

The Birds of Berkshire



**Annual Report
2020**

Published 2024

Berkshire Ornithological Club

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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:

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Annual Report for 2020

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

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Introduction

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 articles relevant to the county and its birds. Sally Wearing as production manager has been responsible for proofreading and liaison with Rob Still, our publisher.

In May 2023 we learnt the sad news that Peter Standley, a long-time member of the Club, had died. Peter served as County Bird Recorder for over 40 years and he edited many annual reports. He was also co-lead author of the first atlas, *The Birds of Berkshire*, published in 1996, for which he wrote most of the non-breeding species accounts. An obituary to Peter will appear in the next annual report.

Since 1949, the covers of all our annual reports have featured an artwork by Robert Gillmor, which he created especially for the Club. Following his sad passing in 2022, we now must find an alternative approach. After considerable deliberation, we have decided to continue featuring original artworks on the cover of these annual reports. We are therefore seeking an artist or artists for future reports to take over from Robert Gillmor. If you are interested in being considered, please contact Sally Wearing at chair@berksoc.org.uk.

In order to continue this unbroken tradition, we have used one of Robert's early artworks on the cover of this report. The linocut of the Tufted Ducks was prepared by Robert for the 1954 report, when he was 18 years old. In *Cover Birds*, his book about the artworks he provided to the Club, he wrote: "The 1954 cover has the first appearance of the Tufted Duck, the bird eventually chosen for the Club's logo. Its neat shape and bold black and white plumage make it an ideal subject, with no fussy detail to make reduction at a small size tricky. The linocut shows all drakes, whereas the duller brown females, lacking the tuft, are not so graphic. The design is more 'designerly' than before, perhaps reflecting the changing, or developing, approach of the eighteen-year-old artist!". We think it is a fitting last cover by Robert Gillmor.

As for the 2019 report, the back cover of this report features four covers of past reports.

This year, as well as the expected articles such as an account of the year's birding highlights, we have articles featuring rare birds seen in the county and scarce breeding species. There is a fascinating article on nocmiggling – a relatively new technique for detecting overflying birds that would otherwise go undetected.

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 SAWs who are listed on page 44. Our thanks also go to: Chris Heard, Debby Reynolds, Jan Legg, Nigel Cleere, Paul Bright-Thomas and Paul O'Neill who all provided articles; 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.

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 158 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 41).

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: Blue Tit, Borough Marsh, Dec 24th 2020, Andy Tomczynski

Bottom: Common Tern, Lea Farm Lake, Aug 10th 2020, Andy Tomczynski

Birding Highlights of 2020

by Robert Godden

JANUARY: birders were out in force on New Year's Day, reporting a variety of interesting species. A **Black-necked Grebe** that had been found at Main Pit, Theale, back in December was still present, but many others seemed to be new in; a flock of eight **White-fronted Geese** took off from Main Pit at first light, while an adult **Caspian Gull** at Queen Mother Reservoir was different to December's individual. Five **Jack Snipes** were located at Horton where one remained into April. Two **Bitterns** that went to roost that evening at Dinton Pastures were the first to be reported there since early November; reports of single birds continued from this location but only until Jan 12th. The **Black-necked Grebe** remained at Main Pit until Jan 10th, with three birds there on the 4th, while a single report from Lower Farm GP on the 11th may have been the same bird passing through. Main Pit also hosted a **Slavonian Grebe** on Jan 3rd and 4th. **Mediterranean Gulls** were found at four sites, including three at Queen Mother Reservoir. At dusk on Jan 6th, a **Marsh Harrier** drifted close past the hide at Lea Farm Lake. In the east of the county, a **Siberian (tristis) Chiffchaff** frequented the brambles by the Roundmoor Ditch at Eton Wick on Jan 7th and 8th, and single **Water Pipits** were at Horton on Jan 3rd and at Queen Mother Reservoir between the 4th and 16th. Two redhead **Smews** visited Great Meadow Pond on Jan 12th, and a drake was at Wraysbury GPs on Jan 22nd and Feb 1st, while two **White-fronted Geese** made appearances at Queen Mother Reservoir and in Windsor Great Park between the 15th and 21st. On the Downs, there were three reports of **Merlins** and of ringtail **Hen Harriers** during the month, but **Short-eared Owls** were in short supply at their traditional sites. Meanwhile 14 **Hawfinches** were an exciting find in tall trees at Combe Hill on Jan 24th, with reduced numbers in subsequent days.

FEBRUARY: three drake and one female **Pintails** at Woolhampton GPs on Feb 1st were the largest flock of the year for this species. The two **White-fronted Geese** made one further appearance, this time at Horton Brook Quarry on Feb 7th. At Lower Farm GP, a **Black-necked Grebe** stayed all month from Feb 8th with three reported there on Feb 11th, while an adult **Little Gull** there on Feb 16th was a particularly rare winter find. A **Bittern** that had been found in December was seen again at Great Meadow Pond, feeding out in the open in a field on Feb 1st. A **Siberian (tristis) Chiffchaff** at Horton GPs on Feb 6th was



Hen Harrier, Roden Down, Jan 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.

thought to be the same bird as that found at Wraysbury GPs on the 8th. Severe storms at sea in February brought in three adult **Kittiwakes**, the first at Lower Farm GP from Feb 10th to 12th, and then singles at Queen Mother Reservoir on the 24th and 27th. A **White-tailed Eagle** that dwarfed a mobbing **Buzzard** as it drifted north-west over the A34 near East Ilsley was possibly a bird that had been in south Oxfordshire in recent times. **Hen Harrier** and **Merlin** were reported from the Downs mid-month, and a **Water Pipit** was at Horton from Feb 22nd into March.

MARCH: by now, the **Black-necked Grebe** at Lower Farm GP was moulting into summer plumage; it remained there until its last sighting on the 21st. Queen Mother Reservoir hosted its third **Kittiwake** in less than three weeks on Mar 9th, and the same day a **Water Pipit** was found at Wraysbury GPs. Apart from a **White Stork** over Moor Green Lakes on Mar 16th, a pair of **Garganey** at Padworth Lane Floods on Mar 22nd and 23rd, and a **White Wagtail** at Lavell's Lake on the 28th, most of the birding interest was in the far east of the county, though this was probably due to uneven or atypical observer coverage, a consequence of the prevailing restrictions. Thus, Queen Mother Reservoir provided sightings of two **Avocets** on the 14th, **Water Pipit** on the 16th, **Caspian Gull** on 17th and 18th, and an **argentatus Herring Gull** and three **Common Scoters** on the 19th; the same day another drake **Common Scoter** was at Summerleaze GPs. Two drake **Garganeys** at Eton Wick on Mar 18th and 19th were relocated at Dorney Wetlands on the 23rd. Up to two **Caspian Gulls** were at Summerleaze GPs mid-month. A distinctive loose feather on one of these enabled it to be picked out also at Jubilee River on Mar 18th. Perhaps the bird of the year was found at Wraysbury GPs on Mar 21st (and still there the next day) in the form of an adult **Bonaparte's Gull**, incredibly by the same observer who had found the county's first of this species in 2013. Two days later a **Little Gull** at the same location was the first of a modest spring passage. Two **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** acting as a territorial pair were a great find in Windsor Great Park on Mar 24th.

APRIL: the night of Apr 2nd stands out for the overland passage of **Common Scoters**. Four Berkshire birders reported hearing their calls, mostly in a couple of hours before midnight, part of a widespread movement resulting in around 75 reports across England, according to Birdguides. Species that have benefitted from reintroduction schemes featured in April: a **White-tailed Eagle** spent Apr 3rd in an arable field between Newbury and Hungerford according to the Roy Dennis project before continuing north the next day, while a different bird passed over Wokingham also on the 4th; possibly the same **White Stork** passed over Moss End on Apr 23rd and over Newbury on the 24th; and finally a **Crane** flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on the 27th. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was watched at Greenham Common on two dates in early April, while in Wokingham a singing **Black Redstart** on Apr 3rd announced the start of a successful and well-documented breeding episode. A **Water Pipit** was found at Fobney Meadow on Apr 6th, and **White Wagtails** were seen at Datchet, with two males on the 10th and a female on the 14th. A **Sandwich Tern** was roosting on a buoy at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 6th and another was watched from a birder's garden at Woodlands Park Fields on the 21st, while a **Black Tern** stayed three days at Black Swan Lake from the 21st. A **Marsh Harrier** arrived at Horton GPs in the evening of Apr 7th and went to roost. Passage waders included: six **Black-tailed Godwits** at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 10th; a **Bar-tailed Godwit** at Datchet on the 13th, and 17 more at Horton Brook Quarry on the 28th; a **Whimbrel** at night over Woosheill on the 22nd and another at Horton on the 25th; and finally a **Spotted Redshank** in partial summer plumage at Moor Green Lakes on the 29th. A **Hoopoe** was an exciting find at Lower Farm GP on Apr 19th, and a female **Ring Ouzel** at Colnbrook on Apr 20th was still around the next day. Two **Cattle Egrets** that overflew Dinton Pastures on Apr 24th settled down in horse paddocks



Spotted Redshank, Moor Green Lakes, Apr 29th, Roger Murfitt.

at Charvil, and a pair of **Garganeys** graced Allsmoor Pond in Bracknell on Apr 28th. The first of just four **Grasshopper Warblers** in the county this spring reeled at Speen Moor on Apr 30th.

MAY: the month started with a widespread passage of **Whimbrels** that included at least five and possibly many more in a busy two-minute period overnight on May 6th. An **Osprey** over Horton on May 5th was the only spring record, and a **Hen Harrier** flew high over Reading on the 7th. A **Wood Warbler** spent May 2nd to 4th at Bucklebury Common, and **Black Redstart** activity at Wokingham continued right through the month. There was a passage of waders mid-month that included: two male **Ruffs** at Hosehill Lake from May 12th to 15th; **Black-tailed Godwits** at Main Pit, Theale, on May 15th and Horton Brook Quarry on the 17th; a **Wood Sandpiper** at Fobney Meadow on the 16th; and three **Sanderlings** at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 21st and 25th. After a report in Oxfordshire ten days earlier, a **Great Bustard** was watched at Wellbottom Down on May 22nd. Another **Kittiwake** flew through Queen Mother Reservoir on May 26th, and a **Black Tern** visited Hosehill Lake on May 28th. The biggest surprise of the month came at Snelsmore Common where a pair of **Pied Flycatchers** were watched using a nest box. May saw the first signs of a significant **Crossbill** arrival, with five reports that included ten at Wildmoor Heath on May 25th.

JUNE: the final northbound wader of the spring was a **Sanderling** at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 2nd. A **White Stork** was photographed at Cookham on Jun 3rd. A **Great White Egret** transitioning from breeding plumage arrived at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 8th; presumably this was the previous August's returning bird. A **Garganey** was at Eton Wick on Jun 13th and 14th, and six reports of **Mediterranean Gull** came from separate sites in the eastern half of the county. A juvenile **Garganey** turned up at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 26th, remaining into August, and two summer plumaged **Black-necked Grebes** were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 30th.



Wood Sandpiper, Lea Farm Lake, Jul 4th, Fraser Cottington.

JULY: the monitoring of the **Black Redstart** pair in Wokingham was rewarded on Jul 6th when four juveniles were finally on show. Meanwhile, two well-grown young **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen at Main Pit, Theale, on Jul 5th, only the second breeding occurrence in Berkshire. Reports of **Crossbills** accelerated during July, and included 40 at Fence Wood on Jul 11th and 12 at Gorrick Plantation on the 30th. Return passage got underway with a **Wood Sandpiper** at Lea Farm Lake on Jul 4th, a **Black-tailed Godwit** at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 10th and four there on the 19th, along with a **Turnstone** and three **Sanderling** the same day. Also at Queen Mother Reservoir, two **Arctic Terns** passed through on Jul 26th, another was there on the 29th, and finally a group of three **Little Terns** stayed for an hour on Jul 31st.

AUGUST: Wokingham's **Black Redstarts** produced their second brood in early August and sightings continued in the area until October. On Aug 7th, six **Sandwich Terns** and an **Arctic Tern** lingered a few hours at Queen Mother Reservoir. A **Short-eared Owl** flew high over Hurst on Aug 10th. One of the year's real highlights arrived on Aug 6th in the form of Berkshire's fourth **Night-heron**. First seen by non-birders near Dinton Pastures,



Night Heron, Dinton Pastures CP, Aug 16th, Dave Rimes.



Knot, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 16th, Andy Tomczynski.

it then made sporadic appearances before settling down towards the end of its three-week stay at Sandford Lake, where a **Cattle Egret** was also present on the 16th. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was ringed on Greenham Common on Aug 12th, but otherwise most of the interest in this productive period was due to waders and other waterbirds. Between Aug 15th and 18th, Queen Mother Reservoir played host to a **Caspian Gull**, **Black Tern**, **Whimbrel**, **Turnstone**, **Knot** and three drake **Common Scoters**. Elsewhere, Main Pit had a **Turnstone** on Aug 14th and a **Ruff** on the 17th, and a **Ruff** was at Lower Farm GP from Aug 16th to 25th. Two **Great Skuas** that circled overhead for just five minutes at Horton GPs on Aug 15th before leaving were a rare and lucky find. An **Avocet** visited Lower Farm GP on Aug 27th, while at Queen Mother Reservoir there was a **Knot** on Aug 23rd, a **Caspian Gull** on Aug 28th and 29th, and an impressive flock of 34 **Arctic Terns** on Aug 25th. Throughout August, **Crossbills** featured in many of the woods in east Berkshire.

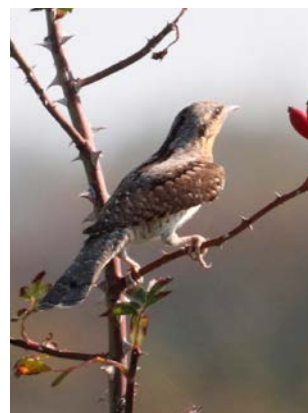
SEPTEMBER: the month started with a few sightings of terns: two **Arctic Terns** at Main Pit on Sep 2nd, and three at Queen Mother Reservoir the next day followed by three **Sandwich Terns** there on the 10th. A **Manx Shearwater** was an excellent find at Main Pit on Sep 5th, where it joined a group of **Cormorants** only to miraculously disappear underwater for good, in full view of the observer. Satellite tracking revealed that a **White-tailed Eagle** roosted near Twyford on the night of Sep 6th. A **Pintail** dropped in at Lea Farm Lake early on Sep 10th, appearing on Sandford Lake later that day; **Pintails** also passed through Great Meadow Pond, Hosehill Lake and Main Pit in ones and twos during the month. Near Hungerford on Sep 10th, a **Grasshopper Warbler** gave excellent views after being disturbed from bracken. Sep 11th at Queen Mother Reservoir was eventful, with a **Knot**, **Mediterranean** and **Caspian Gulls**, and an **Osprey** overhead. **Great White Egrets** returned to various sites mid-month, including three at Sandford Lake on Sep 11th. The long-staying **Garganey** at Dorney Common, Bucks, crossed the county border to join the **Teal** at Eton Wick on Sep 13th and 19th, and a **Red-breasted Merganser** circled Queen Mother Reservoir without stopping on Sep 24th. A **Wryneck** was found on the runway at Greenham Common on Sep 15th, and a **Merlin** gave good views at Cow Down on the 20th. A juvenile **Marsh Harrier** was at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 19th, 20th and 27th, a **Whimbrel** was at Sandford Lake on the 20th, and three **Jack Snipes** arrived for the winter at Horton on Sep 27th. After a **Cattle Egret** was seen from a boat on the Thames at



Manx Shearwater, Main Pit, Theale, Sep 5th, Andy Tomczynski.



Sandwich Tern, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 10th, Andy Tomczynski.



Wryneck, Greenham Common, Sep 15th, Roy Young.



Eider, Main Pit, Theale, Oct 3rd, Andy Tomczynski.



Whooper Swan, Lower Farm GP, Oct 15th, Andy Tomczynski.

Charvil on Sep 12th and 13th, there were several reports of singles at the end of the month from Lower Farm GP and Hosehill Lake, while two flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 29th. Two **Ring Ouzels** accompanied **Blackbirds** at Greenham Common on Sep 29th.

OCTOBER: September's **Cattle Egret** at Lower Farm GP remained all through October, and even until Dec 23rd, while Wokingham's **Black Redstarts** were reported until Oct 16th. **Jack Snipes** were found at five sites, including one that showed well on the island at Hosehill Lake, and an amazing nine at Horton that remained into November. Raptors were well-represented: the **Marsh Harrier** at Great Meadow Pond was reported again on Oct 4th; an **Osprey** caused panic amongst the **Coots** at Main Pit, Theale, on Oct 5th; passage **Merlins** were noted at Horton GPs and Queen Mother Reservoir; and **Short-eared Owls** passed through Jubilee River, Horton Brook Quarry and Moor Green Lakes. **Merlins**, **Short-eared Owls** and a **Hen Harrier** were also reported from the Downs. An adult drake **Eider** was a very rare find at Main Pit in the evening of Oct 2nd, and was still present the next morning. A **Whooper Swan** was at Lower Farm GP on Oct 15th. Queen Mother Reservoir had a good run: single **Arctic Terns** on Oct 2nd and 23rd; a **Grey Plover** on Oct 9th; **Rock Pipits** on many dates, with a maximum of three on Oct 16th; a **Little Gull** on Oct 15th; a **Black Redstart** on Oct 15th and 16th; and a **Great Northern Diver** flew over the car park on Oct 29th. **Crossbills** were widespread but with the majority in the east of the county, including 20 at Buckler's Forest, 18 at Swinley Park and 15 at Wishmoor Bottom mid-month. Even Queen Mother Reservoir was in on the act when six flew over on Oct 10th.

NOVEMBER: Queen Mother Reservoir recorded yet another **Kittiwake** on Nov 2nd, but sadly it was found dead the next day. The **Marsh Harrier** made its final appearance of the year at Great Meadow Pond on Nov 1st. A **Hen Harrier** hunted at Fawley on Nov 6th, while a **Merlin** was seen at Washmore on Nov 4th. A **Black Redstart** was feeding from the solar panels at Woolhampton on Nov 8th and 9th. The **Cattle Egret** stayed at Lower Farm GP all month; **Great White Egrets** were regularly reported from Moor Green Lakes, Main Pit and Woolhampton GPs. **Crossbills** were widespread in east Berkshire, while in the west up to five were at Snelsmore Common and 20 were in Fence Wood on Nov 24th. **Mediterranean** and **Caspian Gulls** were both reported at Lower Farm GP, Main Pit and Queen Mother Reservoir, and the latter site also held two **Herring Gulls** of the *argentatus* race. A **Black-necked Grebe** was on the Reservoir on Nov 14th, and **Water Pipits** were seen there on four dates in November and at Horton on Nov 21st. At Combe Wood, three



Kittiwake, Queen Mother Reservoir, Nov 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.



Cattle Egret, Lower Farm GP, Nov 4th, Andy Tomczynski.

Hawfinches were in the treetops on Nov 23rd. By the end of the month, **Jack Snipe** numbers had built up to 13 in a small area of flooded grass at Horton, and a juvenile **Scaup** was located at Searles Farm Lane GP on Nov 28th.

