 14:05 (CRG). **Autumn passage:** one was at Lower Farm GP on Jul 10th

(NC), one was heard at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 29th (CDRH), and the last of the year was one heard over the observer's house in Winkfield on Sep 4th (FHu).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown in the table.

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	2019
No. of records	14	24	20	12	19	18	9	21	22	25
No. of birds	63	36	48	31	30	22	19	45	45	35

CURLEW EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, very scarce and localised in summer (Red)

There were 18 records of possibly 33 birds over the year. **Spring/summer:** the first of the year was one in potential downland breeding habitat at Welford on the Farnborough Downs on Mar 23rd, followed by three at the same place on Apr 3rd (RJC). Three were then on the gallops at Wellbottom Down on Apr 7th (GDS), with further birds recorded there from May 2nd to Jun 17th: singles on four dates, two on two dates and four on the last date (MO). At RAF Welford there were further records on May 12th and Jun 1st (NJB), and one was at Compton Downs on Jun 9th (NJB). Migrants were recorded in east Berkshire with singles at Horton Brook Quarry/Horton Fields on Apr 8th and Jun 1st (CDRH), and one at Lea Farm Lake on Apr 9th (ABT, RHS). **Breeding:** there was probable breeding at one site and confirmed breeding at another. Two of the birds at Wellbottom Down on Apr 7th were in song flight (GDS), a pair were reported feeding together on May 12th (ABT) and then a pair were seen mating on May 19th (GDS). However, a visit to this area on Jun 17th reported four birds but no juveniles (ABT). At Welford, though, it was encouraging that a pair was seen with three small juveniles just inside the fence of the RAF station on Jun 1st (NJB), the first proof of breeding since 2016. It has been reported that in East Anglia the fencing around airbases can provide protection for ground-nesting birds like Curlews from ground predators like Foxes, so this pair may have benefited in this way. **Autumn passage:** the final record of the year was of two birds, presumably on return migration, flying over Horton GPs on Jun 30th (CDRH).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were two records involving five birds on spring passage. On May 8th four summer plumage adults flew north-north-east over Queen Mother Reservoir with a Grey Plover (CDRH) and one flew over Queen Mother Reservoir calling early on May 9th (CDRH).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown in the table.

Bar-tailed Godwit: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of records	5	0	3	2	8	0	5	4	2	3
No. of birds	6	0	3	2	35	0	12	76	2	3
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	0	8	8	0	4	0	2	4	0	2
No. of birds	0	64	65	0	33	0	2	8	0	5

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Red)

There were 30 records of 67 birds this year, reflecting the increasing numbers of this species seen in the county over the last decade or so.

Spring passage: the first of the year was one in winter plumage at Fobney Meadow on Feb 26th (DJB *et al.*). What may well have been the same bird was reported at Lower Farm GP from Feb 28th and then regularly until Mar 16th (MO), also being seen back at Fobney Meadow on Mar 1st (RAGP). Two were then over Theale GPs on Mar 23rd (WeBS) and two, one in summer plumage, at Fobney Meadow on Mar 24th (JA, ABT). A flock of ten was on Fobney Meadow from Mar 29th to 31st, with two birds remaining there until Apr 5th (RAGP *et al.*). Five were at Fobney Meadow on Apr 8th (SRo) and two were on East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Apr 9th (RJG).

Autumn passage: return movement got under way on Jun 26th with one on East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, (RCM) and two at Fobney Meadow (RAGP, JJK, ABT). Three were then at Fobney Meadow on Jun 27th and one there on 28th (both RAGP). On Jun 30th, two were seen to leave Lea Farm Lake (FJC) and what may well be the same birds were reported at Moor Green Lakes 45 minutes later (CRG). One was at Fobney Meadow on Jul 2nd (RAGP) and one was at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 3rd and 4th (RJG, RCM, CDRH). Also on Jul 4th, one was at Lower Farm GP which remained to Jul 5th (NC, IW), whilst two were at Lea Farm Lake and Lavell's Lake on Jul 7th (ABT, MFW, RM). One was flushed off Dorney Common floods on Jul 10th, and then at Eton Wick a flock of 12, all summer plumage of the *islandica* race, flew off heading north-east on Jul 13th (both CDRH). Also on Jul 13th, two were seen on recently exposed mud on Summerleaze GP (CDRH). One was at Eton Wick on Jul 26th (CDRH) and one at Lower Farm GP on Jul 31st (RAL, NC, GJS). One present at Queen Mother Reservoir early morning on Aug 2nd departed to the



Black-tailed Godwits, Fobney Meadow, Mar 30th, Andy Tomczynski.

north-east (DJB) and two were at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 5th (RFM). One was at Lea Farm Lake from Aug 9th to 11th (ABT *et al.*) and then three were there on Aug 13th (ABT) with one remaining until 16th. One was at Lea Farm Lake and Lavell's Lake from Sep 4th to 9th (RRK *et al.*), one was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 13th (CDRH) and the last record of the year was one at Lavell's Lake on Oct 15th (JBS).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown 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	2019
No. of records	15	17	9	21	11	19	10	25	34	30
No. of birds	52	26	17	69	40	50	22	97	66	67

TURNSTONE RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were seven records involving 14 birds at two sites. **Spring passage:** on May 8th one was on the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes (A Stoney) and later the same day one (possibly the same bird?) was at Queen Mother Reservoir (PNe). **Autumn passage:** all autumn records came from Queen Mother Reservoir, starting with an adult from Jul 29th to 30th. Two summer plumage adults were present on Aug 6th, and flocks of six and two flew through to the south ten minutes apart on Aug 14th (all CDRH). The party of six was the largest flock reported so far this century, and had only been exceeded in 1932, with separate flocks of seven and eight [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. Finally, a juvenile was present on Sep 9th (ABT, CDRH, PNe).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown 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	2019
No. of records	8	11	9	10	4	3	8	2	3	7
No. of birds	10	11	12	40	5	3	13	9	10	14

KNOT RED KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were three records involving seven birds this year. **Spring passage:** on May 8th a flock of five in summer plumage flew north-north-east over Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH) and a summer plumage bird at Sonning Eye GP flew into Berkshire before departing (HRN). **Autumn passage:** a juvenile was present at Queen Mother Reservoir from Sep 26th to 27th (CDRH *et al.*).



Knot, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

The yearly status of this species this century is 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	2019
No. of records	0	3	5	1	0	3	2	0	2	3
No. of birds	0	4	15	1	0	3	2	0	2	7

RUFF *Calidris pugnax*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

2018 Correction: the report of a bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 16th should have stated three birds, two males and a female. The table of annual numbers of birds reported should have stated 11 reports of 13 birds for 2018.

2019: this species was only recorded on autumn passage at two sites this year. The first was an adult female at Lower Farm GP on Aug 1st (NC). All other records were at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, where low water levels left favourable muddy conditions for waders. Two juveniles were there from Sep 16th to 25th (MO), one on Sep 27th (RCM), five were present on Sep 28th (MCo) and two remained on Sep 29th (MHu).



Ruff, Moor Green Lakes, Sep 16th, Andy Tomczynski.

The yearly status of this species this century is shown 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	2019
No. of records	9	10	6	14	7	5	9	8	11	2
No. of birds	9	16	19	31	12	9	10	6	13	6

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

2018 Correction: the account omits a record of an adult at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 31st (DJB, CDRH). The table of annual number of birds reported should state 16 records referring to 22 birds in 2018.

2019: there were 16 records involving 46 individuals, all of them at Queen Mother Reservoir. **Spring passage:** the first of the year was one in summer plumage on May 19th (CDRH) which flew through without landing. This was followed by two on May 23rd (CDRH, PNe) and then three on May 26th (CDRH), one in summer plumage, two of which remained to May 27th. Another three were present on May 28th (CDRH), and then a flock of five on May 31st (CDRH). Seventeen were recorded in two flocks on Jun 1st (CDRH, PNe), which set a new record site day count for this species in Berkshire, whilst four on Jun 2nd



Sanderling, Queen Mother Reservoir, May 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

(CDRH, PNe) may have been some of the birds from the day before. Four were present on Jun 8th (CDRH, PNe), and the last of the spring were three on Jun 9th (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** the first returning birds were two adults in worn plumage on Jul 26th (PNe, CDRH), followed by one adult on Jul 28th (CDRH). On Jul 30th, five were seen to fly across the reservoir and leave (ABT), then an adult was present on Jul 31st (DJB). An adult moulting into winter plumage was present on Aug 9th (CDRH); the last record was of three in winter plumage on the comparatively late date of Oct 24th (CDRH).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown 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	2019
No. of records	13	14	13	18	16	13	10	11	16	16
No. of birds	20	46	31	51	27	26	22	20	22	46

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Fairly common passage migrant, scarce in winter (Amber)

Dunlins were recorded at ten sites, with at least 72 individuals involved. Most records came from Queen Mother Reservoir and Moor Green Lakes. **Spring passage:** the first of the year was one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 27th. The next was not until Apr 9th, which was again a single at Queen Mother Reservoir, then on Apr 10th two were at both Moor Green Lakes and at Horton Road GP. During May and early June, there were records from Queen Mother Reservoir on 11 dates from May 7th to Jun 8th, involving up to three birds, whilst at Moor Green Lakes there were records on nine dates up to Jun 1st, again involving up to three birds. The remaining spring records were of singles at Lea Farm Lake, Horton Brook Quarry and Lower Farm GP. **Autumn passage:** the first returning bird was one at Queen

Mother Reservoir on Jun 28th, followed by records of up to four there on a further 13 dates during the autumn. At Moor Green Lakes there were records on 18 dates in the autumn with up to five birds present (Aug 19th). The remaining records were at seven further sites on 12 dates; the last of the year was one which flew to Slough Sewage Farm on Oct 30th.

[PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*]

Very rare vagrant (Amber Listed)

2017 Correction: the bird on Oct 30th 2017 was seen by a single observer, CDRH.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Scarce passage migrant, mostly in autumn (Green)

2016 Missing record: one was watched briefly at Lavell's Lake on Sep 8th, before being flushed by two Green Sandpipers and flying off (FJC).

2019: there was only one record, of a juvenile which spent just three minutes at Lea Farm Lake on 7th Nov (ABT).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown in the table.

Little Stint: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of records	3	15	4	2	4	0	2	5	6	3
No. of birds	3	24	4	2	5	0	6	5	7	4
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	2	1	1	0	2	0	3	3	0	1
No. of birds	3	1	1	0	2	0	3	3	0	1

WOODCOCK EURASIANWOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce and localised resident and fairly common winter visitor (Red)

First winter: in the period up to the middle of April, Woodcocks were found in some 11 sites, all singles except for two seen on two occasions. An unusual sighting was of one walking along the pavement at Purley Beeches on the afternoon of Mar 18th, which flew off as the observer pulled alongside in their car (D Massie).

Breeding: spring and summer records after the beginning of May were all from the traditional breeding areas and generally referred to the roding breeding display. The counts from west Berkshire derived from a Nightjar survey carried out with teams of 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 of roding birds as follows: Snelsmore Common (two); Greenham Common (four); Crookham Common (four); Bucklebury Common (four); Ufton Nervet woods including Roundoak Piece (eight); Wildmoor Heath (one); four areas in Swinley Forest (total of four); and Swinley Park (two). These figures suggest a total number of 29 territories. Interestingly at Crowthorne Woods, Swinley Forest, successful breeding was confirmed when an adult was seen with a juvenile on Jun 29th (DJS). In addition to the roding reports, one was flushed from a ditch in Windsor Forest on May 27th. The last report from this period was of two at Greenham Common on Jul 3rd.

Second winter: there were 11 reports in this period, from Nov 8th to the year end. These were often only sighted when flushed and all were single birds, except for two at

Woolhampton and Brimpton GPs on Dec 21st, and three which flew up from the side of the bridleway in Combe Wood on Dec 25th.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There were only ten records at just five sites over the year.

First winter: the first was one in a ditch in Crowthorne Wood, Swinley Forest, on Jan 9th, which typically only flushed when nearly trodden on (JCMo). One was flushed from a waterlogged area at Colnbrook on Jan 26th, three were flushed together at Horton on Feb 10th, and one was still at the same site on Mar 10th (all CDRH).

Autumn/second winter: one was seen on the shore of Lea Farm Lake on Oct 12th and 13th (FJC, MFW, FH). Another was flushed at Horton on Oct 25th and 26th (CDRH); on Nov 10th six were flushed together at this site, with flooding subsequently reducing numbers to four. Finally, singles were reported at Greenham Common on Nov 12th (IW) and Dec 1st (NM).

SNIPE COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, formerly bred (Amber)

Snipes were recorded at some 32 sites: 13 in west Berkshire, nine in mid Berkshire and ten in east Berkshire. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Snipe: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	35	16	15	5	-	-	-	-	3	14	8	3
Dorney Wetlands	11	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	15
Eton Wick	4	6	1	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	1
Fleethill Farm	4	4	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	11
Fobney Meadow	1	-	3	8	6	-	-	-	-	4	5	2
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	2	5	27	-	-
Lower Farm GP	10	32	51	7	-	-	-	3	9	5	7	4
Moor Green Lakes	47	6	7	8	1	2	3	7	25	16	13	20
Streatley	1	10	4	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	1
No. birds at other sites	13	11	10	12	-	-	-	-	7	25	7	24
No. other sites	4	6	4	7	-	-	-	-	4	3	3	2
WeBS Count Totals	43	29	18	4	-	-	-	-	4	10	4	3
Total birds (minimum)	126	89	102	47	7	2	3	14	52	92	49	81

First winter/spring: peak site counts included 51 at Lower Farm on Mar 12th, 47 at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 1st and 35 at Dinton Pastures CP on Jan 20th, with double figure counts at three other sites. Numbers declined markedly from early April, although there was a double figure count at Pingewood GPs. **Summer:** birds were present at three sites during May, and sightings continued during June and July at Moor Green Lakes. At this latter site, good conditions with low water levels on East Fen creating muddy margins resulted in up to two seen on three dates in June and up to three seen on ten dates in July. However, there was no evidence of breeding.

Second winter: birds began to appear at sites other than Moor Green Lakes from early August. Peak counts were generally lower than in the first winter period, with a highest count of 27 at Lea Farm Lake on Oct 12th. Away from the regular locations, there were

double figure counts at three other sites, namely 20 at Hyde Farm, Bisham on Oct 20th, 20 at Greenham Common on Dec 1st and 11 at Fleethill Farm, Finchampstead, on Dec 28th.

[GREY PHALAROPE RED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*]

Rare visitor usually after autumn storms (Not Listed)

2018 Correction: there were two birds on Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 22nd, not three as stated. The 2018 total in the table of annual number of birds reported should read four.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Fairly common passage migrant, has bred. (Amber)

Common Sandpipers were recorded at 24 sites: five in west Berkshire, 11 in mid Berkshire and eight in east Berkshire. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Common Sandpiper: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	1	2	-	2	3	5	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	5	3	-	2	4	2	1	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	2	2	1	7	2	4	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	3	6	1	14	6	1	-	-	-
Summerleaze GPs	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	3	1	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	3	3	1	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	1	-	1	6	8	1	5	4	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	1	-	1	6	5	1	2	4	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	1	1	1	18	28	3	40	27	17	2	-	-

First winter: there was a winter record of one along the River Pang at Bucklebury on Jan 2nd. **Spring:** the first of what were presumed to be early spring migrants were one at Lavell's Lake on Feb 20th and one at Roundmoor Ditch near Slough Sewage Farm on Mar 5th. There was then a gap until Apr 10th when singles were at both Moor Green Lakes and Hosehill Lake. The highest spring day counts were of six at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 17th and five at Lower Farm GP on Apr 23rd. The last report of a bird on spring passage was likely to be one at Horton Brook Quarry from Jun 6th to 9th.

Autumn: the first bird returning on autumn passage was considered to be one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 24th. From mid July to the end of September, Common Sandpipers were reported on an almost daily basis in the county. Peak day counts were 14 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 27th, seven at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 30th, and five at both Summerleaze GP on Jul 21st and Lea Farm Lake on Sep 9th. The main sites with regular records during the autumn were Queen Mother Reservoir, Moor Green Lakes, Lea Farm Lake and Theale GPs. Away from the regular sites listed in the table, there was a count of four at Purley Meadows on Jul 1st, one at Bray GPs on three dates, and singles at three other sites on a single date. The last of the year was one at Lower Farm GP on Oct 5th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Fairly common passage migrant, scarce in winter (Amber)

Green Sandpipers were recorded in every month of the year except May at 28 sites: 14 in west Berkshire, eight in mid Berkshire and six in east Berkshire.

The maximum monthly counts are given in the table.

Green Sandpiper: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Crookham Common	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	-	-	-	2	4	5	1	-	-	-
Eton Wick	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	-
Fleethill Farm	-	1	1	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	3
Fobney Meadow	1	-	2	5	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	-
Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields	1	2	1	2	-	-	1	2	-	2	3	2
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	1	-	-	1	6	8	6	1	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	1	1	1	-	7	6	6	4	3	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	2	1	2	2	-	3	19	14	10	4	-	1
Thatcham Marsh	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	1	-	-
No. birds at other sites	5	1	3	10	-	-	2	11	2	5	3	3
No. other sites	4	1	3	8	-	-	2	5	2	4	3	3
Total birds (minimum)	9	8	13	21	-	15	50	55	27	17	7	9

First winter/spring: wintering birds were reported at just seven sites in both January and February, but records became more frequent during March, although the peak site count was still only two. Green Sandpipers were recorded more widely across 14 sites as spring migration was under way in April, with a peak count of five at Lower Farm GP on Apr 14th. The last records of the spring were on Apr 23rd, with singles at both Moor Green Lakes and at Fobney Meadow.

Autumn/second winter: the first returning bird was noted at Lea Farm Lake on Jun 7th; the peak count in this month was seven at Lower Farm GP on 25th. From late June to mid October, Green Sandpipers were recorded almost daily within the county. Low water levels created ideal conditions for waders on East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, leading to some very good counts of up to 19 on Jul 26th, 14 on Aug 26th and ten on Sep 16th. Elsewhere the highest autumn count was eight at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 4th. During December there were records from only five sites, with a peak count of three at Fleethill Farm on 28th.

REDSHANK COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor, occasionally breeds (Amber)

The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Redshank: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	2	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	2	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	4	7	2	2	12	2	-	5	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	10	7	1	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	4	3	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	1	3	4	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	1	3	2	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	1	2	17	20	12	18	24	8	-	5	-	-

Winter: there was an unusual winter record of one at Lower Farm GP on Jan 10th.

Spring: the first of the spring were singles on Feb 28th at both Crookham Common Pools and Lea Farm Lake. From Mar 7th, Redshanks were recorded in small numbers on an almost daily basis to the end of April at some ten sites. The highest counts were: seven at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Apr 8th; three at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 21st; and three at Fobney Meadow on Apr 23rd.

Summer/breeding: Redshanks were reported from nine locations during May and June, with pairs putting in more extended stays at Fobney Meadow and Moor Green Lakes. Sightings at other sites across the county were generally brief, involving ones or twos that were probably migrants or local wanderers, though a flock of ten flew north-north-east over Queen Mother Reservoir calling on Jun 7th. Evidence of breeding was limited to two sightings of mating at Fobney Meadow in April, one sighting of display at the same site in May and one sighting of mating at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 5th.

Autumn: the autumn passage of Redshanks is usually much less marked than the spring passage in Berkshire but in 2019 there were more autumn sightings than usual. Highest counts were: seven at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 14th; 12 at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 19th; and three at Lower Farm GP on Aug 21st. After Aug 21st, there were no more sightings until a late record of five at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Oct 15th which were the last of the year.

WOOD SANDPIPER

Tringa glareola

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

It was an excellent year for this species, with more records than any previous year this century (see table). The good number of autumn records reflected an exceptional autumn influx of this species into the country starting in late July. **Spring passage:** the first records of the year were on Apr 24th, one at Horton GP (CDRH) and then one at dusk at Fobney Meadow (AVL). One was at Burnthouse Lane GP on 1st May (KEM), then on May 8th one was found at Moor Green Lakes (RJG) and one was at Fobney Meadow (BTB). On May 17th, two were found at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes (RFM), both remaining until 18th and one until May 19th. **Autumn passage:** the first bird on return passage was one at Lea Farm Lake on Jul 31st (RM). A juvenile was reported at Crookham Common Pools on Aug 1st (CDRH), then on Aug 2nd two were at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes (RCM), increasing to three there on 4th (PBT) and staying until Aug 5th. A probable adult was on the outwash delta at Summerleaze GP on Aug 10th (CDRH), and the last reported was one at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 11th (MFW).

The yearly status of this species this century is shown in the table.

Wood Sandpiper: 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



Wood Sandpiper, Lea Farm Lake, Jul 31st, Andy Tomczynski.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	2	6	1	5	4	1	3	2	2	11
No. of birds	3	6	2	5	5	2	3	2	2	14

GREENSHANK COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Fairly common passage migrant and rare winter visitor (Schedule 1, Amber)

There were records on 17 dates in spring and 17 dates on return (autumn) migration, involving at least 40 birds. **Spring passage:** the first was a single which circled East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Apr 5th before departing. The majority of spring records were at Fobney Meadow, with two there from Apr 20th to 25th, two on May 8th, one from May 13th to 14th, and then five on May 16th, declining to one on May 19th. At other sites, one was at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 21st and one was at a farm pool at Sulhamstead Abbots on Apr 25th. One was at Burnthouse Lane GP from May 16th to 19th, and one flew through at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 2nd. At East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, there was one from May 17th to 19th, two on May 20th, two on May 31st, and one on Jun 3rd. **Autumn passage:** the first returning bird was one over Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 7th, followed by another there on Jul 18th. The next sightings were not until well into August, with one at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 21st and one at Lower Farm GP on Aug 24th. A juvenile was reported at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 25th, one at Lavell's Lake on Aug 26th, and two at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Aug 29th. One was at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 30th, and singles were at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, and Horton on Sep 1st. A single was at Lower Farm GP on Sep 7th; one was at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Sep 8th, and then one or two were present at the same site from Sep 11th to 16th.

KITTIWAKE BLACK-LEGGED

Rissa tridactyla

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

There was a single record of this species for the year. It was seen at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Apr 28th (FJC, BTB).



Kittiwake, Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Apr 28th, Roger Stansfield.

Kittiwake: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of records	0	4	6	5	6	11	6	9	4	3
No. of birds	0	6	6	15	9	102	8	72	4	3
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	4	4	1	4	7	6	5	4	5	1
No. of birds	14	5	1	4	12	6	5	4	5	1

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

A total of 981 records from 107 locations were received for the year. The highest percentage of tetrad occupancy during the year was for mid Berkshire. Highest counts were during the winter months. By far the highest was 11,100 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 27th. November also saw high counts at: Main Pit, Theale, of 1,500 on Nov 5th; 1,200 at the Jubilee River on Nov 11th; and 1,100 at Dinton Pastures CP on Nov 18th. A count of 2,000

was estimated to be present on the extensive floods on Sonning Meadows on Dec 27th. Dinton Pastures CP had 1,800 on Jan 20th.

Breeding records came from Moor Green Lakes, Main Pit and Hosehill Lake. About 200 nests were counted at Moor Green Lakes, but at Main Pit it was difficult to count the nests of the colonies on the three islands. However, the observer on Jun 14th estimated that over 1,000 birds were present, and the site was having a very successful breeding season with lots of fledged birds and many chicks still present at the time. No records were received for Lea Farm Lake, although mention was made in the Lea Farm Lake archive of a few chicks and juveniles present in June.

Interesting foreign ringed birds included the following: a Norwegian bird ringed at Lake Songevatnet, Vinje, in May 2016, seen at Newbury Wharf on Nov 3rd; a bird ringed as a chick on Jun 25th 2014 at Zbiornik Przykona, Radczyny, Turek, Wielkopolskie, Poland, was at Jubilee River on Jun 23rd; a pullus ringed on Jun 14th 2015, at Bielinek, Cedynia, Zachodniopomorskie, Poland, seen on Jan 3rd at Lower Farm GP; and a bird ringed at Truskaw, Mazowieckie, Poland, on Jun 14th 2012 seen at Lower Farm GP on Jul 25th [BTO Ringing].

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Schedule 1, Green)

A rather good year for this species, with the best total number in the 21st century; see the table of annual totals. Twenty-two records accounted for 129 birds seen. At least 106 of these were adult birds. The forerunner was a single second winter bird at Lea Farm Lake on Mar 19th (ABT) that stayed to the next day. The main passage started in earnest on Apr 6th with 19 adults passing rapidly over Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH). Four birds were seen at Main Pit, Theale, the same day (KEM, KS, CMcK). On Apr 8th, 14 birds were found at Woolhampton GPs (DJB), three at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre (GJS) and then 30 at Main Pit (ABT *et al.*), giving a total of 47 birds for the day. The following day, Apr 9th, saw a single bird at Lower Farm (NC, IW), three at Thatcham Marsh (RJC), two at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH) and four at Main Pit (AVL, KEM). Seven appeared in the afternoon of Apr 10th at Main Pit (KEM), then six the following day, Apr 11th, at the same location (ABT, RAGP). On Apr 12th three birds flew north-east over the gull roost at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH) and a further three were seen at Main Pit the same day (AM).

There was an interlude of six days before the next movement appeared with five birds at Horton GPs on Apr 20th (CDRH) and five at Main Pit on the same day (RCo). Apr 21st only produced singles at Queen Mother reservoir (CDRH) and at Main Pit (WeBS). On



Little Gulls, Main Pit, Theale, Apr 8th, Andy Tomczynski.

Apr 22nd, a total of 14 birds in two flocks flew north-east at Queen Mother Reservoir in the morning (CDRH). The last migrant of the spring was a single bird, a first summer, at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pasture CP, on Apr 28th (BTB).

The return passage was non-existent except for a single first summer injured bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 6th, also seen on the next two consecutive days (CDRH). There were two late autumn records. The first was a second winter bird at Main Pit from early morning to midday at least on Nov 22nd (ABT). The second, an adult winter plumaged bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 29th (PNe, DJB), had an injured underwing. It was found sitting in the grass at the base of the grassy reservoir embankment at the south end.

Little Gull: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of records	6	5	21	31	27	36	17	23	20	10
No. of birds	12	11	41	113	81	108	40	45	33	20
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	15	22	18	6	21	12	10	11	28	22
No. of birds	22	57	35	7	56	54	32	25	56	129

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, very scarce in summer, first bred in 2019 (Schedule 1, Amber)

A total of 99 records from 11 locations were entered on the database. Birds were seen in every month except September and predominantly in the east of the county. Most records were from Queen Mother Reservoir and Moor Green Lakes. The table gives maximum counts of Mediterranean Gulls at given sites within a month; note this is not the same as the number of individual birds present within the month.

Mediterranean Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lower Farm GP	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	4	4	6	2	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	3	2	2	2	2	1	4	1	-	3	1	2
Theale GPs	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	1
No. other sites	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	1
Total birds (minimum)	5	4	4	8	6	7	8	2	-	4	1	4

Regular visits and close observation of plumage details by one observer provided a good insight into the number of birds using Queen Mother Reservoir and the turnover. More birds were visiting the Reservoir than would be apparent from the occasional visit. For instance, the three birds seen in January were not necessarily the same individuals seen in February. Interestingly, one of the January birds was in full summer plumage on Jan 8th (CDRH). At least four birds used the Reservoir in February. In March, although the records show two birds as the maximum on any one day of the month, in fact there were four individual birds seen: a summer plumaged, with a complete hood; another without a complete hood; a second summer with incomplete hood not seen previously; and a first winter (CDRH)!