DECEMBER: birdwatchers were treated to impressive **Starling** murmurations over Thatcham Marsh in December, with 7,500 on Dec 1st the largest estimate of numbers. The start of the month saw a significant arrival of **White-fronted Geese**, and flocks of up to 13 at Remenham, up to 27 at Wigmore Lane GP, and seven in Windsor Great Park accounted for other sightings of smaller numbers in those areas. A **Siberian (tristis) Chiffchaff** showed well at a landfill site at Colnbrook on Dec 6th. A **Black Redstart** was at Barkham from Dec 8th to 11th, while another, a smart male, quickly passed through Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 24th. A drake **Pintail** was at Green Park on Dec 8th and 9th, two drakes were at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 21st, while the **Scaup** remained at Searles Farm Lane GP until Dec 17th. The **Cattle Egret** at Lower Farm GP and the **Great White Egrets** at Padworth Lane GP, Moor Green Lakes and Fleethill Farm stayed all month, with occasional sightings of the latter species also at Main Pit, Woolhampton GPs and Temple. A **Whooper Swan** joined three **Mute Swans** in a field just south of the county boundary at Streatley from Dec 13th to 15th. Christmas Day arrivals included a **Brent Goose** at Queen Mother Reservoir, which stayed to the year's end, and a **Ruddy Duck** at Fleethill Farm that remained in the area until the spring.



White-fronted Goose, Bisham, Dec 5th, Marek Walford.

2020: My Year with Sound

By Paul Bright-Thomas

The year 2020 will be remembered for many things, but it was also the year I entered a new dimension in birding, via “nocmig”. This is short for “nocturnal migration”, or birding by night-time sound recording, which has been growing in popularity. I got myself a digital recorder at the end of 2019, with the intention of recording something, sometime, but as the first Covid-19 lockdown began in late March, I realised that spring migration was upon us, and so began to record from home. By the end of December 2020, I had recorded on 221 nights and found that some pretty amazing things could be heard from my Wokingham garden. It has become an important part of my routine and a fascinating point of contact with nature.

Before I share the highlights, I should answer the likely question “What exactly do you do?”. If the forecast is relatively dry and not too windy, I set up the recorder in the garden after dark to record whatever can be heard until I collect it in the morning (usually between 9 and 12 hours later). I use a small Olympus digital recorder which has built-in microphones and some storage. To protect it from the weather, I stand it up in a large plastic pudding basin, which I can cover with clingfilm if rain is a possibility. The bowl gives an illusion of collecting sound, but since the microphones point upwards, it provides shielding rather than amplification. I later bought a 60cm parabolic dish which offers more sensitivity on completely dry nights.

The hard work of finding bird sounds in the recordings is done visually, using the free software Audacity to display the sound as a spectrogram on a timeline, which allows interesting patterns to be visualised and, with practice, recognised. I view about 30 seconds at a time and can step rapidly through a night’s-worth of background noise, skipping over frequent foxes or passing humans (and many ambulance sirens in those early months). I take short clips of any recognisable species or an unknown sound worthy of further analysis. The directionality of the microphones makes it possible to separate overhead bird sound from ground-level noises. When the dawn chorus starts, everything gets much more jumbled, but I often take the time to listen to the dawn and daytime sounds too, to record my local birds and listen for any daytime migrants or oddities. In the following I have labelled species recorded with (N) for night and (D) for day, based on whether they were recorded before the start of dawn chorus (true nocmig), or as part of it.

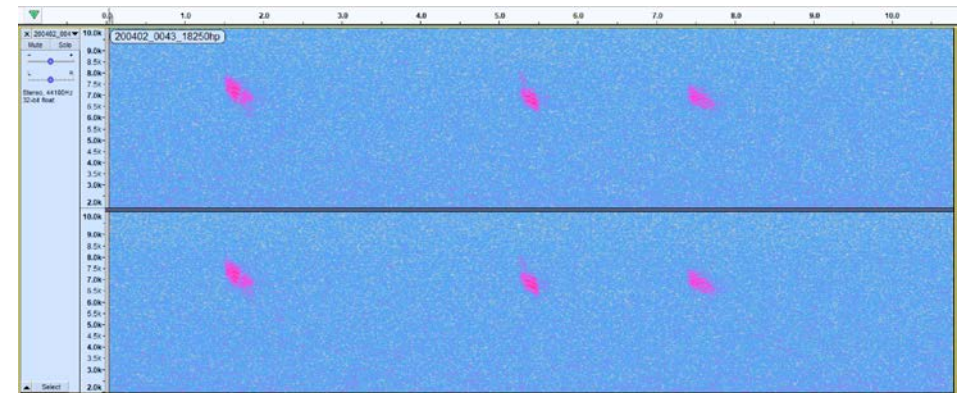


Figure 1: Redwing flight calls, 00:41BST April 2nd 2020

The first night's recording yielded a calling **Wigeon** (N) – strong inverted V shape – which was a first record for the garden and a very good start! The classic noctmig call in late March is **Redwing** (N) and the high descending note with close wavering bands was heard multiple times each night. The next two most regular birds were **Moorhen** (N) and **Coot** (N), heard on about 50% of spring nights as they roam widely in the dark, and a local **Tawny Owl** (N) hooting regularly from early April.

The evening of March 31st brought something very exciting, a train of **Common Scoter** (N) calls. Overland Scoter migration is a regular spring phenomenon, the true scale of which is being revealed by noctmig; across the country, there were 500+ records of nocturnal Scoter movement over the next few nights, as flocks moved from the Channel and Irish Sea across England to the North Sea.

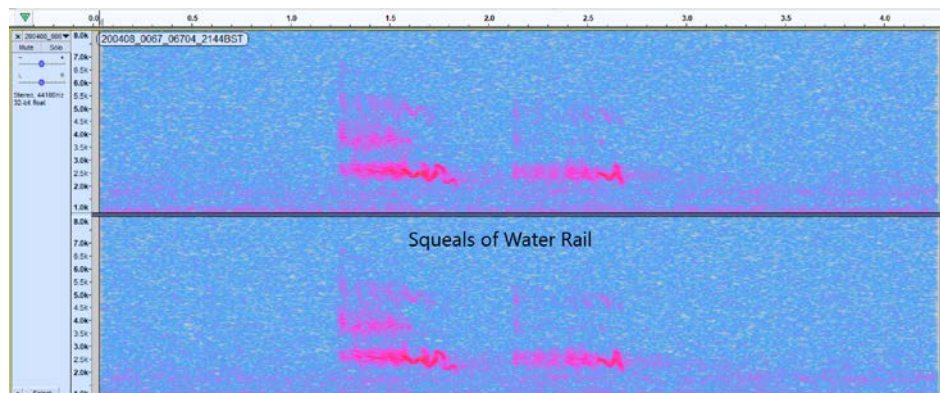


Figure 2: Water Rail, 21:44BST April 8th 2020

Spring migration continued to build with new birds moving north in the form of **Snipe** (N), **Teal** (N) and **Dunlin** (N), plus a second Common Scoter record. A grating call from April 5th went unidentified for many months until recognized as **Tufted Duck** (N), followed by **Water Rail** (N) and **Oystercatcher** (N), all new for the garden. **Little Grebe** (N) and **Grey Heron** (N) added to the waterbird tally, before early May brought one of the most anticipated noctmig sounds, with a flock of **Whimbrel** (N) giving over 50 trains of whistling calls in a two-minute period; another flock followed a week later.

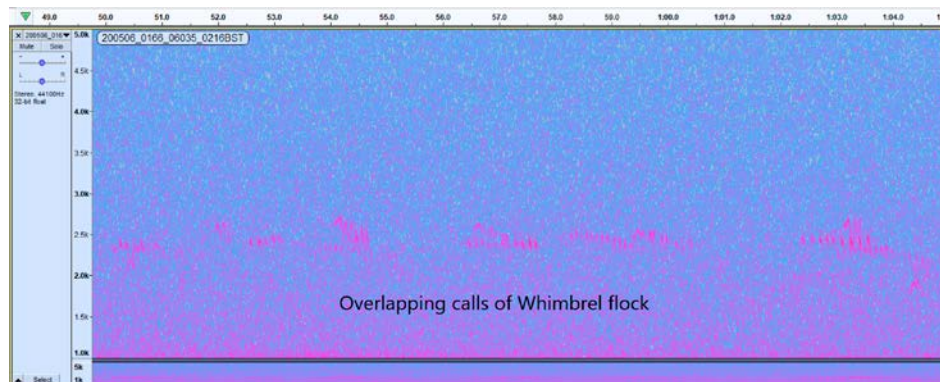


Figure 3: Whimbrel flock, 02:16BST May 6th 2020

The dawn chorus had been full of vigour since my first recordings, always led by **Song Thrush** (D) and **Robin** (D), and the variety was enhanced by spring migrants like **Chiffchaff** (D) and **Blackcap** (D). Local birds were showing up in the post-dawn parts of the recordings, with **Kingfisher** (D) regularly audible from mid-May, and a first **Raven** (D) recorded at the end of the month. **Red Kite** (D) and **Buzzard** (D) are the two most vocal birds of prey, and both were recorded multiple times after sunrise. **Goldcrest** (D) is a scarce winter bird in my garden, but a singing male passed through in late May. Even more surprising was a pre-dawn **Yellowhammer** (N) and although there are birds about a mile away, this seemed to be an unlikely month to record one out of territory.

June was mostly quiet at night, with resident birds from dawn, increasingly supplemented by the repetitive begging calls of young **Robins** (D) and other recently fledged youngsters. The **Kingfishers** (D) were still very active on the Emm Brook, and on one morning a bird flew straight through the garden calling, peaking at an incredibly loud volume with its piercing whistle call.

In July, the mornings were suddenly depleted by the disappearance of **Song Thrush** (D) song, the real bandmaster of the dawn chorus. Melancholy **Blackbird** (D) song also petered out, with **Blackcaps** (D) still singing for most of the month; the **Wrens** (D) kept going, of course. Somewhat quieter mornings did increase the chance of detecting daytime flyovers, starting with my first **Siskin** (D) recorded. **Herring Gulls** (D) were quite often heard, including the begging call of a juvenile late in the month. As **Swifts** (D) rallied for departure, they were recorded on a couple of mornings, unknown if they were the last remaining birds from a few streets away, or others already on their fantastic journey.

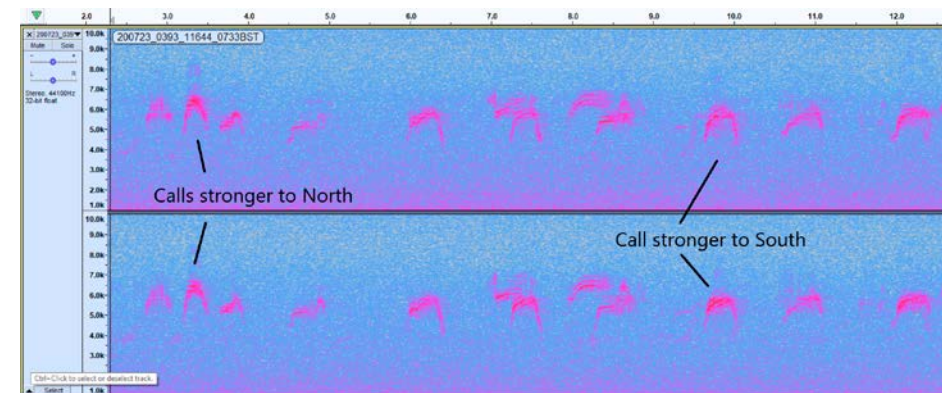


Figure 4: Common Swift calls, 07:33BST July 23rd 2020

In August, a local **Green Woodpecker** (D) was recorded for the first time; even though regularly heard they are usually distant and so faint on recordings. The same could not be said for the first recording of **Ring-necked Parakeet** (D), deafening as it announced its traversal of the soundscape. As southbound migration got going, further migrants passed in the form of **Common Sandpiper** (N), **Ringed Plover** (N) and three **Tree Pipits** (N) recorded in late August.

Continuing into September, there were several short, high calls that may yet prove to be **Spotted Flycatcher** (N), but the first **House Martin** (D) calls were unmistakable. The first recording of **Rook** (D) came mid-month and in the second half of September brought many **Meadow Pipits** (D) migrating in daytime as expected, together with **Pied Wagtails** (D) and

more **Goldfinches** (D), **Siskins** (D) and **Linnets** (D). The calls and then hooting of **Tawny Owl** (N) became more frequent, but the real prize for September was a shrill wavering call on two nights from a passing **Barn Owl** (N), something I had never expected. The very end of the month was marked by the first returning **Redwing** (N), and another great bird for the garden with a clear recording of **Hawfinch** (D) calls, coming from probably two birds passing over.

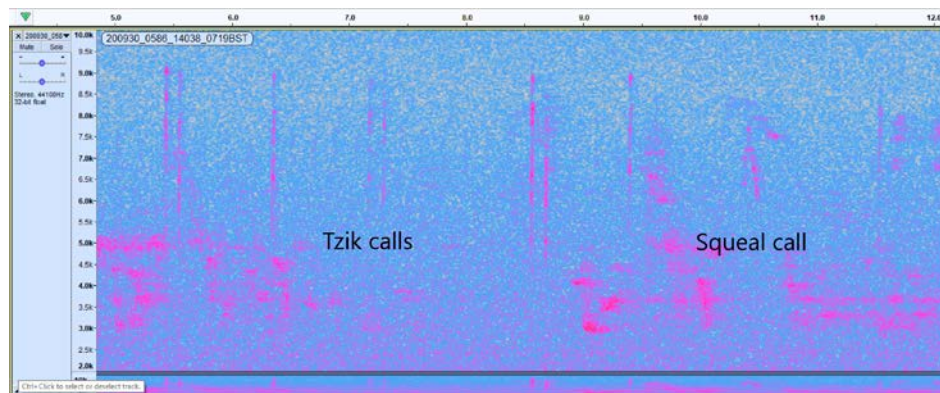


Figure 5: Hawfinch, 07:19BST September 30th 2020

October nights were quiet, apart from Redwings and Tawny Owl, but a **Golden Plover** (N) was a welcome nocturnal migrant. Mornings, however, were very busy, with pipits and finches, and the first of two **Crossbill** (D) recordings was made that month. **Fieldfare** (D) calls were occasional in the mornings, along with **Redpoll** (D) and a few **Skylarks** (D), but **Reed Bunting** (D) was a less expected passer-by. Later in the month, nocturnal **Song Thrush** (N) and **Blackbird** (N) could be heard on passage amidst the growing volumes of **Redwing** (N). Amongst **Chaffinch** (D) calls, **Brambling** (D) was a sought-after migrant, with several more over the remainder of autumn. November continued the thrush and finch movements, but a **Bullfinch** (D) was probably local and brought the total of finch species recorded to ten (all were also seen on at least one occasion). A pre-dawn **Dunlin** (N) was the last of the wader passage, after which numbers and variety were much reduced and I stopped recording for most of December.

Retrospective analysis is often required with initially unrecognised nocturnal sounds, comparing recordings with the available online references to reach a conclusion, sometimes asking for expert opinion; such were my records of Tufted Duck, Water Rail, Yellowhammer and Barn Owl. One discovery was exceptionally delayed, yet delightful. A few weeks into my nocturnal immersion, I was enjoying the dawn chorus so much that I started to keep clips of the daily ensemble. On one April day only, I kept a clip of one minute at every quarter hour, from before dawn until 7am, filed away unheard. I write this in 2022, and these clips were first played two years after recording, when I found a faint phrase repeated three times, the strongest of these just loud enough to convince me that I had recorded that most iconic of spring sounds, a male **Cuckoo** (D) doing what it is famous for.

Altogether I recorded at least 75 species in this 9-month period, with 11 species never previously seen or heard in fifteen years at the same location, along with some intriguing mystery recordings still to be deciphered. It has been a fascinating and educational experience that has greatly improved my understanding of bird sounds and migration, and after three years and 700 nights of recording it is something I continue to do as regularly as possible.

The Changing Status of Firecrest in West Berkshire

by Dr. Debby Reynolds CB

(Tetrad Analysis provided by Robert Godden)



Firecrest, Bucklebury, 2024, Debby Reynolds

This paper assesses the apparent changes in the status of Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*) in West Berkshire over the last 18 years. It concludes that there is clear evidence of a range expansion and increase in the population in the west of the county. However the scale of the increase is uncertain, due to the inherent biases in data collected by unstructured observations. This raises wider questions which local ornithologists are invited to address.

The Birds of Berkshire 2013 [Berkshire Atlas 2013] notes that the first record of Firecrest in Berkshire was in 1958 and the first spring or summering birds were observed in 1972. For several years thereafter all records received were mentioned in The Birds of Berkshire annual reports. Subsequently the Crowthorne and Swinley Forest areas were described as the only areas holding colonies, the first confirmed breeding being in 1979, and then intensive field work from 2001 revealed the east of the county to be a breeding stronghold with a few records of overwintering.

It is clear that the situation has now changed significantly. Twenty-four observers submitted a total of 304 records of Firecrests from West Berkshire to the country recorder over the 18 years from 2002 to 2020 (the year of this Birds of Berkshire annual report). The information contains data on the location and date of sighting, and, in some cases, details of breeding behaviour as well. Figures 1 and 2 show an apparent steady increase in records from 2010, followed by a dramatic increase in 2019 and 2020. There is a clear predominance of records in the breeding season from March to June, with a low scattering of records in other periods of the year. This brings a new perspective to the 2013 Berkshire classification of "scarce visitor in all seasons" via the Newbury District Ornithological Club [2020 Annual Report] of "scarce passage migrant, rare resident, has bred" to my own suggested classification of "widespread, likely to be breeding in most suitable habitats, scarce in winter".