The first juvenile of the year at Queen Mother Reservoir was seen with three summer plumaged adults on Jul 8th. On Jul 16th, a first summer moulting to second winter and two

juveniles were seen at the same location. The last record of the year at Queen Mother Reservoir was of two adults in the pre-roost: one with nearly a full hood, the other a full winter plumaged bird (all CDRH).



Mediterranean Gull, Moor Green Lakes, May 27th, Marek Walford.

The only breeding record was at Moor Green Lakes where a pair had nested in 2018 but the eggs failed to hatch. The first record of the year was of two summer plumaged adults on East Fen on Apr 15th (RJG). Four birds were seen on Apr 22nd (SCD). Two pairs were noted on Tern Island on Apr 20th (RFM). Mating was observed on May 1st (RFM). One pair were full summer plumaged birds, whereas the other pair were second summer birds. The latter pair were seen feeding recently hatched young on May 27th and seen with two chicks on Jun 1st (RCM). Only one chick went on to fledge. The juvenile was last seen on Jul 7th [MGLG 2019]. One of the adults was seen to take a Black-headed Gull chick on Jun 8th (CRG).

The Moor Green Lakes breeding success was the **first** proven record for Berkshire, and is documented on page 12.

It is interesting to note that a pair of summer plumaged adults were seen briefly in pre-roost at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 1st (CDRH). A pair of adults was also recorded at Lea Farm Lake on Apr 5th (GS) and Apr 6th (BTB). Two second summer birds were seen to fly in from the south-west but continued east at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 20th (DJB, PNe). Could these two pairs elsewhere in the county have been those that settled down at Moor Green Lakes?

COMMON GULL MEW GULL *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

A total of 185 records were received from 40 locations, from every month of the year. The highest counts were for the period November through to April as expected. Counts for the other months were mostly of single birds, with the highest being six at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 24th. The highest count of the year was 750 also at Queen Mother Reservoir, on Nov 27th. There were only 11 records of over a 100 or more. A roost count of 500 plus at Moatlands GP was noted on Jan 17th. Counts of 150 were noted at Bisham, Aston and Hurley all in the east of the county during January, and 100 at Remenham during the same month. The only high count further west was 292 on the River Thames at Streatley on Feb 2nd, the largest flock there for years according to the observer. The only high counts during the later winter months were of 100 on winter floods at Windsor Great Park and at Remenham in December.

During March, numbers were generally very low except for a count of 50 on the River Thames at Remenham. Low counts continued into April but a roost count of a 100 or more at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 6th was significant. It was noted that they were mostly first winter birds, presumably lingering in the area before moving north. A striking leucistic individual was also seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 17th. During May and June, first summer individuals were noted at Queen Mother Reservoir. At the same location on Jun 6th, a summer plumaged adult flew over heading north-east. This was unusual in that

there had been only two mid June reports of adults in the last 13 years of Queen Mother Reservoir records, though late June arrivals are usual. The first juvenile of the autumn was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 25th.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

A total of 66 records were submitted to the database from ten locations, predominantly during the period October to January and in the east of the county. Forty eight percent of the records were single birds. High counts are associated with pre-roost or roost counts. The highest count of the year was 90 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 1st. Other roost counts at this location were 40, 44, and 42 in October, November and December respectively. All these counts were predominantly adult birds. In the previous five years, from 2014 onwards, the highest single counts were 52, 6, 53, 32, and 13. These figures are a far cry from the high figures recorded from the 1980s to 2010s, typically in the hundreds, the highest being an estimated 500 at Queen Mother Reservoir in December 2007 [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. The closure of landfills in the county has presumably influenced this general decline. Maximum monthly counts at certain key sites are given in the table.

Great Black-backed Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Moor Green Lakes	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	90	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	5	40	44	42
Theale GPs	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	2	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of other sites	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	93	2	2	10	3	2	2	3	6	40	44	42

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare winter visitor (Amber)

A single, very pale first winter (or second winter) bird was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 10th (CDRH). The bird was seen daily from Feb 12th to 18th. Independently, a pale first winter (bird seen to have a dark eye) was found at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 27th (DJB, PNe, ABT). On that day the bird flew north, its flight followed over Langley where it dropped down on to rooftops. It was then reported daily until Mar 24th; its last sighting was on Mar 29th (DJB, JOB) when it was seen to fly north in late morning. It is assumed that the first discovery in early February was the same bird rediscovered later in that month.



Glaucous Gull, Queen Mother Reservoir, Mar 21st, Andy Tomczynski.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Rare winter visitor (Amber)

There were two records of this rare visitor to the county. At Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 11th, a first winter was seen to fly in from the north east with a few Herring Gulls and settle on the water. It was seen again at the roost on Mar 23rd and 30th (CDRH).

The second record was on Dec 21st at Queen Mother Reservoir; when the observer arrived at 09:00 he noted a pale first winter bird present on the water that flew off east at 09:24 (CDRH).

HERRING GULL EUROPEAN HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, breeds (Red)

A total of 227 records were entered on the database from 51 locations. Most records were from the winter months, although low counts were spread throughout all months of the year. There were ten counts exceeding 100. The two highest counts were of 600 each. This number was present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 27th, presumably at the roost although this was not explicitly stated. The other occasion was also at Queen Mother Reservoir, on the morning of May 24th, which was an exceptionally high figure for this time of the year. These birds were predominantly subadult non-breeders and were accompanied by 80 Lesser Black-Backed Gulls. Presumably these birds were on passage.

Other high counts were at Moor Green Lakes, with 225 on Jan 7th and 210 on Jan 13th at the roosts. Counts exceeded 100 on a further four occasions at this location. There was only one conclusive record of local breeding with a report of two pairs seen with young on warehouse rooftops in Slough on Jun 18th. Twelve recently fledged juveniles were noted at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 24th, but given the location it would be difficult to prove they were raised in the county.

An interesting observation was reported of wintering birds dropping large freshwater shellfish onto a car park surface at Green Park, Reading, on Jan 4th. This learned behaviour was also noted at the same location on May 8th.

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

An adult was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 6th and again on Sep 14th (CDRH). Six adults were seen on Nov 17th on the north-east bank of Queen Mother Reservoir at pre-roost (CDRH).

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinmans*

Very scarce autumn and winter visitor (Amber)

2016 Correction: a second winter was photographed at Lower Farm GP on Jan 25th (ABT). N.B. The photograph appears on page 27 of that year's report [Birds of Berkshire 2016].

2019: a similar pattern of occurrences as in recent years, with a total of ten different birds seen on 23 dates from three locations assuming some of these birds were recognisable enough to be seen on more than one occasion. All but one record was attributed to one experienced observer of gulls who identified all birds bar one! One can only speculate that more Caspian Gulls may be found if there were more 'larophiles' in the county birding community?

At Queen Mother Reservoir, a total of eight identifiably different birds were seen, with three in the first half of the year and five in the second half. Most records were of single birds, mostly first winters, but two birds (a first winter and a second winter) were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir in the first half of the year on Feb 1st (CDRH), and two first winters on Apr 8th (CDRH).

Caspian Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	2	2	1
Summerleaze GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Theale GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	2	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	3	2	1

In the second half of the year, the earliest of the five birds identified at Queen Mother Reservoir was a first-summer bird on Jul 25th (CDRH). Two first winters were seen in the pre-roost on the north-east bank on Oct 5th (CDRH). Two birds were also seen on Nov 20th, again in the pre-roost, one a third winter and the other a first winter (CDRH). The only adult of the year was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 28th (CDRH).

At Summerleaze GPs, a first winter bird on Oct 4th showed plumage features suggesting the influence of German Herring Gull genes (CDRH). On Jan 1st a first winter was present in the roost at Main Pit, Theale (KEM, ABT).

The table gives numbers of Caspian Gulls seen each year this century.

Caspian Gull: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of birds	2	4	4	11	23	12	8	16	18	11
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of birds	9	15	18	11	19	8	12	10	13	10

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Fairly common passage migrant, more frequent in autumn, scarce in winter (Amber)

There were 68 records from 11 locations, with sightings of this species in every month of the year although the peak months were July, August and September, reducing thereafter until January; see table of maximum monthly counts. Two sites accounted for the vast majority of records: Queen Mother Reservoir and the adjacent Horton Brook Quarry on the Reservoir's east side. A high percentage of these records are from a single observer (CDRH) who accounted for nearly 60% of all the year's records (and all the unattributed records in the following account).

The highest single count was 16 birds on Horton Brook Quarry on Aug 16th, comprising 14 adults and two first summers. The highest count at Queen Mother Reservoir was seven at a pre-roost on Aug 17th. The highest count elsewhere was of four birds at Main Pit, Theale, on Nov 5th (KEM). There were records from the west Berkshire downs, with two at Lowbury Hill on Aug 15th (PBT) and five at Farnborough on Nov 19th. These birds are usually associated with Lesser Black-backed Gull flocks.

The first returning adult was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 26th. The first juvenile of the summer was seen at the same location on Jul 11th. The data show that counts from midsummer onwards comprised a high proportion of adults. Adult sightings reduced when

they departed to breed after February, and thereafter most counts comprised subadult birds.

Yellow-legged Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Colnbrook	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	-	4	-	-
Horton Brook Quarry / Horton Fields	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	16	12	5	-	-
Lower Farm GP	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	1	1	1	1	2	5	7	6	1	2	1
Theale GPs	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
No. birds at other sites	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	1	7	3
No. other sites	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	2	2
Total birds (minimum)	8	4	2	1	2	2	22	30	18	11	13	4

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, breeds (Amber)

A total of 502 records from 64 locations were entered into the database, both figures being of the same order as in recent years. The mid and west of the county accounted for the highest bird counts reflecting previous years. The highest count was 80, in the east of the county at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 25th; given the time of year, these were probably spring passage birds. Passage birds, in late summer, probably also accounted for the peak counts in August, such as the 300 flying east over Lowbury Down on Aug 17th, the 200 following a plough north of Inkpen Hill on Aug 29th, and the 150 on Compton Downs on Aug 8th.

Only 2% of the records exceeded a count of 100. There were two counts of a 1,000 or more taken at winter roost sites. The highest was at Main Pit, Theale, where 1,500 birds were at roost on Nov 5th. Lower Farm GP had 1,000 birds at the roost on Jan 1st. The latter site also had 267 on Jan 13th and 200 on Feb 18th. Moor Green Lakes counts reached 147 on Oct 9th and 100 on Jan 3rd. But, to put these counts into perspective maximum winter counts peaked at 7,500 at Main Pit in November 2008. An even higher figure was recorded during the passage period with a roost count of 22,000 at Theale in September 2003.

There were few counts from the downs during the winter months, although it is known that roost birds disperse to feed on the downs in winter. This was probably due to poor observer coverage.

Evidence of breeding was noted at five locations. Two pairs bred at Queen Mother Reservoir where five chicks were seen on May 12th and Jul 7th. At Colnbrook, a pair of adults with three juveniles were seen on Jul 27th and 28th, and were presumed to have bred on factory roofs in the area. At Dorney Wetlands an adult and two juveniles were seen on Jul 15th, presumably having bred in Slough. At Green Park, Reading, a pair at a nest were seen on roof tops on May 16th, having been seen calling together there on Apr 1st. Lastly, a juvenile was seen begging from an adult at Caversham Bridge, Reading, on Aug 8th.

Maximum monthly counts are given in the table.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dorney Wetlands	-	-	-	5	4	6	3	1	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	6	7	-	2	5	-	-	2	10	8
Lower Farm GP	1,000	200	18	5	5	6	13	28	8	26	29	3

Moor Green Lakes	100	25	12	6	4	1	-	6	98	147	1	85
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	6	10	80	9	26	60	15	2	15	1
Thatcham Marsh	12	2	2	5	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	46
Theale GPs	-	1	1	10	-	2	3	35	3	120	1,500	100
Woolhampton GPs	-	1	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	208	14	41	42	18	45	14	667	29	5	7	106
No. other sites	17	12	13	11	6	7	5	8	8	4	4	10
Total birds (minimum)	1,322	244	89	93	117	74	67	800	156	305	1,563	349

SANDWICH TERN *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

Seen on six dates at two locations only, a total of 14 birds was recorded. The first of the year was at the East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Apr 8th (RFM). Thereafter all records were at Queen Mother Reservoir, most of which were of short duration. The first were three birds on Apr 20th (DJB, PNe) that stayed for ten minutes. Four birds were seen on Jun 9th (CDRH), but did not stay long after being found despite settling on a raft.

The first returning bird was an adult that flew straight through at the reservoir on Jul 24th (CDRH), as did two adults on Jul 29th (PNe). Two more birds, winter plumage adults, were seen on Aug 9th (CDRH, ABT), which departed 25 minutes after arriving. The last bird of the year, another winter plumaged adult, was seen on Aug 25th (CDRH); this bird was seen later at Staines Reservoir.

The table gives numbers of Sandwich Terns seen each year this century.

Sandwich Tern: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of birds	43	27	43	56	20	6	13	6	28	7
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of birds	10	15	14	7	10	12	18	21	27	14

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

A total of 440 records were entered on the database from 43 locations. The first record of the year was at Moatlands GP on Apr 6th (ABT) and the last on Sep 9th at Lea Farm Lake (ABT). The highest regional counts were from mid and east Berkshire, although the highest single count of the year was in the west of the county with 60 birds on passage south, at Lower Farm GP on Aug 9th, of which only six were immature birds. The highest single count in the spring was 30 birds at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Apr 27th.

Breeding took place at least eight locations, although information on the success or not of breeding is rather patchy. At Summerleaze GP about ten pairs were present with 17 chicks noted on Jun 28th, with 15 remaining on Jul 14th, some of which were flying. At Queen Mother Reservoir, one pair nested on a raft, laying three eggs, but of the two chicks that hatched there was no sign on Jun 30th. Three pairs nested on the pier roof, but deserted for some reason. At Lea Farm Lake, although little information was available on the database, the 2019 archive of the Lavell's Lake Trust confirmed that at least 12 pairs nested on the raft and 17 chicks were noted on Jul 31st, with two remaining on Aug 23rd. One may assume the others had fledged.

At Moor Green Lakes, six pairs nested, although one nest was washed away by rising water levels. At least eight chicks fledged by Jul 17th. Five pairs nested at Hosehill Lake, and on Jun 6th two of these pairs had three chicks each, whilst the other three pairs were still sitting. The Theale Area Bird Conservation Group reported in their July Newsletter that ten chicks were ringed. Six immature birds were recorded on Jul 3rd. At Woolhampton GPs, one pair nesting on the raft was noted on May 29th, and were seen with three chicks on Jun 15th, all of which were seen fledged on Jul 6th.

A pair with two chicks were noted on the raft at Lower Farm GP on Jun 13th, then three chicks on Jun 20th. All three chicks were seen to be fledged and on the wing on Jul 5th. At the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre, a pair was seen on the raft with two chicks on Jun 13th.

At Dorney Wetlands three ringed birds were seen during May and June. Two of these birds had been ringed at Bedfont Lakes Greater London: one on Jun 16th 2013 and the other on Jul 2nd 2014. The third bird had been ringed at Thorpe Park, Surrey, on Jun 16th 2013 [BTO Ringing].

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

A rather poor year for the total number of birds, with few records. Only 12 birds were seen in spring, with the first two at Main Pit, Theale, on a relatively early date of Apr 6th (KEM). A further two were again at Main Pit on Apr 12th (ABM) followed by a single bird on Apr 14th (RJB). The last April record was of another single bird at Main Pit on Apr 27th (TAG). The last record for this site for the year was a single on May 5th, watched for 70 minutes in the company of Common Terns (ABT). At Queen Mother Reservoir, the first record of the year was of two birds on May 12th (CDRH) that flew east with Common Terns. A first summer was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 8th and another on Jul 8th (CDRH). An adult on Jun 22nd (CDRH) at the same site was presumably a late spring migrant. The highest single count of the year and only autumn passage record was of four birds, early morning only, at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 14th (FJC).

The table gives numbers of Arctic Terns seen each year this century.

Arctic Tern: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of birds	1	6	47	38	42	124	76	17	51	14
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of birds	33	38	158	40	17	29	69	13	27	16

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce passage migrant (Green)

A total of 149 birds were recorded for the year, the highest this century. Birds were seen on 21 dates at eight locations, and all occurrences are summarised in the first table; numbers are peak counts in a period and figures in brackets are estimates of the total number of birds in that period.



Black Tern, Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Aug 24th, Marek Walford.

Black Tern: Maximum and Total Counts by Location

	Apr 19th - 25th	May 7th - 8th	May 16th - 18th	Aug 3rd	Aug 10th	Aug 24th - 26th	Sep 10th - 13th	Sep 17th - 18th	Observers
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	-	-	-	5	-	-	BTB, MFW
Moatlands GPs	2	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	DJB, MFW
Moor Green Lakes	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	RJG, A Stoney
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	1	5	2	-	28 (38)	2	-	CDRH
Streatley	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	NJB
Theale GPs	4 (10)	8 (10)	4 (8)	-	-	45	1	3	MO
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	AEDH
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	CDRH

Spring passage began with the first record of a single bird at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 19th. The highest April count was of four birds at the same location on Apr 20th. Two birds passed rapidly over Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 21st. The first May record was of eight birds at Main Pit on May 7th, this being the highest single count for the month. On May 16th, five birds were at Queen Mother Reservoir and four at Main Pit. Birds were also seen at Dinton Pastures CP, Moor Green Lakes, and Woolhampton GPs during May, with the last record being on May 18th. An unusual location for this species was the R. Thames at Streatley where a single bird on May 8th represented the first spring record for the observer there, his last record being in 1972!

The return passage began in the county on Aug 3rd with two juveniles at Queen Mother Reservoir. Aug 24th was an exceptional day, with five birds recorded at Dinton Pastures CP, 28 at Queen Mother Reservoir, 45 at Main Pit and nine at Moatlands Lake. The last August records were at Queen Mother Reservoir, with seven on Aug 28th and three on the following day. There were a few September records, all juveniles, with two at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 10th. A single bird was probably the same individual lingering at Main Pit from Sep 11th to 13th. Thereafter, three were at the same location on Sep 17th, with possibly one of these staying into the following day, which was also the last record of the year.

The second table gives numbers of Black Terns seen each year this century.

Black Tern: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of birds	89	64	26	38	64	24	65	19	99	101
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of birds	43	102	17	7	13	38	19	41	94	149

RED-THROATED DIVER RED-THROATED LOON *Gavia stellata*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There was a single report of this diver this year. A winter plumage adult circled over Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 18th (CDRH) before heading off south-east eight minutes later. Previous recent records of this rarely seen inland species have come from the same location in 2013 and Main Pit, Theale, in 2017.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER COMMON LOON *Gavia immer*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

Another good year for this species with three birds reported. **First winter:** the juvenile first reported at Beale Park, Pangbourne, on Dec 22nd of the previous year (NJB *et al.*) stayed

until it was last noted on Jan 17th (JLe). It was seen regularly on the fishing lake (often at close quarters) and occasionally nearby on the Thames. **Spring:** a bird in full summer plumage flew into Queen Mother Reservoir from the east at 08:29 on May 4th (PNe, CDRH), circled twice and headed off north-north-west three minutes later. It was thought likely that this was the same bird that had circled the Reservoir in a similar manner the previous year on May 10th 2018. **Second winter:** a winter plumage adult was initially seen close to the north bank at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 10th (CDRH) before swimming off and subsequently only giving distant views.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

Very rare vagrant, most recent records relate to a reintroduction project in West Sussex

There were four reports this year. On Jan 15th, a bird was seen over Cold Harbour (BDC per Tim Haymes) before departing over Knowl Hill; this was regarded as the same as one seen two days later flying over Beale Park, Pangbourne (JLe per John Berry). On Apr 8th, a bird was seen circling Thatcham Marsh before drifting off east (BJW), and on May 17th two birds were seen at close range flying over Greenham Common, being mobbed by gulls and egrets (K Phillips). It is likely that all these reports relate to birds from the introduced flock at the Knepp Estate in West Sussex, which account for many sightings in southern England these days. In fact, the colour rings on a White Stork seen at Beale Park on May 7th revealed that this was indeed the case [BTO Ringing].

CORMORANT GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor, increasing in summer; the continental race sinensis breeds (Green)

A familiar bird at the many wetland sites in the county. Monthly maximum counts of Cormorants at the most frequently reported sites are shown in the table.

Cormorant: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	6	12	18	15	14	14	-	-	3	4	2	11
Burghfield GPs	51	29	11	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	16	20
Dinton Pastures CP	14	6	8	4	1	-	3	9	3	6	29	20
Dorney Wetlands	16	20	11	7	7	6	5	8	15	-	22	14
Fleethill Farm	4	2	5	-	6	-	4	3	-	3	7	2
Lea Farm Lake	14	-	8	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	2	1
Lower Farm GP	29	10	27	24	28	40	42	43	24	34	41	32
Moor Green Lakes	40	51	33	25	15	25	9	13	26	24	35	50
Padworth Lane GP	10	6	6	2	-	6	-	-	-	-	6	17
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	3	4	2	-	1	175	109	4	200	1	2
Sandhurst GPs	37	24	6	-	-	-	-	1	7	22	28	31
Thatcham Marsh	14	9	13	13	9	3	5	5	16	6	11	23
Theale GPs	80	10	25	1	-	1	4	34	103	20	71	50
Twyford GPs	31	22	20	10	7	4	-	-	1	13	41	27
Woolhampton GPs	20	7	4	1	19	-	2	-	1	-	5	-
Wraysbury GPs	29	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	6
No. birds at other sites	60	24	28	18	14	24	10	12	2	25	36	38
No. other sites	13	10	16	11	9	11	6	6	2	9	11	13
WeBS Count Totals	313	149	126	44	13	7	13	177	129	94	244	203
Total birds (minimum)	457	235	227	124	120	124	259	239	229	362	361	344

The highest count of c200 occurred at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 4th. Successful

breeding was reported from three sites and probable breeding at one further site. A bird that was ringed as a nestling earlier in the year on Jun 22nd on Puffin Island, Anglesey, was reported at Hosehill Lake on Sep 3rd [BTO Ringing].

SHAG EUROPEAN SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Red)

A good year for this species, with seven birds reported at two locations. At Main Pit, Theale, two immature birds were seen on February 5th (KEM, DJB) and a first winter was initially observed on Nov 21st (KEM *et al.*), staying until the 27th. At Queen Mother Reservoir two pairs, all first winter birds, were seen on Dec 27th (CDRH).



Shag, Main Pit, Theale, Nov 25th, Andy Tomczynski.

BITTERN EURASIAN BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Very scarce but regular winter visitor (Schedule 1, Amber)

2018 Correction: the Bittern reported by DJB at Great Meadow Pond in September was only seen on Sep 2nd.

2019: a better year, with seven birds (up from three to four last year) reported from four locations. As usual, the majority of reports were from Dinton Pastures CP. **First winter:** a single bird was first seen in the reedbed at White Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Jan 2nd (BTB) and then reported regularly until last noted on Jan 14th (MO). A bird was also seen in flight over the reedbed at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire on Feb 24th (DJB). **Summer:** an unusual record for this time of year was a bird seen flying over the reedbed at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 4th (IW). **Second winter:** at Hosehill Lake, a bird was seen to fly from the reedbed behind the pond on Oct 4th (CMc per Brian Uttley), and, on Nov 21st, one was seen to fly from the northern reedbed at dusk with a second bird seen roosting in the reedbed near the Sand Martin bank (AVL). At Lavell's Lake, one was seen from the Teal hide on Nov 10th (FH per Mark Lauri). Finally, at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire, an individual was seen on Nov 15th, 22nd and 29th where on two occasions it showed well in a field before flying into a reedbed (DJB).

CATTLE EGRET WESTERN CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Rare but increasing vagrant

2014 Correction: although this record was included in the table, the corresponding text was omitted. This should have said: At Cock Marsh on May 12th, a non-breeding adult landed on the south bank of R. Thames near cattle at 11:18 but was repeatedly flushed by dogwalkers and flew back to Little Marlow GP at 11:30.

2019: six birds were reported this year, continuing the annual appearance of this species in the county since 2007; two of the six were long-stayers. The first of those was an individual first seen associating with horses in a field on Bostock Lane, Englefield, on New Year's Day (RCW, R Josey) and then seen almost daily there for nearly the whole of January, giving good views to many observers. It was also noted on several occasions coming in to roost at the heronry at Main Pit, Theale. and was last seen on Jan 29th at Amner's Farm, Burghfield (RCr). Two months later, on Mar 26th, a bird first seen on Pylon Island at Main Pit (KEM) appeared to be resident there until Apr 23th. Further birds were an individual at the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 30th (JCMo), one flying over Horton GPs on Apr 13th (CDRH) and one at Roundmoor Ditch, Eton Wick, on Jun 4th (KPD, DAC). The last report for the year was of one in front of the main hide at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 14th (RJG, BTB).



Cattle Egret, Englefield, Jan 1st, Andy Tomczynski.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common resident and winter visitor (Green)

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

Grey Heron: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	4	4	4	6	5	3	-	-	7	1	2	10
Burghfield GPs	7	10	14	-	-	-	4	-	9	-	6	2
Dinton Pastures CP	4	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	5	2	5	2
Lower Farm GP	3	2	5	3	9	18	12	10	10	8	2	2
Moor Green Lakes	7	4	3	3	4	5	1	1	5	4	2	4
Padworth Lane GP	7	2	3	1	-	3	-	-	16	-	10	17
Queen Mother Reservoir	9	9	8	8	3	-	1	3	1	2	2	2
Sandhurst GPs	3	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	1	4
Thatcham Marsh	1	1	2	1	3	2	5	1	2	3	-	1
Theale GPs	6	7	4	3	-	4	-	6	15	3	5	4
Twyford GPs	15	14	14	19	8	3	1	2	9	5	7	6
Woolhampton GPs	3	2	2	-	1	-	4	16	2	-	1	-
No. birds at other sites	25	13	30	40	23	20	7	8	18	19	21	19
No. other sites	11	11	23	20	13	15	5	7	10	11	14	15
WeBS Count Totals	54	42	63	40	9	7	2	11	56	26	39	45
Total birds (minimum)	94	76	98	87	58	59	37	48	103	52	64	73

The highest count was of 16 at Woolhampton GPs on Aug 24th, when three were on the lakes and a further 13 were slowly flying round in large circles, gradually drifting away westwards. Nesting was recorded at seven locations: Aldermaston GP (five occupied nests); Twyford GPs (ten nests with young); Queen Mother Reservoir (four nests); Beale Park, Pangbourne (two nests); Remenham (one nest with two young); Heath Lake, Crowthorne (at least one nest); and Theale GPs. Probable breeding was also reported at Donnington Grove, Newbury. Juveniles observed at Moor Green Lakes would have fledged from nests over the county boundary. Interestingly, there were two reports from the Fobney Meadow/Green Park area (possibly of the same bird) with a mole as prey species.

GREAT WHITE EGRET GREAT EGRET *Ardea alba*

Rare but increasing vagrant

This species continued to be a regular sight in the county. There were 136 records this year representing a 50% increase on the previous year. There were several long-staying birds, which appeared to move between closely located sites, and a few single day sightings.

First winter: single birds were seen in the Moor Green Lakes complex on Jan 2nd (RCM), 20th (PBT) and Feb 16th (RCM) and at the roost at Main Pit, Theale, between Jan 17th and Feb 2nd (AVL *et al.*), at times joining both Little and Cattle Egrets there. Up to two birds were roosting at Twyford GPs and seen flying over lakes at Dinton Pastures on several dates between Jan 19th (RM *et al.*) and Feb 25th.

Spring/summer: single birds were noted at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 24th (WeBS), 26th (RJG) and Apr 4th (RJG). Two birds flew over Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, on Apr 23rd (RM). A bird was regularly seen at Woolhampton GP between Jul 17th (PB *et al.*) and Aug 3rd.

Autumn: late August through to mid November brought many reports of up to three birds in the Greenham Common/Lower Farm/Thatcham Marsh area. On Aug 21st, a bird flew south-west over Greenham Common (RJC, IW, JL) and the following day one was at Lower Farm (ABT). A bird was again at Lower Farm on Sep 5th (NC per R Adams) and at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre the following day (IW, JL). There were more records of



Great White Egret, Rownleys Predator Lake, Jul 27th, Marek Walford.

a single bird again at Lower Farm on Sep 8th (MJD), 17th (NC) and Oct 8th (NC), and two or three birds regularly between Oct 15th and 26th, and a single bird on Nov 10th and 11th. Outside this area, individuals were at Great Meadow Pond, Windsor Great Park, between Aug 11th and Sep 29th (DJB, CDRH), and at Dinton Pastures CP there were birds at Lea Farm Lake on Oct 15th (TAG) and over Lavell's Lake on Nov 1st (RM). One bird reported at a garden pond in Calcot on Oct 28th (LGRE) had apparently been a regular visitor.

Second winter: a single bird reported at Padworth Lane GP on Nov 6th (PD) was presumably the same bird then seen there regularly from Nov 29th (KEM *et al.*) until the end of the year. At Moor Green Lakes a bird first observed at Colebrook Lake on Oct 5th (MHu *et al.*) and joined by a second bird there on Nov 4th (AS) was reported on many occasions until the year's end on various lakes in the complex. Further west, a bird was seen at Bagnor on Nov 11th (JL, IW).

LITTLE EGRET

Egretta garzetta

Fairly common resident, first bred in 2006 (Green)

Records were received from approximately 90 locations, the majority from the wealth of water bodies across the county. Double figure high counts from the most productive sites were 18 at Wraysbury on Oct 30th, 17 at Lower Farm GP on Jul 6th, 15 at Horton GPs on Nov 1st, 14 at Theale GPs on Jan 17th and 20th, 12 at Twyford GPs on Nov 6th, 12 at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 24th and 11 at Dinton Pastures CP on Nov 27th. **Breeding:** three fledged young were noted close to a nest site in east Berkshire on Jun 11th and then flying there on Jun 23rd. Breeding was also confirmed at a site in mid Berkshire and probably occurred at two sites in west Berkshire. A colour-ringed juvenile observed at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 16th was ringed as a pullus at Stanborough, Welwyn Garden City this summer [BTO Ringing].



Little Egret, Bury Down, West Ilsley, Oct 30th, Andy Tomczynski.

OSPREY WESTERN OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Amber)

Only a single report this year, making it possibly the worst year ever and certainly this millennium. The species does vary from year to year, but usually makes high single figures and occasionally high teens, with the best year this century being 2011 with 16 or 17 birds. This year's record was of a bird at Winter Hill, Cookham, flying along the R. Thames and north into Buckinghamshire on Mar 25th (ADB).

HONEY-BUZZARD EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare passage migrant and summer visitor (Amber)

2018 Additional information: there were several sightings at a site in the east of the county, where a bird was seen in 2017. After the first sighting on May 27th, there was a run of sightings during July: 16th, 18th, 23rd and 25th. The last sighting was of a pale-phase male on Aug 5th. All sightings presumably relate to the same bird (observers withheld).

2019: for the third year in a row, there were several sightings at a site in the east of the county. A male was seen on Jun 2nd and an unsexed bird was seen on Jun 6th. On Jul 4th, an

unsexed bird was seen displaying. It was noted as being very like a bird seen in 2018 that was identified as a male. However, it was definitely a different bird to the one seen on Jun 2nd. Unsexed birds were seen on Jul 16th and Jul 22nd. Despite the run of sightings, including a displaying bird, the observers did not think there was a pair present. However, with sightings in three consecutive years, it may not be long before Honey-buzzards are confirmed as breeding in Berkshire for the first time.

SPARROWHAWK EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common resident (Green)

A fairly typical return of nearly 400 reports, evenly spread across the county with many coming from suburban gardens. Typical of the species, every report is of single and occasionally two birds. However, despite being recorded in too few surveys to obtain reliable results, the data used by the Berkshire Bird Index indicates a rapid decline in the Sparrowhawk population, reflecting the national trend over the last 25 years [BTO BirdTrends, BBI 25yr]. Just one report referred to breeding: two juveniles calling near their nest in Whiteknights Park, Reading, on Jul 29th.

GOSHAWK NORTHERN GOSHAWK

Accipiter gentilis

Rare resident, first bred in 2018 (Green)

After the first successful breeding in the county in 2018, the same pair fledged two juveniles in 2019 (RRi). Goshawks have strong site fidelity and this year nested in another Hemlock tree ten to twenty metres from the previous year's nest. Elsewhere, in west Berkshire an immature was seen on Apr 16th (DJB), a juvenile female on Aug 8th (AEDH), and an adult male on Dec 25th (CDRH).



Goshawk, west Berkshire, Apr 16th, Derek Barker.

MARSH HARRIER WESTERN MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Amber)

Ten reports were made this year, involving probably eight birds. The first of the year was of a juvenile at Arthur Jacob LNR, Horton, on Feb 15th (DW). A female was reported at Woolhampton GPs on Apr 13th (JJT), and an adult female was seen well in east Berkshire on May 22nd (DJB). One was reported from Windsor Great Park on Jul 23rd (CDJ). A juvenile flew south over Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 31st (CDRH). One was reported over Lavell's Lake on Aug 5th (KSeY). A juvenile was seen well, hunting over Roden Down, Compton on Aug 12th and remained in the area until at least Aug 15th (ABT *et al.*). Finally, a female or juvenile was seen flying over Lavell's Lake at dusk on Dec 29th and was subsequently relocated the next morning before flying off north (FJC)..

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Schedule 1, Red)

As sometimes happens with this species, the majority of the 12 records received involved just two long-staying individuals. A ringtail was seen flying west, high over Combe Hill, on Jan

8th (DJB); a ringtail at Lambourn on Feb 6th was presumably the same bird that had been in the area since November 2018 (CDRH) and remained in the Sheepdrove and Eastbury area until at least Feb 26th (MO); and a female seen at Roden Down, Compton on Nov 10th (NJB) was presumably the same ringtail that was in the area and regularly seen until the end of the year (MO). A juvenile, presumably a different bird, was seen at Lambourn on Nov 13th and again on 19th (CDRH).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Common and increasing resident (Schedule 1, Green)

With around 1,200 reports of Red Kites from all areas across the county, 2019 appears to be what nowadays is a normal year. There were several counts in excess of 20 birds: 40 over Streatley on Jul 31st; 32 over Tilehurst on May 27th; 31 at Remenham Hill on Oct 29th; 30 at Hurst on May 12th; 28 at Thatcham on Jun 22nd; 26 at Purley on Thames on Sep 14th; 24 at Walbury Hill on Oct 21st; and 22 at Shinfield on Apr 10th. In addition, there were around 50 reports of gatherings of between ten and 20. The Berkshire Bird Index shows the population to be still increasing [BBI 25yr], and breeding was confirmed at seven locations.

BUZZARD COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common and increasing resident (Green)

Once again, Common Buzzard was only beaten to the title of most recorded bird of prey by the ubiquitous Red Kite, though this year, kite reports have increased slightly, whilst buzzard reports are slightly down on last year. Of the 800 reports, 730 related to singles, twos and threes. According to the Berkshire Bird Report, the population grew rapidly following initial breeding in the west of the county in the mid-1980s. Now widespread, the population has been stable since around 2010 [BBI 25yr]. The largest gatherings were of 16 soaring over Padworth on Mar 20th and over Combe Gibbet on Mar 23rd; 12 in fields at Hurst on May 12th; and 11 over Greenham on Jul 23rd. Like all birds of prey, breeding was under-reported, though there was evidence of breeding at Bisham, one on a nest at Battlemead Common, two adults with a juvenile over Maidenhead Golf Course and a pair at a traditional nest site in the Farnborough Downs area.

BARN OWL WESTERN BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident (Schedule 1, Green)

Barn Owls were recorded across the county in all months of the year, between Jan 1st and Dec 30th, with many sightings in the vicinity of established natural sites or nest boxes provided by the Kennet and Pang Valley Barn Owl Group and the Bisham Barn Owl Group. All sightings were of one or two birds, other than those from the nest box schemes and ringers. Barn Owls were recorded in 38 tetrads across the county, 9.7% of the total number of tetrads. It was a successful breeding season for both Groups with average brood sizes of 2.63 and 2.7 respectively. The mild winter and warm spring meant an early start to the season which raised hopes of second broods; however, the wet July had a detrimental impact on the birds' ability to hunt so not only did some first broods fail but there were not the expected second broods either. Birds from Barn Owl Group sites are, where possible, ringed and the continued monitoring year on year helps provide a picture of how the species is faring over time. It also provides an insight into individual birds.

An unusual recovery was of a Barn Owl found dead near Canterbury in Kent. This bird had been ringed as a chick in 2018 near Theale. It had travelled a distance of 150 km. Most birds

tend to travel between 3 and 8 km. The comparative yearly figures for the Kennet and Pang Valley Group are shown in the table.

Barn Owl: Breeding Success in Recent Years

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of boxes	91	111	123	119	125	136	174	188	187	187
Successful boxes	10	18	27	0	45	15	39	40	41	41
Chicks fledged	29	54	72	0	173	31	100	114	107	108
Average brood size	2.9	3	2.7	0	3.8	2	2.5	2.8	2.61	2.63

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Common resident (Amber)

Tawny Owls were recorded from across the county and in all months of the year between Jan 1st and Dec 30th, although many were heard rather than seen, including some calling during daylight hours. They were recorded in 63 tetrads across the county, 16% of the total number of tetrads. Most records were of single birds although some observers were treated to a duet with a bird calling from their location and another responding from further away. Other observers were alerted to their presence by smaller birds mobbing the Tawny Owl, and sadly three records concerned road casualties. The maximum count from any site was three. Breeding was confirmed from two sites, with three chicks ringed at one, a private site in Maidenhead.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Fairly common but declining resident

The plight of the Little Owl in our county continued. They were recorded from only 21 tetrads or 5.4% of the total and there were only 51 records for the year, with none in August and October, and only a single record in September. The maximum count was three on May 19th when an adult and two juveniles were reported from a regular site in west Berkshire. This was one of two confirmed breeding records; the other came from Wokingham on Jul 30th when three birds were seen flying together. A site in west Berkshire was believed to have had an occupied nest, and a territory was identified at another west Berkshire site but no fledged juveniles were seen. The Kennet and Pang Valley Little Owl boxes had two successful outcomes: one in the Kintbury area where two chicks fledged; and a second at a site in the Pang Valley where two out of three chicks fledged.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Rare resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

2016 Missing record: there was a single record of one bird at a west Berkshire site on Jan 15th (ABT).

2019: Long-eared Owls are very susceptible to disturbance and as such winter roost sites are kept confidential. At one such regular site in west Berkshire, one bird was present on Feb 13th (ABT) and 14th (IW), and two were present on Dec 19th (IW). At another previously regular site in west Berkshire, one was present on Feb 25th (GEW). Elsewhere, one was seen roosting in a bush at Bury Down on Dec 11th (ABT). At Compton on Dec 27th (CDRH), a bird with prey was flushed along the road after dark. Away from west Berkshire, at a private garden in the Maidenhead area where up to three birds were in residence in the 2017-2018 winter, a single bird that arrived in November 2018 remained until Apr 24th.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

This species was recorded in just six tetrads in 2019, five in west Berkshire and one in east Berkshire. In the first winter period there were nine records between Jan 1st and Mar 19th, all from west Berkshire. Sightings were usually of one to three birds but one lucky observer saw a total of nine. In the second winter, one bird was reported from the same east Berkshire site on three occasions between Oct 5th and Nov 22nd. In west Berkshire two birds were regularly reported between Nov 24th and Dec 22nd. The final sighting of the year was on Dec 25th when a single bird was recorded.

HOOPOE EURASIAN HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Rare passage migrant

This scarce migrant was reported for the first time since 2013. A bird was photographed at Allsmoor Field, Martins Heron, in east Berkshire on May 19th (M A Johnstone).

KINGFISHER COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Fairly common resident (Schedule 1, Amber)

As in recent previous years, the total records this year of this distinctive bird indicated a wide spread across the county, with reports from 9% (15) of tetrads in west Berkshire, 23% (21) in mid Berkshire and 22% (28) in east Berkshire. The number of separate one km squares with one or more reports were well in excess of 84, so this represents an increase from 2018 but, as noted for that year, sightings from adjacent squares may represent the same birds so there may be some duplication in the total. Most of the sightings of adults were of one bird but sometimes two or even three were recorded.

These birds of course are found associated with water bodies, rivers, lakes, large ponds, gravel pits etc, where there is suitable food. Records came from 68 main water bodies and the table summarises the monthly distribution of records.

Kingfisher: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	17	8	14	12	13	10	11	16	21	24	16	13
Number of birds	21	13	20	14	18	20	15	20	30	29	20	15

The table shows that peak sightings were in the autumn period, corresponding with previous years. The locations with the highest numbers of sightings during the year were Dinton Pastures CP, Moor Green Lakes, Woolhampton GPs, Streatley, the River Thames between Reading and Pangbourne, and Sandhurst GPs.

Across the county, from March to August the presence of pairs of birds indicated probable breeding. However, definite evidence of breeding came from four sites. In west Berkshire, two juveniles were reported at Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford, on Jun 15th, while four juveniles were reported from The Wilderness, Kintbury, on Jun 25th. In east Berkshire, an adult was feeding two fledglings by the Wradisbury stream (which enters Wraysbury No. 2 pit from the Horton direction) on May 28th, and a pair and four juveniles were reported from a Thames backwater at Winkfield on Jun 9th. The second table shows the site distribution along the county's rivers. Figures for still water locations are included with the adjacent river, thus Moor Green Lakes is included with the River Blackwater.

Kingfisher: Sites on Berkshire Rivers

River	No. of Sites
River Blackwater	4
The Cut	2
River Dun	1
The Emmbrook	2
River Enborne	1
Jubilee River	2
River Kennet and K & A Canal	20
River Lambourn	2
River Loddon	2
Maidenhead Waterways	1
River Pang	1
River Thames	13
Other sites	12
Total	63

WRYNECK EURASIAN WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Rare passage migrant, formerly bred

There were three records this year of this scarce bird after an absence of records since 2014. The table shows the annual run of records this century.

Wryneck: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of birds	2	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	0
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of birds	3	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	3

This year the records were all from west Berkshire and in the autumn. The first was at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 25th, where a first-year bird was caught and ringed (IW, JL). The next was at Greenham Common on Sep 18th, where another first-year bird was caught and ringed (IW, JL). Finally, a bird was watched near the eastern end of the industrial park at Crookham Common on Sep 26th (IW, NC, JCB).

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dryobates minor*

Very scarce and rapidly declining resident (Red)

With only two records received for this year, the status of this species in the county remained extremely fragile at best. The sad decline in the county since 2007 is summarized in the table, which shows that since 2016 there have been no more than three records per year. The records for this year were from mid Berkshire: Fobney Meadow, where one was heard drumming and also briefly seen on Mar 28th (ABT); and at Padworth Lane GP, where one was heard drumming on Apr 6th (RJB). The decline in Berkshire mirrors the situation in the rest of the country where few strongholds for the species remain.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: Annual Number of Sites

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of sites	25	18	18	31	29	21	15	15	12	3	3	1	2

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common resident (Green)

The most commonly reported woodpecker species throughout the county with records from areas of mixed woodland or landscapes with scattered trees and copses. It was also often reported from gardens where the birds, both adults and juveniles, were feeding on peanut feeders and, in two cases, fat ball feeders. In all, records came from 23% (41) of tetrads in west Berkshire, 38% (35) in mid Berkshire and 27% (34) in east Berkshire. Records of one to three birds and sometimes more were received in all months. Figures from the Berkshire Bird Index show that although Great Spotted Woodpecker abundance increased between 1994 and 2010, this increase has not been sustained [BBI 25yr].

Some of the high counts reported referred to family groups (recently fledged young or young being fed at a nest hole) at locations including: Woolhampton GPs; Ashmore Green; RAF Welford; and Thatcham Marsh, where eight birds including several fledged young on Jun 20th constituted the highest total. Breeding was also confirmed at Quarry Wood, Bisham and Upper Basildon, while at Whiteknights Park five active nest holes were found on May 21st, leading the observer to estimate eight pairs breeding across the university campus. Drumming by birds was widely reported, with the earliest report coming from Whiteknights Park on Jan 5th. Reports of higher counts outside the breeding season possibly gave an indication of numbers of territories being established; reports of five came from Enborne on Jan 24th and Winterbourne on Feb 22nd while seven, including six individuals drumming, were reported from various parts of Windsor Forest on Mar 24th.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

EUROPEAN GREEN WOODPECKER

Common resident (Green)

A widely reported species with records coming from 18% (31) of tetrads in west Berkshire, 29% (26) in mid Berkshire, and 22% (28) in east Berkshire, and from all months of the year. Most records were from the species' typical habitats, deciduous woodland and grassy areas with scattered trees, but many birds were reported from observers' garden lawns feeding on ants. The Berkshire Bird Index reports that the Green Woodpecker population has been fairly stable, with some indication of a small decline over the last ten years [BBI 25yr]. Breeding was confirmed at just three locations, when recently fledged young were seen at Woolhampton GPs and Sulhampstead, and a family party of five were seen at Greenham Common. Green Woodpeckers are normally seen in ones and twos or as post-breeding family parties which might account for groups of seven at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 20th and Crookham Common on Sep 16th, while there were two winter counts of five at Burghfield GPs.

KESTREL COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Common resident (Amber)

There were 392 records of Kestrels received in 2019, which is only two-thirds of the number of records in 2016. Kestrels were recorded from 95 tetrads, coming from roughly 25% of tetrads in each of west, mid and east Berkshire. According to the Berkshire Bird Index, Kestrel numbers have not changed substantially over the last 25 years, though have been showing signs of decreasing in the last few years [BBI 25yr]. The highest count was of six, a pair and four juveniles, at Winkfield on Jul 15th. There were further records of four chicks ringed in a garden at Maidenhead on May 31st, four juveniles at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 20th, and four juveniles at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 31st, with several other family groups reported and 20 records overall mentioning young birds. Outside of the breeding

season the highest count was of three at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 20th. On Dec 31st at Woolhampton GPs, a Kestrel was harried by a Red Kite for several minutes, attempting to force the smaller bird to yield its prey, but without success.

A bird ringed as a nestling at Moss End on Jun 19th 2018 turned up at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire, on Jun 3rd [BTO Ringing].

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Red)

2017 Correction: the bird at Remenham Hill on Nov 2nd was an adult male, not a female as stated.

2019: there was a typical total of ten records, split between the Downs and lowland locations, in ten separate tetrads. **First winter/spring:** a single bird was seen at Bostock Lane, Theale, on Jan 27th (IW, JL). A male was seen carrying a small bird as a prey item at Brimpton GPs on Mar 18th (GEW), followed by a female heading north at Marsh Benham on Apr 10th (AEDH), briefly chasing a small bird en route.

Autumn/second winter: the easternmost record of the year was a bird crossing Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 9th (DJB), with a second October record of a female at Walbury Hill on 21st (IW). The remaining records were spread over a number of sites on the Downs in December, beginning with the same observer finding a female or immature at Cow Down and a second female or immature at Parkfarm Down, Upper Lambourn, on Dec 18th (both DJB). A female or immature was seen at Roden Downs on Dec 23rd (ABT) attacking a partridge and a further female or immature was at Woolley Down, South Fawley, on Dec 29th (GDS). The final record of the year was of two birds at Aldworth on Dec 30th (DNTR).

HOBBY EURASIAN

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Green)

A total of 173 records of Hobbies were received from 50 tetrads (13% of total), coming from 7% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 19% in mid Berkshire and 16% in east Berkshire. **Spring/summer:** the first record of the year was one over Hungerford on Apr 20th (AEDH), with another eleven records by the end of the month. The largest flock was 16 jointly over Horton and Wraybury GPs on May 7th, with nine at the same location on May 14th. There were 12 records of three to six birds, and over thirty records of two seen together. There were several observations of hirundines pursued or taken; a Hobby was on the ground feeding on small prey items at the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on May 5th, while an unusual prey species in Blue Tit was seen to be taken at Eton Wick on Jun 14th. Birds in first



Hobby, Queen Mother Reservoir, Oct 19th, Peter Newbound.

summer plumage were recorded at Fobney Meadow on Jun 20th and at Colnbrook on Jun 12th, with presumably the same bird looking very worn at the same location from Jul 27th to 29th. There were ten records of juvenile or immature birds of the year and one confirmed breeding record, raising three young in east Berkshire.

Autumn: Hobbies were regular at mainly wetland sites in August and September, with five records into October including a juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 3rd and the final sighting at Padworth Lane GP on Oct 9th (KEM).

PEREGRINE PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce resident, first bred in 2010 (Schedule 1, Green)

In 2019, Peregrines were recorded in 40 tetrads (10% of total), coming from 9% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 14% in mid Berkshire and 10% in east Berkshire. Many of these records will relate to relatively few birds semi-resident in a few locations and roaming over larger areas. The highest counts were three adults together at Horton Fields on Mar 3rd, three adults at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 7th, three over Newbury on Nov 11th and three adults at Roden Downs on Dec 29th. First winter birds were reported at West Ilsley on Feb 14th and over Emmbrook, Wokingham, on Mar 24th.

Breeding: pairs were recorded in the summer months at three urban locations, and another close to a town centre. Breeding was attempted in Newbury but failed due to weather conditions (see the article by Ken White earlier on page 15). A first successful breeding on a building in Bracknell fledged a single female chick, which was colour-ringed orange TRD on Jul 10th. A juvenile begging to be fed by an adult was seen at Theale GPs on Jul 7th, and a juvenile was seen regularly at Queen Mother Reservoir from Jul 27th to Sep 22nd. A variety of prey species were identified, but an attempt on an Egyptian Goose at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 31st was probably the most ambitious.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET

Common feral resident in the east of the county, scarce elsewhere

There were 179 records from 44 tetrads (11% of total), coming from 19 sites in 12 tetrads (13% of tetrads) in mid Berkshire and 45 sites in 32 tetrads (26% of tetrads) in east Berkshire; there were no records from west Berkshire, with the westernmost records from Holybrook Linear Park, Calcot, on Jan 21st and Fords Farm, Calcot, on Jun 5th. High counts came from the roost opposite Slough Sewage Farm, in the first winter period with 2,000 estimated on Jan 24th and 1,500 on Feb 14th, building in the autumn to 2,500 by Oct 23rd. The roost did not seem to be affected by extensive works on the M4 which began in autumn 2019, and the roost was still estimated at 1,000 birds on Dec 31st. Away from this location and approaches to it, the only large count was of 400 in Windsor Great Park on Nov 16th, which included an unusual bird with pale blue plumage but normal bare parts colouration. Surprisingly, there were no other counts over 30, and the largest count for mid Berkshire was 15 at Dinton Pastures CP on Dec 14th, although numbers in that area were stronger than this count indicated. **Breeding:** although clearly now a widespread breeder, there was very little breeding activity reported; a pair was recorded at a nest hole at Cookham on Mar 8th. The Berkshire Bird Index finds that the population has grown approximately tenfold since 2000, but as this species is recorded in too few surveys to yield statistically sound results, apparent fluctuations in the population shown by the data should not be regarded as significant [BBI 25yr].

JAY EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident (Green)

The number of records of this colourful corvid continued its upward trend, with 584 records in 101 tetrads (26% of total); 50% of records came from west Berkshire. However, the population over the long term appears to be stable [BBI 25yr]. The largest number seen together was 11 in a garden in Bracknell on Feb 21st, with counts of ten at Wishmoor Bottom on Mar 27th and at Moatlands GP on Apr 12th. Jays were very commonly seen in smaller groups. In Upper Bucklebury on Jan 18th, a Jay with two Jackdaws were watched trying to catch and kill a small rat, but the outcome was not reported. **Breeding:** there were six records of probable nesting, and Jay is obviously a species which is under-recorded in the breeding season.

MAGPIE EURASIAN MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Very common resident (Green)

There were 1,074 records reporting Magpies in 119 tetrads (30% of total), coming from 24% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 37% in mid Berkshire and 34% in east Berkshire. According to the Berkshire Bird Index, Magpie numbers have been remarkably stable over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr]. There were 75 records from 25 sites of ten or more birds together. The highest count was 35 roosting at Jubilee River on Nov 8th with other high counts including: 25 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 9th (22 on Jan 16th); 23 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 24th; 23 together on a flooded field at Calcot on Dec 22nd; and 22 at Slough Sewage Farm on Dec 22nd.

Breeding: although discrete when breeding, there were ten records of probable nesting and 12 records of confirmed breeding, including fledged young or juveniles. A party of six juveniles was noted in Reading on Jun 30th including feeding on insects stuck to a car body.

Magpies commonly feed on roadkill and one was reported pecking at a dead hedgehog at Hungerford on Nov 22nd.

JACKDAW WESTERN JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*

Very common resident (Green)

There were 958 records of Jackdaws in 113 tetrads (29% of total), coming from 27% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 32% in mid Berkshire and 30% in east Berkshire. The highest count was an estimated minimum of 2,000 seen regularly at dawn and dusk at Winkfield from Jan 12th. A similar large pre-roost gathering of 1,000-2,000 was seen in fields near Warfield on Oct 31st. There were 19 other counts of 100 or more birds, and this gregarious species was widely reported in groups all year round.

Breeding: there were 14 records indicating probable breeding and 14 records of confirmed breeding, although only a single record of juvenile birds away from the nest, at Waltham Place on Jun 6th.

Jackdaw numbers have been growing significantly, though are showing signs of levelling off over the last five years [BBI 25yr].

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Very common resident (Green)

There were 308 records of Rooks in 77 tetrads (20% of total), coming from 24% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 16% in mid Berkshire and 16% in east Berkshire; 68% of records were from west Berkshire, 19% in mid Berkshire and 13% in east Berkshire. The Berkshire Bird

Index reports no significant trend in Rook numbers over the 25 year period [BBI 25yr]. The highest count of the year was of a flock of over 1,000 corvids that were mostly Rooks at Roden Downs on Jul 5th. There were eleven further counts of over 100 birds, mostly in west Berkshire, but including 100 at Wargrave on Jan 1st and 100 at Warren Row on Jun 11th. **Breeding:** large gatherings at rookeries were reported with 200 birds at Pinkneys Green on Mar 15th and 120 birds at RAF Welford on May 11th. There were 20 records of nesting overall, with further rookeries at Hungerford Newtown (51 nests), Kintbury, Woolley Down, Farnborough, Compton Downs, Aldermaston (22 nests), Knowl Hill (30 nests), Hurley (13 nests), Winkfield (42 nests), Remenham (4 nests) and Albert Bridge, R. Thames (23 nests).