However there are many quirks in the data. My own records account for over 50% of the records (160 of 304) and cover the period from 2017 to 2020. It is interesting to look back,

Figure 1: Firecrest Records by Year

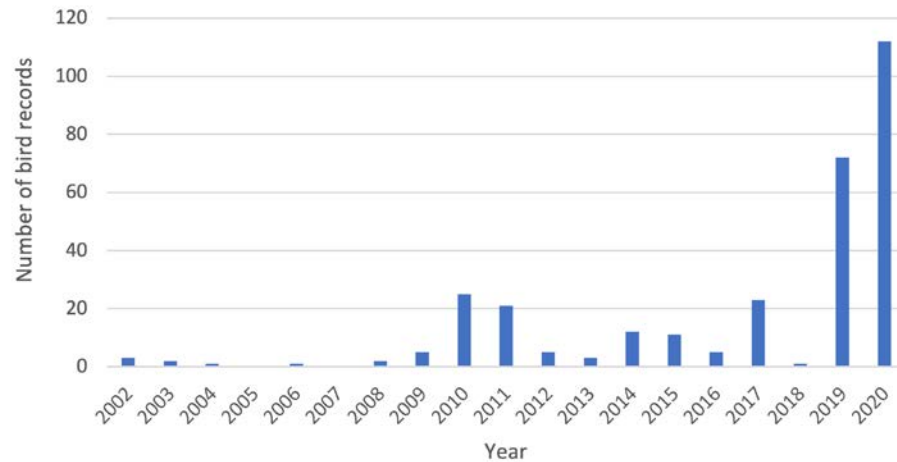
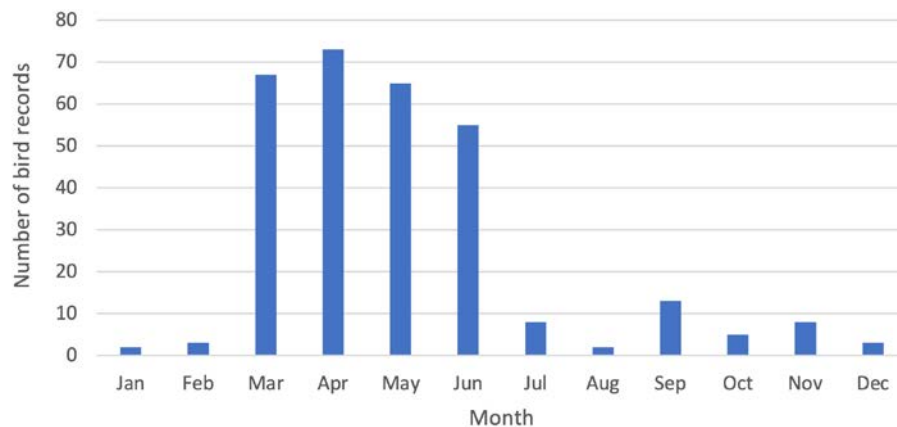


Figure 2: Firecrests Recorded by Month



knowing how and why this happened, to highlight the bias this unsystematic observation and recording has produced.

The 2019 report for Berkshire [Birds of Berkshire 2019] says: “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”.

For 2020, of 112 records in west Berkshire all but two (one at Fence Wood, Hermitage, and the other at Southridge Farm SU57) were from the woodlands around Upper Bucklebury.

This raises a number of questions including why so many records from one area and why so few elsewhere. The latter is easily answered as COVID 19 put a stop to the outdoor activities of most people. My own fortunes were different, frequent absence on foreign work travel was stopped and there was much more time at home, and the imperative of daily exercise also meant much more local birding. For me, every day from March 2020 onwards comprised a long run, with binoculars and camera in Firecrest country, and every Firecrest was recorded and submitted. In addition, the years since my first local record in 2017 had enabled me to learn the song and calls, so that I can pick up the sound and find birds that a great many, probably most others, would completely overlook. The observations were not adequately structured, or my skills sufficient to determine the numbers of territory, suffice to say there were a lot and many more than in 2019.

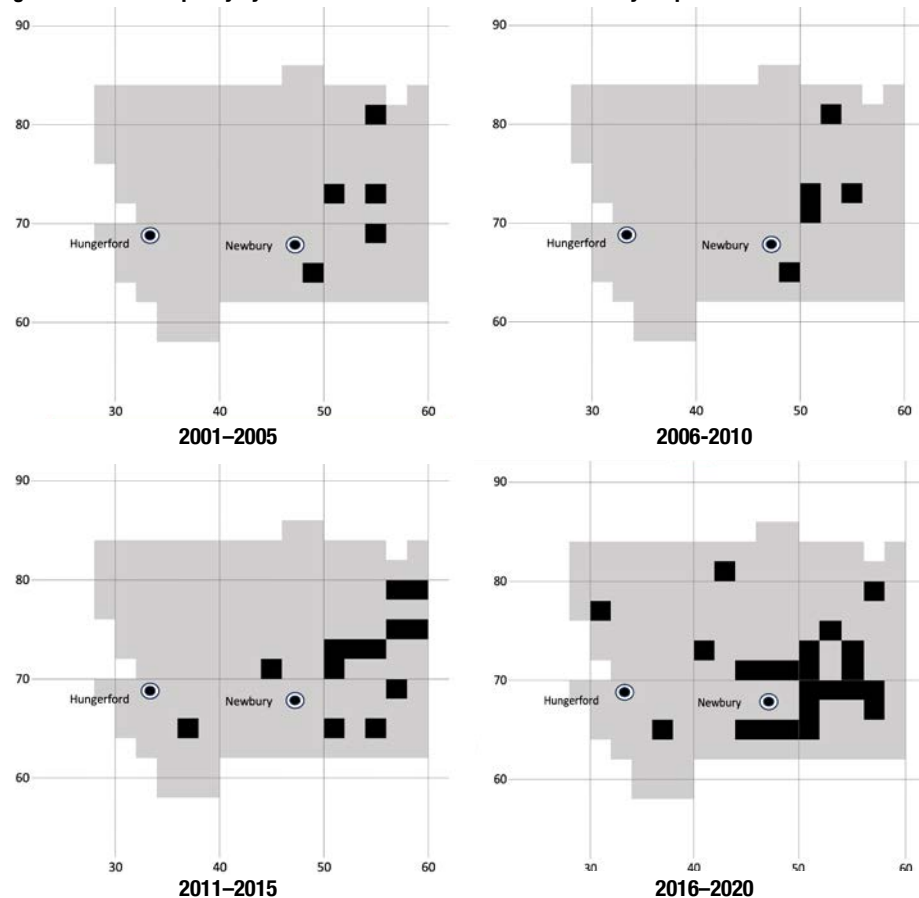
This meant the power of surveillance for Firecrests was dramatically transformed and, since the birds were evidently there, the number of records shot up. The places I visited included some sites which were definitely new territories, but included others not previously surveyed. My conclusion is that the population has undoubtedly increased in number and distribution, probably due to climate factors, but that the scale of the increase is probably overestimated by the change in survey method. And as a ‘plot spoiler’ for the 2021-23 reports, this species is doing even better and can now be found easily in many more areas. This strongly suggests that a structured survey would be of value to determine the population. This could be challenging because of the difficulty many people have in hearing and seeing Firecrests. The BTO’s Breeding Bird Survey is helpful but too generalised. It may be that the advent of The Cornell Lab Merlin App could also help, but would bring its own bias and might find these quiet songsters hard to detect.

Finally, in an attempt to overcome some of the bias introduced when examining numbers of records from unstructured surveys, Firecrest records from west Berkshire have been plotted



Firecrest, Bucklebury, 2024, Debby Reynolds

Figure 3 Tetrad Occupancy by Firecrests in west Berkshire in four five-year periods



according to their associated tetrad. The Berkshire Bird Records Database, which holds records from a wide range of sources, was accessed to extract Firecrest records since the year 2000. Records west of SU60 were selected and locations were converted to tetrads. Figures 3a – 3d present tetrads in which Firecrests were reported in the months March to June in four five-year periods. The period 2011 to 2016 saw the first increase in Firecrest occupancy, with a considerable presence in the woods north-east of Newbury. This was maintained in the following five years, along with an increase in spring records along the Kennet Valley and on Greenham and Crookham Commons.

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Black Redstarts – Pair Raises Two Broods in Wokingham

by Paul O'Neill

Despite being a regular, though scarce, passage migrant, breeding records for Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* in Berkshire have been few and far between since the first record at Windsor Castle in 1964. There have been just three proven breeding records since 2010, all from the same site in Reading town centre, the last of these being in 2016 [Birds of Berkshire 2010-2016]. The appearance of a male at a site on the northern edge of Wokingham in June 2019 raised hopes of a possible breeding pair but, despite the male singing in the area for at least three weeks, no female was seen.

On April 3rd 2020, a snatch of song was heard coming from close to my house on the northern edge of Wokingham and, having run indoors to get my binoculars, I located a male Black Redstart at the top of a large tree about 75 m away. It flew almost immediately but, surprisingly, came towards me and landed on a wooden fence less than 10 m away, affording excellent views. It then flew off and disappeared so, despite looking for it for the next few days, I assumed it was most likely just a passing bird. However, a week later it was heard singing some 100 m away, on a housing construction site, in the same area as the individual seen in 2019.

For the next six weeks the bird continued to sing from prominent perches in and around the largely ('Covid-19 lockdown-induced') inactive construction site, mostly from scaffolding, rooftops and TV aerials. In the third week of May, I thought I caught a brief glimpse of a female carrying food but the brevity of the sighting and poor light meant I couldn't be sure. On May 29th things suddenly got more exciting, as a male and female were seen together, and on June 5th the female was seen taking food into an uncovered extraction vent, at a height of about 10 m, in the exterior wall of an occupied three-storey block of flats. Over the next 25 days, both birds were observed making ever more frequent feeding forays, with the male peaking at a rate of eight feeds in a 15 minute period. On July 1st, a juvenile was seen at the entrance to the nest hole, and the female was seen taking food into an adjacent garden where it seemed that the juveniles may have been taking refuge underneath a wooden shed.

Three juveniles were seen on a garden fence on July 6th, directly below the nest site, and on July 13th the male was provisioning four juveniles. The male was again singing on July 15th and the juveniles continued to be present until July 28th.

On July 31st I was alerted to the possibility of a second nest site and, on visiting later that day, the male and female were seen taking food into another uncovered extraction vent approximately 40 m from the first nest site. Unlike the first site, this site was just three metres above the ground on the exterior wall of a house, alongside a driveway that was in daily use, and just two metres from a front door. Fears of the possibility of disturbance and subsequent nest abandonment were unfounded, thankfully.

A juvenile was seen in the entrance to the vent on August 9th, and two days later there was a juvenile on the house roof and another in the vent. Between August 11th and 17th, the female and one or more juveniles were seen in the, now active, construction site on the opposite side of the road.

On August 18th three juveniles were seen on a nearby house roof.

The last juvenile was seen on September 4th; the adult male and female continued to be present in the area until October 16th.

Black Redstarts have been regarded as having strong site fidelity, a fact supported by the Reading breeding records, although some studies suggest that ".....in Britain most breeding



Male Black Redstart, Wokingham, 2020,
Paul O'Neill



Female Black Redstart, Wokingham, 2020,
Paul O'Neill

sites are only occupied by Black Redstarts for a short period of time, often just one year..... even though the habitat did not appear to change.” [Holloway, S.J. & Glue, D.E.]

The Wokingham breeding site is constantly evolving, with building expected to continue for some time yet but hopefully, despite or because of the construction, there will be more records from this site in future years.

Observations

The nesting sites chosen by the pair were consistent with known preferences for the species, as was the building of an alternative nest for the second brood. “A typical nest site comprises a ledge generally within a building, or holes and crevices in rocks and walls. Most nests are located 1-4 m above ground level, but can occur up to heights of 45 m.....In the UK, pairs usually have a single brood [Glue, D.E.]. The female takes between five and eight days to build the nest in which 4-6 eggs are usually laid (one egg each day). The eggs hatch after 13-17 days and chicks fledge after 12-19 days. After fledging, chicks seek safety amongst rocks, vegetation or other cover, where they may remain for most of the day and night.” [Holloway, S.J. & Glue, D.E.]

Based on the fledging date of the first brood, and thus the approximate laying date of the second brood, the date the second brood fledged, August 11th, was within the calculated fledging dates of August 8th-15th. This also correlates with data showing that “Females frequently re-nested before fledglings of the previous brood were independent.” [Weggler, M]

Interestingly, the fact that the male was seen regularly provisioning all four of the juveniles from the first brood is at odds with studies that show “.... that in black redstarts parental investment is equivalent for both sexes during the nestling period but that after fledging males have significantly lower feeding rates than females. We found two patterns of post fledging care: either each parent will provide preferential care to particular chicks within the brood (brood division) or the female will take care of all the fledglings, with the male providing no help or occasionally feeding one chick.” [Draganoiu, T. I. *et al.*] It is possible



Juvenile Black Redstarts, Wokingham, 2020,
Nicky Collins



Black Redstart nest site, Wokingham, 2020,
Paul O'Neill

that the male in this instance took on feeding duties whilst the female was busy constructing the second nest and laying the second brood.

In addition, based on the relatively limited observations possible at the Wokingham site, in relation to the first brood, there was no evidence of any brood division whereby parents preferentially feed one or more fledglings.

As far as could be ascertained, male involvement in feeding fledglings from the second brood was minimal.

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“Baltic Gull” – A New Bird for Berkshire

by Nigel Cleere

During the winter months, large numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* gather together at Lower Farm Gravel Pit in west Berkshire, before heading off to roost on larger water bodies further east. Two subspecies regularly occur at this site, *L.f. graellsii* and the darker, less common *L.f. intermedius*, although these races may represent clinal variation of a single taxon [Olsen, K. M. & Larsson, H.].

On January 9th and 10th 2012 whilst recording colour ring details, I took note of an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull with a colour ring on the left tarsus and metal ring on the right tarsus. The bird was noted as being slightly smaller, darker and neater looking than surrounding individuals and was considered to be possibly a female *L.f.intermedius*. The colour ring was black with a white inscription J127 and the metal ring was later confirmed to be Stavanger Museum 4250077.

Investigation of its origin showed it to have been ringed as an adult female (in at least its fifth calendar year) in a breeding colony at Maritholman Sørvest in the Horsvær archipelago, northwest Norway, on July 2nd 2005. Since it was ringed, this individual had ranged widely and been sighted a number of times (see below). During the winter months, this bird had been noted at two sites in southern England and at one site in Morocco. During spring migration, it had been recorded at one site in France, but of particular interest is that during the summer it had been back on its breeding grounds each year between 2005 and 2009.

The taxonomy and identification of Lesser Black-backed Gulls is often controversial and has been the subject of much discussion in the literature. One recent paper discussing the breeding gulls in the Horsvær archipelago, from where the bird seen at Lower Farm GP originated, was published in *British Birds* [Baggott, C. *et al.*]. In their article, the authors postulated, through discussion of the birds' plumage, appearance, migration patterns and moult strategy, that the gulls breeding in the Horsvær archipelago should be considered to be of the nominate race *Larus fuscus fuscus*, known colloquially in the UK as “Baltic Gull” and this view has now been officially accepted.

Prior to the publication of the paper, “Baltic Gull” was on the British list based on a single ringing recovery and the sighting of a ringed bird (Ed. a different individual to J127)



J127 “Baltic Gull” adult female, at least 6th calendar year, Gloucester landfill site, Oct 17th 2006, John Sanders

Sightings of “Baltic Gull” J127

Recovery Date	Recovery Location	Ringer(s)	Days Since Ringing	Distance (km)...	Bearing (deg)...
				from Ringing Site	
Jul 2nd 2005	I Maritholman Sørvest, Nordhørsvær, Sømna, Nordland, Norway	"65°19'44"N 011°37'49"E	NINA - Tromsø	(Ringing Site & Date)	
Oct 18th 2005	Gloucester landfill site, Gloucester, Great Britain	"51°51'40"N 002°16'22"W	Sanders, John	108	1692
Oct 20th 2005	Gloucester landfill site, Gloucester, Great Britain	"51°51'40"N 002°16'22"W	Sanders, John	110	1692
Nov 1st 2005	Gloucester landfill site, Gloucester, Great Britain	"51°51'40"N 002°16'22"W	Sanders, John	122	1692
Nov 19th 2005	Oued Louaar, Tan Tan, Morocco	"28°10'00"N 011°48'00"W	Talamelli, Adriano	140	4441
Jun 22nd 2006	I Maritholman Sørvest, Nordhørsvær, Sømna, Nordland, Norway	"65°19'44"N 011°37'49"E	NINA Tromsø v/ Jan Ove Bustnes	355	0
Oct 17th 2006	Gloucester landfill site, Gloucester, Great Britain	"51°51'40"N 002°16'22"W	Sanders, John	472	1692
Apr 12th 2007	Blaringhem, Nord, France	"50°41'00"N 002°24'00"E	Vercruysse, Harry	649	1713
Jun 20th 2007	I Maritholman Sørvest, Nordhørsvær, Sømna, Nordland, Norway	"65°19'44"N 011°37'49"E	NINA Tromsø v/ Jan Ove Bustnes	718	0
Jun 17th 2008	I Maritholman Sørvest, Nordhørsvær, Sømna, Nordland, Norway	"65°19'44"N 011°37'49"E	Bentsen, Thomas; Bustnes, Jan Ove; Helberg, Morten	1081	0
Jul 30th 2008	I Maritholman Sørvest, Nordhørsvær, Sømna, Nordland, Norway	"65°19'44"N 011°37'49"E	Helberg, Morten; Omnø, Runar	1124	0
Jun 19th 2009	I Maritholman Sørvest, Nordhørsvær, Sømna, Nordland, Norway	"65°19'44"N 011°37'49"E	Bustnes, Jan Ove; Lorentzen, Nils Helge	1448	0
Mar 24th 2010	Stoke Orchard landfill site, Gloucester, Great Britain	"51°56'37"N 002°05'20"W	Sanders, John	1726	1679
Jan 9th 2012	Lower Farm GP, Newbury, Berkshire, Great Britain	"51°23'37"N 001°17'15"W	Cleere, Nigel	2382	1716

in Gloucestershire in 2007. Following a review of recent sightings in Great Britain, 12 records, including the bird seen at Lower Farm GP, have now been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee [Holt, C. *et al.*] and two further records have been accepted subsequently. “Baltic Gull” can now be added to the list of birds recorded in Berkshire.

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Bonaparte's Gulls in Berkshire

by Chris Heard

Bonaparte's Gull was not recorded in Berkshire until the 21st century. The first record, which was at Theale GPs in April 2013, has now been swiftly followed by a second bird: at Wraysbury GPs in March 2020. The following account describes the finding of both of these birds and includes individual descriptions taken from the BBRC submissions.

The 2013 Bonaparte's Gull was found on April 26th – which proved to be a remarkable day in Berkshire – one of those rare occasions, in spring, when interesting migrants seem to show up everywhere you go! My day started at Queen Mother Reservoir, where four Black-necked Grebes and a Sanderling were all new in, and I then decided to make my way to the Berkshire Downs, via a few other sites. An Arctic Tern had been seen at Main Pit, Theale, and I called in there mid-afternoon. The Arctic Tern was still present and, while scanning the open water (at 15:20), I noticed a slightly smaller gull among a dozen or so Black-heads feeding over the centre of the pit. It was rather distant (c. a third of a mile), but it consistently lacked duskiness on the underside of the primaries; if it had been a first summer I wouldn't have placed much store by this feature but as it was in full summer plumage (with a complete hood) this was harder to dismiss...

A hail-shower passed over, forcing me to shelter under some trees, and, when it cleared, I found that the gulls had actually moved a bit closer, allowing me to confirm that it was indeed a Bonaparte's Gull and enabling some 'record shots' to be taken. I texted Birdline South East and two local birders (Derek Barker and Fraser Cottingham) with news of my find. However, a few minutes later (and after just c.10 mins total viewing), a heavier bout of hail moved in and all the gulls seemed to fly off west. Once the hail had eased, I crossed the road to Hosehill Lake, where there is a breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls, and I eventually relocated the Bonaparte's there, resting on the bank; this allowed much better photos to be taken. But, although at much closer range, it could still be difficult to pick out; in fact when the growing group of c.20 local birders had failed to spot it, I had to go back and find it for them. As this was the first record of Bonaparte's Gull for Berkshire, this bird attracted a lot of local interest. And, luckily, most interested birders were able to catch up with it by early evening, because it was not seen subsequently.

Description: a small 'hooded' gull in full summer plumage (hood complete, with no white flecks). similar to Black-headed Gull but slightly smaller and more compact.

Upperparts (mantle/wing-coverts): light grey, a subtly darker shade than Black-headed. Neck, body and tail pure white (no significant wash of colour). Head with clearly defined charcoal-grey hood (completely lacking the brown component of Black-headed), relieved by pristine white 'eyelids' (incomplete eye-ring), but not showing any contrast with the wholly blackish bill.

Spread wing showed white wedge formed by outer primaries, contrasting with light grey inner primaries – which lacked dusky-grey on the underside (unlike adult Black-headed Gull) – but all neatly tipped with black, forming a well-defined trailing edge (however, contra a common cliché, I would not say that the resulting pattern bore much comparison with outer wing of Arctic Tern; and I initially had one for direct comparison!). At rest, on the underside of the closed wing, the primaries showed a neat black triangle at the wing-tip contrasting with whitish distally (not something which I had noted before, but it is just visible in some of the photos). Legs and feet: deep pink (quite distinct from the red of adult Black-headed)

I *did* manage to get to the Berkshire Downs that evening, where I found a male Blue-headed Wagtail and six White Wagtails, with a flock of 80 Yellow Wagtails, on a flooded field at Great Shefford. And later at Bury Down I found a Dotterel, which was subsequently enjoyed by many observers and proved to be the only Berkshire sighting of the year. That was an excellent end to what was undoubtedly my best-ever spring day's birding in Berkshire!

Berkshire's second Bonaparte's Gull was found - in much less notable circumstances - at Wraysbury GPs on March 21st 2020. I arrived at the gravel pits mid-morning, and located an adult Mediterranean Gull with a horde of Black-heads flycatching over the Village Pit. After checking some other pits, I stopped at the village Co-op to look for some bread (there wasn't any due to the widespread Covid-19 induced panic-buying!). Being close by, I checked to see if the Med Gull was still present and, while scanning through the gulls with bins (at 13:30), I spotted a slightly smaller gull – which, when it turned, showed translucent primaries with a crisp black trailing-edge... I made an audible "woah" and ran back to the car to get my telescope. On returning, it took a while to relocate because, from my restricted viewpoint, I was downwind of most of the gulls. I soon realised that *in a rear view* the rose-pink legs and feet were one of the best ways to locate it. The bird kept strictly to the north side of the pit, at 75-90 m range, so only 'record shots' were obtained that day with my 'digiscope' set-up.

Description: a small gull in full winter plumage, similar to Black-headed Gull in flight but slightly smaller and more compact; with the gulls at varying ranges this could be hard to judge, but the wingspan was also slightly less – which could produce a quicker wingbeat (e.g. when fluttering to take an insect) – that sometimes brought Little Gull to mind. On the water, however, it was clearly smaller than all the Black-heads and maintained a consistently lower profile. When feeding it would make a duckling-like dash across the water (whereas Black-heads tended to hold their heads higher and pick downwards). Clean white head and underparts (latter sometimes looking slightly flushed with pink). Surprisingly, no sign of grey wash on nape/hindneck but a neat blackish, pear-shaped spot on the side of the head and just a few grey flecks on the hind-crown (so head pattern much tidier than a winter-plumage or first-winter Black-headed Gull, although most of those present had summer plumage hoods!). Pale grey 'mantle' contrasting with white rump and whole of tail. Spread wing showed white wedge on leading primaries, but inner primaries very pale grey (without duskiness of Black-headed) which, combined with the neat black trailing edge to all of the primaries, produced an Arctic Tern-like pattern (no doubt enhanced by the bright light conditions). Bill slightly shorter than Black-headed, rather slim and wholly black (with just a faint touch of brown near the gape). Legs and feet: clear rose-pink (quite distinct from the yellowish-flesh of first summer or the dark red of adult Black-heads)

Like many pits in the Wraysbury complex, the Village Pit was purchased by a large syndicate (RK Leisure) several years ago and soon afterwards steel paling fencing was erected around much of it. As a result, viewing was very restricted and it would only be possible to squeeze one or two other observers into the available viewing space (any more and it would have been impossible to maintain the then current government guidance for social distancing!). So, when it was still present the following day, I only felt able to invite one trusted confidant



*Bonaparte's Gull, Wraysbury GPs,
Mar 22nd 2020, LGR Evans*

to come and photograph it. However, most serious Berkshire listers had seen the previous Bonaparte's Gull at Theale GP in April 2013.

It is interesting to compare the UK occurrences of Bonaparte's Gull with its North American congener Ring-billed Gull. Britain's first Bonaparte's Gull was shot at Loch Lomond, Strathclyde, in April 1850 (following another shot in Belfast in 1848) but it has remained a national rarity. Whereas Ring-billed Gull went undetected in the UK until March 1973, when Rob Hume found one on Blackpill beach at Swansea in Wales. Subsequently, national sightings quickly increased, including several in Berkshire, and following a record 55 individuals in 1981 it was demoted from national rarity status in 1982. However the tables have now turned and, while Bonaparte's Gull records have maintained a gradual increase, Ring-billed has become rarer. Indeed, since 2019, Ring-billed has actually become the rarer of the two (see *British Birds* 115: 288). The reasons for this turnaround remain unclear.

Radde's Warbler (*Phylloscopus schwarzi*)

by Jan Legg, Newbury Ringing Group

Greenham Common, October 24th 2019
Observers: Jan Legg, Licensed A Ringer (JL)
Ian Weston, Licensed A Ringer (IW)
John Claridge, Helper (RJC)

Summary

During a ringing session at the Western Enclosure, Greenham Common, on October 24th 2019, an unusual *Phylloscopus* warbler was trapped in the bottom shelf of an 18 metre mist net. It had a prominent eye stripe, much more prominent than the *Phylloscopus* warblers expected. JL immediately thought of Radde's Warbler and showed it to IW and RJC, who thought the same. The bird was bagged and taken back to the ringing station. After consulting three references, [Svensson, L. *et al.* 2009], [Demongin, L.] and [Duijvendijk, N.], it was agreed to be a Radde's Warbler and the bird was ringed, processed, photographed and released.

The October 24th 2019 Ringing Session

Detail: this was the second of three sessions during week 43. JL arrived at the site at 07:35 and erected two 18 metre and one 12 metre mist nets by 08:00; around this time IW and RJC joined him. The weather was overcast, warm and calm, rain was forecast around 10:00 but apart from an occasional very light spotting did not materialise.

Two iPhone 5 powered portable Aker M1505 speakers and one iPod powered Altec Lansing nobi speaker intermittently played songs and calls of the following: Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Firecrest, Yellow-browed Warbler, Meadow Pipit, Redwing (both the "Scandinavian" and the "Latvian" song), Brambling, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin and Reed Bunting. The first bird was not netted until 08:55 when a Goldcrest was ringed.

On the next net round at about 09:15, two birds appeared to be in the nets: a Redwing and a Robin. JL approached the Redwing and on reaching it noticed below it another bird in the bottom shelf. It was only partially restrained and was trying to escape away from JL, pushing into the net pocket. Realising the bird might escape, he quickly put the bird in the ringer's grip and extracted it from the net. Whilst doing so he noticed that it was not one of the *Phylloscopus* species he expected it to be. For a start, it had a very prominent black eye



Photo 1, Jan Legg.



Photo 5, Jan Legg.



Photo 2, Ian Weston.



Photo 6, John Claridge.



Photo 3, Jan Legg.



Photo 4, Jan Legg.



Photo 7, Ian Weston.

stripe and a pale supercilium. He showed it to IW and RJC, and it was collectively thought it to be a Radde's Warbler.

The bird was bagged, and the Redwing was extracted and bagged; the Robin had been extracted and bagged by IW. First, the other two birds were ringed, processed and released. The warbler was then taken out of the bird bag and the ID confirmed. The BTO Ringers Info App was consulted for ring size, the caution as to size was noted. The fit to the tarsus was checked using the first notch of the ringing pliers and the A ring size stated was judged to be the best fit. Ring No AKJ1490 was fitted, rotating freely and up and down the tarsus, and stopping below the "knee" and above the "foot".

Biometrics: wing 65 mm, weight 12.1 g, fat score B2.

Age: 3 (1CY). Plumage fresh, feathers disseminated, loose, thinly distributed over breast and underwing, and showing fresh flesh pink (no flaking) skin, [Svensson, L, 1992]. Undertail coverts strong yellow buff, rectrices narrow and pointed (Photo 4).

Moult: no sign of active moult, moult score O (old, yet to have a full-grown full moult).

Wing Formula (Photo 3):

Emarginated P2 to P5

P2 emargination for about 75%

P3 to P5 emargination graduating from about 25% to 15%

P6 to P10 not emarginated

Wing point P3 and P4

Primary feather tips: no wear detected.

Fat Score: B2 base of tracheal pit obscured by fat to 1/3rd. (Yellow/pink)

Plumage

Head (Photo 1):

Crown: olive brown.

Supercilium: cream at front graduating from front to pale cream white.

Eye ring: cream, broken by eye stripe.

Eye stripe: black, broad about 80% of eye depth.

Eye: very dark grey brown.

Ear coverts: creamy with a grey wash and mottling.

Bill: upper mandible – dark horn colour, deeper than other common phyllos, not quite parallel with strong rounded buff bill tip (culmen), and buff slightly curved cutting edge.

Lower mandible – dark horn coloured graduating to buff coloured base.

Body (Photos 2,4,5,6,7)

Upperparts: nape, mantle, back, rump and upper tail coverts olive brown.

Underparts: chin, throat and breast buff cream with white tones, under tail coverts graduating from cream buff to strong beige yellow.

Wing (Photo 3)

Upper wing: remiges (primaries and secondaries), also primary, greater, secondary and median coverts: dark olive brown. Outer edges of remiges lighter.

Under wing: cream beige.

Tail (Photo 2 & 4)

Shape: rounded, rectrices pointed, tips no wear detected.

Upper tail: olive brown.

Under tail: light beige, brown, grey.

Legs (Photo 4)

Colour: yellow-beige, feet yellow.

Note: differences in tone in the photos are due to settings on different iPhones/Cameras.

Optics: two iPhone SE (cameras) and a Nikon Coolpix P610.

References

ID in the field

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Recent Observer Experience

Jan Legg:

BirdTrack complete lister, locally, European Iberian and Mediterranean Coast.

Radde's Warbler: first sighting, have seen closely related Dusky Warbler, Cley, Norfolk.

Ian Weston:

BirdTrack complete lister, locally, regular at Portland Bird Observatory.

Radde's Warbler: in the hand and field, Portland Bird Observatory.

John Claridge:

BirdTrack complete lister, locally, UK and worldwide, guided and unguided.

Radde's Warbler: first sighting.

Radde's Warbler UK Status

First recorded in the UK in 1958. There are 451 accepted records to the end of 2019; no records in 2018. Almost all records are on or near the coast. The status of Radde's Warbler continues to teeter between that of national rarity and very scarce migrant. The mean for the period 2010-2019 is ten records per year. There are six accepted records for 2019, all in October. Except for the Greenham Common record, all were on or near the coast: Flamborough Head 15th, Fair Isle 17th-18th, Land's End 20th, Isle of May 21st-23rd and Southwold 29th. As for some other far eastern species, its occurrence in the Western Palearctic has increased in recent times.

Radde's Warbler breeds in South Siberia and north-east China, and migrates through eastern China to winter in north Burma and Indochina, south to central Thailand.

Source: British Birds, Volume 114, Issue 8, August 2021. "Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2019".

Addendum: Site History and Ringing Activities

Site: Greenham and Crookham Common is the site of the former USAF airbase and Cruise Missile station (RAF Greenham Common) The base was vacated following the cruise missile crisis in the early 1990s. It was handed to West Berkshire Unitary Authority for reversion back to common land which was confirmed by an act of parliament. Until vacated the airbase consisted of one long runway with associate hard standings and mown grassland surrounded by a high security perimeter fence. Some areas outside the fence remain remnant heathland. Administration buildings and hangers became Greenham Business Park run by a trust and are no longer part of the common. In 2009 JL took over the ringing permission and rings on various parts of the common under the auspices of Newbury Ringing Group.

Before becoming common land, the concrete surfaces were removed, crushed and the hardcore used on the A34 Newbury Bypass. The removal of the surfaces exposed many areas of gravel. This with the grassland is reverting to heathland with Gorse, Heather, Blackberry bush and Birch scrub. The Gorse is managed on an eight-year rotation. The Western Enclosure is a fenced area of approximately 42 metres square subdivided in two. The fencing is barbed wire and pig mesh to the perimeter and the eastern half has in addition rabbit wire including forming a central dividing fence. The object of the enclosure initially was to exclude cattle and pony grazing, and also from the eastern portion rabbits, to monitor plant growth on the bare gravel. This monitoring ceased sometime around the year 2000.

The Common is a very popular open space with the public and is heavily used by the ever-increasing human population from the surrounding environs. In particular it is very popular with dog walkers; a recent survey found that more than 95% of visits were for this purpose. The enclosure forms an ideal barrier to livestock, people and dogs and in 2010 permission to ring there was given.

Note: in 2011 management of the Common was handed over to the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust on contract

Ringing activities: Within the enclosure five mist net rides were created and the Gorse, grass, Heather and Birch scrub “gardened” regularly to suit ringing activities. After several sessions throughout the seasons, it was found that the site was used by many migrating birds from July to November. It was noticed that birds were moving through in numbers daily; birds ringed on the day were gone by the next. A structured ringing project developed such that intensive ringing, similar to bird observatories, is now done from late June through to November (week numbers 24 to 47) each year. During the period at least three sessions a week are intended subject to weather and other commitments. Usually, JL and IW are present. Two of four 18 m and one 12 m by 2.7 m high nets are erected, usually from 08:00 to 10:30 (a minimum of two hours and not more than three hours is the norm). With the appropriate licenses, audio lures are played and many hundreds of outgoing summer and later incoming winter migrants are ringed (1,205 birds ringed to date in 2019).

At each session, all bird species detected are counted and logged on BirdTrack as a Complete List. A report link is issued of each session to interested parties: <http://newburyrg.blogspot.com>

The report link for the session of the 24th Oct is: <https://newburyrg.blogspot.com/2019/10/2410-greenham-common.html>

Report on Sightings of Colour-marked Birds in Berkshire 2020

by Robert Godden

In 2020, 32 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 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.

2020 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2020 Sightings	Observer	
Barnacle Goose	Code SK on Orange/Red	Temple	Dec 4th - 27th	ABT, ADB, CDRH	Cat C bird ringed at Roxton Park Lakes, Beds, on Jul 11th 2010
Mute Swan	Code 4EEM on Orange/Red on Left Leg	Eton Wick	Dec 30th	PEH	Ringed at Dorney Common on Nov 17th 2018, with many subsequent reports, all in the immediate vicinity.
Pochard	Blue Nasal Tag	Moatlands GPs	Dec 11th	MFW	Ringed in France
Dunlin	Swedish coloured leg ring	Queen Mother Reservoir	Jul 18th	CDRH	Ringed in Sweden
Black-headed Gull	Code 21P5 on White	Lea Farm Lake	Aug 10th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Lea Farm Lake on Jun 15th 2014. Reported from Wilstone Reservoir, Herts, in mid Oct 2015 and at Little Marlow GPs, Bucks, Jun & Jul 2016.
Black-headed Gull	Black 21V8 on White	Hosehill Lake	May 8th & Jun 15th	KPD	Ringed as a nestling Jun 14th 2014 at Hosehill Lake. Many subsequent reports from there, also Lower Farm GP on Jul 5th 2015 and the Camel Estuary, Cornwall, Nov & Dec 2016.
Black-headed Gull	Code 25PO on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 2nd	RCM	Ringed as a nestling Jun 22nd 2014 at Moor Green Lakes. Reported there Mar 21st 2019.
Black-headed Gull	Code 26N6 on White	Theale GPs	Jul 1st	ABT	Ringed as a nestling Jun 11th 2016 at Hosehill Lake. Also seen at Hosehill Lake Jun 9th 2019.
Black-headed Gull	Black 28N9 on White	Moor Green Lakes	Mar 11th	KPD	Ringed as a nestling at Lea Farm Lake Jun 15th 2014. Reported from Hosehill Lake in mid May 2015 and at Lea Farm Lake late Aug 2019.

2020 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2020 Sightings	Observer	
Black-headed Gull	Black 28S3 on White	Pangbourne Meadow	Apr 12th, and three dates Oct - Dec	ATa, MPW	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake Jun 4th 2016. Seen frequently around the landing stage at Pangbourne Meadow since Nov 2018, often displaying oddly aggressive behaviour.
Black-headed Gull	Black 29S0 on White. (Reported as 2950)	Moatlands GPs	Feb 6th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake Jun 4th 2016. Subsequently only reported from Hosehill Lake in 2016.
Black-headed Gull	Code 29N6 on White	Dinton Pastures CP	Aug 10th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Lea Farm Lake Jun 15th 2014. Reported from Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, Oct to Dec 2015.
Black-headed Gull	Black 2B80 on Yellow	Moor Green Lakes	May 14th	KPD	Ringed as a nestling at Fishers Green, Essex Jun 14th 2019. First sighting since being ringed.
Black-headed Gull	Code 2X38 on White	Hosehill Lake	Jul 24th & Aug 13th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling at Hosehill Lake on Jun 13th 2009. Many subsequent reports from Hosehill Lake, and occasionally elsewhere in Theale area and Lower Farm GP.
Black-headed Gull	Code JOL1 on Green	Newbury Wharf	Dec 6th	KGW	Ringed as a second calendar year bird in Oslo, Norway, May 2016. Reported from Newbury in Nov 2019.
Black-headed Gull	Code TJHX on White	In Berks at Henley-on-Thames	Nov 21st	DNTR	Ringed at Przykona Reservoir, Turek, Wielkopolskie, Poland, on Jun 11th 2011. Reported in 2013 at ringing site, then 36 reports in winters 2014 - 2019, all at Henley-on-Thames.
Black-headed Gull	Black TJXM on Yellow	Hosehill Lake	Sep 14th & Oct 10th	KPD	Ringed at Lake Sowińskie, Pomorskie, Poland, Jun 6th 2020.
Black-headed Gull	Code TLUE on White	Lower Farm GP	Oct 29th	ABT	Ringed at Przykona Reservoir, Turek, Wielkopolskie, Poland, on Jun 10th 2012. Subsequent spring reports from ringing site in Poland or nearby; reported in several winters since, but only from Lower Farm GP and Hosehill Lake.
Black-headed Gull	Code TMA0 on Yellow	Queen Mother Reservoir	Jul 20th	ABT	Ringed in breeding colony (not necessarily breeding), Jeziorko, Podkarpackie, Poland, on May 4th 2018.
Mediterranean Gull	Red AYJE on Yellow	Queen Mother Reservoir	Jul 26th	ABT, CDRH	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 7th 2018 at Riether Werder, Luckow, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany. Subsequent sightings at Crossness Pumping Station, London, on Dec 11th 2019 and at Tices Meadow, Surrey, on Jul 17th 2020.