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Very common resident (Green)

There were 1,065 records of Carrion Crows in 120 tetrads (30% of total), coming from 27% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 35% in mid Berkshire and 32% in east Berkshire. The highest counts were 100 at Dinton Pastures CP on Dec 14th and 78 at Long Walk, Windsor, on Jan 13th, with 19 more counts of 20 or more. **Breeding:** there were 13 records of probable breeding and nine records of confirmed breeding, with 18 of the breeding records being in west Berkshire (although the species is expected to be breeding across the county). Indeed, the Berkshire Bird Index reports no significant changes in population levels [BBI 25yr].

RAVEN NORTHERN RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Fairly common resident in the west of the county, increasing elsewhere (Green)

Although increasing in familiarity across the county, the number of Raven records was stable at 340 in 96 tetrads (25% of total), coming from 26% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 32% in mid Berkshire and 17% in east Berkshire. Of the total records, 68% were in west Berkshire, with several sites providing many records indicating almost constant presence, plus 16% in mid Berkshire and 16% in east Berkshire. The highest count was unusually in midwinter with 37 at Combe on Jan 22nd. The highest post-breeding gathering was of 20 on Jul 29th, and there were 17 other counts of ten or more birds; all counts of six or more came from the Walbury Hill area or sites nearby. **Breeding:** there were six records of pairs with young in the nest or fledged juveniles, with three in west Berkshire and three in east Berkshire, including breeding at Wishmoor Cross, with three fledged juveniles subsequently seen in a family party of five.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common resident (Green)

Reports of Coal Tits were evenly spread across the county, in total from 79 tetrads (20%): 30 (17%) in west Berkshire, 18 (20%) in mid Berkshire and 31 (25%) in east Berkshire (percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region). Most reports were of ones and twos, often at garden feeders, though records of larger numbers came from coniferous woodland areas. The Berkshire Bird Index shows the population to have been fairly stable over the last 25 years, increasing a little over the last five.

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

Fairly common but declining resident in the west, scarce elsewhere (Red)

Marsh Tits are almost entirely restricted to the west of Berkshire, where they are widely reported in deciduous woodland and at garden feeders. In mid Berkshire, reports came from Padworth, Hosehill Lake, Clayfield Copse in Reading, from four sites along the R. Thames

from Streatley to Pangbourne and further downstream, to the east of Reading, at Aston. There were two reports from east Berkshire: at Cookham on Feb 20th and at Wishmoor Bottom on Mar 8th. Breeding was confirmed at three of the mid Berkshire sites: Padworth Lane GPs, Clayfield Copse and Aston.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

Very scarce and rapidly declining resident, now confined to the west of the county (Red)

The only reports of Willow Tits were from the North Hampshire Downs area in the south west of Berkshire where a tiny population remains. At least one pair was holding territory at Walbury Hill in April and a pair were seen with three recently fledged young in late June. At Combe Wood at least two males were singing in April, though there was no confirmation of successful breeding. At Wigmoreash Pond, a bird was seen in January and two in August, but, with no evidence of breeding at this site, these may have been dispersing birds.

BLUE TIT EURASIAN BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident (Green)

Atlas data for 2008-2011 showed Blue Tits to have been present in the breeding season in 99% of Berkshire tetrads. However, like most common species, it is substantially under-recorded outside survey periods. In 2019 records were received for only 122 tetrads (31%) equally spread across the county. Blue Tits are abundant in many parts of Berkshire, with high numbers reported, particularly in autumn and winter. For example, in November, there were high counts of 73 at Snelsmore Common CP and 50 at garden feeders in Winkfield. Breeding Bird Survey data covering around 70 survey sites across the county have shown no significant changes in abundance over last 25 years [BBI 25yr].

Ringling data demonstrate the sedentary nature of Blue Tits. An adult ringed at Whiteknights Campus in November 2011 was re-trapped there in March 2019, over seven years later; a first-year bird ringed at Snelsmore Common in November 2013 was re-trapped there in December 2019, and a first-year bird ringed at Jealott's Hill in January 2014 was re-trapped there in February 2019 [BTO Ringing].

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident (Green)

Atlas data for 2008-2011 show Great Tits to have been present in the breeding season in all 394 Berkshire tetrads. Like most common species, it is substantially under-recorded outside survey periods and in 2019 records were received for only 104 tetrads (27%), equally spread across the county. Breeding Bird Survey data show abundance to have varied little over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr], with possibly a small upward trend over the last five years.

There were two ringling reports of interest: a nestling ringed near Bagnor in 2013 was re-trapped nearby in 2019 (6 years 6 months later), and an adult male ringed at Harvey's Meadow in 2014 was re-trapped there in 2018 and 2019 [BTO Ringing].

BEARDED TIT BEARDED REEDLING *Panurus biarmicus*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant, has bred (Green)

There were two reports of Bearded Tits in 2019, each recorded on one day only. Two birds were seen at Jubilee River on Jan 26th (J Heal), and on Oct 20th three birds were seen briefly at Lavell's Lake (RM). These were the tenth and eleventh Berkshire records this century.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

Fairly common but localised summer visitor, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Schedule 1, Green)

Jan-Mar: a bird in song at Hut Hill, Swinley Forest, on Feb 7th was the first to be reported; several further reports in this area reached a maximum of four on Mar 27th. At Greenham/Crookham Common, numbers rose from two on Feb 12th to seven on Feb 26th and again on Mar 28th. Small numbers elsewhere involved Walbury Hill, Padworth Common and Aldermaston AWE, where four were singing on Feb 27th.

Summer/breeding: the information for breeding localities is summarised in the table (for details of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, see [Crowley *et al.*, 2012]). At Greenham and Crookham Commons where the number of territories had been slowly but consistently increasing from ten in 2009 to 16 in 2017, this dropped to 12 in 2019, but their overall status was thought to be stable [AEDH 2019]. However, in the Swinley Forest area there was a marked improvement possibly due to better observer coverage. Surveys by PJC *et al.* revealed 25 territories in Swinley Forest; other casual reports received for this area suggested hardly any territories, showing the importance of surveys for this species. There was a single report of a songster at Woolhampton GP in April. A report of nine at Buckler's Forest, Crowthorne, on Aug 30th probably reflects dispersal from other sites rather than breeding at the site itself.

Woodlark: Breeding Season Summaries

Locality	Number of Territories	Max Count inc young	Notes
Combe	1?	1	
West Woodhay	1	1	
Greenham/Crookham Common	12	13	Survey by AEDH
Bucklebury Common	2?	2	
Aldermaston AWE	4?	4	Based on the Feb report
Ufton Nervet	?	?	No reports received.
Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Berkshire locations):			
Crowthorne Woods	0	0	
Swinley Forest	13	?	Survey by PJC <i>et al.</i>
MOD Heathland/Wishmoor Bottom	12	?	Survey by PJC <i>et al.</i>
Swinley Park	?	?	No reports received
South Ascot	?	?	No reports received
Buttersteep, South Ascot	?	?	No reports received

Sep-Dec: nearly all the reports related to Greenham and Crookham Commons, with a maximum count of 15 on Sep 16th and a final sighting of one on Nov 14th. The sole report for Swinley Forest concerned three at Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 31st.

SKYLARK EURASIAN SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

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

Skylark numbers have shown a small, but significant, decrease since 2000, in line with the national trend [BTO BirdTrends, BBI 25yr]. A hint that the breeding population was continuing to decline came from the fact that breeding was confirmed at just one site and numbers between September and December were down. As usual, it was more widespread in summer; see the table which summarises the localities where Skylarks occurred.

Skylark: Number of Sites by Region

	Jan - Mar	Apr - Aug	Sep - Dec
West Berkshire	28	31	22
Mid Berkshire	8	11	5
East Berkshire	13	22	7
Total	49	64	34

First winter: though modest, numbers were up on this period in 2018. Apart from 100 at Sheep Down, East Ilsley, on Feb 15th, the only counts above 40 came from Englefield, where there was a maximum of 260 on Jan 17th. Song was heard from Jan 17th. **Spring/summer:** despite numerous indications of probable breeding, this was confirmed at just one location, Greenham and Crookham Commons. Here, the national and county downward trend was also apparent; numbers of territories had fallen monotonically from 32 in 2009 to just nine in 2019, when rather surprisingly, breeding was confirmed in two of these territories as adults were seen carrying food to young [AEDH 2019]. **Autumn/second winter:** counts were down on this period in 2018, mostly falling below 100. Counts of approximately 100-150 were received for Englefield and the Berkshire Downs, including East Ilsley, Roden Down and Aldworth.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Locally common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber Listed)

Spring: a very early arrival was one at Lea Farm Lake on Mar 2nd (PSc). Passage continued until early May and showed a spike in the first week of April (see table) which included a huge flock of up to 1,000 Sand Martins, but much smaller numbers of other hirundines, at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 4th.

Sand Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week	Feb	Feb	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	May	May
Commencing	17	24	03	10	17	24	31	07	14	21	28	05	12
No. of sites	-	1	1	1	5	2	13	10	7	6	5	6	-
No. of birds	-	1	6	2	54	7	1,503	286	72	275	145	172	-

Breeding: indications of breeding were reported from: Woodspeen; Newbury Station; Hosehill Lake; Kennetmouth, Reading; Lea Farm Lake; Black Potts Railway Viaduct; and Eton College. **Autumn:** passage was well below normal, becoming negligible after Sep 15th (see table). The last sighting was of one at Lea Farm Lake on Sep 29th (ABT), a normal final departure date.

Sand Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week	Jul	Jul	Jul	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug	Sep	Sep	Sep	Sep	Sep	Oct
Commencing	14	21	28	04	11	18	25	01	08	15	22	29	06
No. of sites	2	1	5	3	6	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	-
No. of birds	13	18	102	64	292	68	8	62	160	1	2	1	-

SWALLOW BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Swallow abundance had remained stable over the last 25 years with the exception of a sharp decrease since 2017 that has also been seen in the national figures [BBI 25yr]. This recent decline in numbers was maintained in 2019. **Spring:** in contrast to Sand Martins, arrival

came late, when two flew north-west through Dinton Pastures CP on Mar 30th (JJT). Numbers on passage were very depressed (see table).

Swallow: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Mar	Mar	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	May	May	May	May
	17	24	31	07	14	21	28	05	12	19	26
Number of sites	-	1	14	17	19	22	17	14	6	13	12
Number of birds	-	2	570	231	56	73	152	136	23	42	47

Breeding: this was likely or confirmed at: Lower Green, Inkpen; Boxford; Bucklebury; Sulhamstead; Southcote Lock, Reading; Twyford; and Winkfield. **Autumn:** passage was below normal and strongest towards the end of September (see table). Two at Fobney Meadow on Oct 30th (RAGP) were the last of the year, a normal date.

Swallow: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Jul 14	Jul 21	Jul 28	Aug 04	Aug 11	Aug 18	Aug 25	Sep 01	Sep 08
Number of sites	4	14	13	4	8	16	8	12	11
Number of birds	66	149	253	72	167	161	139	209	192
Week Commencing	Sep 15	Sep 22	Sep 29	Oct 06	Oct 13	Oct 20	Oct 27	Nov 03	
Number of sites	12	12	17	9	6	1	1	-	
Number of birds	77	770	256	24	80	3	2	-	

HOUSE MARTIN COMMON HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Fairly common but declining summer visitor and common passage migrant (Amber)

This species continued to show a steady decline, as is evident from the Berkshire Bird Index trend [BBI 25yr]. **Spring:** three passing over Lea Farm Lake on Mar 23rd provided the first sighting (ABM), a normal arrival date. Passage was generally light, apart from higher numbers at the end of April and beginning of May (see table).

House Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Mar 10	Mar 17	Mar 24	Mar 31	Apr 07	Apr 14	Apr 21	Apr 28	May 05	May 12	May 19
Number of sites	-	1	-	9	7	10	11	12	7	8	8
Number of birds	-	3	-	145	53	89	122	799	250	55	54

Breeding: in May and June, 9% of tetrads were occupied in west Berkshire, 12% in mid Berkshire and 10% in east Berkshire, showing an even spread across the county. Breeding was confirmed at Lower Green, Inkpen; Boxford; Enborne; Thatcham; Pangbourne; Reading; Twyford; Maidenhead Thicket; Winkfield; and Cookham. **Autumn:** passage was fair and reached a maximum in the last part of September (see table). It continued into the middle of October and the last bird was reported at Winkfield on Oct 28th (FHu), a typical final departure date.

House Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Jul 07	Jul 14	Jul 21	Jul 28	Aug 04	Aug 11	Aug 18	Aug 25	Sep 01
Number of sites	5	5	8	10	3	11	11	6	9
Number of birds	54	123	324	129	100	263	181	160	827
Week Commencing	Sep 08	Sep 15	Sep 22	Sep 29	Oct 06	Oct 13	Oct 20	Oct 27	Nov 03
Number of sites	10	7	18	15	6	6	1	1	-
Number of birds	315	128	1,099	1,040	78	101	1	1	-

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Fairly common resident along the river valleys (Schedule 1, Green)

This species has become locally common along river valleys, notably the Kennet valley between Hungerford and Reading, where about 150 birds were reported in 2017. This year, in May and June, 5.6% of all tetrads in the county were occupied. Concentrations included 25 at Thatcham Marsh on Jun 20th and 14 at Burghfield GPs on Mar 30th. Probable or confirmed breeding was reported at: The Wilderness, Kintbury; West Meadows, Marsh Benham; Lower Farm GP; Thatcham Marsh; Hosehill Lake, Theale; East Park Farm Playing Fields, Charvil; Lands End GP; and an undisclosed site in east Berkshire.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident (Green)

This species remained common and widespread. Over 400 records were received, the bulk via BirdTrack. The highest count was of 51 at Thatcham Marsh on Nov 19th, followed by 49 at Wraysbury GPs on Jun 8th and 40 there on Dec 30th. A pair appeared to be nest building at Paices Wood, Wasing on the early date of Feb 26th. According to the Berkshire Bird Index, there has been no significant change in the abundance of Long-tailed Tits during the survey period [BBI 25yr].

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Rare passage migrant, formerly a scarce summer visitor (Red)

This species showed a welcome increase in records compared to recent years with seven reports concerning five birds, the best showing since 2009. The first bird sang briefly on Apr 30th at Peaked Hill on the edge of Greenham Common (JL). There were three reports of a bird on May 1st at Dinton Pastures CP (FH, RM, MFW), with a further record that day from Winterbourne Holt (JL). Another bird was singing and calling at Bucklebury Common on May 7th (DJR) and the final record on May 10th was again from Greenham Common (JL).



Wood Warbler, Dinton Pastures CP, May 1st, Dave Rimes.

RADDE'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

Very rare vagrant

Radde's Warbler has a large breeding range in east Asia and is strongly migratory, normally wintering in south-east Asia. Most years there are a handful of autumn records in the UK, typically on the east coast and Scilly (though no longer a BBRC rarity), but it is virtually unknown in inland counties. Thus, when a first-year bird was caught and ringed on Greenham Common on Oct 24th the event was entirely unforeseen and needless to say the record represented a county first. The bird was processed and photographed by JL, RJC and IW and was one of only two ringed in the country in 2019 [BTO Ringing].

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

The first birds of the year were singles singing at Burghfield GPs (RCr) and at Main Pit,



Willow Warbler, Rodent Down, Apr 21st, Andy Tomczynski.

Theale, (ABT) on Mar 23rd. Spring passage peaked in the second and third weeks of April with birds reported from some 40 locations. High counts included 11 at Burghfield GPs on Apr 15th, 13 at Greenham Common on May 15th and 13 at Crookham Common on May 23rd. Numbers were especially low later in spring as can be seen in the table, providing further evidence for the decline of the Willow Warbler as a breeding species in Berkshire; this was particularly evident in the east and centre of the county.

Willow Warbler: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	-	-	1	21	11	6	5	8	2	1	-	-
Mid	-	-	2	33	12	6	-	1	2	-	-	-
West	-	-	1	60	54	21	15	27	20	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	4	114	77	33	20	36	24	1	-	-

There was just one record of confirmed breeding with an adult feeding young at Crookham Common on Jun 4th. The continued decline is confirmed by the Berkshire Bird Index which shows a reduction of over 50% in population levels during the last 25 years [BBI 25yr]. Nationally this species is declining throughout the country but most dramatically in the south [BTO BirdTrends]. Autumn passage started around the end of July, with largest numbers noted in the first two weeks of August. The last bird of the year was recorded in Bracknell on Oct 5th (DAMD).

CHIFFCHAFF COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant, scarce but increasing in winter (Green)

The Chiffchaff continued to be the commonest warbler, reported in all months of the year with almost three times as many records as for Willow Warbler. Indeed, the Berkshire Bird Index shows an almost twofold increase over the last 20 years [BBI 25yr]. During the winter, Chiffchaffs were widely reported from around 35 sites along river valleys, and also at Greenham Common and at Combe. Singing birds were heard from the middle of February,

but the main spring arrival started in the last third of March and included some impressive counts, such as 35 at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 22nd and 44 at Burghfield GPs on Mar 23rd. Totals of monthly maximum counts at sites according to the habitat are given in the table, and show a distribution that is more widespread during the spring and summer compared to autumn and winter.

Chiffchaff: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Downs	-	2	10	36	27	16	5	14	23	7	2	-
River Valleys	45	70	204	240	94	123	84	79	83	46	16	30
Heaths/Woods	2	7	74	88	47	47	27	38	25	12	1	2
E. Plain	-	-	12	9	2	2	3	5	1	3	-	-
Urban	-	2	20	24	11	1	6	-	7	7	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	47	81	320	397	181	189	125	136	139	75	19	32

Chiffchaffs were reported from around 50 sites during the late spring and breeding was confirmed at ten sites. In the autumn, peak numbers were observed between mid August and mid September, including 31 counted at Thatcham Marsh on Aug 20th. By November, numbers were below those of the first winter period and there were several reports of Chiffchaffs in mixed tit flocks.

A bird that had been ringed as a first-year male at Thatcham Marsh in September 2015 and re-trapped there in spring 2017 was found on Mar 14th freshly dead at Ballenaves, Allier in central France, 660 km away [BTO Ringing].

SCANDINAVIAN CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*
CHIFFCHAFF (TRISTIS)

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

There were two records for this subspecies, both from Bray GPs. The first was a single bird associating with six nominate race birds on Jan 20th. The second was on Feb 13th when the same observer noted a rather drab individual with grey-brown upperparts, minimal olive in wings and tail, buff evident on ear coverts and chest sides, and a complete absence of any yellow on the underparts including the vent, the under-tail coverts (which were clean white), and the ‘knee’ feathering at the tibiotarsal joint (CDRH).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There were just 190 reports of Sedge Warblers in 2019 from 51 locations in 2019: ten in east Berkshire, 16 in mid Berkshire and 25 in the west as summarised in the table.

Chiffchaff: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	31	23	15	10	4	7	-	-	-
Number of birds:												
East	-	-	-	14	7	6	1	1	2	-	-	-
Mid	-	-	-	20	31	16	3	1	3	-	-	-
West	-	-	-	59	48	35	16	4	6	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	93	86	57	20	6	11	-	-	-

The first birds to be reported were singles at Thatcham Marsh (IW) and Horton GPs (CDRH) on Apr 7th. Sites reporting the highest numbers in spring were: 23 at Thatcham

Marsh on May 14th; 12 at The Wilderness, Kintbury on Apr 29th; 12 at Fobney Meadow on May 3rd; and 12 at Woodspeen on May 22nd. Thatcham Marsh and Fobney Meadow accounted for a third of the breeding season reports, while reports from other locations were sporadic. Breeding was confirmed at Thatcham Marsh, Fobney Meadow, Pangbourne and Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford and was probable at a further five sites. The only Sedge Warbler recorded at Moor Green Lakes in this period sang prominently for several weeks along the west margin of Colebrook North but it was thought that no breeding took place on the reserve for the first time [MGLG 2019]. As a wetland species, Sedge Warblers are recorded in too few surveys to yield reliable results in the Berkshire Bird Index [BBI 25yr], but national data show no significant trend over the period [BTO BirdTrends].

Sedge Warblers are closely associated with reedbeds along river valleys so reports in other habitats may indicate passage birds such as singles at Englefield on Aug 24th, at Great Shefford on Sep 1st, on the Lambourn Downs on Sep 5th, and at Colnbrook on Sep 11th. A bird at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 15th was the last to be reported this year (IW, JL).

A Sedge Warbler caught by a ringer at Jubilee River on Jul 8th had been ringed as a first-year at Marais de Pompas, Herbignac, Loire-Atlantique, France, on Aug 19th 2018 [BTO Ringing].

REED WARBLER EURASIAN REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

After the first bird was heard singing at Lower Farm on Apr 14th (MJT), Reed Warblers were widely reported from river valley reedbeds across the county, with reports from nine sites in east Berkshire, 18 in mid Berkshire and 18 in the west Berkshire. The table shows totals of site monthly maximum counts.

Reed Warbler: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	17	24	19	13	8	4	1	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	76	128	100	54	38	12	1	-	-

In the breeding season, Reed Warblers were present at 32 locations. Breeding was confirmed at Lower Farm, Thatcham Marsh and Streatley, where young in a possible second brood were being fed on the late date of Aug 4th. There was evidence of probable breeding at a further six sites. The highest counts were as follows: 18 at Thatcham Marsh on Apr 24th; 13 at Moatlands GPs on May 21st; 14 at Thames Valley Park on May 24th; 12 at Woolhampton GPs on May 25th; 20 at Dorney Wetlands on Jun 6th; and 12 at Green Park, Reading, on Jun 27th. Two June reports from Sheepsdove in the Lambourn Downs including three on Jun 18th were notable. Autumn sightings were confined to typical breeding sites and the last bird was reported at Horton GPs on Oct 2nd (CDRH).

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

There were 15 records received from eight tetrads for this species, with six birds in spring and two in autumn. The first record came on Apr 19th from Dorney Wetlands, some four days later than the recent average first date, and presumably the same individual was recorded there for the following two days (PNe *et al.*). The next record on Apr 23rd came from Greenham Common (JL). There were records of up to two reeling birds from different areas of Southcote Meadows including Coley Park Farm between Apr 26th and 28th (AVL, EN, PB). A bird was heard singing by the K&A Canal near Hampstead Park on Apr 29th and

30th (MJD, IW), while the final spring record involved a bird singing near Widmead Lock at Thatcham Marsh on May 18th (NC). There were two autumn records, one from Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford, on Sep 3rd (JLS), and one from Horton GPs on Oct 1st and 2nd (CDRH), the latest date this century, when a bird was watched perching on dead docks. The records provided no evidence that breeding had even probably taken place.

BLACKCAP EURASIAN BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant, scarce but increasing in winter (Green)

This species was reported from 135 tetrads spread across the county and in every month of the year, between Jan 1st and Dec 31st. The wintering birds between October and late March were mainly reports of ones and twos to a maximum of four from gardens where they were observed feeding on apples, sunflower seed, fat balls, Mahonia and Cotoneaster berries, as well as the less usual bread and scones. Numbers of this species have been increasing in recent years, possibly a reflection of the birds taking advantage of maturing habitats round the many worked out gravel pits in the county.

The spring arrivals were evident from Mar 23rd when 21 birds were recorded from Burghfield Gravel Pits, which was the highest count so early in the year made by the observer over 37 years of recording (RCr). Numbers there continued to climb with the same observer recording 69 birds in the same area a week later, followed by 97 on Apr 7th and 125 on Apr 15th. Away from the Theale/Burghfield complex, double figure spring counts of between ten and 20 birds also came from many sites throughout the county, including Greenham and Crookham Commons, Woolhampton GPs, Winkfield, Twyford, Dorney Wetlands and Slough. There were 13 reports of confirmed breeding, including an adult carrying food on May 10th at Loddon NR, Twyford. Fledged youngsters were recorded: at Lower Farm on Jun 9th; at Frost Folly on Jun 15th; at Woolhampton GPs on Jun 15th, 22nd, 28th and 30th; in the Datchet area on Jun 11th and 18th with a further record on Jul 24th; from Hungerford on Jul 4th; and from Horton on Jul 24th. Numbers began to build again in September with counts of: 47 at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 1st, with 27 there on Sep 8th; and seven double figure counts from Greenham Common, the highest being 29 on Sep 13th. Numbers began to tail off again at the end of September. It should be noted that the high counts in west Berkshire were a reflection of observer activity at those sites. Sites in mid and east Berkshire may be equally productive but were either less well and systematically observed or reports are not submitted.

There were a few notable ringing recoveries. A bird found freshly dead at Caversham on Jan 9th had been ringed as a first-year female at Nanjizal, Cornwall, on 27th Oct 2016. Other locally ringed birds were caught by ringers in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, and Pett Level, East Sussex. International flights included a juvenile ringed at Wraysbury on Aug 1st 2018 later caught at Herne, Brabant, Belgium, on Apr 19th, and a first-year female ringed at Plaisance, Saint-Froult, Charente-Maritime, France, on Sep 24th 2018 caught by ringers at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 15th [BTO Ringing].

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

The first Garden Warbler was reported at Green Park, Reading, on the fairly early date of Apr 8th (SRo). As numbers built up, the highest counts were made in the first three weeks of May, mostly around the gravel pits south of Reading, with Hosehill Lake, Moatlands and Burghfield GPs producing counts of 13 to 18. Successful breeding was confirmed at five sites and the Berkshire Bird Index shows no obvious change in population levels over the 25-year period [BBI 25yr]. After the end of June, the number of birds reported reduced to

a trickle with the exception of a brief four-day period from Jul 23rd to 26th when 20 birds were reported from five sites, including 12 at Greenham Common on Jul 23rd. A bird at Greenham Common on Sep 13th was the last to be reported in 2019 (IW, JL).

A bird ringed at Greenham Common on Jul 26th was caught by a ringer 202 km away at Hollesley Heath, Suffolk, on Aug 16th [BTO Ringing].

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Curruca curruca*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

The table shows totals of site monthly maximum counts.

Lesser Whitethroat: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	18	35	9	5	9	5	-	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	29	43	12	5	12	6	-	-	-

The first birds of the year were two at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 20th (DAC, RHS). Thereafter until the end of May birds were widely reported from some 42 locations as passage birds augmented the summer arrivals. The majority of reports concerned either one or two birds, but four were present at Enborne Farm Woods on Apr 30th, and three were at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 28th, at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 29th, and at Old Forest Road Meadows, Wokingham, on May 23rd. The number of reports dropped significantly after the end of May, and at only two sites was there a prolonged presence: two birds were reported throughout June at Fobney Meadow, and one bird throughout June and July at Greenham Common. Otherwise, Lesser Whitethroats were reported from a further 11 sites on just a single day in June and July, and there were no reports of confirmed breeding. The Berkshire Bird Index found that Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in too few surveys to assess population trends [BBI 25yr].