2020 Sighting Details					History
Species	Ring Details	Location	2020 Sightings	Observer	
Caspian Gull (hybrid)	Black XJHA on Yellow (left leg)	Queen Mother Reservoir	Aug 15th	ABT	Ringed at Braunsbedra, near Leipzig, Germany, on Jun 8th 2020.
Yellow-legged Gull	Yellow ring on (left leg)	Summerleaze GPs	Mar 12th	CDRH	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Orange 999 on Blue	Moatlands GPs	Feb 5th	ABT	Ringed at Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucs, on Oct 31st 2005, when it was already at least four years old. Then numerous reports from landfill sites in Gloucs until Jul 5th 2011, but none since.
Common Tern (juv)	Black C68 on Yellow	Queen Mother Reservoir	Aug 4th	ABT	Ringed as a nestling on Jun 30th 2020 at Bedfont Lakes, Greater London.
Common Tern (juv)	Black C76 on Yellow	Queen Mother Reservoir	Aug 4th	ABT	Ditto
Common Tern (juv)	Black C92 on Yellow	Queen Mother Reservoir	Aug 4th	ABT	Ditto
Common Tern (ad)	Yellow leg ring	Queen Mother Reservoir	Aug 4th	ABT	
White Stork	Code GB4A on Blue	Midgham	Aug 23rd	RHS	Male, originally from Poland, brought to East Sussex reintroduction site in 2018, released in Apr 2020. Since then, reported from Kent & Sussex and from Midgham area in preceding weeks.
White Stork	2 or 3 rings on upper left leg	Fobney Meadow	May 20th	AVL, RRI	
Peregrine	White 69 on Black	Newbury	May 17th - Sep 2nd	KGW	Ringed as a nestling in May 2017 at Chichester Cathedral. Nesting attempt in Newbury in 2019. Paired with unringed female in 2020, raising three young (see below).
Peregrine	Blue YL on Black	Newbury	Jun 24th - Aug 27th	KGW	One of three young raised by Black 69 (above). Ringed on Jun 24th when rescued after falling to the ground.
Peregrine	Orange leg ring	Bracknell	Oct 15th	KGW	Probably ringed in the UK.

The Berkshire Bird Index 2020

by Robert Godden

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

The **index** is a snapshot for the year of the ratio of a year's abundance to the reference year 2000, except for Buzzard and Red Kite, for which it is 2010. The index is shown as the range within the 85% confidence limits. However, year on year changes can be large; in addition to actual changes in abundance, weather conditions during surveys, their timing and observer changes etc. can introduce fluctuations in apparent abundance, so statistically significant index changes do not necessarily reflect long term trends, which may better be estimated by combining several years of data. So, in addition to the **index**, the average **trend** in abundance is shown, calculated as the slope of the least squares linear regression of the annual indices from 2000 to 2020. Statistically significant results at $p < 0.05$ are shown with coloured highlighting; in other words there is a less than 5% probability that the results are due to random data. More detail and graphs of the changes in relative abundance of commoner species over the years 1994 – 2019 are available at <http://berksoc.org.uk/berkshire-bird-index/>

This year's report attempts to follow the methodology and style of presentation used by the late Renton Righelato in his yearly BBI reports, which have appeared in Birds of Berkshire Annual Reports since 2011, except for the 2019 report in which each species was treated with increased detail.

In general, the Berkshire results reflect the national trends for those species that are sufficiently abundant to calculate statistically valid changes. Species increasing significantly in abundance nationally and in Berkshire over the period 2000 to 2020 include Red Kite, Jackdaw, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Nuthatch and Goldfinch. Species in decline since 2000 both nationally and in Berkshire include Kestrel, Lapwing, Cuckoo, Swift, Starling, Mistle Thrush and Greenfinch.

COVID lockdown restrictions affected BBS surveys in 2020, with the early visits in all areas severely reduced and only the late visits in England carried out in sufficient numbers to permit trends to be calculated for a reduced set of species. Using data from only a late visit introduced a bias for some species which the BTO have attempted to compensate for, but nevertheless the BTO state that the data should be treated with caution.

Acknowledgements

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

Berkshire Bird Index 2020

Trend: this is the linear regression for 2000 -2020 expressed as % per year change.

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

Black text on red background : significantly decreasing trend.

White text on green background : increasing trend.

Index: this is the species' abundance in 2020 relative to the abundance in 2000. It is shown as a range within the upper and lower 85% confidence limits. Annual indices may be affected by factors other than long term trends, such as the weather.

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

Some points to note:

- Most Berkshire trends are consistent with previous years and are also found in the national data from the BTO.
- The index for Skylark since 2000 has been almost constant yielding a trend close to zero with high significance.
- Bullfinch appeared in the table in previous years, but this species has not been included in the latest data provided by the BTO, probably as it was detected in too few Berkshire squares.
- After a rapid increase from 1990 to 2011, Buzzard numbers have been stable, but this time show a minor decrease relative to 2010.

For national trends see <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birdtrends/2020>

Species	Trend %/year	Index 2020/2000
Canada Goose	0.83	1.41 - 0.97
Mallard	** -1.21	0.85 - 0.68
Red-legged Partridge	** 4.29	2.19 - 1.60
Pheasant	** 2.70	1.74 - 1.39
Red Kite ⁽¹⁾	** 12.42	2.45 - 2.05
Buzzard ⁽¹⁾	** -1.10	1.00 - 0.77
Kestrel	** -2.04	0.73 - 0.47
Moorhen	** -1.83	0.82 - 0.49
Lapwing	** -2.48	0.62 - 0.40
Stock Dove	** 4.18	2.24 - 1.47
Woodpigeon	-0.16	1.04 - 0.89
Collared Dove	** -2.10	0.70 - 0.45
Cuckoo	** -2.24	0.70 - 0.38
Swift	** -2.87	0.56 - 0.31
Green Woodpecker	** -1.76	0.73 - 0.57
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1.28	1.39 - 1.14
Magpie	-0.64	0.94 - 0.79
Jay	** 2.38	1.67 - 1.26
Jackdaw	** 3.72	1.94 - 1.60
Rook	2.18	1.77 - 1.14
Carrion Crow	** -0.80	0.94 - 0.75
Goldcrest	-0.26	1.09 - 0.80
Blue Tit	0.37	1.16 - 0.99
Great Tit	0.56	1.20 - 1.02

Species	Trend %/year	Index 2020/2000
Coal Tit	0.14	1.24 - 0.87
Skylark	** 0.22	1.13 - 0.95
Swallow	* -2.12	0.70 - 0.48
House Martin	** -3.71	0.32 - 0.20
Long-tailed Tit	* -1.34	0.90 - 0.60
Chiffchaff	** 4.23	2.02 - 1.70
Willow Warbler	** -3.28	0.41 - 0.27
Blackcap	** 7.37	2.62 - 2.31
Whitethroat	** 3.21	1.78 - 1.50
Nuthatch	** 5.41	2.32 - 1.85
Wren	** 0.54	1.17 - 1.04
Starling	** -2.14	0.69 - 0.44
Blackbird	** 0.80	1.24 - 1.09
Song Thrush	** 1.54	1.40 - 1.22
Mistle Thrush	** -2.24	0.66 - 0.46
Robin	** 0.94	1.25 - 1.12
Duncock	0.38	1.15 - 0.99
House Sparrow	** -1.48	0.84 - 0.56
Pied/White Wagtail	** -2.48	0.59 - 0.41
Chaffinch	** -3.13	0.41 - 0.33
Greenfinch	** -3.80	0.30 - 0.19
Goldfinch	** 7.55	2.77 - 2.26
Linnet	** -2.19	0.73 - 0.43
Yellowhammer	** -2.36	0.61 - 0.45

Weather Summary 2020

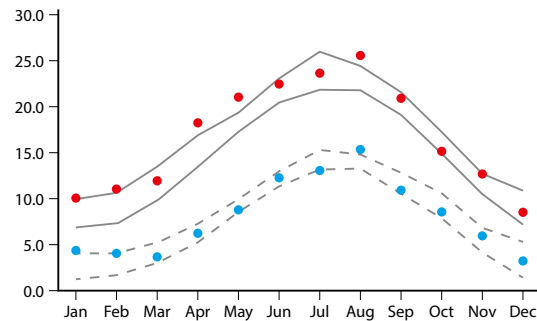
by Robert Godden

This weather summary is based on the Met Office weather reports for Heathrow. Grey lines show one standard deviation either side of the average for 2000 – 2019.

The year 2020 saw the weather break several records. A mild winter started the year and included a very wet and stormy February. Spring was warm, sunny and dry. Summer was warm, cloudy and wet; Heathrow recorded the UK's highest temperature of the year with 37.8°C on Jul 31st. In autumn, there were three named storms in October; this was also an exceptionally wet month with Oct 3rd the wettest day on record. The year ended with more storms and heavy rain.

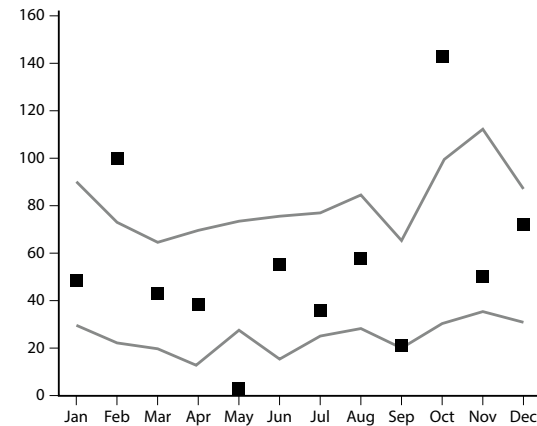
Temperature °C

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



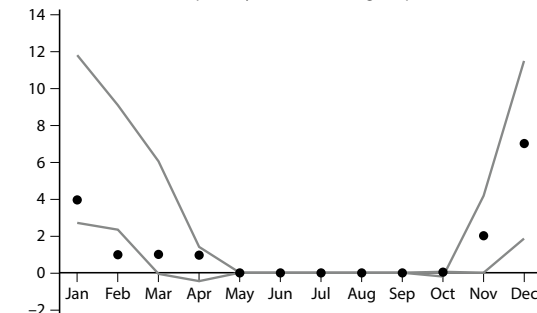
Rainfall

Monthly rainfall (mm).



Days air frost

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



Report for 2020 by the Berkshire Records Committee (BRC)

Committee members when the 2020 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 2020

Category 2 species

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

Category 3 species

White-fronted Goose, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Garganey, Scaup, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Quail, Red-necked Grebe, Slavonian Grebe, Black-necked Grebe, Avocet, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot, Temminck's Stint, Sanderling, Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Kittiwake, Little Gull, Yellow-legged Gull (spring), Sandwich Tern, Little Tern, Arctic Tern, Great Northern Diver, Gannet, Shag, 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 2020 Records

Records that the Committee has not been able to accept are listed below. We do not include reports from social media, which 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 the majority of cases the record was not accepted because, in the committee's view, the identification was not fully established. Only in a very few cases were records not accepted because, in the committee's view, a mistake had been made.

Osprey, Swallowfield, July 30th.

Merlin, Compton Downs, March 1st.

Merlin, Cox Green, Maidenhead, December 12th.

White Wagtail, Moor Green Lakes, September 25th.

Water Pipit, Queen Mother Reservoir, February 14th.

Hawfinch, Crowthorne, October 29th.

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.

Garganey, Burghfield GPs, September 20th.

Garganey, Lower Farm GP, October 28th.

Green-winged Teal, Eton Wick, December 29th.

Scaup, Moor Green Lakes, January 19th.

Common Scoter, Virginia Water, May 15th.

Common Scoter, Theale GPs, May 22nd.

Quail, Hampstead Norreys, August 2nd.

Turtle Dove, Tilehurst, July 9th.

Black-necked Grebe, Burghfield GPs, February 3rd-10th.

Little Gull, Theale GPs, April 9th.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, September 6th.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, October 30th.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, November 12th-17th.

Caspian Gull, Lower Farm GP, November 22nd.

Arctic Tern, Dinton Pastures CP, three, August 7th.

White Stork, Beale Park, March 16th.

Osprey, Kintbury, May 15th-18th.

Osprey, Arborfield, October 19th.

Goshawk, Confidential, September 5th.

Hen Harrier, Bury Down, November 20th.

Hoopoe, Newbury, February 19th.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Virginia Water, March 8th.

Merlin, Great Shefford, January 17th.

Merlin, Streatley, February 4th.

Merlin, Lavell's Lake, August 8th.

Merlin, Englefield, October 25th.

Merlin, Frost Folly, December 5th.

Merlin, Theale, December 5th.

Merlin, Sandhurst GPs, December 10th.

Willow Tit, Welford, four, January 11th to August 16th.

Wood Warbler, Crookham Common, May 6th.

Yellow-browed Warbler, Hermitage, October 13th.

Ring Ouzel, Warfield, April 26th.

Ring Ouzel, Greenham Common, October 17th.

Ring Ouzel, Lavell's Lake, October 18th.

Pied Flycatcher, Greenham Common, August 27th.

White Wagtail, Crookham Common, August 31st.

White Wagtail, Lower Farm GP, September 20th-27th.

White Wagtail, Eton, September 20th.

Hawfinch, Upper Bucklebury, two, January 8th.

Hawfinch, Englefield, February 26th.

Hawfinch, Lavell's Lake, May 17th.

Hawfinch, Englefield, October 17th.

Introduction to the 2020 Systematic List

by Robert Godden

The Systematic List that follows provides a summary of the status of the bird species recorded in Berkshire in 2020; 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 2020 this amounted to almost 70,000 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. Our 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 yourself 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 158 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 Manx Shearwater	Andy Tomczynski
Chaffinch to Reed Bunting	Anne Harrison
Firecrest to Ring Ouzel	Brian Hackett
Barn Owl to Tawny Owl	Cathy McEwan
Nightjar to Collared Dove	Elaine Charlson
Kestrel to Raven	Katie Jenks
Confidential Species, Escapes and Hybrids	Marek Walford
Egyptian Goose to Teal	Mike Taylor
Wood Warbler to Dartford Warbler	Paul Bright-Thomas
Woodlark to Long-tailed Tit, Tree Pipit to Rock Pipit	Peter Gipson
Coal Tit to Great Tit, Spotted Flycatcher to Wheatear	Renton Righelato
Water Rail to Coot, House Sparrow to Pied Wagtail	Richard Gilham
White Stork to Little Egret	Rick Dawson
Red-crested Pochard to Ruddy Duck	Robert Godden
Oystercatcher to Greenshank	Roger Murfitt
Grey Partridge to Red-legged Partridge, Hoopoe to Green Woodpecker	Sean Murphy
Osprey to Buzzard	Steve Ricks
Brent Goose to Whooper Swan, Crane to Black-necked Grebe	Val Brown

To strike a balance between conciseness, readability and recognising observers' efforts in the field, observers' initials are applied in just these cases: to records of scarce and rarer species; to reports of significant survey work; to accompany reports of first and last migrants; and 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 previously in the table. For example, if the February WeBS count at Moor Green Lakes found 40 Goosanders, the February Moor Green Lakes entry in the table will give the highest count of the month, quite likely the WeBS count of 40, while the total in the WeBS row has included 40 in the summation.

The Covid-19 pandemic led to lockdown restrictions in the spring and autumn of 2020. Birdwatchers interpreted government guidelines in different ways, leading to some walking a regular route for exercise, while others were confined to home. Most bird hides were closed and official surveys cancelled. Thus the survey of ground-nesting birds at Greenham and Crookham Commons that Adrian Hickman has carried out for many years could not be run in its usual manner, so estimates from the seasonal wardens' 2020 observations were given in the 2021 report [AEDH 2021]. It is hard to discern from details in submitted records what, if any, effect there was on the county's birds or on bird recording. Of the 70,000 records, fewer than five suggested that birds were subjected to greater disturbance by an increase in numbers of walkers, while none reported an increase in populations at locations that had become relatively inaccessible. References to words such as "covid", "lockdown" etc. in notes associated with records were usually provided to legitimise an observer's walk or to describe a period of time.

This year, 198 species were recorded in a wild state in the county, with a further four less usual subspecies identified and another 13 species of unknown or escaped origin. The reports indicated that 93 species were confirmed to have bred, with another 17 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		

2020 SYSTEMATIC LIST

Edited by Robert Godden and Marek Walford

BRENT GOOSE BRANT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

Just one record was submitted this year, of a single dark-bellied adult associating with Canada Geese in the Horton Brook Quarry area from Dec 25th to 31st (CDRH).

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Common feral resident

This year the highest count on any one day was of 671 feeding on the stubble fields at Englefield on Sep 11th. Counts of 300 or more were recorded in August from Lower Farm GPs and Moor Green Lakes (340 and 300, respectively), and in September from Windsor Riverside (379), Lea Farm Lake (350), Theale GPs (317) and Dinton Pastures (300). The table shows numbers recorded at sites across the county.

Canada Goose: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	23	2	9	6	-	6	8	4	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	60	99	53	-	3	60	-	-	61	2	11	7
Dinton Pastures CP	100	53	29	6	30	10	-	55	300	92	200	150
Great Meadow Pond	33	25	58	-	32	4	208	-	205	47	-	1
Jubilee River	60	-	24	4	9	16	35	-	4	-	-	108
Lea Farm Lake	4	12	14	-	-	-	-	-	350	-	80	240
Lower Farm GP	42	30	5	-	20	19	36	340	300	190	165	83
Moatlands GPs	-	-	8	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	58	16	35	30	50	110	20	300	93	100	101	20
Padworth Lane GP	60	25	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	80	-	3	-	-	6	-	25	-	4	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	55	16	25	19	49	78	68	48	86	121	139	63
Theale GPs	34	10	84	-	41	73	108	12	317	39	5	24
Twyford GPs	66	12	76	19	10	23	35	25	59	19	9	6
Woolhampton GPs	3	6	14	-	19	2	15	15	3	19	20	5
Wraysbury GPs	20	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	2	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	742	678	545	265	763	297	401	384	1,656	589	949	763
No. other sites	17	15	24	30	33	14	8	11	21	19	23	16
WeBS Count Totals	889	572	745	19	194	206	608	152	1,367	583	670	639
Total birds (minimum)	1,440	984	986	349	1,026	704	948	1,208	3,436	1,222	1,679	1,470

Confirmed breeding was reported from 20 sites, with at least 203 goslings sighted, although this is likely to be an underestimate of actual numbers. Recording the breeding of flocking geese is often difficult: goslings tend to congregate in creches and are not always easy to match with particular adults. Of interest was a report of a female bird with an angel-wing deformity at Whiteknights Park, known to have hatched in 2009, which was still breeding successfully and which the regular observer had never seen to fly. Another observer by the Thames at Caversham witnessed an interesting mixed species interaction, in which a Mute Swan, assuming a threat posture, successfully broke up a serious fight between two Canada Geese.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

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

The regular flock of 18 to 23 birds at Moor Green Lakes was recorded frequently from the start of the year until early March and again (with no increase in numbers) from early November (RCM *et al.*), with just a brief two-day visit in August. Two birds in the Bisham and Temple area from Dec 1st to 27th (A Akkaraju *et al.*) associating with Greylag Geese included an adult sporting a red leg ring with letters "SK" that linked it to a Category C Bedfordshire flock; a colour-ringed bird at Eton Wick on May 24th was probably the same individual [BTO Ringing]. Also in east Berkshire were singles at Eton on Jan 14th (R Denison-Pender) and May 24th (JCR), at Eton Wick on Aug 29th (PJ Watts), and at Windsor on Nov 20th (LRB); the Jan 14th bird was unringed so these reports possibly referred to the same one or two individuals. Finally, a lame bird in a Canada Goose flock was reported at Horton Brook Quarry between Dec 22nd and 28th (CDRH).

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common feral resident (wild population Amber)

This year the highest reported numbers were of birds feeding in the stubble fields at Englefield, with 494 recorded in August and 443 in September. Flocks in excess of 200 individuals were seen at several wetland sites across the county, mostly in the autumn and winter months (see table), and the species remained common.

Greylag Goose: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	2	1	3	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	-
Burghfield GPs	11	1	2	-	-	13	-	-	2	4	6	276
Dinton Pastures CP	-	50	3	-	2	10	-	1	20	-	19	50
Great Meadow Pond	50	261	160	-	72	128	13	48	373	282	5	3
Jubilee River	-	-	6	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	45
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
Lower Farm GP	3	16	19	-	7	5	15	68	84	44	81	3
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	51	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	16	26	2	3	2	18	19	30	28	48	120	40
Padworth Lane GP	83	8	4	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	12	-	-	3	12	77	-	-	1	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	6	1	6	8	16	16	1	1	15	1	-
Theale GPs	143	2	14	1	10	8	41	3	149	69	140	11
Twyford GPs	1	2	8	9	4	1	16	8	3	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	6	-	38	10	53	4	2	1	46	20
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	902	591	368	82	270	358	567	706	978	617	837	1,222
No. other sites	13	8	12	15	21	6	5	6	6	8	14	12
WeBS Count Totals	639	422	297	9	196	302	353	238	849	800	228	94
Total birds (minimum)	1,211	964	608	104	468	581	754	947	1,640	1,082	1,258	1,705

Its familiarity undoubtedly leads to under-reporting, particularly of breeding. This was noted at 12 sites, where at least 153 goslings were seen, including five Greylag/Domestic goose hybrids.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Anser albifrons

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Very scarce winter visitor (Red)

In comparison with the last several years, in which no more than a handful of White-fronted Geese were reported, 2020 saw a total of 57 birds recorded. The year began with a report of eight individuals at Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 1st (KEM). At the eastern end of the county, two adults were sighted at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 15th and 18th (CDRH), having flown in from Windsor Great Park. Probably the same birds were seen again at Horton Brook Quarry on Feb 7th. No further records were submitted until December when a much larger number were seen, usually in association with other geese. At Remenham the first report of three individuals came on Dec 1st (A Akkaraju) and was followed on Dec 4th by sightings of a maximum of 13: eight adults and five juveniles (ABT *et al.*). This flock continued to be reported from the area until Dec 27th (CDRH). From Dec 5th, a larger flock of 27 was recorded at Wigmore Lane GP (ABM *et al.*) from where they dispersed on to surrounding gravel pits, with the last sighting of one adult at Burghfield GPs on Dec 25th (CDRH). A smaller flock, of maximum six adults and one juvenile, was reported from Windsor Great Park from Dec 6th to 31st (CDRH). Individuals from this flock were initially recorded at separate locations: three adults and a juvenile at Colnbrook/Horton Brook on Dec 2nd (ABT, CDRH, LGRE), and two adults at Windsor Great Park on Dec 4th (CDRH).



White-fronted Goose, Colnbrook, Dec 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.



White-fronted Goose, Bisham, Dec 4th, Andy Tomczynski.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common resident (Amber)

As in previous years, the highest number of Mute Swans was at Windsor Riverside, where 205 were recorded in September. The Wetland Bird Survey reported numbers between 95 and 129 on the River Thames at Caversham in all months except April, when it appears this

location was not surveyed. Monthly totals at other sites can be seen in the table. It is worth noting that Mute Swans congregate in the largest numbers where they are frequently fed by the public!

Mute Swan: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	3	2	2	2	3
Burghfield GPs	39	36	19	-	-	43	-	-	46	35	17	1
Caversham Bridge	128	106	122	-	129	119	111	129	95	99	127	-
Dinton Pastures CP	11	8	4	3	3	4	3	7	17	6	12	3
Great Meadow Pond	34	23	7	-	3	5	12	12	7	16	22	19
Jubilee River	2	-	8	2	14	1	-	-	9	2	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	-
Lower Farm GP	11	2	2	-	4	5	10	2	8	8	3	5
Moor Green Lakes	4	2	6	8	4	5	7	8	10	4	6	6
Padworth Lane GP	6	3	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	3	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	1	-	-	4	3	4	2	2	-	3
Thatcham Marsh	3	3	2	4	11	3	3	3	5	4	4	4
Theale GPs	4	-	5	2	20	18	27	19	29	27	40	25
Twyford GPs	6	18	12	7	7	8	12	10	14	10	34	30
Woolhampton GPs	6	6	4	-	2	6	11	3	3	5	6	3
Wrybury GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	10	-	7	9	-	4
No. birds at other sites	166	205	106	37	162	100	56	33	305	159	272	122
No. other sites	24	19	20	12	29	9	11	5	14	21	21	18
WeBS Count Totals	354	296	262	7	163	156	155	186	303	349	379	185
Total birds (minimum)	423	414	303	63	359	322	290	233	562	391	547	228

Breeding was reported from 31 sites, producing at least 148 cygnets from a minimum of 34 pairs. A pair nesting at Whiteknights in Reading, with at least 12 eggs in the nest in April, was reported to have lost all their young and their own lives by November, possibly due to botulism.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly a feral resident (Amber)

Two individuals, both adults, were recorded during the autumn and early winter. The first was at Lower Farm GPs on Oct 15th (NC, IW, ABT), and the second was associating with three Mute Swans in a field near Streatley between Dec 12th and 15th (ABM *et al.*).



Whooper Swan, Streatley, Dec 14th, Andy Tomczynski.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common feral resident

Numbers were very similar to 2019; the population appeared to have stabilised after a rapid increase during the first decade of this century. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Egyptian Geese were widespread across the county, mainly near gravel pits and rivers. Three figure counts were recorded at: Queen Mother Reservoir, with 107 on Jun 25th; 102 feeding in a stubble field at Englefield on Aug 8th; and at Moor Green Lakes, where 110 flew in with Canada Geese on Aug 21st. Other high counts included: 51 at Caversham Bridge, Reading, on

Egyptian Goose: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	10	4	2	-	-	-	-	9	-	3	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	2	1
Dinton Pastures CP	4	3	1	-	4	-	1	8	3	7	2	2
Great Meadow Pond	11	4	3	-	1	2	2	-	-	2	-	-
Jubilee River	1	-	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	8	7	2	-	3	2	3	4	6	3	2	4
Moor Green Lakes	8	7	4	2	9	40	41	110	-	32	2	4
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	4	2	-	52	107	92	60	4	32	10	6
Thatcham Marsh	2	-	-	2	9	7	14	12	7	7	7	7
Theale GPs	12	2	9	-	22	21	44	15	13	9	3	2
Twyford GPs	2	3	10	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	2	2
Woolhampton GPs	3	-	-	-	2	2	4	-	-	1	4	1
No. birds at other sites	42	74	90	67	103	52	136	121	171	95	216	199
No. other sites	15	18	22	17	21	8	8	5	14	11	27	22
WeBS Count Totals	53	49	38	-	66	117	194	33	44	70	33	32
Total birds (minimum)	105	109	128	71	205	235	337	341	207	197	250	228

Jul 6th; 65 at Emmer Green on Oct 23rd; and 85 at Newland Farm, Charvil, on Nov 22nd. An unusual sighting was one seen after dark in the middle of a road in Sandhurst on Nov 21st.

Breeding was reported from 22 locations with at least 27 broods. At Whiteknights Park, two pairs raised five broods, with the first brood's new chicks observed on Feb 2nd and the last brood's new chicks on Dec 17th. At least three pairs bred in Windsor Great Park.

SHELDUCK COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor (Amber)

The population appeared to be stable, with more evidence of successful breeding compared with 2019. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

First winter: numbers increased from the start of the year, peaking in March, with the distribution across the county reflecting the distribution of gravel pits. The highest count in this period was eight birds at Horton Brook Quarry on the east side of Queen Mother Reservoir on Feb 8th.

Summer/breeding: a brood of four ducklings was seen at Great Meadow Pond on May 12th, but only two remained on Jul 4th. At Moor Green Lakes, a female was seen to enter the nest tunnel on Plover Island on several occasions during April, but any nesting attempt may have failed, as an Oystercatcher and Jackdaws were seen eating a large duck egg outside the tunnel on May 17th. Later a brood of four ducklings was seen on the New Workings main lake on Jul 1st. Two pairs bred successfully at Queen Mother Reservoir: a brood of three ducklings was seen on May 19th; and a brood of nine small ducklings was seen on Jun 6th, which had reduced to six ducklings by Jul 10th. Another nine pairs were observed during the breeding season at six sites.

Second winter: the summering Shelduck population departed for their moulting grounds in the Wadden Sea or estuaries around Britain during early July, with some lingering until early August. At Queen Mother Reservoir one of the family groups was present until Aug 5th, reducing to just two juveniles by Aug 10th, with no further sightings until 24th Sep when a flock of four juveniles flew through to the south-west. Up to two juveniles were observed at Moor Green Lakes throughout August and September.

Shelduck: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dinton Pastures CP	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	1	3	6	-	7	6	2	-	-	-	-	-
Horton Brook Quarry	2	8	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
Lower Farm GP	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	2	4	4	4	2	6	2	1	1	1	2
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	7	2	-	13	21	14	9	4	-	3	2
Theale GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraybury GPs	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	9	10	10	13	4	2	-	1	-	-	1	4
No. other sites	4	2	4	6	3	1	-	1	-	-	1	1
WeBS Count Totals	3	4	6	-	15	12	6	-	1	-	1	-
Total birds (minimum)	18	31	26	22	34	32	23	13	5	1	6	13

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	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	5	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emmer Green	14	14	6	3	3	-	-	3	-	-	7	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	10	6	7	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	10	-	4	1	2	3	2	2	12	-	-	3
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	2	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Whiteknights Park	4	8	2	-	10	2	-	4	2	33	14	2
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	9	-
No. birds at other sites	17	9	46	40	55	30	19	17	7	10	18	8
No. other sites	4	1	17	14	16	8	5	5	3	3	3	1
WeBS Count Totals	10	3	2	-	6	5	2	7	7	5	8	-
Total birds (minimum)	45	31	72	50	83	48	29	36	26	52	48	13

Mandarin Ducks mostly occur in mid and east Berkshire, with smaller numbers in west Berkshire. Due to their secretive nature, most records come from well-watched water bodies and they are likely to be under-recorded elsewhere. The highest count was 33 at Whiteknights Park at dusk on Oct 1st. Double figure counts at other sites included: 14 at Emmer Green Pond on Jan 5th and Feb 8th; 12 at Moor Green Lakes on Sep 12th; and 12

on the Holy Brook at Fobney Meadow on Jun 10th.

Summer/breeding: eight broods were seen at seven sites, with broods of 12 ducklings at Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead on May 12th, and nine ducklings seen at Whiteknights Park Lake on May 8th. A further 17 pairs were noted at 16 other sites during the breeding season.

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

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

There were 11 to 13 birds reported, which was a slight increase on 2019. Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

Garganey: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	4	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	8	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-

Spring: the first arrivals were a pair at Lower Farm GP on Mar 18th (GJS, RCo, KEM) and two drakes at Eton Wick on Mar 18th and 19th (CDRH), which were also seen at Dorney Wetlands on Mar 23rd (KPD, DCI, LGRE). A pair was present at Padworth Lane Floods on Mar 22nd and 23rd (KEM, PH), which may have been the birds seen a few days earlier at Lower Farm GP. An unusual record was of a pair at Allsmoor Pond, Martin's Heron, Bracknell, on Apr 28th (M A Johnstone). A drake was seen at Moor Green Lakes on May 15th (J D Savage).

Summer: a female was present at Eton Wick on Jun 13th and 14th (MFW, KPD, RCW), and a juvenile was present at Great Meadow Pond between Jun 26th and Aug 2nd (DJB).

Autumn: a long-staying juvenile that was present at Dorney Common, Bucks, from Sep 8th to Oct 9th was seen on the Berkshire side of the county boundary at Eton Wick on Sep 13th and 19th (DCI, CDRH).

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. Midwinter counts were lower than in recent years, perhaps due to milder weather conditions.

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

Summer/breeding: as usual there was a scattering of summer records as shown in the table, but there was no evidence of breeding. A pair was noted at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 10th and at Horton Brook Quarry on various dates in June.

Second winter: numbers increased from the end of August until the end of the year. The September monthly maximum counts at Lea Farm Lake and Lavell's Lake may refer to birds moving between the two sites.

Shoveler: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	6	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	10	4	9
Bray GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	76	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	4	5
Dinton Pastures CP	22	13	7	-	1	-	-	2	50	13	6	19
Great Meadow Pond	5	21	12	-	-	-	-	4	50	10	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	7	-	1	5	-	50	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	45	32	17	-	-	-	4	8	29	44	46	16
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	76	32	14	30	-	2	-	-	10	16	34	63
Padworth Lane GP	25	19	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	4	9	6	2
Theale GPs	28	24	11	1	-	-	2	6	52	31	10	3
Twyford GPs	13	22	27	-	-	-	-	-	16	9	2	9
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Wrybury GPs	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
No. birds at other sites	124	111	65	26	2	2	-	3	23	68	63	120
No. other sites	12	10	6	5	1	1	-	2	6	8	9	10
WeBS Count Totals	181	147	98	-	-	-	-	4	132	67	57	101
Total birds (minimum)	421	278	173	64	3	5	14	27	292	222	176	252

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

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

Gadwall were widespread 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	4	5	8	3	-	3	6	11	12	10	2	4
Burghfield GPs	175	107	13	-	-	-	-	-	16	31	102	118
Dinton Pastures CP	80	9	4	-	-	31	-	102	26	14	122	165
Great Meadow Pond	58	20	7	-	2	41	48	88	36	35	56	28
Jubilee River	4	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	4
Lea Farm Lake	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	48	70	16	-	12	27	18	42	39	65	170	68
Moor Green Lakes	43	54	29	30	3	5	3	7	38	8	23	83
Padworth Lane GP	35	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	1	4	4	5	5	2	1	7	1	3	2
Theale GPs	8	4	8	-	2	2	4	52	38	15	77	102
Twyford GPs	58	108	7	2	1	-	1	60	28	70	111	99
Woolhampton GPs	12	12	2	-	3	-	-	-	1	6	26	15
Wrybury GPs	15	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	10	30
No. birds at other sites	314	170	93	59	62	2	4	74	121	221	164	246
No. other sites	9	8	9	10	12	1	2	6	8	10	9	10
WeBS Count Totals	764	406	100	2	3	43	49	178	214	242	638	681
Total birds (minimum)	854	572	209	98	90	116	87	437	367	488	866	964

First winter: wintering numbers gradually declined from the January peak until April. Apart from those sites listed in the table, there were counts exceeding 50 at Fobney Meadow and Sandhurst GPs.

Summer/breeding: summering birds were present at many sites. Breeding was confirmed at three sites: a female with a brood of five ducklings were on East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Jun 13th; and young were seen at Aldermaston GPs and Lower Farm GP.

Second winter: numbers started to increase in August and continued to do so until the end of the year. Counts exceeding 50 were recorded at Charvil CP, Fleethill Farm and Horseshoe Lake (Sandhurst).

WIGEON EURASIANWIGEON *Mareca penelope*

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

Monthly maximum counts are given in the table.

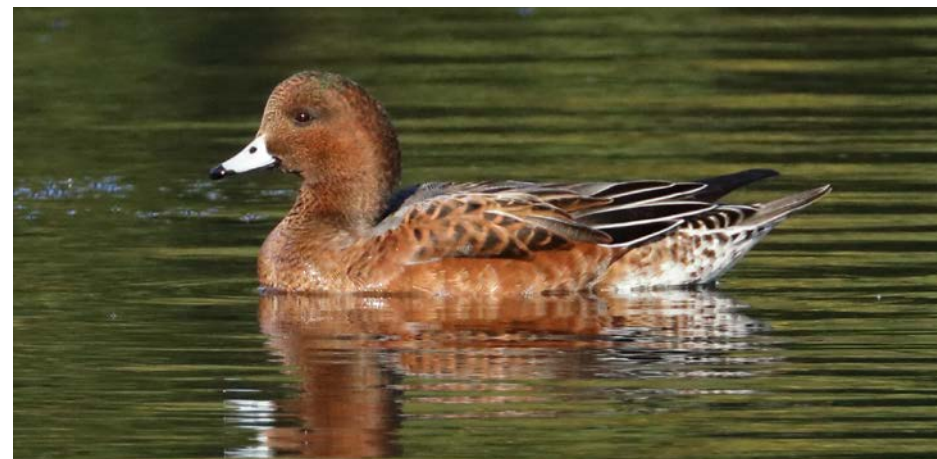
Wigeon: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	76	33	7	-	-	-	-	-	12	24	2	150
Dinton Pastures CP	43	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	20	71	61
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	6	2	8
Horton Brook Quarry	-	105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	51	68	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	8	37	14	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	31	40
Moor Green Lakes	105	79	34	82	-	-	-	-	44	43	109	149
Padworth Lane GP	35	2	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	79	50	29	-	-	-	-	-	32	85	112	64
Twyford GPs	84	111	21	-	-	-	-	-	25	122	126	142
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	27	1
No. birds at other sites	497	461	129	1	-	-	-	20	163	351	293	458
No. other sites	12	9	4	1	-	-	-	1	4	6	11	7
WeBS Count Totals	722	470	225	-	-	-	-	-	110	568	443	656
Total birds (minimum)	927	941	312	83	-	-	-	20	303	708	843	1,073

First winter: numbers were lower than in the equivalent period in the three previous years. Away from the sites listed in the table, treble figure counts were recorded at Fleethill Farm, although these birds may have been moving between there, Moor Green Lakes and the gravel pits over the Hampshire border. Numbers peaked in January and gradually decreased during February and March; all had departed by early April.

Summer: there were no summer records.

Second winter: numbers were higher than for the equivalent periods in 2019 and 2018, but lower than 2017 levels. A flock of 20 birds was seen at Datchet on Aug 31st, but otherwise small numbers were recorded from mid-September and gradually built up through the autumn. Treble figure counts away from the main sites were recorded at Charvil CP and Fleethill Farm.



Wigeon, Charvil CP, Sep 27th, Andy Tomczynski.