In the autumn, up to two were reported on many dates in August at Greenham Common, while at Crookham Common ones and twos were reported between Aug 23rd and Sep 18th. Elsewhere, there were ten reports of single birds at nine locations, six of which were in east Berkshire, while on Aug 3rd, two juveniles were watched in a bush at Colnbrook that also contained Blackcap, Garden Warbler and several Common Whitethroats! The last bird of the year was recorded accompanying a large tit flock at Horton GPs on Sep 28th (CDRH).

WHITETHROAT COMMON WHITETHROAT *Curruca communis*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

The Whitethroat is a common summer visitor to a wide range of habitats as can be seen from the table which shows totals of monthly maximum counts at locations grouped according to habitat type.

Chiffchaff: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	48	51	41	21	13	11	1	-	-
Number of birds:												
Downs	-	-	-	30	57	18	8	16	6	-	-	-
River Valleys	-	-	-	109	102	94	61	30	15	-	-	-
Heaths/Woods	-	-	-	51	36	37	10	17	8	2	-	-
E. Plain	-	-	-	7	16	9	1	-	-	-	-	-
Urban	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	200	215	158	80	63	30	2	-	-

The first reports of the year were two birds singing at Braywick Park LNR, Maidenhead, on Apr 6th (MHe), a full eight days before the next reports from Burghfield GPs and Brightwalton Common on Apr 14th, which signalled the start of the main arrival that peaked around the end of April. High counts in spring included: 22 at Englefield on Apr 20th; 15 at Woolley Down on Apr 29th; 22 at Enborne Farm Woods on Apr 30th; 15 at Southcote Meadows on May 3rd; 16 on the Compton Downs on May 6th; and 14 on Greenham Common on May 15th. Good numbers continued to be reported from around 80 sites during the breeding season, though it was probably under-recorded nevertheless. The Berkshire Bird Index states that Whitethroat numbers appear to have increased almost twofold in the 20 years since 1994, substantially faster than the national increase of around a quarter over the same period, but there has been no significant change in the last five years [BBI 25yr]. Breeding was confirmed at eight locations and was probable at a further 12, but most likely occurred wherever there was suitable habitat. During late summer, birds continued to be recorded from the same sites where they had been present earlier in the season offering little evidence of passage migration, except for a single bird in an Earley on Sep 14th, a garden first for the observer. The last report for the year concerned two at Greenham Common on Oct 2nd (IW, JL).

DARTFORD WARBLER *Curruca undata*

Scarce and localised resident (Schedule 1, Amber)

2016 Missing records: although stating that Dartford Warblers were rare away from breeding habitat, the account omitted both such records, namely a first winter still present at Colnbrook on Jan 23rd having been first seen on Dec 20th 2015 (CDRH), and another first winter in a large stand of chenopodium at Colnbrook on Oct 30th and Dec 11th (CDRH).

2017 Correction: the account should have drawn attention to two records from the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes, on Aug 28th (GJK) and Dec 28th (RFM, RJG), a site not within their traditional breeding area.

2019: this species was reported throughout the year between Jan 1st and Dec 8th from sites with suitable habitat in south-west and south-east Berkshire, in a total of nine tetrads. A total of 97 records were received, up on the 63 received in 2018, but still well down on the 211 in 2017. This change could be a reflection of bird numbers but could equally be reflecting changes in observer activity. The majority of records were of one or two birds, often heard rather than seen.

Estimates of numbers on the various areas of heathland in south-east Berkshire were as follows: four territories on Wildmoor Heath; reports of single birds in winter months only at Crowthorne Woods and Caesar's Camp; up to two birds at Wishmoor Bottom in spring; a single bird at Wishmoor Cross in spring, but five on Oct 29th; and one territory on the MoD land. Adults were observed feeding young on two occasions at Wishmoor Bottom.

In the west of the county, many reports came from Greenham and Crookham Commons, where the highest counts were of three and four birds respectively. Three, or possibly four, territories were located here, and successful breeding was recorded at two of these [AEDH 2019]. Single juvenile birds were observed at both sites in August, including one feeding on blackberries at Greenham Common on Aug 23rd. Away from Greenham and Crookham Commons, there only other report in west Berkshire was of two birds on May 17th at Snelmore Common. Surprisingly this location has only yielded two previous reports of Dartford Warbler this century, with single birds in January 2001 and April 2006, so it is hoped that it will feature again in future years.

Away from the traditional breeding areas, a male that had been wintering at Colnbrook at the end of 2018 was observed again on Jan 6th and Feb 3rd.

FIRECREST COMMON FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce resident and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Green)

There were just 64 reports of Firecrests in 2019. Close monitoring in the woods around Bucklebury revealed a significant and possibly recently expanding population that in some way compensated for a paucity of records from traditional sites in Swinley Forest.

First winter: there were five reports of a single bird at Whiteknights Park, Reading between Jan 29th and Feb 25th. The only other reports in this period were singles at Upper Bucklebury on Feb 19th and at Cold Ash on Feb 22nd. **Breeding:** reports of Firecrests at their summering sites started to increase in March. Firstly in east Berkshire, up to two Firecrests were continually present in large gardens with holly undergrowth in Sandhurst until Jun 25th, and singing was heard on two dates in May at the Wildmoor Heath car park, and nearby at Wellington College, Crowthorne on Jun 22nd. There were just four reports from Swinley Forest, with up to two in May at Wishmoor Bottom and a single at Buttersteep, while Finchampstead Ridges yielded just two reports of singles. Three were at Virginia Water on Mar 24th, and two were singing in Maidenhead Thicket on Mar 29th. In mid Berkshire, reports of up to two birds continued at Whiteknights Park until May 3rd, and a male was in Sulham Wood on Jun 17th. In west Berkshire, detailed observations were made in the woods between Bucklebury Common and Cold Ash with repeated visits made to establish territories (DJR). At Bucklebury Common, single pairs were found in three territories, and seven other territories were identified with at least 15 extra birds. Two pairs were found at Cold Ash, three birds were at Upper Bucklebury, another at Upper Woolhampton, and at least two males were singing at the northern limit of these woods at Hermitage. Away from this nucleus, single birds were encountered at Welford, Ashampstead Green, Newbury and Wash Common. **Autumn/second winter:** after the breeding season, there were just two reports of Firecrests from the Bucklebury area (including one in DJR's garden!). Otherwise, eight birds made single day appearances at Searles Farm Lane GPs, Dinton Pastures CP, Moor Green Lakes, Newbury, Whiteknights Park and Greenham Common.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

The Goldcrest is a very resilient species, found across the whole of the county. While susceptible to harsh winter weather, the population will recover over time [BTO BirdTrends]. The fluctuations in the Berkshire Goldcrest population over the last 25 years match the national picture, with low points correlating with winters that had above average numbers of days with air frost and no overall long-term trend [BBI 25yr].

Peak counts occurred in October and January, with high spring counts, reinforcing the classification of winter visitor and passage migrant. There were just six reports of confirmed breeding in 2019, covering the period from early May through to July, the latter presumably being a second brood.

Far from being sedentary by nature, this tiny bird showed evidence of considerable mobility. One first-year male ringed at Jeallott's Hill in October was recovered two days later 16 km away, over the border at Stanwell Moor in Surrey [BTO Ringing].

WREN EURASIAN WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident (Green)

Wrens were widely and frequently found across the county throughout the year. Overall reports were similar to 2018 at almost 1,000, and from a similar number of locations at

around 150. However, the maximum count reported was 142 birds at Burghfield GPs on Apr 7th (RCr), a record for this regular survey. There has been a small increase in Wren numbers since 1994 [BBI 25yr].

NUTHATCH EURASIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Common resident (Green)

Nuthatch numbers in Berkshire have increased around threefold over the last 25 years, somewhat more than the twofold increase nationally [BBI 25yr]. There are numerous reports of birds visiting garden feeders, possibly a factor in this species' increase.

Ringers checking a nest box on Greenham Common found a brood of eight nestlings. Ringing recoveries during the year point to the sedentary nature of Nuthatches. At Snelmore Common, a first-year male ringed there in October 2012 was recovered at the same place in March 2019, while a first-year female ringed in December 2014 was also recovered in the same place in February 2019 [BTO Ringing].

TREECREEPER EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident (Green)

Reports of Treecreepers remain consistent over the last few years; indeed, there is no evidence of change in Treecreeper abundance over 25 years [BBI 25yr]. The birds are to be found at similar densities across the county, at all times of the year. There were only three confirmed instances of breeding. While usually seen in singles or pairs, there was one report of at least nine birds at Long Moor, Barkham, on Apr 17th.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING ROSY STARLING *Pastor roseus*

Very rare vagrant

The first Berkshire sighting in the 21st century of a Rose-coloured Starling occurred in Calcot over five days, Oct 24th to 28th, when a juvenile was initially reported by a resident (J.



Rose-coloured Starling, Calcot, Reading, Oct 28th, Andy Tomczynski.

Adams). This is only the fourth time the species has been seen in Berkshire, with one sighting in 1975 and two more in the 19th century. The bird was seen with a small flock of Starlings, moving around gardens in the area, and observed by several local birdwatchers.

Normally resident in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and wintering in the Indian subcontinent, this species infrequently undertakes westward irruptions in spring when some adults reach as far as the UK; however juveniles are most frequently encountered in October.

STARLING COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Very common but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

Starling abundance in Berkshire has fallen by over a half in the last 25 years, in parallel with national statistics [BTO BirdTrends, BBI 25yr]. Totals of maximum monthly counts at sites where multiple significant counts were made are given in the table.

Starling: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Compton Downs	350	650	500	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-
Crookham Common	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	50	250	62	24	-
Greenham Common	4	2	2	4	53	25	25	36	60	210	33	26
Lower Farm GP	41	46	40	22	14	39	34	30	30	40	400	2
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	2	-	-	50	-	-	70	300	14	20
Queen Mother Reservoir	50	10	20	20	70	60	20	160	15	30	16	25
Walbury Hill	49	31	120	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	20	30
No. birds at other sites	418	789	345	115	276	260	659	317	198	1,716	886	707
No. other sites	33	20	18	15	23	17	11	8	8	11	14	9
Total birds (minimum)	912	1,528	1,029	161	413	451	738	605	623	2,390	1,393	810

There were counts of over 100 birds at 15 sites across the county, mainly winter flocks but including 300 at Jubilee River on Jul 8th and 160 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 24th. The maximum count was an autumn flock of 1,000 at Englefield on Oct 24th. There were 13 reports of successful breeding, and another 13 of mixed adult and juvenile groups. A few accounts noted Starlings returning to gardens for the first time in several years, possibly indicating a successful breeding season.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce passage migrant (Red)

2016 Missing information: the bird at Broadmoor Farm seen on Apr 3rd was colour-ringed (red above blue on left leg and orange above metal on right) and thus had been ringed as a nestling on May 21st 2015 at Loch Lee in Tayside, Scotland (RJG).

2019: this proved to be a fairly average year for sightings of Ring Ouzels, with a minimum of eight birds.

Spring passage: the best showing was at Greenham Common, where two males were present between Apr 5th and 15th (RRK *et al.*). There was also a female in the same



Ring Ouzel, Woolhampton GP, Apr 18th, Andy Tomczynski.

area between Apr 11th and 17th. A male was watched feeding in a ploughed field south of the Rowney Predator Lake at Woolhampton between Apr 17th and 19th (AEDH *et al.*). On Inkpen Hill, a male and female were seen on Apr 19th, with a male present the next day (JHa).

Autumn passage: a male was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 9th, and again, possibly the same bird, on Oct 12th and 13th (CDRH). The only other sighting was a male at Walbury Hill on Oct 20th (SAG).

BLACKBIRD COMMON BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

Blackbirds were found in each tetrad during the 2007-11 Atlas Survey, and continue to be widespread, being well adapted to suburban as well as rural environments. The Berkshire Bird Index shows a significant small increase in population over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr].

In Sandhurst on Apr 18th, a female Blackbird was seen to catch an adult Smooth Newt from a garden pond and to thrash it around for a minute before swallowing it whole. Interesting ringing recoveries during 2019 included an eight-year-old female ringed in Lincolnshire in 2009 and recovered at Silwood Park, a distance of 230 km. This contrasted with two non-movers: another eight-year-old female ringed and recovered annually since 2016 at Jealott's Hill and similarly a male recovered there most years since 2012. The ring number of another Blackbird observed in Bracknell in January and December revealed that the bird had been ringed as an adult in Sweden in 2016 [BTO Ringing].

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

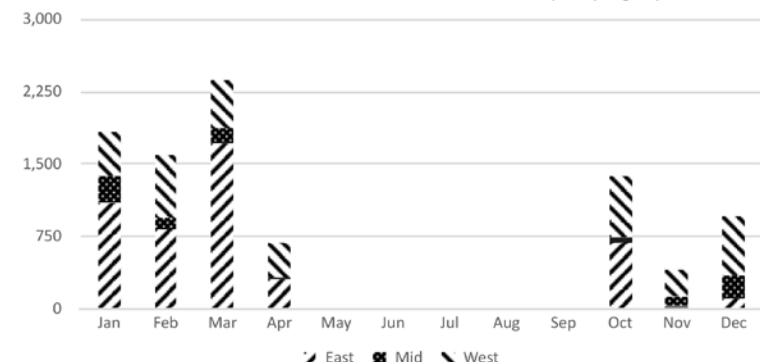
Common winter visitor and passage migrant, has bred (Schedule 1, Red)

Fieldfares are winter visitors to Berkshire that continued to arrive in considerable numbers in 2019. They are not seen as much in urban locations as Redwings, and so reported numbers may be lower. Reports have them more often feeding on open fields compared to the Redwing's apparent preference for berries. This is reflected in the chart, showing fewer birds overall in the central, urban districts.

First winter: notable reports included a flock in a paddock at Colnbrook that built up through February, reaching 809 on Mar 17th, and around 500 at Hyde Farm, Bisham, on Jan 8th. The last sightings, with two at Whistley Green (JCMo) and 48 at Walbury Hill (IW), were on Apr 24th, which was consistent with last sightings for the last few years.

Second winter: the first report of Fieldfare arrivals was of two at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 19th

Fieldfare: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



(RCM), which was up to two weeks later than in recent years. These were followed by a flock of 600 on Bury Down on Oct 30th; and 23 flocks totalling 568 birds heading west at Wishmoor Bottom were counted in the space of one hour on Oct 29th, with the largest flock comprising 240 birds (DJB).

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Red)

Redwings are very much associated with Fieldfares, arriving and departing at around the same time, and often seen in mixed flocks. Redwings, however, seem more willing to visit urban locations and gardens, feeding on berries. In 2019, there were more than twice the number of reports of Redwings visiting gardens than for Fieldfares.

First winter: flocks of up to 200 birds were reported through the winter months. One report referred to nocturnal spring passage, with several birds heard between 21:15 and 22:20 heading east over Winkfield on Mar 26th. The last report of the season was a single bird at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 25th (NS).

Second winter: the first report of the season was a single bird flying south over Woodford

Redwing: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



Park on Sep 28th (FH), and in the first half of October many flocks of up to 50 birds were noted across the county. A more substantial movement started on Oct 6th, when 180 flew south-west at Queen Mother Reservoir and 350 passed over Lea Farm Lake. But the most significant passage was observed in the morning of Oct 29th, when flocks exceeding 300 birds were observed flying over at several locations across the county. The largest numbers by far were recorded at Wishmoor Bottom, where at least 70 flocks (totalling 2,329 birds!) passed overhead, all in a west-north-west direction, mostly between 07:00 and 09:00 (DJB). Wintering flocks of 50 or more were reported from eight locations thereafter.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

Song Thrush abundance in Berkshire has increased significantly, by about 20% since 2000 [BBI 25yr]. A more dramatic increase was reported by the Theale Area Warbler and Nightingale Survey, which recorded 150 Song Thrush territories in 2019, up from 111 in 2012, 54 in 2005 and 40 in 1998. Reports of Song Thrushes came mostly in the first six months of the year, with very few reports in August and September, before a gradual increase again towards the end of the year. Although there were a great many reports of territorial activity, especially birds singing, there were only 13 confirmed instances of breeding. An individual with

a long overgrown upper mandible, hooked at the tip, was observed in Earley on Jan 31st (RR).

The only ringing recoveries concerned birds ringed almost five years ago at Jeallot's Hill and at Moor Green Lakes; both were recovered close to their original ringing locations [BTO Ringing].

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common resident (Red)

Unlike the Song Thrush, the abundance of Mistle Thrushes has halved over the last 25 years, reflecting the national trend [BBI 25yr]. There were roughly half the number of reports of Mistle Thrushes compared to Song Thrushes, with a significant number of repeat sightings at the same location. This reflects the more sedentary nature of Mistle Thrushes, whose numbers are not refreshed by migrants or winter visitors. There were two reports of post-breeding parties, the largest being 22 birds at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 22nd, while a group of 16 were seen feeding on cherries at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 13th. These numbers compared unfavourably with the groups of 100+ seen at the end of the 20th century [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Fairly common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

Spotted Flycatchers arrived in early May, and the first report of two birds, at Catmore Copse, Kintbury, was on a typical date of May 5th (RRi). **Breeding:** over the next three months, birds were reported from 13 sites, all potential breeding locations: Wigmores Pond (ABT, SAG), Combe Church (IW), Walbury Hill (IW), RAF Welford (RJC), Winterbourne Holt (JL), Bowdown Woods (MJD, M Jenkins), Wasing (AEDH), Streatley (RCr, RD, ABT), Basildon Park (DTy), Padworth Lane (IW), Swallowfield Church (MO), Stubbings (M Copland) and Swinley Forest (CDRH). An adult and a recently fledged juvenile were seen on the early date of Jun 17th at Streatley (RCr). One was watched on a nest in Swinley Forest on Jun 14th (CDRH) and later family groups were reported at Bowdown Woods (MJM), Stubbings (M Copland) and Combe Church (IW).

Passage: during post-breeding dispersal and return passage, Spotted Flycatchers occurred also at sites away from breeding locations. Single birds were seen at: Upper Lambourn on Aug 23rd (CDRH); Moor Green Lakes on Aug 29th (RJC); Dinton Pastures on Sep 1st, 2nd and 5th (MO); and Walbury Hill on Sep 15th (SAG) and 20th (IW). There were two at Greenham Common on Sep 13th, two at Colnbrook on Sep 13th (CDRH) and three at Maidenhead Thicket on Aug 20th (CDRH). The last records of the year were singles at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 29th and Wargrave on Sep 30th (both CDRH).

ROBIN EUROPEAN ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident (Green)

Although Atlas surveys showed Robins were breeding in 99% of tetrads [Berkshire Atlas 2013], in 2019 records were received for only 123 tetrads (31%): 48 (27%) in west Berkshire, 32 (35%) in mid Berkshire and 43 (34%) in east Berkshire. This was, no doubt, a consequence of under-recording.

Records followed the pattern of recent years. Although they sing most of the year, counts of Robins typically peak in the most active singing months in spring and autumn. In February, 26 were reported singing at Coldharbour (Knowl Hill) on Feb 23rd and 32 at Waltham St Lawrence on Feb 28th; in March, 64 were counted at Burghfield GPs on Mar 19th and 24

at Speen Moor on Mar 30th. High autumn counts included 42 at Thatcham Marsh on Sep 19th and 23 at Crookham Common Pools on Sep 16th, with similarly high counts at both sites in October; there were 24 at Welford on Sep 18th and 29 at Pinkney's Green on Nov 30th. Unfortunately, most records did not specify the areas covered by the counts, so it is not possible to estimate abundance. However, the Berkshire Bird Index shows that Robin abundance has varied little over the last 25 years, showing perhaps a slight upward trend [BBI 25yr].

NIGHTINGALE COMMON NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Scarce summer visitor (Red)

In 2019, Nightingales were recorded in 19 tetrads (4.9%): eight (5%) in west Berkshire, nine (10%) in mid Berkshire and two (2%) in east Berkshire.

Nightingales arrived in their main Burghfield/Theale breeding area on Apr 12th (RCr, JPM). By the end of the month, they had also been reported from Greenham and Crookham Commons, Woolhampton and Brimpton GPs, and Fobney Island. The most westerly likely breeding locations were the Wilderness, Kintbury, and the most easterly Fobney Island. Elsewhere, there were single spring records of birds at Charvil and Datchet in April and at Dinton Pastures CP in May. **Breeding:** the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group counted 51 territories in a survey of the Theale and Burghfield GPs complexes, down from 109 in the 2012 survey, but similar to the surveys of 2005 (57) and 1998 (59). At least 13 other singing males were reported, which was similar to the numbers in 2018. At Greenham and Crookham Commons, the stable trend over the last ten years was maintained with nine territories located, equalling the best years in that period [AEDH 2019]. Their skulking behaviour results in few records after singing has ceased; however, a fledgling was seen at Brimpton on Jun 6th. **Post breeding:** a bird was present at Wraysbury in mid July, and one was heard at Theale on the late date of Sep 4th (RCr).



Nightingale, Main Pit, Theale, Apr 18th, Andy Tomczynski.

Nightingale: Territories and Singing Males

	April	May	June	July	Observers
River Kennet west of Newbury	1	3	1		RHar, IW
Greenham & Crookham Commons		9 Territories			AEDH
Woolhampton GPs	1	1			JJT <i>et al.</i>
Brimpton GPs	3	3	1		JPM, GEW
Theale & Burghfield GPs		51 Territories			RCr <i>et al.</i>
Fobney Island	1	1			JLe <i>et al.</i>

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER

Very scarce passage migrant, has bred (Red)

2018 Correction: the observers of the bird at Dinton Pastures on Sep 12th should have been given as (ABM, BTB).

2019: there were three records, all in autumn. An adult female or first winter bird was seen at Wigmoresh Pond on Aug 26th (SAG). Then on Aug 29th, a female or first winter was at Lavell's Lake (RHS). Finally, a first winter was seen briefly at Crookham Common on Sep 3rd (MJD, RRK).

BLACK REDSTART

Phoenicurus ochruros

Very scarce passage migrant, occasionally breeds (Schedule 1, Red)

On Apr 19th, a male was seen singing from a TV aerial on newbuild apartments adjacent to a roundabout at Emmbrook, Wokingham (A Harrison). There were no further reports from this area until Jun 2nd, when a male was seen and heard singing close by (PO, ABT). It was present in the area to Jun 25th (MO). At Queen Mother Reservoir, a presumed adult female in worn plumage was photographed on Jun 19th (CDRH).

There was only one autumn record: a male in a residential street in Barkham from Nov 15th to 18th (S Orino *et al.*).



Black Redstart, Barkham, Nov 17th, Marek Walford.

REDSTART COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Scarce passage migrant and very scarce summer visitor (Amber)

In 2019, Redstarts were recorded in 24 tetrads (6.1%): 13 (7%) in west Berkshire, five (5%) in mid Berkshire and six (5%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

Spring passage: the first recorded arriving bird was a male at Greenham Common on a typical date of Apr 5th (RRK), followed over the next week by reports of males from various sites in the main breeding area of the Thames Basin Heaths. Away from the breeding areas, males were seen in April at: Green Park, Reading; Wraysbury; and Theale Golf Club. The

first female was not recorded until May 2nd, when one paid a surprise visit to a garden in Southlake Crescent, Woodley. **Breeding:** at least ten territories were located in three woods in east Berkshire (DJB). No other evidence of breeding was received and there were no records in June and July.

Autumn passage: whilst evidence of breeding was restricted to the Thames Basin Heaths in the east of the county, most of the autumn passage records were from mid or west Berkshire. The first autumn bird was a fully-fledged juvenile (so not necessarily raised locally) at Lambourn on the early date of Jul 4th, with further birds in this area on Aug 4th and Aug 23rd, and two males on Sep 5th. One or more Redstarts were at Crookham/Greenham Commons from Aug 13th to Sep 15th; the highest count there was three on Aug 23rd and 30th. Three Redstarts were at Walbury Hill on Aug 26th, and one or two birds were then reported from there until Oct 1st. At Wigmoreash Pond, Inkpen, two birds were present between Aug 26th and Sep 1st, with three on Aug 27th. At Dinton Pastures CP, birds were seen between Aug 20th and Sep 2nd, with a maximum of four on Sep 1st. The only autumn birds reported in the east of the county were singles at Colnbrook on Aug 25th and Widbrook Common on Aug 27th. The final record was of a single bird at Lower Farm GP on Oct 5th (IW, JL).

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Fairly common passage migrant, formerly bred (Red)

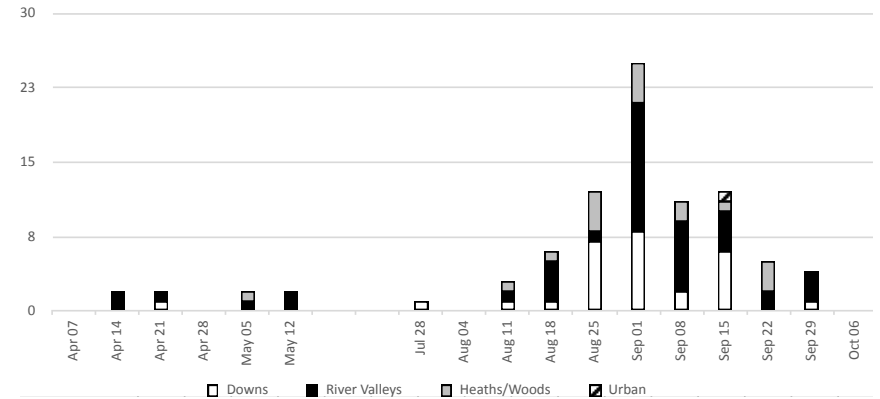
This year was more typical for Whinchats than 2018, when numbers, particularly in autumn, were unusually low. Whinchats were recorded in 27 tetrads (6.9%): 15 (9%) in west Berkshire, six (7%) in mid Berkshire and six (5%) in east Berkshire (percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region). The species favours open country, and half of the birds were recorded on the downs and heaths of west Berkshire. The majority of the remainder were found on farmland in the river valleys in mid Berkshire.

Spring: this was a rather poor year for passage Whinchats in Berkshire, with only six birds recorded. The first were single males at Wraysbury GPs (CDRH) and Burnthouse Lane GPs (SRi, ABT, KEM) on Apr 19th. These were followed by birds at: Lea Farm Lake and Walbury



Whinchat, Crookham Common, Sep 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

Whinchat: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



Hill on Apr 21st; Greenham Common on May 7th; Lea Farm Lake again on May 12th; and Brimpton Common on May 13th. **Autumn:** the first returning bird was recorded on Jul 29th at Walbury Hill, one of this species' favoured sites. Thereafter, passage was fairly typical, peaking in the last week of August and first week of September, and finishing at the beginning of October, with the last report at Colnbrook on Oct 2nd (CDRH). Most records were of one or two birds, though groups of four were seen at Englefield and at Sonning Meadows on Sep 1st, and five juveniles were seen together beside a solar farm at Woolhampton on Sep 5th. An interesting observation was a juvenile at Remenham Hill on Aug 28th showing traces of downy feathers and thought to have recently been fledged (ABT).

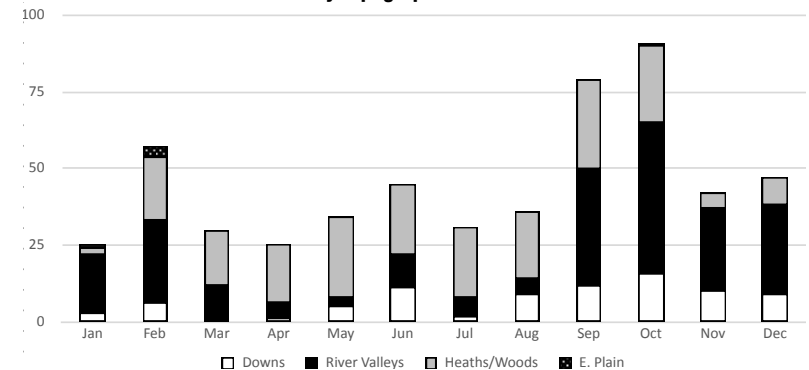
STONECHAT EUROPEAN STONECHAT *Saxicola rubicola*

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

In 2019, Stonechats were recorded in 63 tetrads (16%): 22 (13%) in west Berkshire, 18 (20%) in mid Berkshire and 23 (18%) in east Berkshire (percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region). It was a fairly typical year.

First winter: the 2018/9 winter period had average temperatures, no prolonged freezing periods and little snow. The numbers of Stonechats recorded at the end of the winter, a January-March average of 34 (range 21-52), were similar to the November-December 2018

Stonechat: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



average of 30. During the winter, most of the Stonechats recorded were on farmland or around gravel pits in the river valleys; numbers on the main heathland breeding areas increasing only at the end of February and into March. Birds were widely scattered over some 33 sites, mostly in ones and twos, though there was a count of seven on Fobney Meadow on Feb 21st. **Breeding:** Stonechats had their best ever season at Greenham and Crookham Commons with 27 territories located, possibly thanks to a productive season in 2018. Successful breeding outcomes were confirmed in 19 of these territories [AEDH 2019], and juveniles were frequently reported between May 7th and Sep 14th. Pairs were recorded at four sites on the Berkshire part of the Thames Basin Heaths, and young were reported on Jul 5th in Swinley Forest. Away from the heaths, a pair was present on the New Diggings, Moor Green Lakes, from March to June, though breeding was not confirmed. At Fobney Meadow, Reading, two pairs were seen displaying in March, and at least one pair bred successfully. Breeding was also confirmed on Compton Downs. **Autumn/second winter:** typically, the numbers of Stonechats reported peaks in the autumn with birds appearing away from the breeding areas. How much this is a result of dispersal of locally bred birds or an influx of migrants is unclear. The October peak this year was much higher than the unusually low number in 2018 and more typical of earlier years this century. Numbers fell in November and December, when the great majority of birds (74%) were located in the river valleys rather than heath or downland.

WHEATEAR NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Fairly common passage migrant (Green)

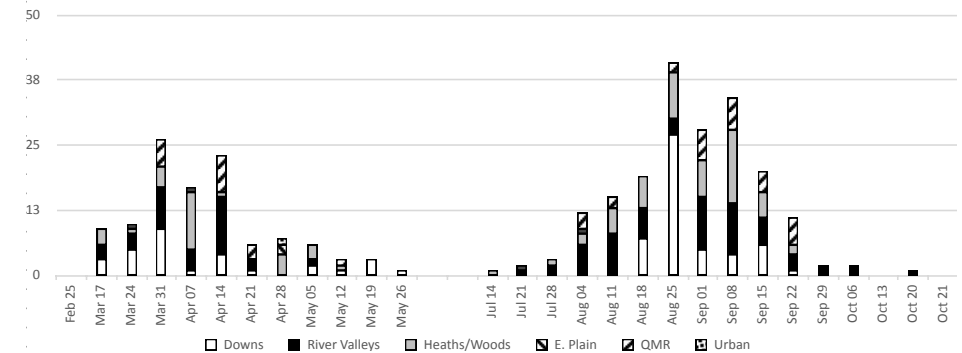
In 2019, Wheatears were recorded in 34 tetrads (8.7%): 20 (11%) in west Berkshire, seven (8%) in mid Berkshire and seven (6%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

Spring: around 100 birds were recorded, a rather typical passage. The first bird arrived at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 17th (CDRH, PNe), and Greenham Common and Englefield registered their first birds on Mar 22nd. Wheatears were reported from 16 sites



Wheatear, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 20th, Andy Tomczynski.

Wheatear: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



spread widely across the county. High counts were six on Compton Downs on Apr 1st, seven on Greenham Common on Apr 11th, and six at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 20th. On May 1st, an unfortunate female Wheatear flew into a glass wall at Sainsbury's in Newbury and was found dead. **Autumn:** around 150 birds were recorded from 24 sites. The first returning bird was on Jul 15th at Greenham Common, where the highest count of the autumn, 12, was recorded on Sep 9th. Passage peaked in the last week of August when around 25 birds were reported from the Downs. Overall, the main sites were: Greenham Common, with around 23 birds recorded in autumn; the Walbury Hill/Inkpen Hill area (around 18); and Queen Mother Reservoir (12). The last bird of the year was reported at Hamstead Norreys on Oct 20th (DJJe).

GREENLAND WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa* NORTHERN WHEATEAR (LEUCORHOA)

Scarce passage migrant, probably overlooked

Three females on Compton Downs on May 22nd were thought possible candidates for this race (ABT), as were three females or first winters at Weathercock Hill on Sep 19th (CDRH). However, a bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 18th and 19th was more conclusive, offering comparison with a bird of the nominate race, and this or another individual was present there again and was photographed on Sep 28th and 29th (CDRH, ABT).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common but declining resident (Red)

A vocal and conspicuous species generally living in colonies should enable easy identification and regular reporting. The House Sparrow had been in decline for many years toward the end of the last century and, in 2002, was moved from Green to Red status on the BTO's Birds of Conservation Concern list. According to the Berkshire Bird Index, following a massive decline in the later decades of the 20th century, House Sparrow numbers have been stable over the last fifteen years [BBI 25yr], mirrored by a marginal increase in recorded sightings, with 254 entries in 2019 compared to 234 in 2018. Observers in Woolhampton, Caversham and Spencer's Wood reported a welcome return of this species to their area after long absences.

This is a species that is distributed relatively evenly throughout the county, reflected by the spread of casual records received for 2019. House Sparrows were recorded in 62 tetrads (16% of the total) with the distribution being 20 (11%) in west Berkshire, 21 (23%) in mid Berkshire and 21 (17%) in east Berkshire. The percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

A total of 19 locations recorded a count of 20 or more birds, an increase on 2018 but generally in line with recent years. The eight highest counts of the year were all at a garden in Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, where a peak of approximately 90 birds were seen coming to the feeders on Aug 14th. Numbers remained between 30 and 75 throughout the year, except during the spring. Counts of above 20 were also recorded across the county, mainly in woodland and river valley areas but also in woodland and urban habitats and the Eastern Plain.

Breeding: only 22 records of breeding activity were received during the year, mainly relating to recently fledged young (seven reports) or birds on permanent territory (six reports) but there is likely to be high levels of under-reporting for this species. Despite the low numbers of records, the data showed that breeding activity occurred throughout the county in all the main habitat types.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Very common resident (Amber)

The Dunnock is a common species that is unevenly reported, and this must be taken into account before drawing too many conclusions from the records received. Of the 924 records submitted in 2019, 97% came via the BirdTrack database representing around 120 different locations from just 56 observers, no doubt entered as part of their BTO Complete Lists (lists of every species encountered on a site visit). For a sedentary species, the multiple records associated with sites appear to show a high level of duplication; hopefully a way can be found in time to analyse such (prolific) data appropriately.

A reasonable picture of distribution across the county was offered by the spread of records by tetrad. During the year, Dunnocks were recorded in 98 tetrads, a quarter of the entire county; this was regionally divided into 42 (24%) in west Berkshire, 24 (26%) in mid Berkshire and 32 (26%) in east Berkshire. The percentages relate to the total number of tetrads for each region. The species has been shown as stable in the Berkshire Bird Index since the year 2000 [BBI 25yr].

The majority of records were in single figures, however there were 14 counts above this from eight locations across the county. The highest counts were 19 recorded at Greenham Common Feb 26th and the same number at Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) on Apr 15th. The maximum counts for each of the other sites were: 18 at Thatcham Marsh on Oct 17th; 15 at Waltham St. Lawrence on Dec 3rd; 14 at Crookham Pools on Oct 10th; 12 along the Thames between Ham Island and Albert Bridge on Feb 5th; 11 at Twyford on Feb 26th; and finally ten at Boxford on Nov 6th. Areas where there was regular coverage generally showed a stable population throughout the year.

Breeding: as well as 73 reports of males singing, birds paired or holding territory, breeding was confirmed at eight locations, but breeding success for this species is surely under-reported.

YELLOW WAGTAIL WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Fairly common but declining passage migrant, scarce summer visitor (Red)

Yellow Wagtails are seen most regularly within the county during their passage between sub-Saharan Africa and their breeding grounds in the UK. The race *flavissima* breeds predominantly in the UK, with Berkshire having suitable areas of breeding habitat. Rapid decline of the species nationally since the 1980s resulted in its status on the Birds of Conservation Concern being moved from Green to Amber in 2002 and then to Red in 2009. This decline has been reflected in the county data with very few confirmed breeding records being noted in recent years.

A total of 104 records were submitted between March and September across the county, with 58 in west Berkshire, 13 in mid Berkshire and 33 in east Berkshire. This represents a slight increase on the 2018 records, which had a similar distribution, but overall is in line with recent years. The Yellow Wagtail counts in the two tables are based on totals over a seven-day period from the last week in March until the final record in September. Note only the maximum site count has been taken when a site has multiple counts in the same time period.

Yellow Wagtail: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Mar 31	Apr 07	Apr 14	Apr 21	Apr 28	May 05	May 12	May 19	May 26	Jun 02	Jun 09	Jun 16	Jun 23	Jun 30
Number of sites	2	3	6	7	7	8	4	4	1	-	1	2	-	3
Number of birds	2	5	12	10	10	11	7	4	1	-	3	2	-	10

Spring passage: an early first sighting was of a mobile bird at Fobney Meadow, Reading, on Mar 31st (ABT), this being approximately one week earlier than the average for recent years. The next sighting occurred at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 6th, after which ones and twos, generally identified as male, were reported across the county. The only sighting above two during the month were four males, again at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 17th. Overall, the numbers were down compared to recent years, but with a slight increase on the very poor year of 2018.

Breeding: males were seen on territory or in suitable breeding habitat at around seven sites in the west of the county from mid April onwards, and breeding was confirmed at three sites. This is an improvement on recent years but still well below historic levels. At Wellbottom Down, two pairs were watched on May 12th and a female with two recently fledged young were seen on Jun 30th. Two reports on the Lambourn Downs around the end of June probably concerned the same family, comprising a pair and two fledged young. Multiple observations on the Compton Downs resulted in a report of a pair with four or five young on Jul 5th. Single sightings at six other locations on the Berkshire Downs suggest that other breeding sites may have existed. Sightings continued in this period at lowland sites along the river valleys, many of which were well watched, but there was no continuous presence there, confirming that these formerly traditional habitats have been abandoned for arable fields. There is likely to be under reporting of this species' breeding success, due to the lack of coverage during the summer months and the remote location of the known sites.



Yellow Wagtail, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 14th, Andy Tomczynski.

Autumn passage: the first indicators of an autumn passage were of two birds being reported on the airstrip at Englefield on Jul 13th, with the odd bird being reported across the county over the following days. The next notable count was of nine birds on Greenham Common on Aug 24th, with five on the same day at Queen Mother Reservoir which increased to seven birds by Aug 26th. Lower Farm GP hosted four birds between Aug 28th and 29th, and the same number of birds were seen flying west over Greenham Common on Aug 30th. Records continued from this area, with a peak count of eight birds on Crookham Common on Sep 9th; the final sighting was five birds around cattle on Sep 12th. The highest count of the year was of 15 birds reported at Colnbrook on Sep 10th, with 13 birds being recorded at Skinners Green the following day. Numbers dropped away after this, apart from ten birds still present at Colnbrook on Sep 18th. The final sighting of the year was of a single “very yellow” adult bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 29th (ABT).

Yellow Wagtail: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

Week Commencing	Jul 07	Jul 14	Jul 21	Jul 28	Aug 04	Aug 11	Aug 18	Aug 25	Sep 01	Sep 08	Sep 15	Sep 22	Sep 29
Number of sites	1	-	1	1	-	3	4	7	3	8	7	1	1
Number of birds	2	-	1	2	-	3	16	27	6	62	31	2	1

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flava*

WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (FLAVA)

Scarce passage migrant

A female of the European race of Yellow Wagtail was seen and photographed associating with four *flavissima* males at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 17th (CDRH).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

This species is present throughout the wetland areas of the county in moderate numbers. Although there is a lot of year-to-year variation in the abundance index, there has been no evidence locally of the decline in the breeding population that has led to the Grey Wagtail being added to the Red List [BBI 25yr]. There were 400 records received for this species over the year, from a total of 85 locations. Records indicated a presence in 74 tetrads (19%), which is regionally broken down as 26 (15%) in west Berkshire, 26 (29%) in mid Berkshire and 22 (18%) in east Berkshire. The percentages relate to the total number of tetrads within each region. When comparing the data with recent years, there has been a reduction in numbers reported, however the levels of reporting make accurate assessment difficult. The monthly status of recorded sightings is given in the table.

Grey Wagtail: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	17	14	26	22	19	23	15	13	22	23	19	20
Number of birds	22	25	44	38	33	52	20	19	38	37	26	26

High counts: there were very few counts above four birds, with the majority of these being family groups. The highest count was eight birds along a stretch of the Lower Kennet to Fobney Island NR on Jun 14th. A family group of seven were reported on the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 19th. Six birds were reported along the K&A Canal between Hampstead and Drewetts Lock on May 29th.

Breeding: there was breeding activity reported across all three regions of the county between April and July, with the majority of confirmed sightings from river valleys and

waterways. A total of 22 different sites recorded evidence of breeding, including eight sites where fledged young were confirmed. Otherwise, sightings of note were adults carrying food at Enborne, Newbury Town Centre, Padworth Lane GP, the Church of St.Mary in Mortimer, Hambleden Lock near Remenham, and Moor Green Lakes, and a nest with eggs was found at Padworth Lane STW. Overall, there were increased reports of successful breeding compared to the poor numbers from 2018 but still below the recent average, though this may have been due to a lack of coverage.

Autumn passage: over the autumn period, Grey Wagtails are known to disperse away from their breeding grounds with running water toward areas with more static water such as lakes, gravel pits and sewage treatment works. This year, no reports were received for any large groups of birds during the winter months. There were 33 sites where birds were only recorded outside the breeding season. This could indicate a small-scale dispersal during the winter months.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Scarce passage migrant

This, the nominate race *Motacilla 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 the UK. There were 13 reports of this species from seven locations across the county during the spring passage period. Sightings were spread with three in west Berkshire, three in mid Berkshire and seven reports in east Berkshire. As with recent years, there was a significant contrast between the spring and autumn counts. All accepted records were submitted during the spring, with none during either the summer or autumn periods.

Spring passage: a small spring passage was recorded between March and May with 13 sightings of approximately 20 different birds. The first sighting of the year concerned a male at Hosehill Lake, Theale, on Mar 19th (KEM). The next sighting was in a ploughed field by the Great Meadow Pond in Windsor Great Park on Mar 22nd (CDRH), then a male was reported at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 23rd and 24th; further reports of singles came from this site on Apr 7th and 16th (CDRH). A notable report of three males was made at Lea Farm Lake on Apr 9th (ABT, RHS). Seven birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 17th comprised a flock of six (four males and two females including a “wholly grey-crowned” first summer type) and a separate female (CDRH). The same day two males were seen near Brimpton (AEDH) and one was found at Woolhampton GPs the following day (ABT). The final spring passage birds were a female on East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Apr 19th (RCM) and a presumed male at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 22nd (CDRH).

Summer/autumn passage: the normal handful of reports did not materialise this year, but with the small numbers usually involved no conclusions can be made regarding this year’s data.

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

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

The UK and Ireland hold nearly the entire world population of the dark-backed, *yarrellii*, race of this wagtail and as such any changes in population levels are of significance. Over recent years, analysis via the BTO has shown the UK population has been subject to some variation, but overall, the national population is stable. As a result, the status is currently listed as Green in the BTO’s Birds of Conservation Concern. In Berkshire a decrease in population levels by around 50% has been recorded since 1994 [BBI 25yr]. This decrease may be partly due to issues relating to wetland habitat, as there has been a similar decrease

in national records for the Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) over the same period. There were 379 records submitted during the year, an almost identical figure compared to 2018. One encouraging sign was that the minimum counts increased compared to last year's poor numbers. This is especially true over the autumn and winter period where on average the minimum counts were up by an average of 108 each month.

Pied Wagtail: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	22	20	17	18	20	22	10	7	12	17	18	12
Number of birds	224	145	47	40	48	47	75	50	142	363	102	188

Pied Wagtails were recorded in a total of 71 tetrads (18%) across Berkshire. The regional breakdown was 24 (14%) in west Berkshire, 18 (20%) in mid Berkshire and 29 (23%) in east Berkshire. The percentages relate to the total number of tetrads within each region. The majority of counts were in single figures, however during the autumn and winter periods numbers increased, with a year high of 100 to 150 near Reading train station at dusk on Oct 13th. At Sainsbury's in Maidenhead on Dec 10th, 100 were roosting in small trees (probably relocated there following disturbance at their usual roosting site at the station) and 100 were counted at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 20th and Oct 3rd, where counts over 30 were frequent until February and from September. A minimum of 50 birds were recorded in an arable field at Pangbourne on Jan 6th and there was a similar count at Ashley Hill on Jan 8th. The highest count of the spring and summer period was at Newbury Racecourse, which hosted 35 birds on Jul 26th. A year high of 49 birds were reported on the East Fen at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 2nd; this site recording significant numbers throughout the autumn and winter period. Other notable counts were: 33 birds reported at Remenham Hill on Oct 29th; 30 at Woolhampton GP on Jan 12th; 30 at Colne Brook on Feb 6th; 29 at Enborne on Nov 5th; 24 near Apex Plaza in Reading on Oct 30th; 23 at both Lea Farm landfill site on Jan 25th and feeding in the horse paddocks at Winkfield on Dec 27th; and at least 21 birds also feeding in horse paddocks at Bottom Lane Floods, Theale GPs, on Feb 9th. Overall, the numbers of birds recorded during the year showed improvement.

Breeding: there were very few confirmed breeding reports submitted, it being highly likely that there was significant under-reporting for this species. Parents carrying food were recorded on five occasions and recently fledged young were recorded only twice, all of these occurring during May. The only reports of juvenile birds all occurred at Moor Green Lakes; the highest count was seven birds on both Jun 7th and Aug 5th.

A partially leucistic male at Moor Green Lakes with the upper half of the mantle greyish-white seen on Oct 2nd presented a possible identification confusion with White Wagtail.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Fairly common resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

The Meadow Pipit continues to decline as a breeding species and no longer summers in mid and east Berkshire.

First winter/spring: like last year, flocks were modest. The highest counts consisted of 55 north of Streatley on Jan 19th and c.50 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 17th. Smaller numbers were reported at open sites across the county. Little movement was observed, apart from a pronounced passage of loose flocks northward over Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 2nd, estimated at about 800 birds per hour. **Summer/breeding:** in another very poor season, breeding was only confirmed at two locations. On the Lambourn Downs on Jun 21st, an adult was seen with a fledged juvenile, and another adult engaged in song flight at

a separate site nearby. At Greenham and Crookham Commons, numbers fell to their lowest since recording began, dropping from 23 territories in 2009 to just 11 in 2019. Successful breeding was confirmed in six of these territories and probable in a further two. The surveyor compared the fortunes of Meadow Pipits with those of Skylarks, species that had both declined despite targeted habitat management at this location [AEDH 2019]. Elsewhere, the only suggestions of breeding related to Walbury Hill and the Compton Downs and only 2% of the tetrads in west Berkshire were occupied. There were no summer or breeding records for mid or east Berkshire, repeating the pattern for last year. **Autumn/second winter:** movements began with 41 at Combe Gibbet and 11 at Walbury Hill on Aug 22nd. In September, the highest counts included up to 130 on the Compton Downs on Sep 25th, 90 flying south over Wokingham on Sep 30th, and 80-100 at Colnbrook between Sep 18th and 30th. Movements peaked in early October, when over 200 were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 3rd and c.200 the next day, followed by 110 on the Compton Downs on Oct 6th. Numbers fell back in November and December, during which the highest counts were 30 at Lea Farm Lake on Nov 3rd, 30 at Winkfield on Dec 7th, and 60 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 28th.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Fairly common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

Reports received suggest a very poor year with only around nine territories located, though it may have been under-reported.

Spring/summer: arrival was late, with four in the breeding area around Lower Star Post, Swinley Bottom, on Apr 15th (RD), followed by a probable migrant at Walbury Hill on Apr 19th. The breeding information is summarised in the table [for details of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, see Crowley *et al.*, 2012]. The survey of ground nesting birds at Greenham and Crookham Commons revealed no records at all in the breeding season, and the second year since 2011 with no territories [AEDH 2019].

Tree Pipit: Breeding Season Summaries

Locality	Number of Territories	Max Count inc young	Notes
Snelmore Common	1?	1	
Greenham/Crookham Common	0	0	Former breeding site, but no records at all in 2019 breeding season.
Bucklebury Common	0?	0?	No reports
Padworth Common	1	2	
Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Berkshire locations):			
Swinley Forest	3?	3	Only 2 reports
Wildmoor Heath	?	?	No reports
MOD Heathland/Wishmoor Bottom	3?	4	
Swinley Park	1?	1	1 report
South Ascot	?	?	No reports

Autumn: passage was rather poor. Two at Greenham Common on Aug 20th fell to singles until Aug 28th. There was one at Wraysbury GPs on Aug 23rd. At least four passed over Walbury Hill on Sep 1st and one flew south-east over Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 28th. A very late bird flushed from rank grass at Horton on Nov 10th showed well, and provided the county with its first November record and latest sighting ever (CDRH).

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

Winter/spring: there were two at Horton on Jan 5th (CDRH), then one in the same spot on Mar 7th was considered to be one of the same birds (CDRH). It was noticed that this bird was missing some tail feathers; interestingly Water Pipits, unlike Rock Pipits, shed their central tail feathers during the spring moult. A run of sightings at Fobney Meadow began with one on Jan 11th (AVL), then one or two regularly (MO) until three on Jan 28th (DJB). There followed a gap until one on Mar 13th (AVL). **Autumn:** there was one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 8th (PNe), one at Horton on Nov 10th (CDRH), and one there Dec 13th and 15th (CDRH).

ROCK PIPIT EURASIAN ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor (Green)

Records were confined to a trickle of singles through Queen Mother Reservoir on four dates in the autumn: Oct 7th (CDRH), Oct 24th (CDRH), Nov 5th (DJB, PNe) and Nov 10th (CDRH).

SCANDINAVIAN ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus littoralis*

ROCK PIPIT (LITTORALIS)

One presumed to be this race was photographed at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 8th and 9th (CDRH).

CHAFFINCH COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

The county holds plenty of suitable habitat for Chaffinches, and they were recorded in 47 tetrads (27%) in west Berkshire, 30 tetrads (33%) in mid Berkshire and 26 tetrads (21%) in east Berkshire.

According to the Berkshire Bird Index, the species has been in decline both nationally and in Berkshire. The population had been stable until around 2007, since then there has been a rapid decline, attributed to trichomonosis [BTO BirdTrends, BBI 25yr]. This is not immediately apparent from the dataset for 2019 which saw Chaffinches reported in approximately the same numbers as last year, although increased from 2017. Breeding was probable or confirmed at 14 locations.

The only flocks exceeding one hundred were 150 at Arborfield on Jan 23rd and 130 at Englefield on Jan 31st. Small flocks migrating south-south-west at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 13th amounted to some 80 birds. Recoveries from the ringing data showed that two birds travelled a considerable distance during the winter period. A first-year female ringed in Lithuania on Sep 28th 2018 was found freshly dead in Maidenhead on Feb 18th, 1506 km from the ringing site. An adult male was recovered at Woolley Firs, Maidenhead, on Feb 23rd, having travelled 890 km from Norway where it was ringed on Oct 2nd 2018 [BTO Ringing].

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Green)

The vast majority of reports came in the first winter period, with very few in the second winter period. At least a third of the sightings were in gardens, where Bramblings were often seen with other finches making use of feeders. There were fewer reports from the west of the county with six tetrads (3%) in west Berkshire, 16 tetrads (18%) in mid Berkshire and

14 tetrads (11%) in east Berkshire. This is in line with the topography of the region as their preferred habitat is woodland, and Beech trees in particular are a favoured food source. The number of Bramblings visiting the UK each year can vary significantly depending on food supply.

In the first winter period, despite a large number of reports from many locations, no counts exceeded ten until the end of March. In the period Mar 27th to Apr 15th, up to 40 were in Swinley Forest, 50 were at Hosehill Lake on Apr 9th, 15 to 20 flew over Sandlesford Heath on Apr 15th, at least 100 were at an undisclosed site in east Berkshire on Apr 7th, while a flock in Bracknell grew to at least 150 on Apr 9th. Increased numbers are often encountered at this time of year as northbound birds pass through. The last bird of this period was seen in Swinley Park on May 15th (RD). The first returning bird was heard at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 15th (RCM), just after a flock of Redwings had passed over. In the following weeks, Bramblings were reported from six other locations, mostly singletons in east Berkshire, with a highest count of four in a mixed flock at Wishmoor Cross on Oct 29th.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Very scarce winter visitor, formerly a scarce resident (Red)

The irruption of the winter of 2017-2018 was followed by an absence of sightings in the winter of 2018. The trend continued for 2019, which was a disappointing year as there were only two reports of this finch species, one for each winter period. The first report was of two birds feeding on Hornbeam seeds in Windsor Great Park on Jan 24th (CDRH). In the second winter period, two were seen in Calcot, Reading, on Oct 28th (ACJ).

BULLFINCH EURASIAN BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Fairly common resident (Amber)

This finch species prefers mixed woodland, scrubby areas, and even parks and gardens, provided there are trees to feed on and dense vegetation to nest in, so there is suitable habitat throughout the county. It was recorded in 53 tetrads (30%) in west Berkshire, 28 tetrads (31%) in mid Berkshire and 23 tetrads (18%) in east Berkshire. There were a few reports of breeding, but this was probably under-reported due to their shy and unobtrusive nature.

The Bullfinch is currently listed as an 'Amber' species of conservation concern because of its recent breeding population decline. Bullfinch numbers declined steeply during 1977-1982 especially in farmland. The decline eased during the mid 1980s and has upturned since 2000. However, the UK numbers are currently 36% lower than in 1967 [BTO BirdTrends]. A survey by the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group in 2019 reported that numbers were still a cause for concern, with seven singing males or territories, whereas five were reported in 2012 and 19 in 2005. Elsewhere, some 16 locations reported probable or confirmed breeding. The peak winter count was 15 at Greenham Common on Jan 22nd.