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	18	4	6	11	-	8	18	26	22	11	17	18
Burghfield GPs	25	24	27	-	-	14	-	-	58	126	25	2
Dinton Pastures CP	40	43	43	3	5	15	-	25	71	30	63	69
Great Meadow Pond	42	9	7	-	10	13	24	45	65	12	50	12
Jubilee River	24	2	15	1	4	6	11	-	1	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	4	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	50	190	2	4
Lower Farm GP	12	14	8	-	4	24	40	56	110	41	25	23
Moor Green Lakes	43	32	22	10	2	10	6	5	27	36	42	60
Padworth Lane GP	25	24	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	14	6	4	-	23	28	27	100	23	29	13	10
Thatcham Marsh	66	40	18	35	42	61	59	71	41	47	25	79
Theale GPs	10	18	37	7	27	20	24	16	70	33	17	21
Twyford GPs	21	20	30	9	12	17	46	42	47	50	4	25
Woolhampton GPs	6	17	5	-	19	14	7	16	7	12	19	19
Wraysbury GPs	2	4	4	-	-	-	17	-	7	-	-	7
No. birds at other sites	570	349	383	195	490	203	209	624	566	527	564	673
No. other sites	28	20	41	36	54	19	17	18	20	20	24	17
WeBS Count Totals	614	442	402	9	158	93	196	352	710	717	559	642
Total birds (minimum)	922	611	616	271	638	433	488	1,026	1,165	1,176	866	1,022

Mallard is a common resident across the county with a small influx during the winter months. Overall, the resident county population has remained stable. Accurate numbers for some sites are recorded on WeBS counts and increasingly on BirdTrack "complete lists" but otherwise this very familiar species is under-recorded.

Broods were reported at 24 sites, with at least 34 broods, but this is likely to be a vast underestimate. The earliest brood recorded was on Whiteknights Park Lake on Mar 31st.

The largest reported brood was 12 ducklings at Hosehill Lake on May 13th.

PINTAIL NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

Numbers were again down compared to recent years, perhaps due to fewer spells of cold weather. 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	-	-	-
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
No. other sites	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
WeBS Count Totals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	3	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	1	1	3

First winter: a pair was present at Lower Farm GP on Jan 4th (MO), a drake was seen at Fobney Meadow on Jan 8th and 10th (AA, RCNP), and three drakes and a female were at Woolhampton GPs on Feb 1st (KEM). An interesting record was of a recording of at least one bird flying over a garden in Palmer Park, Reading, on the night of Apr 2nd (FH).

Second winter: the first autumn bird was a female seen at Lea Farm Lake and Sandford Lake on Sep 10th (FJC, BTB). Two birds were at Great Meadow Pond on Sep 18th (CDRH, WeBS), with a single bird present the following day (DJB). An adult and juvenile male commuted between Hosehill Lake and Main Pit, Theale, from Sep 18th until the end of the month, with a single bird remaining until Oct 4th (ABM *et al.*). A drake was present at Green Park, Reading, on Dec 8th and 9th (SRo, Sly), while at Moor Green Lakes a single drake was seen on Nov 29th (CRG) and two drakes on Dec 21st (RCM).

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.

First winter: numbers continued the downward trend seen during the previous three years, perhaps due to milder winters. Away from the sites listed in the table, counts exceeding 20 birds were recorded at Battlemead Common, Fleethill Farm and Fobney Meadow. Numbers peaked in January and decreased during February and March, with the last birds seen in April.

Summer: there were no records during May but a few birds were present during June and July at Hosehill Lake, Lower Farm GP and Moor Green Lakes. A bird was seen being eaten by a juvenile Peregrine on the BT Exchange building in Newbury on Jul 29th.

Second winter: birds started to return in August, and numbers increased to the end of the year. Numbers in this period were down compared to 2019. Away from the sites listed in the table, counts exceeding 20 birds were recorded at Battlemead Common, Fleethill Farm, Fobney Meadow and Streatley.

Teal: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	3	-	7	-	-	-	-	2	14	8	1	-
Burghfield GPs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	61	13	1	-	-	-	-	3	30	6	9	32
Great Meadow Pond	4	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	3	-
Jubilee River	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
Lea Farm Lake	-	33	30	-	-	3	-	19	39	86	-	-
Lower Farm GP	80	84	24	-	-	4	14	17	47	41	60	70
Moor Green Lakes	6	4	2	3	-	1	2	12	11	30	5	12
Padworth Lane GP	16	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	5	19	2	4
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
No. birds at other sites	268	245	206	55	-	2	3	8	43	133	96	232
No. other sites	10	8	4	3	-	1	2	2	5	8	7	7
WeBS Count Totals	149	119	114	-	-	-	-	-	36	79	49	63
Total birds (minimum)	441	387	278	58	-	11	20	65	209	324	188	391

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Fairly common feral visitor or escape, occasionally breeds

The maximum monthly counts of Red-crested Pochards by site are given in the table.

Red-crested Pochard: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	24	23	13	4	8	1	-	-	-	10	7	3
Horton GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	8	6
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	4	-	5	1	2	14	10	8	1	3	10	-
No. birds at other sites	4	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	11	21	15	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	-
Total birds (minimum)	34	25	22	7	13	17	10	8	1	13	25	10

The table shows this species' usual preference for sites in the Reading area; there were no reports from west Berkshire and a drake at Summerleaze GP on May 6th was the only other report from the east of the county. The largest numbers in the first winter period came from Burghfield GPs, with a peak of 24 on Jan 28th, whereas the Theale GPs provided the highest counts in 2019. Although several reports later in the year referred to juveniles, there was no evidence that breeding had occurred in Berkshire.

POCHARD COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

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

2020 was a good year for Pochards in terms of breeding success, but wintering numbers were down on recent years. Maximum monthly counts by site are given in the table.

Pochard: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	8	4	12	5	-	3	4	8	2	8	5	6
Bray GPs	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Burghfield GPs	18	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10
Dinton Pastures CP	11	40	10	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	15	12
Great Meadow Pond	76	29	11	-	1	11	10	53	10	36	55	1
Jubilee River	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Lea Farm Lake	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	41	63	6	-	10	7	13	6	6	13	7	6
Moatlands GPs	76	26	3	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	53	81
Moor Green Lakes	13	6	3	2	2	3	3	1	7	20	15	10
Padworth Lane GP	26	-	-	-	2	3	5	9	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Thatcham Marsh	5	8	21	14	12	5	5	2	1	2	7	4
Theale GPs	83	28	25	-	-	1	-	2	-	2	2	1
Twyford GPs	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	3
Woolhampton GPs	3	35	-	5	22	6	4	1	-	-	14	7
Wraysbury GPs	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	8
No. birds at other sites	70	13	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	13	24
No. other sites	9	4	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	10	21
WeBS Count Totals	246	135	66	-	6	11	10	54	20	58	114	43
Total birds (minimum)	447	278	94	26	50	39	46	84	31	82	211	177

First winter: the highest count in this period was 83 at Theale GPs on Jan 5th. Most Pochards had departed by mid-March, except at sites where breeding would later occur, and at those sites the number of lingering adults generally greatly exceeded the number of ensuing broods.

Breeding: this was confirmed at six sites as follows: a female attending a recently hatched duckling was seen at Great Meadow Pond on Jun 7th; at Lower Farm GP, six young ducklings on Jun 21st gradually reduced to just one three weeks later; at Thatcham NDC, a female was seen leading six fledglings to water on Jul 4th; at Woolhampton GPs, a female accompanied three small ducklings on Jul 5th; a female was seen with two young on East Fen at Moor Green Lakes on Jul 13th and both young seemed to be thriving on Jul 27th; and at Aldermaston GPs, seven half-grown ducklings were seen on Aug 18th. From just these six locations during the relevant months of June, July and August, 77 reports of Pochards were submitted but only 11 mentioned breeding activity, indicating the elusive nature of Pochard as a breeding species. The second table shows the number of confirmed Pochard broods annually since breeding resumed in 2008; the increase in breeding attempts and breeding sites is evident.

Pochard: Number of Confirmed Broods this Century

(NB Before 2008, the previous confirmed breeding was in 1998)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Lower Farm GP	1	1	1	-	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	2	2	2	6	3	-	4	-	-	1
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	1
Thatcham NDC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
No. broods	1	1	1	2	4	4	10	6	3	9	3	6	6
No. sites	1	1	1	1	3	3	4	4	2	5	3	4	6

Second winter: the regular summer influx at Great Meadow Pond peaked at 53 on Aug 22nd, but it was not until mid-November that numbers started to significantly increase at the non-breeding sites. A maximum of 81 was recorded at Moatlands GPs on Dec 18th.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

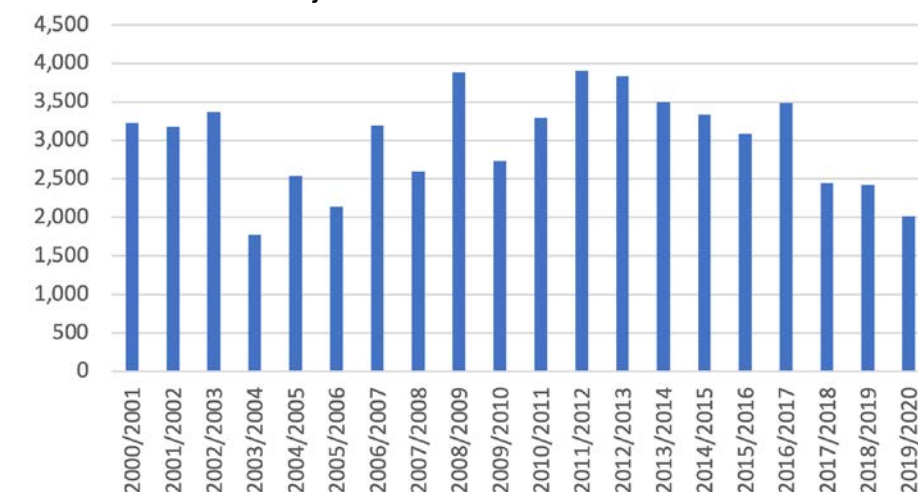
Common resident and very common winter visitor (Green)

Monthly maximum counts by site are given in the table.

Tufted Duck: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	15	8	26	11	-	5	3	8	12	2	5	19
Bray GPs	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Burghfield GPs	292	261	239	-	-	14	-	-	111	188	276	237
Dinton Pastures CP	70	90	89	7	7	18	-	20	37	18	132	85
Great Meadow Pond	13	46	28	-	7	1	3	-	4	7	17	5
Jubilee River	19	1	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	13	8	2	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	12	3
Lower Farm GP	20	41	55	80	22	12	28	40	18	11	22	9
Moatlands GPs	-	58	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	69	49	82	40	42	17	10	40	51	39	77	52
Padworth Lane GP	24	16	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	10	21	20	-	-	22	33	236	230	100	42	27
Thatcham Marsh	33	22	35	19	17	16	49	44	23	21	34	30
Theale GPs	193	83	176	-	27	78	44	24	105	114	197	148
Twyford GPs	46	103	118	44	7	14	7	19	35	25	112	114
Woolhampton GPs	13	16	12	-	42	4	29	24	15	43	33	35
Wraysbury GPs	76	24	60	-	-	-	2	-	73	28	195	111
No. birds at other sites	579	340	341	33	84	23	21	90	257	401	514	391
No. other sites	13	13	12	6	19	5	8	2	7	8	14	12
WeBS Count Totals	1,315	1,006	1,201	44	85	99	71	404	797	874	1,330	831
Total birds (minimum)	1,485	1,194	1,298	242	255	224	229	545	977	1,027	1,668	1,290

Tufted Duck: Peak Winter Monthly Counts



First winter: of the sites in the table, the highest count of 292 was made at Burghfield GPs on Jan 12th. Elsewhere, large counts were made at Sandhurst GPs, with 211 on Jan 10th, and Virginia Water, with 117 on Jan 12th. An apparent sudden reduction in numbers in April was due to several WeBS counts not taking place. **Breeding:** this was confirmed at the following sites with the number of broods given in brackets: Bagnor (one); Donnington (one); Lower Farm GP (two); Midgham Quarry (one); Brimpton GPs (one); Woolhampton GPs (three); Hosehill Lake (six); Theale GPs (two); Moor Green Lakes (seven); and Horton Brook Quarry (one). A female on the R. Thames at Streatley in early July was a surprise find and possibly suggested breeding nearby. The largest broods comprised 12 ducklings at Theale GPs on Jul 12th and 15 at Hosehill Lake on Jul 12th.

Second winter: as in previous years, the highest counts at Queen Mother Reservoir were made in early autumn with over 200 in a four-week period at the end of August and early September, before numbers fell away. Otherwise, peak counts were: 276 at Burghfield GPs on Nov 15th; 197 at Main Pit, Theale, on Nov 15th; 233 at Virginia Water on Nov 16th; and 195 at Wraybury GPs on Nov 29th.

The chart demonstrates the decline of Tufted Duck as a wintering species in recent years. For each winter, the count is the highest monthly total in the period October to March of site maximum numbers. The local and national trends are similar [BTO BirdTrends].

SCAUP GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Red)

A juvenile found at Searles Farm Lane GP North on Nov 28th was reported on four dates up to Dec 17th (MFW *et al.*), and again in early 2021.



Scaup, Searles Lane GP North, Nov 28th, Andy Tomczynski.

EIDER COMMON EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Rare vagrant (Amber)

A male starting its moult out of eclipse was found on Main Pit, Theale, in the afternoon of Oct 2nd, and was still present and occasionally seen diving the next day (ABM, ABT). The last report of Eider in the county was ten years earlier when two were on Dorney Wetlands in December 2010.



Eider, Main Pit, Theale, Oct 3rd, Andy Tomczynski.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

After the excellent showing of this species in 2019, 2020 was a poor year with just seven birds seen, but several birds were heard overhead at night. In common with 2019, multiple reports fell on a few dates of significant overland migration that was detected across the nation [Birdguides].

The first reports came on Mar 19th, when a drake was at Summerleaze GPs, and two adult drakes and a first winter drake were at Queen Mother Reservoir (both CDRH). The Summerleaze GP report was only the second ever occurrence of this species at the site, with the first record (of four drakes) just two years previously in 2018. The next reports came on the evening of Apr 2nd: a small flock flying eastbound were heard clearly over Willows Riverside Park, Windsor, at 22:10 (DAC); a small flock was heard also eastbound over Emmer Green at 23:35 (AMH); others were heard over Hamilton Road, Reading, at

23:00 (RRi); and, nearby at Palmer Park, the calls were heard distantly (and some recordings made) throughout the evening and into the early hours of Apr 3rd (FH).

The only autumn report was of three drakes found at first light on Aug 16th, departing westwards at 08:42 (ABT, PNe, CDRH).

GOLDENEYE COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Fairly common winter visitor (Amber)

As usual, the distribution of Goldeneyes had an easterly bias in the county, while in west Berkshire, where the species had been just hanging on in recent years, 2020 saw none reported for the first time. The maximum monthly counts of Goldeneye by site are given in the table.

Goldeneye: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Burghfield GPs	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Dinton Pastures CP	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Moatlands GPs	3	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Moor Green Lakes	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Theale GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Twyford GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraybury GPs	28	31	34	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	18	28
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	5	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total birds (minimum)	41	43	43	1	-	-	-	-	1	5	26	35

First winter: the highest count of 34 was made at Wraybury GPs on Mar 1st, and the last report was of a female at the same place on Apr 4th (CDRH). **Second winter:** the first returning bird was found at Wraybury GPs on Sep 30th (CDRH, DTy). The only October reports were of three at Lea Farm Lake on Oct 17th and two at Wraybury GPs the same day. A widespread arrival was observed in November, with a peak count of 28 at Wraybury GPs on Dec 21st.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

Very scarce winter visitor (Amber)

Two redheads were on Great Meadow Pond on Jan 12th (DJB), and a drake was at Wraybury GPs on Jan 22nd and Feb 1st (CDRH).

GOOSANDER COMMON MERGANSER *Mergus merganser*

Fairly common winter visitor, has bred (Green)

The maximum monthly counts of Goosanders by site are given in the table.

First winter: as usual, the highest numbers of Goosanders were found at Moor Green Lakes, peaking at 41 on Jan 15th, a combined total of birds roosting on Colebrook North and Grove Lakes. Away from the tabulated sites, there were several reports from Fleethill Farm of birds commuting to or from Moor Green Lakes, though one was seen on the R.

Goosander: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lower Farm GP	3	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Moatlands GPs	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	41	32	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	16	42
Padworth Lane GP	7	10	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Sandhurst GPs	21	23	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	18
Theale GPs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	8
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Wraysbury GPs	8	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9
No. birds at other sites	5	16	11	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	9	12
No. other sites	4	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	6	10
WeBS Count Totals	40	40	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	41
Total birds (minimum)	96	87	40	1	-	-	-	-	1	6	36	94

Blackwater there on Mar 8th. There were also good numbers at Sandhurst GPs with a maximum of 23 on Feb 7th. The final report of the period was of a bird at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 2nd (SCD).

Second winter: the first returning Goosander was a female at Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead, on Sep 28th (BDC), a rather early arrival date. Numbers increased at the regular sites, with a maximum of 42 at roost at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 30th. Elsewhere, up to two were reported at Heath Lake, Crowthorne, on three dates, three birds were at Donnington Grove GC on Nov 12th, while on the R. Thames there were occasional sightings at Streatley and Purley on Thames.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There was just one report of this increasingly scarce visitor, a redhead that circled low over Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 24th. After some harassment from a Peregrine, it continued in a west-south-west direction (CDRH).

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Very rare winter visitor (following the eradication programme), formerly a rare resident and scarce winter visitor

A winter plumage male was found at Fleethill Farm on Dec 25th (PKe, JCMo) and remained in the area into 2021. This was the first report of this species since a female at Burghfield GPs in November 2014.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Scarce and declining resident (Red)

In 2020, the abundance of Grey Partridges in Berkshire was less than 25% of that in 2000 [BBI 25yr], mirroring the national trend.

The stronghold for Grey Partridges in Berkshire remained the downs in the west of the county, with records coming from 8% (14) of the tetrads in that region. However, the majority of the sites featuring in the records from west Berkshire were the well-visited sites along the border with Oxfordshire such as in the Lambourn and Compton Downs, so

the apparent restriction to these sites may be a consequence of uneven observer coverage. The 2007-2011 Atlas found Grey Partridges in 62 tetrads in west Berkshire so it is likely therefore that the species may still be found in many of these tetrads. Indeed, there were single records from Walbury Hill, Welford and Eling, while four summer records came from the Bucklebury area. Most reports were of up to four birds, but three reports were in double figures, including a count of 20 flushed by dogs at Aldworth on Jan 3rd.

A healthy total of 37 records spread across the year came from mid-Berkshire, but, except for a single bird at Sonning on Apr 29th, all records were from Englefield. Here the habitat has been sympathetically managed for wildlife and regularly monitored, revealing up to ten pairs on Feb 26th and a peak count of 48 on Dec 30th, comprising eight coveys (RCr).

In east Berkshire, just eight records were submitted for six locations. These are in three distinct areas: Binfield, Warfield and Frost Folly to the north of Bracknell; around Temple to the north-west of Maidenhead; and Windsor Great Park. Despite the low number of records, it appeared that Grey Partridge was hanging on in these traditional areas. Two remarkable counts of 67 at Frost Folly in November and December probably indicate that the local population was being supplemented or maintained by captive-bred birds.