GREENFINCH EUROPEAN GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Very common but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

Greenfinches were recorded throughout the county: 26 tetrads (15%) in west Berkshire, 15 tetrads (16%) in mid Berkshire and 17 tetrads (14%) in east Berkshire. Although they were heard singing during the spring and summer months, young were observed on only three occasions, and breeding was confirmed or probable at just nine locations. The Greenfinch population has been in rapid decline since 2005, primarily, it is believed, due to trichomonosis. It is now around 25% of that in 2000. The decline in Berkshire reflects the national trend [BBI 25yr].

Greenham Common registered some of the largest counts, with the highest in the low thirties occurring in September and October. However, the other highest counts came from suburban settings around Reading, with 23 in an Earley garden on Sep 12th, 30 roosting in Forbury Gardens on Feb 18th, and another 30 in Whiteknights Park on Dec 4th. There was also an incredible 52 around a Tilehurst garden on Jan 21st, the observer's record count unsurprisingly!

LINNET COMMON LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

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

Linnets were recorded across the county, in 34 tetrads (19%) in west Berkshire, 12 tetrads (13%) in mid Berkshire and 15 tetrads (12%) in east Berkshire. During the autumn and winter periods, Linnets form foraging flocks with other seed-eaters and may be joined by winter visitors. The largest flocks were reported at Englefield, with the peak count of 550, possibly more, on Oct 27th. Other than Englefield, there were only four reports of flocks numbering over 100, and these came from locations in west Berkshire. This was a similar distribution to 2018, but for the previous two years there were more reports of large flocks in west Berkshire locations.

According to the Berkshire Bird Index, the trend graph shows this species in decline since 1994. There has been no significant change in the breeding season relative abundance over the last 15 years [BBI 25yr]. This was the second year that Linnets have been included in the survey of ground nesting birds at Greenham and Cookham Commons, resulting in 52 territories [AEDH 2019]. Elsewhere, just one report suggested probable breeding: two juveniles with adults at Widbrook Common, Cookham, on Jul 23rd.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds (Red)

Lesser Redpolls were recorded in ten tetrads (6%) in west Berkshire, nine tetrads (10%) in mid Berkshire and seven tetrads (6%) in east Berkshire. There were far fewer reports for this finch species than for previous years. As shown by the table, the majority of sightings occurred in the first winter period, and reports were scarce for the second winter period. In the first winter, the majority of reports were of birds at garden feeders, with a flock of up to 22 throughout this period at a Sulhampstead garden. The peak count was 60 at East Park Farm Playing Fields, Charvil, on Feb 3rd. After a single at Greenham Common on Apr 18th, there were no further reports (and consequently no suggestion of breeding) until the autumn when the first report was of one at Greenham Common on Oct 15th.

Lesser Redpoll: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	16	6	9	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	5
Number of birds	91	94	73	20	-	-	-	-	-	6	1	10

The ringing report for 2019 shows that an adult female, which was ringed at Jealott's Hill, Bracknell, on Nov 2nd 2017 was caught by a ringer 715 km away at Deer Park Forest Croft on the Black Isle, Scotland, on Apr 8th [BTO Ringing].

CROSSBILL RED CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Scarce resident whose numbers are increased by occasional irruptions, occasionally breeds (Schedule 1, Green)

2019 followed the same trend as 2018 for this finch species, with fewer observations than for 2017, and no indication that 2019 was an irruption year. Most reports for Crossbills came in the

first winter period, from Swinley Forest and Crowthorne in east Berkshire which contains the coniferous woodland favoured by this species. There were only three reports from mid Berkshire (Ufton Nerve and Dinton Pastures), and three reports from the west (Inkpen and Hermitage). Just eight reports were received during the spring, including the year's peak count of 35 at Swinley Forest on May 17th. In terms of breeding evidence, a male was singing in Swinley Forest on Feb 19th, and, following a report with photographic evidence of an adult feeding a fledged juvenile at The Folly, Inkpen on Mar 29th, a pair with at least one juvenile were seen there on Mar 31st. Only one report was received in the second half of the year, a single flying over at Wishmoor Bottom on Oct 29th, a day of spectacular winter thrush movement.

GOLDFINCH EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

As expected, Goldfinches were reported widely throughout the county in 113 tetrads (29% of the region). This finch species is increasing significantly in abundance both nationally and in Berkshire. The graph of Breeding Season Relative Abundance for Goldfinch in Berkshire shows that their numbers have increased over twofold since 2000 [BBI 25yr]. Breeding was probable or confirmed at 16 locations. Several post-breeding flocks of over 50 birds containing many juveniles were reported; the largest count of 160 was made at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 12th, when two separate flocks of 60 birds were present.

SISKIN EURASIAN SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce in summer (Green)

Siskins were reported throughout the county, in 21 tetrads (12%) in the west, 16 tetrads (18%) in mid Berkshire and 19 tetrads (15%) in the east. The table shows the monthly counts for 2019, and as can be seen, the majority of sightings were in the first winter period, with far fewer during the second winter period. This follows a similar pattern to the last two years. However, numbers in 2016 were significantly higher than for later years for both winter periods. As this species is a winter visitor, their numbers may be influenced by changes in cone abundance so fluctuations should be expected. Siskins continued to be reported in May and June from typical forested locations such as Swinley Forest, and also from gardens in the vicinity of such habitat where they were attracted to feeders. Two of these reports offered evidence of probable breeding nearby: a pair feeding a juvenile at a feeder in Forest Park, Swinley Forest, on May 4th; and a female with two juveniles visiting a feeder on May 6th.

Siskin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	30	26	24	9	5	1	-	-	1	8	7	5
Number of birds	431	241	149	48	12	3	-	-	1	59	57	54

The ringing report showed the following birds moved more than 100 km: a first-year male was ringed at Greenham on Feb 22nd 2016, and was caught by a ringer 812 km away at Shebster, northern Caithness, Scotland, on May 10th; and an adult male, ringed at Durris, Aberdeenshire, on Jul 21st 2018 was recovered at Harvey's Meadow, near Hungerford, on Feb 21st, having travelled 628 km from the ringing site [BTO Ringing].

LAPLAND BUNTING LAPLAND LONGSPUR *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

There was a single report for this species in 2019. A first winter bird was observed at Bury Down on Nov 19th, first with a flock of Linnets and then shortly after with a flock of Skylarks (CDRH). This was the sixth year this century that Lapland Bunting had been recorded.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

A single bird was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 5th (DJB, PNe). It was thought to be a first winter male due to the large amount of white in the wing. The table shows the number of Snow Buntings reported in each year this century.

Snow Bunting: Annual Number of Birds Reported

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of records	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0
No. of birds	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of records	1	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1
No. of birds	2	2	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Fairly common resident on the downs, rare elsewhere (Red)

Corn Buntings were recorded in 24 tetrads (14%) in west Berkshire, with no sightings in mid or east Berkshire. This is as would be expected of an almost exclusively downland species, but unfortunately this species is absent again from central and eastern regions of the county after the two records from outside west Berkshire last year.

Corn Bunting: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bury Down, West Ilsley	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	42
Compton Downs, East Ilsley	41	26	23	25	18	14	13	11	49	2	15	8
Eastbury Down, Sheepdrove	-	57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lambourn Downs	18	20	56	2	21	14	12	-	-	-	50	-
No. birds at other sites	8	3	53	38	9	10	19	3	1	-	50	173
No. other sites	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	1	-	1	5
Total birds (minimum)	69	112	132	65	48	38	44	14	50	9	115	223

A peak count of 100 was reported at Several Down, East Ilsley, on Dec 18th. There were no reports of breeding, although there were 31 reports of singing birds between early March through to early August, and one report of singing in December. It is interesting to note that Corn Buntings are so sedentary that individuals only 30 km apart sing in a different dialects [BTO BirdFacts].

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Common but declining resident and winter visitor (Red)

This farmland species was observed more frequently at sites in the west of the county. Records came from 35 tetrads (20%) in west Berkshire, 15 (16%) in mid Berkshire and 14 (11%) in east Berkshire, with broadly similar distributions during and outside the breeding season. The downs and heaths of west Berkshire saw the highest counts, with the peak count during the winter months being 60 at Several Down, East Ilsley, on Dec 18th. Despite apparently suitable habitat in the rest of Berkshire, observations were restricted to a few locations in the central region, mainly Englefield but with some sightings at Pangbourne and Sonning Meadows. South of Reading, reports were limited to the Shinfield and Arborfield

areas. Sightings in the east of the county came mostly from the area west of Maidenhead towards Remenham, and to the north around Cookham.

The decline in abundance of this bird continued, as according to the Berkshire Bird Index, numbers of Yellowhammers have approximately halved in the last 25 years, a decrease much greater than the national average (c 20%) [BBI 25yr]. Although singing birds were widely reported during the spring and summer months indicating breeding territories, only two reports referred to confirmed breeding.

REED BUNTING COMMON REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

In 2019, Reed Buntings were recorded in 61 tetrads (16%): 29 (17%) in west Berkshire, 23 (25%) in mid Berkshire and nine (7%) in east Berkshire.

Reed Bunting: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	12	2	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Dorney Wetlands	-	4	2	6	5	5	-	-	-	-	-	4
Englefield	18	22	10	3	2	4	12	8	10	-	-	-
Fleethill Farm	-	1	3	-	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	2	-	-	5	8	16	5	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	4	12	3	2	3	2	3	1	1	1	1	3
Moor Green Lakes	3	2	2	1	3	4	4	-	1	1	-	1
Thatcham Marsh	1	2	9	5	5	6	2	2	2	7	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	5	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	90	46	43	36	31	37	7	5	8	9	11	33
No. other sites	11	18	20	17	18	15	3	2	5	6	5	10
Total birds (minimum)	130	91	79	61	62	75	37	16	22	19	14	44

During winter months, this species was seen in gardens on seed feeders; it was observed in wetland and arable areas in spring and summer months. The largest winter flocks were: 30 attracted to maize in set-aside at Remenham on Jan 4th; at least 25 at Colnbrook on Jan 26th; 16 at Warfield Church on Jan 23rd; and up to 22 throughout January and February at Englefield. At Lavell's Lake, up to 12 birds could be seen roosting on Teal Scrape in late January.

The Berkshire Bird Index shows a steady decline in abundance for this species, though wetlands, their main breeding habitat, are not well covered by the Breeding Bird Survey and the data should be treated with caution. A survey by the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group area appeared to confirm a decline in the Theale area, with 19 singing males or territories recorded; this was a massive drop from 58 in 2012 and 81 in 2005. At Greenham and Crookham Commons, the single territory represented a stable situation over the years since 2015 when this species has been surveyed [AEDH 2019]. Elsewhere, many birds were heard in song, and there were six reports of young birds or of adults carrying food. Thus, Reed Buntings were confirmed as breeding at six sites, including surprisingly the Compton Downs, and probable at a further 19. Apparently over 50% of Reed Bunting chicks are not fathered by the pair male, but are the result of an adulterous liaison, the highest recorded rate of any bird [BTO BirdFacts]; needless to say, none of the received records supported or challenged this fact!

ESCAPES

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Widespread in North, Middle and South America, Africa and Oriental Region

Two were at Thames Valley Park on Sep 28th.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Breeds in central Asia; winters in north India

A long-staying bird was at Dinton Pastures CP from Jan 5th to Oct 27th. Elsewhere, singles were at Sunnymeads GPs on Jan 5th, Old Windsor on Jan 24th, Windsor Great Park on Feb 3rd, Woolhampton GPs on Apr 22nd, Lower Farm GP from May 8th to 18th, on the River Thames at Caversham on Jun 27th, Remenham on Oct 1st, and Battlemead Common on Oct 30th.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Breeds in north Canada; winters in south and west USA and north Mexico

One was reported between Marlow and Temple on Sep 17th.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Breeds in North America; winters in south and west USA and north Mexico

The surviving member of the Eversley flock was seen at Moor Green Lakes between Jan 1st and Oct 21st.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Resident in Australia and New Zealand

One was at South Lake, Woodley on Aug 19th.

Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melancoryphus*

Resident in the Southern Cone of South America

One was at Beale Park on Apr 23rd.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Breeds from south Europe to central Asia, north-west Africa and Ethiopia; winters in north Africa and the Oriental region

One was at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 19th, one was paired with an Egyptian Goose at Lower Farm GP on Jun 3rd, and four were reported at Virginia Water on Dec 15th.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Widespread in North America; winters from south USA to north Mexico

A male was at Fobney Meadow from Nov 12th to Dec 27th.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Resident in North and Middle America and in South America from south Texas to north Argentina

Up to three were at Thatcham Marsh Discovery Centre between Sep 3rd and Dec 30th. Elsewhere, one was at Caversham Bridge, Reading, on Nov 17th and Dec 15th.

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Resident in north and central China

A male was seen at Bucklebury Common on Apr 28th.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Resident in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

Five birds (including a white one) spent two hours in a garden in Upper Bucklebury on Jul 1st before being spooked by a cat! Three flew off south-east, and two heavier birds, thought to be young males, hopped into the neighbour's garden.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Widespread in Africa and south west, south central Eurasia

One flew over a garden in Earley, Reading, on Oct 7th.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Resident in North, Middle and South America, from south west USA to south Argentina and Chile

One was present in Sandhurst between Jan 18th and Mar 1st.

HYBRIDS

Geese

Canada Goose × Greylag Goose

Up to three were recorded on WeBS counts on the River Thames between Reading and Pangbourne (NJB). Elsewhere singles (unless otherwise stated) were on the River Thames at Datchet on Jan 6th (KPD), Streatley on Feb 20th (NJB), Moor Green Lakes on Feb 27th (RJG), Beale Park on Mar 16th (NJB), Dinton Pastures on Mar 23rd (MFW), two at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 21st (WeBS), Dorney Wetlands on Jul 20th (KPD), and Hosehill Lake on Nov 10th (KPD).

Canada Goose x Barnacle Goose

One was at Lower Farm Trout Lake on Feb 10th (RJB).

Greylag Goose x Snow Goose

One, first recorded in 2018, was at Streatley between Jan 1st and Mar 30th (NJB).

Ducks

Aythya Hybrids

Ferruginous Duck type

A drake, described as a "Pochard x ?" was at Great Meadow Pond on Mar 20th (DJB). It was noted as Pochard size, with a very dark red wine-coloured head, blackish breast with a purple wash, and a yellow eye.

Scaup type

2016 Correction: a first winter drake hybrid resembling Scaup was present at Moatlands GP between Nov 16th and 18th (RCr, JA *et al.*). An *Aythya* hybrid present on Nov 24th was a different bird and showed characteristics of Ring-necked Duck (DJB).

2019: a drake, described as a “Scaup x Tufted Duck” was at Searles Farm Lane GPs on Mar 30th (ABT).

Unspecified type

An “*Aythya* hybrid” was at Bray GP on Feb 22nd (SAG).

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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 2019. Locations and observers' initials are not included, as in previous years' reports, but can be found in the Systematic List. This creates space to include the extreme dates for these species this century. Where the 2019 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			
	2019	Earliest	Average	Latest	2019	Earliest	Average	Latest
Quail	20-Jun	21-Mar	17-May	20-Jun	03-Aug	06-Jul	13-Aug	08-Oct
Garganey	22-Mar	11-Mar	09-Apr	18-May	07-Nov	16-Aug	07-Oct	22-Nov
Nightjar	24-Apr	23-Apr	05-May	15-May	27-Aug	12-Jul	17-Aug	28-Sep
Swift	21-Apr	30-Mar	14-Apr	21-Apr	09-Sep	28-Aug	13-Sep	01-Nov
Cuckoo	09-Apr	01-Apr	08-Apr	16-Apr	09-Aug	20-Jul	21-Aug	25-Sep
Turtle Dove	23-Apr	04-Apr	25-Apr	17-May	16-Jul	16-Jul	25-Aug	24-Sep
Stone-curlew	21-Apr	18-Mar	02-Apr	05-May	04-Sep	04-Sep	25-Sep	18-Oct
Little Ringed Plover	08-Mar	03-Mar	12-Mar	19-Mar	25-Sep	18-Aug	08-Sep	06-Oct
Common Tern	06-Apr	24-Mar	03-Apr	14-Apr	09-Sep	05-Sep	02-Oct	13-Nov
Osprey	25-Mar	13-Mar	29-Mar	12-Apr	00-Jan	08-Jul	22-Sep	15-Nov
Hobby	20-Apr	04-Apr	14-Apr	22-Apr	09-Oct	02-Oct	12-Oct	04-Nov
Sand Martin	02-Mar	28-Feb	11-Mar	21-Mar	29-Sep	19-Sep	05-Oct	24-Oct
Swallow	30-Mar	12-Mar	22-Mar	01-Apr	30-Oct	14-Oct	31-Oct	01-Dec
House Martin	23-Mar	10-Mar	26-Mar	08-Apr	28-Oct	06-Oct	27-Oct	10-Dec
Willow Warbler	23-Mar	17-Mar	24-Mar	13-Apr	05-Oct	16-Sep	30-Sep	14-Nov
Sedge Warbler	07-Apr	15-Mar	01-Apr	12-Apr	15-Sep	15-Sep	03-Oct	17-Oct
Reed Warbler	14-Apr	02-Apr	11-Apr	19-Apr	02-Oct	24-Sep	10-Oct	29-Oct
Grasshopper Warbler	19-Apr	04-Apr	15-Apr	22-Apr	02-Oct	16-Jun	20-Aug	02-Oct
Garden Warbler	08-Apr	03-Apr	13-Apr	21-Apr	13-Sep	01-Sep	15-Sep	05-Oct
Lesser Whitethroat	20-Apr	10-Apr	18-Apr	26-Apr	28-Sep	08-Sep	22-Sep	02-Oct
Whitethroat	06-Apr	31-Mar	07-Apr	14-Apr	02-Oct	12-Sep	26-Sep	21-Oct
Ring Ouzel	05-Apr	12-Mar	04-Apr	20-Apr	20-Oct	17-Sep	12-Oct	29-Oct
Spotted Flycatcher	05-May	23-Apr	04-May	16-May	30-Sep	12-Sep	24-Sep	05-Oct
Nightingale	12-Apr	28-Mar	05-Apr	12-Apr	04-Sep	04-Jul	04-Aug	05-Sep
Redstart	05-Apr	18-Mar	06-Apr	15-Apr	05-Oct	05-Sep	27-Sep	13-Oct
Whinchat	19-Apr	04-Apr	19-Apr	29-Apr	02-Oct	24-Sep	11-Oct	25-Nov
Wheatear	17-Mar	03-Mar	12-Mar	26-Mar	20-Oct	14-Oct	26-Oct	27-Nov
Yellow Wagtail	31-Mar	10-Feb	28-Mar	09-Apr	29-Sep	25-Sep	17-Oct	17-Dec
Tree Pipit	15-Apr	16-Mar	03-Apr	15-Apr	10-Nov	23-Aug	16-Sep	10-Nov

Extreme Dates for Winter Visitors this Century									
Departure					Arrival				
	2019	Earliest	Average	Latest	2019	Earliest	Average	Latest	
Goldeneye	06-May	28-Mar	18-Apr	13-May	01-Oct	13-Aug	08-Oct	30-Oct	
Goosander	10-Apr	24-Mar	19-Apr	17-Jun	23-Oct	16-Sep	26-Oct	16-Nov	
Golden Plover	02-May	23-Feb	20-Apr	11-May	30-Sep	02-Aug	30-Aug	30-Sep	
Bittern	24-Feb	23-Jan	13-Mar	24-Apr	04-Oct	18-Aug	22-Oct	19-Dec	
Fieldfare	24-Apr	02-Apr	19-Apr	19-May	19-Oct	03-Sep	02-Oct	19-Oct	
Redwing	25-Apr	02-Apr	18-Apr	09-May	28-Sep	14-Sep	26-Sep	06-Oct	
Brambling	15-May	11-Apr	01-May	31-May	15-Oct	13-Sep	12-Oct	05-Nov	

Sightings of Colour-marked Birds in Berkshire 2019

by Robert Godden

In 2019, 34 colour-marked birds were observed in Berkshire. It has been possible in most cases to discover where these birds were ringed, and their travels since then, by noting details of the colour marking such as colour and code, and referring to the European Colour-Ring Birding website (<https://cr-birding.org/>). 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, Theale, to Cathy McEwan (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.

2019 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2019 Sightings	Observer	
Mute Swan	Black 4DEN on Orange	Datchet	Jan 27th & Mar 6th	KPD	Female ringed on Sep 15th 2017 at Truss's Island, Staines-upon-Thames, as part of the East Anglia Swan Study Group. Previous sightings on five dates between Oct 22nd 2017 and Oct 20th 2018 at Truss's Island.
Pintail	Yellow (Left leg)	Lavell's Lake	Jul 21st to Sep 2nd	ABT, MFW	Presumed escaped bird with yellow ring but no metal ring.
Tufted Duck	Code A3 on Blue Nasal Tag	Woolhampton GPs	May 25th	MFW	Probably ringed in France.
Black-headed Gull	Black 25P0 on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 21st	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 22nd 2014 at Moor Green Lakes. First record since being ringed.
Black-headed Gull	Black 26K5 on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 21st	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 8th 2013 at Hosehill Lake. Reported in each subsequent spring at Moor Green Lakes.

2019 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2019 Sightings	Observer	
Black-headed Gull	Black 25P2 on White (Left Leg)	Moor Green Lakes	Feb 25th & Mar 21st	RCM, KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 22nd 2014 at Moor Green Lakes. First record since being ringed.
Black-headed Gull	Black 26L2 on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 21st	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jul 6th 2013 at Lea Farm GP. Also seen on Jun 16th 2014 at Bowling Green Marsh, Devon, and at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 3rd 2014.
Black-headed Gull	Black 28L2 on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 21st	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jul 11th 2013 at Fleet Pond, Hants. Previous sightings on Aug 4th 2013, Mar 23rd 2015 and Mar 29th 2015, all at Moor Green Lakes.
Black-headed Gull	Black 26S0 on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 21st	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 4th 2016 at Hosehill Lake. Also seen in Jun and Jul 2016 at Hosehill Lake.
Black-headed Gull	White 2C09 on Red	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 21st & Apr 21st	KPD	Ringed on Jun 17th 2014 as a chick at Bedford Country Park, Greater London. Also seen on Mar 21st 2019 at Moor Green Lakes.
Black-headed Gull	Code 22P6 on White (Left leg)	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 15th	RCM	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 15th 2014 at Lea Farm GP. Also seen on Oct 29th 2015 at Saint-Jean-du-Doigt, Finistère, France, and back at Lea Farm GP on Apr 6th 2016.
Black-headed Gull	Code 24P3 on White (Right leg)	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 22nd, Apr 6th & 8th	RCM, ABT	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 22nd 2014 at Moor Green Lakes. Also seen at Moor Green Lakes in Mar and Apr 2016.
Black-headed Gull	Code 2RKH on Yellow	Moor Green Lakes	Apr 20th	RCM	Ringed at Pitsea landfill. It spent the winter of 2018-2019 in Spain; this was its first return.
Black-headed Gull	Black 28S3 on White	Pangbourne Meadow	Jan 4th, Feb 3rd, Apr 25th, Jul 30th & Nov 30th	ATa	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake on Jun 4th 2016. Seen frequently around the landing stage at Pangbourne Meadow since November 2018, often displaying oddly aggressive behaviour.
Black-headed Gull	Black TMVN on White	Dorney Wetlands	Jun 23rd	KPD	Ringed as a chick on Jun 25th 2014 by Tomasz Iciek at Zbiornik Przykona, Radczynyn, Turek, Wielkopolskie, Poland. Previous sightings: Oct 11th 2015 at Datchet, Dec 2015 at Staines-upon-Thames and Sep 18th 2018, again on Dorney Common.
Black-headed Gull	Black TL0E on White	Lower Farm GP	Jan 3rd	ABT	Ringed as a pullus on Jun 14th 2015, at Rz. Odra, Bielinek, Cedynia, Zachodniopomorskie, Poland. Only other recovery was on Jul 11th 2015, close to nesting location.
Black-headed Gull	Code 28S2	Lower Farm GP	Jul 25th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake on Jun 4th 2016. Several more reports from Hosehill Lake until Jun 30th 2016, before a sighting at Slimbridge, Gloucs, on Jul 14th 2016.

2019 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2019 Sightings	Observer	
Black-headed Gull	Code 2X74	Lower Farm GP	Jul 25th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake on Jun 20th 2009. It has been recorded in spring in every year since, a total of 69 times, mostly from Hosehill Lake but also other local sites as far as Lower Farm GP.
Black-headed Gull	Code 26D4	Lower Farm GP	Jul 25th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake on Jun 4th 2011. Numerous reports from Hosehill Lake in subsequent springs and summers, and occasional winter sightings from there and elsewhere in Berkshire.
Black-headed Gull	Code 27D9	Lower Farm GP	Jul 25th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake on Jun 4th 2011. Numerous reports from Hosehill Lake in subsequent springs and summers, and once ventured as far as Englefield.
Black-headed Gull	Code T1UE on White	Lower Farm GP	Jul 25th & Aug 22nd	ABT	Ringed at Truskaw, Poland, on Jun 14th 2011.
Black-headed Gull	Black 27J3 on White	Lea Farm Lake	Feb 25th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 26th 2011 at Lea Farm GP. Occasional sightings in most subsequent springs at Lea Farm GP and Hosehill Lake.
Black-headed Gull	Black 2FKF on Yellow	Lea Farm Lake	Feb 25th	ABT	Ringed as a second calendar year or older on Dec 12th 2014 at Pitsea Landfill Site, Essex. Subsequently, it was found on Dec 5th 2015 and Nov 2nd 2018 at Dinton Pastures CP.
Black-headed Gull	Code 28N0 on White	Lea Farm Lake	Aug 27th to 30th	ABT	Ringed at Lea Farm Lake on 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	Codes 28N9 on White	Lea Farm Lake	Aug 27th to 30th	ABT	Ringed at Lea Farm Lake Jun 15th 2014. Subsequently reported from Hosehill Lake in a ten day period in mid May 2015.
Black-headed Gull	Code JOL1 on Green	Newbury Wharf	Nov 3rd & 13th	KGW	Ringed as a second calendar year bird in Oslo in May 2016. First UK sightings were these in Newbury.
Black-headed Gull	Black 21V8 on White	Hosehill Lake	Jun 9th	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 11th 2016 at Hosehill Lake. Also seen frequently at Hosehill Lake until Jul 7th 2016.
Common Gull	Red (Right leg)	Shaw, Newbury	Feb 2nd	IW	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Red PO on White (Left leg), Green (Right leg)	Moor Green Lakes	Jun 24th	RCM	Ringed as a fourth calendar year bird on Apr 30th 2012, at Europoort Rotterdam, Netherlands, with many subsequent reports from there, and a single report in 2014 from Maine-et-Loire, France, before this first report in England.

2019 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2019 Sightings	Observer	
Cormorant	White ZNL on Green	Hosehill Lake	Sep 3rd	KPD	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 22nd 2019 on Puffin Island, Anglesey. The sighting at Hosehill Lake was the first since being ringed.
Little Egret	Yellow K on Black (Right leg), Black 6 on Orange (Left)	Moor Green Lakes	Aug 16th	RCM	Ringed as pullus in Stanborough, Welwyn Garden City, summer 2019.
Peregrine	Code TRD on Orange	Fujitsu building, Bracknell	Jul 26th	RDr	Female ringed as a chick on Jul 10th 2019 at same location.
Peregrine	White 69 on Black	Newbury Town Centre	Apr 1st to Jun 14th	KGW	Ringed as a nestling in May 2017 at Chichester Cathedral. See the article on page 15 for more details of this bird.
Peregrine	Orange	Borough Marsh	Dec 29th	ABT	Probably ringed in the UK.

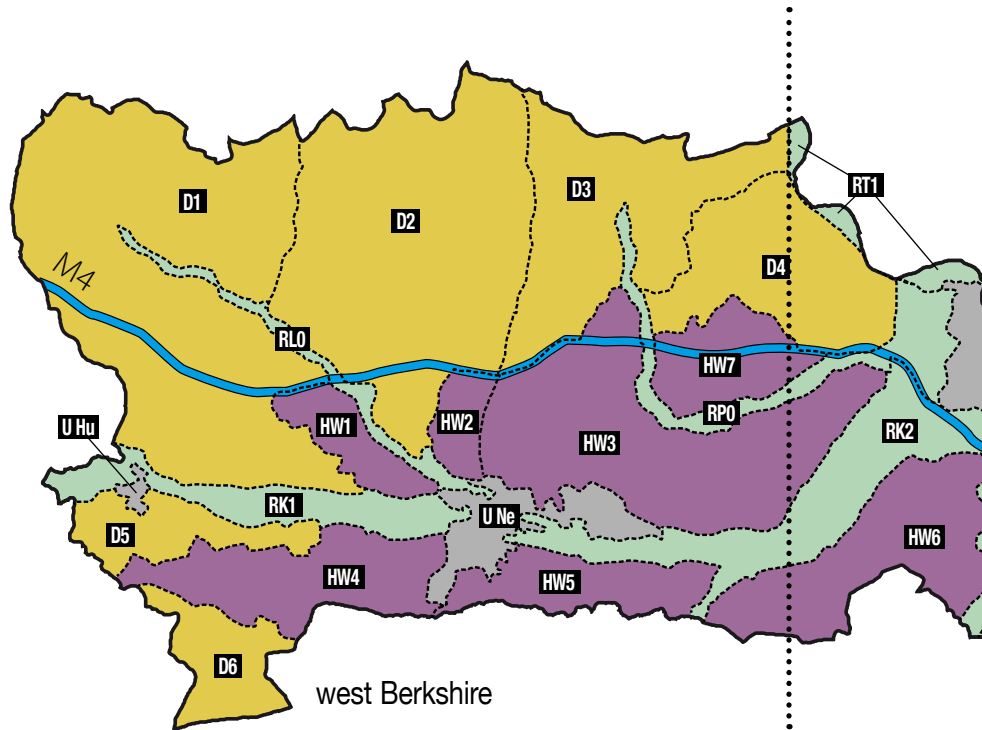
Contributors to the Systematic List 2019

Abbott P	Brooks C	Cooper M	.....MCo
Abbott S D	Brown S A	Cooper A	.....ACoo
Absolom A	Brown G	Copland M	
Adams P	Brown O	Corbett I	
Ahlgren L	Brown W	Cottingham F J	.....FJC
Akkaraju A	Buchanan J C	Crabb B	
Alexander T O	Buck T	Crathorne B	.....BCr
Allison S	Buckel F C	Crawford R	.....RCr
Amphlett M J	Bucknell N J	Crouch J	.....JC
Anderson P	Buckton S	Crowley P J	.....PJC
Andrews J E	Bunn R	Crowley et al P J	
Andrews D	Burden P	Cuff M J	
Angus R	Burness R J	Culver C	.....CC
Asquith D	Butler J	Cumming D A	.....DACu
Ball T G	Butler D S	Cummins T	.....TCu
Barker D J	Calcutt D	Daniels R	
Bass C G	Campbell G	Davies R C W	.....RCWD
Bassett A D	Carlaw C	Davies L	.....LD
Batho G S	Carley T	Davies J	
Beadle D	Carter D A	Davis K	
Bennett B T	Cave A	Dawson R	.....RD
Bingham D	Chapman C B	Day S	.....SDa
Birch L	Charlson E	Dear M J	.....MJD
Bird M	Chown P K	Dellow J	.....JD
Bishop J	Clacey C	Denison-Pender R	
Blundell L R	Claridge R J	Denyer R	
Bolton A	Clark J M	Devereau S C	.....SCD
Booth A	Clayton I	Dewey R	
Booth R	Cleath D	Dickinson B	.....BD
Boult P	Cleere N	Dodds D A M	.....DAMD
Brant P	Clews B D	Dove A	.....AD
Bright-Thomas P	Collins R	Downes A	
Bromley R	Cook S	Drewitt E J A	
Brooke-Taylor D	Coombes P	Driver P W	.....PD

Drummond B	Hemmings M.....MHe	Lyford M	Proctor R	Slocombe G	Violette M.....MVi
Dryden R..... RDr	Hickman P.....PH	Lyle R A.....RAL	Proddow S K.....SKP	Sluman N.....NSlu	Vogel M.....MV
Duncan K P.....KPD	Hickman A E D.....AEDH	Lynch S.....SLy	Quelch I.....IQ	Smart S	Wadsworth P.....PW
Dungey S M	Hicks R	Mackinnon I	Rampton N.....NR	Smethurst A	Walford M F.....MFW
East T A	Highfield M	Mackowski A	Randall G.....GR	Smith M J.....MJS	Walker B J.....BJW
Eddie T	Hilder C	Mann L.....LMa	Reaney A.....ARE	Smith W	Wallace R.....RW
Edwards J	Hines M	Mannion P.....PM	Redhead J W	Soane J C.....JCS	Wang E
Edwards N	Holder R.....RHo	Mansfield S	Reedman R.....RR	Stalker B	Warren J E.....JEW
Elphick I M	Holliday P	Marchant J	Reeve B.....BR	Stansfield R H.....RHS	Warren R S
Evans H W.....HWE	Holmes C.....CH	Marriner N.....NM	Reid T	Staves L.....LS	Watson M I G.....MIGW
Evans L G R.....LGRE	Holmes P	Marsh R.....RM	Reynolds D J.....DJR	Stephens R.....RS	Watts R C.....RCW
Ezard C	Hotchkis B	Martin J P.....JPM	Rhodes K.....KR	Stevenson S.....SS	Werran R.....RWE
Fabry R.....RFa	Hubbard M J.....MJH	Massie D	Ricks S.....SRi	Stewart G J.....GJS	West Farmland Birds
Farrell C.....CFa	Hughes F.....FHu	McAvoy S	Rider S C	Stewart C	Weston I L G.....IW
Farrell G R	Hunt M S.....MHu	McCarthy M G.....MGM	Righelato R.....RRi	Stoney A	Wetland Bird Survey.....WeBS
Feltham C	Hutchins P E.....PEH	McEwan C.....CMc	Rimes D N T.....DNTR	Stow A N.....ANS	Whitaker M S F.....MSFW
Fewtrell-Smith I.....IFe	Hutchinson F.....FH	McMahon A.....AMc	Rivoire J R.....JRR	Sumner G J.....GJSu	White K G.....KGW
Fincham N	P'Anson M.....MAn	McNeill J M	Roach A H	Sussex D J.....DJS	White D
Firth T.....TFi	Jacob I	McNish C	Robertson S.....SRo	Swallow J L.....JLS	White S A.....SAW
Fisher S L.....SLF	James C	Meads S M.....SMe	Rogers S	Talbot G	Wilding J H S.....JHSW
Flannagan A W.....AWF	Jenkins M	Milligan R F.....RFM	Rose J E.....JRos	Taylor J J.....JJT	Wilkinson T
Forster T	Jenkins D.....DJe	Mills D J.....DJM	Rossiter N	Taylor A.....ATa	Williams R
Foster C W.....CWFO	Jennings T J.....TJJ	Mitchell M J.....MJM	Rowing G.....GRO	Taylor K.....KTa	Williams-Jones D.....DWJ
Frampton O	Jinks R.....RJ	Monkhouse J	Rudgley R	Taylor M J.....MJT	Williamson C & S
Frankum R.....RF	Johnson A C	Moore R C.....RCMo	Ryall J	Taylor S	Wilson G E.....GEW
Free P	Johnstone M A	Moore K E.....KEM	Rymer A.....AR	Thorn L.....LTh	Wilson H J
Fryer-Saxby D	Jolly A	Morgan J C.....JCMo	Sandell J.....JS	Thornton G.....GT	Winkworth M P.....MPW
Fuller D.....DF	Jones C D.....CDJ	Murfit R C.....RCM	Sargent B	Tindall B.....BTi	Winn A
Fuller R	Jones B.....BJ	Murphy S	Scholey G D.....GDS	Tomczynski A B.....ABT	Winslet B.....BW
Funnell L	Jones C.....CJ	Napper E.....EN	Scott S.....SSc	Toms M P	Wolfe K
Gardner M	Jones K.....KJo	Nash R H J	Scudamore P.....PSc	Toogood-Johnson I	Wood K G.....KGW
Garner-Langham L.....LGL	Jones T	NDOC.....NDOC	Seligman P M	Townsend W	Wordley G V.....GVW
Garnsworthy N	Jones G	Neale C.....CN	Seymour K R.....KSeY	Trout N S.....NST	Wright N
Gent C R.....CRG	Jones E	Needs J.....JNe	Sharp A L H	Turner R M.....RMT	Wright D.....DW
Gilham R.....RGi	Jordan T	Netley H R.....HRN	Sheridan J B.....JBS	Turton M H.....MHT	Wright S J
Gillingham J	Josey R	Newbound P J.....PNe	Shilland E M	Tyler D.....DTy	Young R.....
Gipson P.....PG	Kalveitis M	Nicoll W A.....WAN	Short I	Upton B	
Godden R J.....RJG	Kearns J J.....JJK	Norman M	Silver N.....NS	Vaughan J	
Godden N R.....NG	Keel R R.....RRK	Norris P R			
Goriup P.....PGO	Kelson D W.....DWK	Nouri L			
Graham S A.....SAG	Kendall P.....PKe	O'Brien J.....JOB			
Griffiths D	Kennard V	O'Neil P.....PO			
Groot-Attias I	Kennelly A D	Orino S			
Guyatt T A.....TAG	King J	Owen G M			
Hadfield P D.....PDHa	Kirby M	Paine I D.....IDP			
Halder S	Kirby A J	Panchaud D			
Hale J A.....JHa	Kujawa S	Parsons J			
Hammatt N	Lambert A	Parsons R.....RPa			
Hampton D W.....DWH	Lambeth C	Paterson G			
Hardy R.....RHar	Lamsdell C.....CL	Peart R			
Hargreaves R	Langdon A	Pell E			
Harley S	Larkins S.....SL	Peterson L			
Harrington J E.....JEH	Lawrence S	Phillips K			
Harris N G.....NH	Lawson A V.....AVL	Philpott M G			
Harris S	Legg J.....JL	Piccolo A			
Harrison A.....AHarr	Lerpiniere J.....JLe	Pidgeon M.....MP			
Hastings D.....DH	Lillie L	Piercey B			
Hatt J	Lincoln P	Pirzio-Biroli A			
Haymes T	Lloyd M	Plank W			
Heal J	Loades J R.....JRL	Pottinger D			
Hear S V	Long D F.....DL	Price R A G.....RAGP			
Hedley C	Loveard D	Price M.....MPr			

Topographical Areas - A Resource for Records Analysis

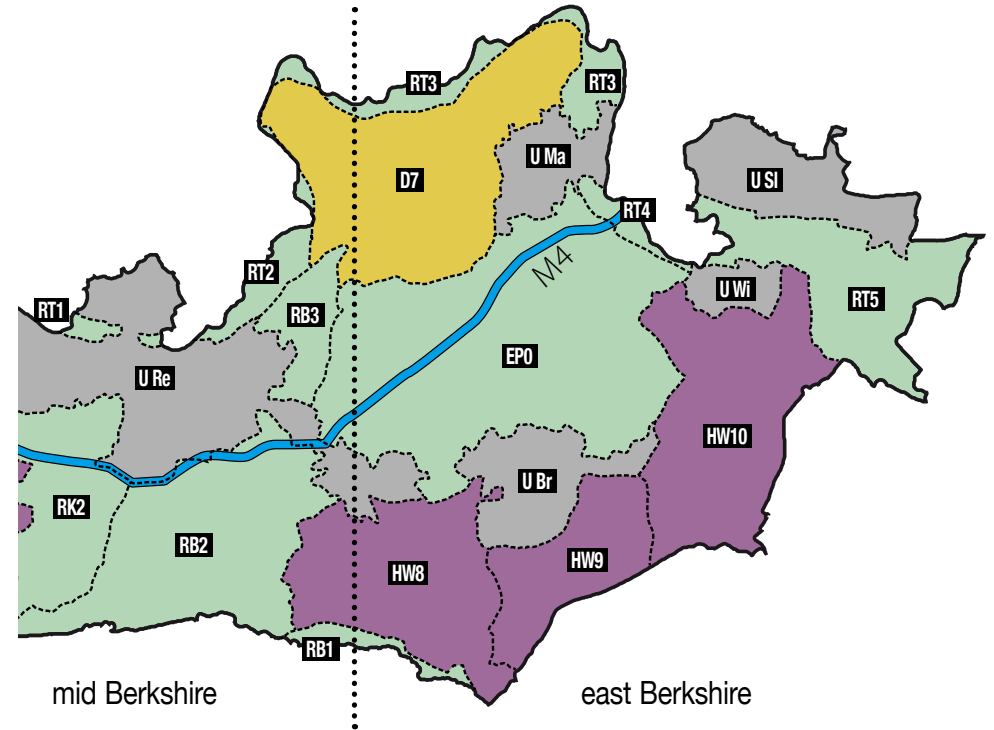
To facilitate analysis of bird records in relation to habitat types, all sites in the bird record database have been assigned to one of 37 topographical areas grouped into five broad topographical classes (TC): Downs, heathlands, river valleys, the Eastern plain between Reading and Windsor and the urban areas. The classes relate to the underlying geology and



TC: The Downs/Chalk areas	DC	TC: Heaths/Heathland Woods and associated areas	HW
Lambourn Downs	D1	Wickham Heath	HW1
Farnborough Downs	D2	Snelsmore Common	HW2
Compton/Aldworth/Isley Downs	D3	Curridge/Hermitage & Bucklebury Plateau	HW3
Eastern Downs & Woods	D4	Inkpen Plateau	HW4
North Hampshire Downs - S Hungerford	D5	Greenham/Crookham Plateau	HW5
North Hampshire Downs - Combe/Walbury heights	D6	Wasing/Burghfield	HW6
Remenham/Hurley/Cookham Plateau	D7	Yattendon/Frilsham	HW7
		Crowthorne/ Finchampstead	HW8
		Swinley Forest	HW9
		Windsor Great Park & Forest	HW10

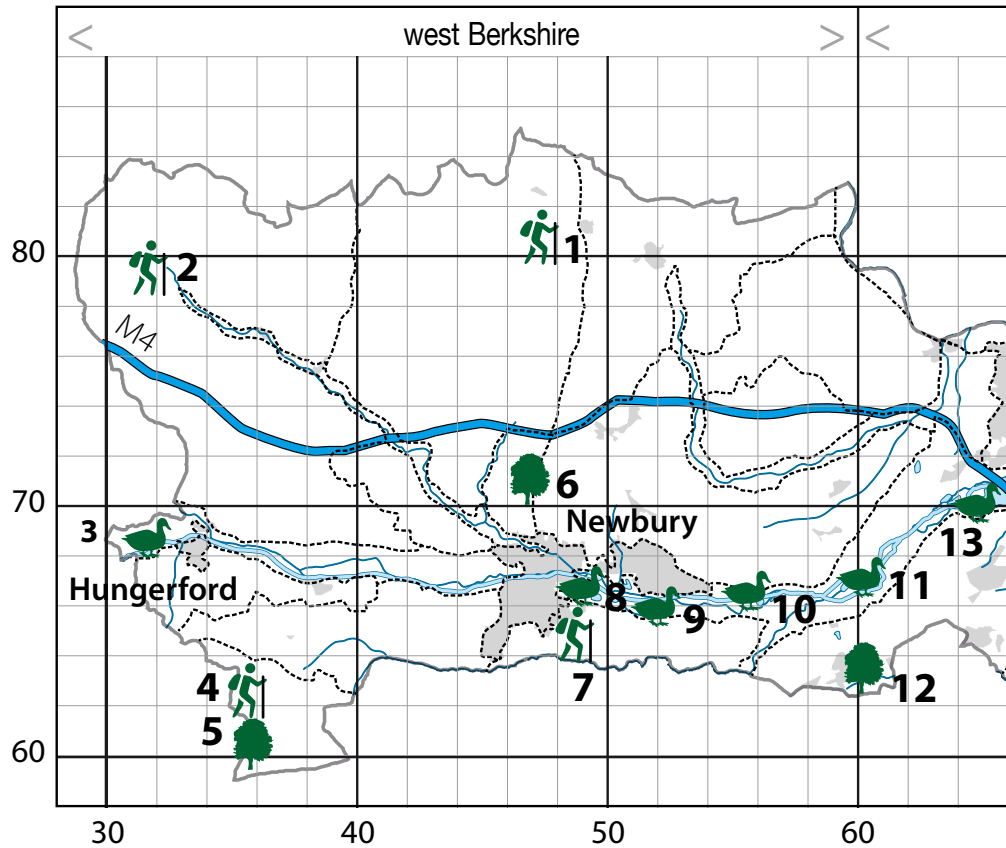
topography, which, together with human activities, determine the types of habitat to be found. The 5,000 or so sites for which there are bird records in our database have been assigned to the appropriate area, allowing records to be analysed by these habitat-related classes.

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.



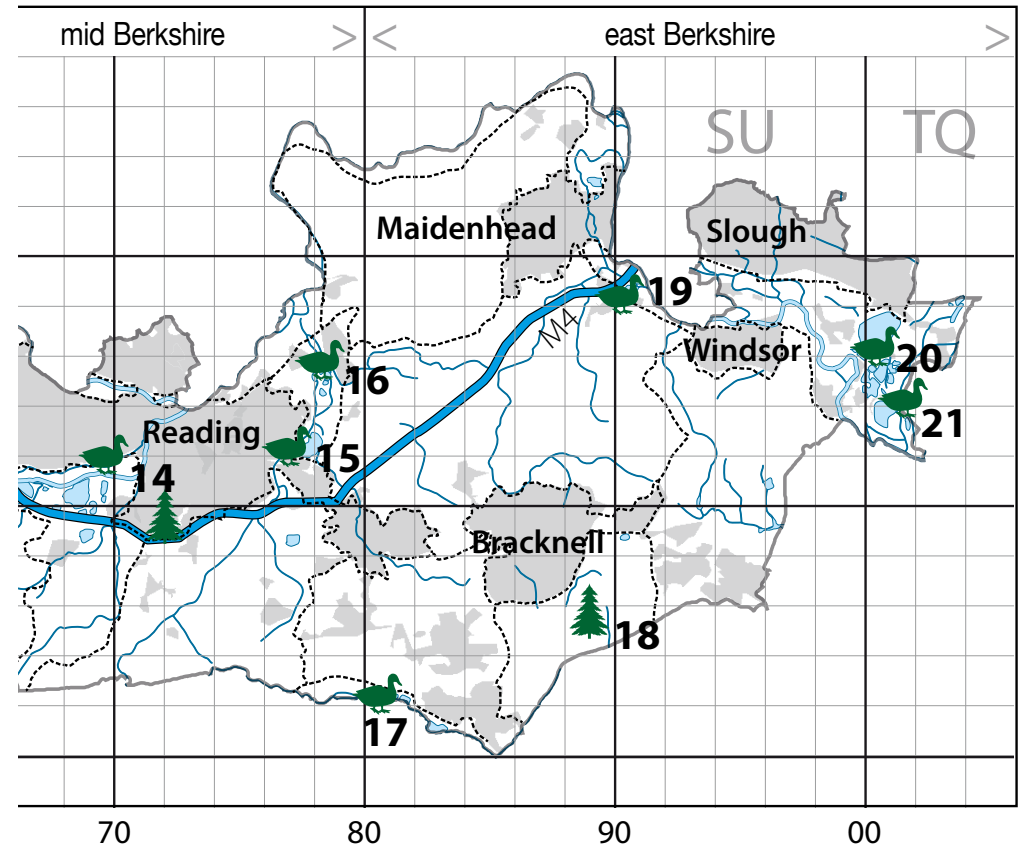
TC: River valleys	R	TC: Eastern Plain	EP
Thames: Goring Gap to Reading	RT1	Twyford/Binfield/Windsor Plain	EPO
Thames: Reading to Wargrave	RT2		
Thames: Wargrave to Maidenhead	RT3		
Thames: Jubilee River to Windsor	RT4		
Lower Thames & Colne	RT5		
Kennet: West of Newbury & Dun	RK1	TC: Urban Areas	UR
Lower Kennet & tributaries	RK2	Hungerford	U Hu
Lambourn valley	RLO	Newbury-Thatcham	U Ne
Pang Valley and Sul Gap	RPO	Greater Reading	U Re
Blackwater	RB1	Bracknell	U Br
Loddon Valley above Winnersh	RB2	Maidenhead	U Ma
Lower Loddon	RB3	Windsor	U Wi
		Slough & Langley	U SI





Some Birdwatching Sites in Berkshire



- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Berkshire Downs: West Ilsley | 12. Padworth Common |
| 2. Berkshire Downs: Lambourn | 13. Theale & Hosehill Lakes |
| 3. Freeman's Marsh | 14. Fobney Island and Meadows |
| 4. Walbury Hill | 15. Dinton Pastures and Lea Farm Lake |
| 5. Combe Wood | 16. Twyford Lakes |
| 6. Snelsmore Common | 17. Moor Green Lakes |
| 7. Greenham & Crookham Commons | 18. Swinley Forest & Wishmoor Bottom |
| 8. Lower Farm Gravel Pit | 19. Dorney Wetlands |
| 9. Thatcham Marsh | 20. Queen Mother Reservoir |
| 10. Woolhampton Gravel Pits | 21. Wryasbury Gravel Pits |
| 11. Padworth Lane Gravel Pit | |

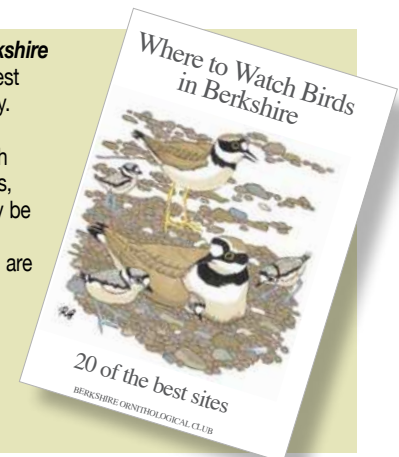
Some of the better-known birding sites in the county are shown here. For access details and more information visit <http://berksoc.org.uk/countysites/>



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

Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire

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



County Directory

COUNTY BIRD RECORDER

Marek Walford, 30 Bellingham Walk, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LS.
Email: records@berksoc.org.uk

BERKSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB www.berksoc.org.uk

*A Club for birdwatchers throughout Berkshire, with indoor and outdoor meetings, surveys and publications, including Birds of Berkshire annual reports – see page 2 for details. Collects bird records for the county and is responsible for the county database and administers 'The Birds of Berkshire Conservation Fund'.
Registered Charity number 1011776*

Secretary, Jane Campbell, 111 Mays Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 7DG

Telephone 07980 076128
Email: secretary@berksoc.org.uk

NEWBURY DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB www.newburybirders.co.uk

*NDOC was founded in 1959 with the aim of promoting study and interest in birds and all aspects of their behaviour and habitats. The Club is open to all, experts or beginners, and visitors are always welcome at our events. Field visits are arranged throughout the year to local sites in West Berkshire and neighbouring counties, with day excursions further afield. During the winter months, invited speakers come to talk on a variety of bird topics. Members receive a copy of the Club's Annual Report and the quarterly newsletter "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

BIRDS OF BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION FUND

Grant-giving fund managed by the Berkshire Ornithological Club for bird conservation in Berkshire.

Enquiries and applications to conservation@berksoc.org.uk or telephone 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

This is an independent website devoted to offering a free resource to birdwatchers in Berkshire. It provides news, photographs and records of birds, with additional optional information services.

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY (BTO)

Berkshire County Representative and Wetland Bird Survey organiser: Sean Murphy
Email: SeanMurphy8@gmail.com

LAVELL'S WETLAND TRUST

Conservation volunteers managing projects in the lower Loddon valley, including Lea Farm Lake Nature reserve and Lavell's Lake in Dinton Pastures Country Park.

Chair: Jane Campbell.
See <http://lavells.org.uk/>

MOOR GREEN LAKES GROUP www.mglg.org.uk

Conservation volunteers who manage Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve, near Finchampstead. Work parties, newsletters, an annual report and access to bird hides.

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

Email: davidrbishop309@gmail.com

THEALE AREA BIRD CONSERVATION GROUP

A local club devoted to the conservation of birds in the Theale area, west of Reading. Indoor and outdoor meetings, and survey work.

<https://tabcg.webs.com>

Cath McEwan, Secretary,
Email: tabcgsec@yahoo.com

LOCAL RSPB GROUPS

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

Further details from the RSPB
www.rspb.org.uk/

or directly from:
Reading RSPB Local Group
<https://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 unlimited fines 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 and Northern Ireland, a fine of up to £20,000 may be imposed by the Magistrates' Court, or an unlimited fine by the Crown Court. In Scotland, the maximum fine on summary conviction is £40,000, or an unlimited fine on conviction on indictment.

If you witness anyone who you suspect may be illegally disturbing or destroying wildlife or habitat, phone the police immediately (ideally, with a six-figure map reference) and report it to the RSPB.

If you discover a rare bird, please bear the following in mind:

Consider the potential impact of spreading the news and make an effort to inform the landowner (or, on a nature reserve, the warden) first. Think about whether the site can cope with a large number of visitors and whether sensitive species might be at risk, such as breeding terns, flocks of wading birds or rare plants.

On private land, always talk to the landowner first. With a little planning, access can often be arranged.

Rare breeding birds are at risk from egg-collectors and some birds of prey from persecution.

If you discover a rare breeding species under any circumstances report it to the County Recorder (for Berkshire: email records@berksoc.org.uk) as a matter of urgency or the RSPB if it's outside the county. The County Recorder will consider telling the landowner of the bird's presence and legal obligations in most cases, and this will help ensure that the nest is not disturbed accidentally. If you have the opportunity to see a rare bird, enjoy it, but don't let your enthusiasm override common sense. In addition to the guidelines above:

- If you go to see a rare bird, park sensibly, follow instructions and consider making a donation if requested.
- Don't get too close for a photograph – you'll earn the wrath of everyone else if you flush the bird out of sight.
- Be patient if the viewing is limited, talk quietly and give others a chance to see the bird too.
- Do not enter private areas without permission.
- Birds should never be flushed in important wildlife habitats or where there are other nesting or roosting birds nearby. Birds should not be flushed more frequently than every two hours nor within two hours of sunrise or sunset, so that the bird has chance to feed and rest. At any time in the breeding season flushing rare visitors can be very disruptive to other species that are breeding in the area and so shouldn't be done.