Given the large number of coveys observed from summer onwards, breeding doubtless took place at Englefield, while two juveniles were seen at Bucklebury on Aug 30th.

PHEASANT COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

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

A common species throughout the county and, as in previous years, around 20% of the total tetrads in west and mid-Berkshire were occupied, as were 10% of those in east Berkshire. This is another species that is artificially reared in the autumn for shooting so numbers in parts of the county rise during this season. The highest numbers were all from west Berkshire: 72 at Welford on Oct 28th, 58 at Enborne on Sep 13th, and counts of between 38 and 55 at Walbury Hill throughout the autumn. There were no substantial reports of breeding, this being a much under-recorded species in this respect; however, overall numbers in the county have been more or less stable since 2004 [BBI 25yr]. Unusual sightings included one wading in deep water at Bottom Lane GP on Mar 21st, another sauntering through the traffic at the Showcase roundabout, Winnersh, on Mar 24th, and an albino at Pound Copse on Dec 2nd.

QUAIL COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

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

This scarce summer visitor was encouragingly reported again in 2020; all reports came from six tetrads in west Berkshire with most in June and July. The earliest record was from Wellbottom Down on May 20th (RJC) and the last from Upper Bucklebury on Aug 13th (DJR) but the observer believed this to have been an escape. This site lies to the south of the main downlands, but all other records were from the Lambourn and Compton Downs where the landscape is characterised by cereal fields and natural grasslands. There was no evidence of breeding other than the presence of singing males and territories held.

In the Lambourn Downs, 17 records came from Wellbottom Down which was monitored on a regular basis, with single birds reported in May and June, increasing to two during July with three on Jul 20th (RJC *et al.*). Nearby at Eastbury Down, reports of singing birds a kilometre apart on Jun 25th (AEDH) and Jun 27th (GDS) possibly referred to different birds.

For the Compton Downs area, one was calling from a wheat field on Jun 13th (NJB). To the east on the Roden Downs, two were calling on Jul 1st and one was even seen in flight (RDr).

Three were present on Jul 10th (RRi), two sang from a fallow field on Jul 12th (PBT), and two males challenged with their characteristic ‘wet-my-lips’ song in a barley field on Jul 29th (CDRH).

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

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

A widespread and common species that has doubled in numbers since 1994 [BBi 25yr] but the numbers are artificially boosted each year with those reared and released for shooting in the autumn. The distribution of this species had a westerly bias, with 21% of west Berkshire tetrads occupied, compared to 15% and 7% in mid and east Berkshire respectively.

The two highest counts, 100 at Pound Copse on Dec 2nd during an active shoot and 45 at Frost Folly on Nov 3rd, doubtless involved birds released for sport. Elsewhere, double figure counts came from Streatley Warren, Thurle Down, Remenham, Winterbourne and Mortimer, while amongst the regular counts at Englefield a total of 29 birds on Sep 19th comprised coveys of ten, ten and nine birds (RCr). Several of RCr’s reports at Englefield made mention of young birds, including an adult with ten small chicks on Jul 12th, and three half-grown chicks were with an adult in the Woolhampton area on May 23rd.

On three occasions, Red-legged Partridges were seen feeding on the hard shoulder of the M4 in west Berkshire. A few birds found their way to some unlikely locations, such as the Harris Garden at Whiteknights Park, the Green Park construction site, Horton Brook Quarry, and domestic gardens in Earley and Emmer Green.

NIGHTJAR EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Scarce summer visitor (Amber)

The table summarises the findings of organised surveys and casual sightings across the county. An estimated total of 76 territories continued the healthy situation for this species, especially considering that a usually productive area in east Berkshire did not receive the usual coverage.

Nightjar: Numbers of Territories

Site	Territories (max birds)	Surveyors	Notes
Snelsmore Common	1 (2)*	Clare Sulston <i>et al.</i>	
Greenham & Crookham Commons	8 (11)*	Clare Sulston <i>et al.</i>	
Bucklebury Common	6 (12)	Many Observers	Covers Upper & Lower Commons
Padworth Common	2 (4)	PH, A Faulkner	
Ufton Nervet Woods	4 (6)	PD, PH <i>et al.</i>	Includes Roundoak Piece
North Ascot	1	SA	
South Ascot	2	CDRH	No other data for this area which held at least 12 territories in 2019.
Swinley Park	3 (4)	M A Johnstone, SA	
Buckler’s Forest	2	PJC	
Wellington College	1	SCD, DJS	
<i>Thames Basin Heath SPA:</i>			Berkshire areas only
Wildmoor Heath BBOWT	3*	PJC <i>et al.</i>	
Swinley Forest	27*	PJC <i>et al.</i>	
MoD Camberley	16*	PJC <i>et al.</i>	Includes Wishmoor Bottom
Total Territories	76		

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

In west Berkshire, BBOWT surveys organised by Clare Sulston involved coordinated visits to various parts of Greenham, Crookham and Snelsmore Commons. Considering the potential for birds to fly between different areas on the survey nights, an estimate of eight territories on Greenham and Crookham Commons was made, with heathland close to woodland rather than the open central heaths favoured. Within this area, a nest with two eggs being incubated was seen on Bishop’s Green Heath on May 21st. Also in the west of the county, 12 birds were present at Bucklebury Common, including a male landing near a nest with two eggs. A female on a nest with two chicks was seen there on Jun 24th.

In mid Berkshire, two birds were heard at Mortimer on May 26th, while a minimum of four birds, including two churring males, were at Padworth Common between May 20th and Jun 1st, and three were at Ufton Nervet from May 9th to Sep 1st, the latter being the latest date recorded (PH).

In east Berkshire, Patrick Crowley organised and compiled data from surveys within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA yielding the tabulated results. Within this area, a bird at Caesar’s Camp in Swinley Forest on May 5th represented the first record of the year (L Wall). Outside the SPA, a churring male was heard at Buckler’s Forest on May 22nd, another was at Wellington College between May 21st and 26th, while an observer enjoyed a bird churring and wing-clapping from his house in North Ascot on Jul 7th and Aug 4th.

SWIFT COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

Sightings were reported in 29% of tetrads, up from 19-21% for 2016-2019. 72.9% of reports were of fewer than ten birds, and there were 12 (1.4%) treble figure records.

The first record was of a single bird at Binfield on Apr 12th (O Brown), an average first date for this century. Numbers then increased from mid-April. Their return was anticipated in Wokingham town centre where the first two were seen on May 1st, about ten days earlier than in 2018 and 2019. The largest number reported was 300+, mostly going west, at Theale GPs on May 23rd. Other significant numbers were seen over water bodies including: 200 at Searles Farm Lane GP on May 5th; 150+ along with huge numbers of Swallows and House Martins feeding around Hambleton Lock on May 13th; c100 at Moor Green Lakes on Jun 6th; 140 at Queen Mother Reservoir also on Jun 6th; 150-200 feeding with hirundines at Lower Farm GP on Jun 19th; 100+ over Moor Green Lakes on Jun 29th; a group of 120 at Theale GPs on Jul 6th, which had built to c200 by Jul 25th; c100 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 26th; and 100 high over Newbury on Jul 30th. There were indications that some birds were preparing to fly south as early as Jul 15th, and definitely by Jul 23rd. Numbers continued to reduce through to Sep 7th, then there were no further sightings until a final single bird was seen with House Martins at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 2nd (ABT).

The first screaming activity noted was 23 birds at Crowthorne on Apr 24th, then at 17 other sites by parties of two to 50 birds, the latter at three sites: over the houses near County Lock on the K&A canal, at Lower Earley, and at Thatcham between Jul 22nd and 24th. Reports of birds entering or leaving nest sites were received for: St. Luke’s Church, Maidenhead (Apr 27th); one bird flying into a roof space in Reading (May 5th); six visiting three nest sites in Eton Wick (May 29th); an active nest hole was in the BT Exchange building in Newbury (Jun 4th to 24th); five birds were prospecting a roof space in Bracknell in response to recorded Swift calls (Jun 1st to 26th); one entered a Swift brick in Hungerford, where there was a possible nest after the House Sparrows had finished nesting there (Jun 14th to Aug 1st); four attended a nest hole in Stratfield Mortimer on Jun 14th; one entered a nest site in

Waverley Road, Reading, on Jun 14th; six visited a nest site in Rose Street, Reading, on Jul 11th; and, finally, a bird dropped out of the roof of The Bell Inn at Aldworth on Jul 30th.

Some of the more unusual records included three accounts of groups of Swifts mobbing raptors: 20+ bothering a Buzzard in Caversham on Jul 12th; 20 mobbing a female Sparrowhawk over Newbury on Jul 21st; and 40 briefly mobbing a Peregrine in Newbury on Aug 1st.

GREAT BUSTARD *Otis tarda*

Former resident, not recorded since the 19th century, recent records relate to a reintroduction project in Wiltshire

Last recorded in 2018, there were two records of Great Bustards in 2020. The first was of a bird at Wellbottom Down on May 22nd, which was also seen nearby in Oxfordshire on May 12th (J Claridge). The other was at Lambourn Downs on Aug 20th, when a bird flew up from tall grass near East Warren Farm (LS).

CUCKOO COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Fairly common but declining summer visitor (Red)

The first record was a single bird heard by the river in Windsor on the fairly early date of Apr 5th (DAC), followed by one each at Brimpton and Thatcham on 11th, then almost daily until Jun 22nd with only three records after that date.

The number of tetrads where Cuckoos were reported was 75 (19%), up by seven from 2019, and by 23 from 2016. Almost all, 96%, records were of one or two birds, but several sites along the rivers Kennet and Lambourn reported three and even four birds present in May. In the east of the county, two males were chasing a female at Jubilee River on May 20th.

There was a pair, including a calling male, at Horton GPs on Jun 1st, and a pile of feathers from a predated unfledged juvenile. The female was seen again on Jun 4th, flushed from a reed-filled ditch, likely to be targeting Reed Warblers. A live juvenile was reported at Horton GPs on Jul 12th (CDRH).

The penultimate record was of a male at RMA Sandhurst on Jul 31st (PJC). However, the final record was of a juvenile at Greenham Common on Oct 3rd (AEDH), the latest date this century. The bird had an injured right leg – could that have affected its ability to migrate?

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Common feral resident (wild population Green)

There were 212 records, 184 of which were single digit, and only five were above 100.

First winter: maximum counts were 100 each at Caversham on Jan 2nd and 7th, 23 at Hungerford on Jan 19th, and 27 at Enborne on Feb 5th,

Spring/summer: there were no reports of confirmed breeding. Largest counts were 31 birds at Enborne on May 9th, 20 at Earley on May 21st, c40 at Kennet Mouth on Jun 16th, 30 at Wokingham on Aug 3rd, and 30 at Newbury on Aug 31st. On several occasions, birds were seen perched close to the breeding Peregrines in Newbury, or engaged in flight displays with Peregrines looking on.

Autumn/second winter: the highest autumn counts were 20 birds at Eton Wick Floods on Sep 9th, 51 at Enborne on Sep 13th, 250 at Cannon Court Farm on Sep 27th, c250 at two sites in Maidenhead on Sep 27th, and 100 at Boxford Common on Oct 11th.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Common resident and winter visitor (Amber)

Records were well spread out over the county, coming from 22% of the county's tetrads with a slightly greater occupancy in the east. Only 3% of the records reported groups of 20 birds or more, at just nine locations.

During the first winter, the highest counts were 26 birds at Eastbury Down on Jan 6th, 20 over Brimpton airfield and Chamomile field on Feb 8th, and 42 in trees surrounding Battlefield Common on Feb 18th. Higher numbers during the summer included the year's highest count of 244 in a field at Waltham Place on Jul 3rd, 50 at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 21st, and 44 at Englefield on Jul 31st. During the autumn and second winter there were 34 at Englefield on Sep 19th, up to c140 in a stubble field at Horton GPs from Sep 24th to Oct 2nd, 150-200 in a Sunflower field at Waltham St. Lawrence from Oct 25th to Dec 1st, c90 at Bisham on Dec 5th, and 80 at Farnborough on Dec 20th.

There were no records of successful breeding, although singing males were noted throughout the year from Jan 19th to Dec 17th at 16 sites, while displaying birds were at Caversham on Feb 17th, and mating was observed at Palmer Park on Mar 26th. In Swinley Park, an unfortunate Woodpigeon was courting a Stock Dove on Jul 11th, which firmly rejected its advances.

WOODPIGEON COMMONWOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

According to the Berkshire Breeding Bird Index, Woodpigeon abundance showed no significant change since 1998 [BBI 2020], and, according to the last county atlas, Woodpigeons were probably or confirmed to breed in 94% of all tetrads [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. Yet in 2020 records came from only 30% of the county's tetrads – surely this is a species that is grossly under-reported.

First winter: there were a few large flocks: 100 birds at RAF Welford on Jan 11th; 150 at Welford on Jan 14th; 440 at Cow Down on Jan 23rd; 100 at Enborne on Feb 5th; and 500 in flight over Farnborough Down on Feb 22nd. **Spring/summer:** at least 100 were at Pangbourne on Apr 19, 100+ at Fulham Wood on Jun 3rd, 300+ feeding in a Barley field in Charvil on Jul 6th, and a large feeding flock of 300 in Englefield on Jul 12th.

Breeding: this is likely to be under-reported, but nest building was observed at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 17th and Jun 23rd, at Newbury on May 31st (on a sloping window ledge so doomed to failure), Shaw on Apr 27th and Jun 8th, and Enborne on Jun 20th. Fledged young were at Lower Green on May 30th, Caversham on Jun 14th and Aug 20th, and Newbury from Aug 7th to Aug 31st (often close to the nesting Peregrines), while a pair were seen mating in Maidenhead on Oct 11th.

Autumn/second winter: large movements included: 3,800 birds, the highest number reported, in several flocks flying south-south-west over Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 3rd; 156 in flocks of up to 40 over Finchampstead flying south on Nov 4th; 275 at Wooshill

on Oct 4th, with the largest flock being 100; 250 flying south in groups of 30-90 at Lavell's Lake on Nov 7th; 200+ over South Hill Park heading north on Nov 7th; c110 at Thatcham heading south on Nov 16th; 400 in several large flocks moving west and north-west at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 19th; and 300 at Kintbury consisting of three small flocks followed by a further 250 birds, all heading north on Dec 9th.

The highest counts of settled birds were: 250 at Enborne on Sep 13th; 300 at Lower Green on Oct 13th; 1,500 at Fleethill Farm in two large flocks on Nov 16th; 200 at Boxford on Nov 17th; 200 at RAF Welford on Nov 28th; c200 at Aldermaston on Dec 1st; 200 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 10th; c300 at Sandhurst on Dec 13th; and approximately 500 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 30th.

TURTLE DOVE EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

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

2020 saw no change to the desperate situation for this species. A single bird was present at a site in west Berkshire on four dates between May 16th and Jun 16th (ABT). It was heard singing and seen to undertake display flights but there was no evidence of breeding. The only other record was of one just within the county boundary at Blewbury Down on Aug 22nd (GDS).

COLLARED DOVE EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Very common resident (Green)

Although a common bird, almost half of the records were of single birds (46%), and 98% were of fewer than ten birds. The highest numbers were noted at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre, with between 13 and 44 during January and February, and 51 on Nov 24th. Wilson Road in Reading had the next highest count, of 30 on Jul 24th.

Breeding activity was very much under-recorded, though the reports covered most months of the year. There were two reports of young birds, including one at North Ascot on Nov 29th, and evidence of probable breeding came from 14 other locations. Unseasonal reports included mating in Hungerford on Nov 4th and in Reading on Dec 16th (though interrupted by a Magpie diving in and striking the pair), and nest building on top of an old Woodpigeons' nest in Pangbourne on Dec 30th. Several reports referred to interactions with Magpies, in which the Collared Doves saw off the aggressor.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Fairly common winter visitor and scarce resident (Green)

The 2016-18 Berkshire Breeding Water Rail Survey estimated that over 100 tetrads in the county contained suitable habitat for the species [Water Rail Survey]. Data extracted from this year's sightings resulted in Water Rails being recorded in 28 tetrads but with numbers stable when compared to last year. The table summarises the records over the year.

Winter: Water Rails were reported from sites along all the main river valleys, notably the Thames, Kennet, Blackwater, Loddon, and Lambourn. The highest counts were of five birds at Fobney Meadow on Mar 30th and Apr 2nd, five at Horton GPs on Feb 19th, and four at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 17th, while birds frequently appeared under the feeders at Lea Farm Lake. Away from the expected sites, one was at Waltham Place on Apr 1st, and overnight sound recordings detected single birds flying over Palmer Park on Apr 6th and over Finchampstead on Oct 15th.

Water Rail: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	2	1
Horton GPs	3	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	2
Jubilee River	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Moor Green Lakes	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Thatcham Marsh	1	1	4	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	3
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	1
No. birds at other sites	7	5	10	9	1	3	1	1	3	7	9	9
No. other sites	5	5	4	4	1	2	1	1	3	5	6	5
WeBS Count Totals	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Total birds (minimum)	18	12	15	10	2	3	3	5	7	16	18	18

Breeding: Water Rails were recorded at very few locations in the breeding season and offered no better evidence for breeding than birds heard singing. However, their elusive nature and partially nocturnal habits probably meant that many went undetected. A Water Rail showed well at Horton GPs on several dates around May 12th, and singles were at Green Park on May 31st and Fobney Meadow on Jun 9th. Also on Jun 9th, two birds at Eton Wick included one singing, as opposed to giving the more familiar sharming call. Apart from singles at Lower Farm GP on Apr 24th and Thatcham Marsh on Jul 28th (which may have been late departing and early arriving winter visitors respectively), no birds were reported in this period from the Kennet Valley west of Reading, which has been a stronghold for this species [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

MOORHEN COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident (Green)

A common and often overlooked species that can be found in many locations across the county where water is present. Since 1994, records have indicated a modest decline in numbers for this species, which is in line with the national trend [BBI 25yr]. Moorhens were recorded in 12% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 31% of those in mid Berkshire and 16% of those in the east, figures that are almost identical to previous years. Sites where Moorhens were counted throughout the year generally found the highest numbers between October and the year end, including 37 at Sandhurst GPs on Oct 15th, 28 at Lower Farm GP on Oct 17th, and 27 at Donnington Grove GC on Nov 26th. Moorhens were frequently detected in overnight recordings at Finchampstead, Palmer Park and Woosheill between Apr 3rd and Jun 27th, and at Kintbury between Sep 10th and 15th.

Breeding: nest building was first noted at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 17th, and the first chicks at Caversham on Apr 15th. Breeding was confirmed at 22 sites around the county, usually by the presence of recently fledged young, including 14 seen on the islands at Main Pit, Theale, during a WeBS survey on Jun 7th.

COOT EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra*

Common resident and winter visitor (Green)

The Coot is a common species of large and small waterbodies, and even large rivers. There have been fluctuations in numbers over the last 25 years including a slight decline since

Coot: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	7	5	8	6	-	5	11	9	10	7	8	10
Burghfield GPs	255	234	119	-	-	48	-	-	137	207	290	4
Dinton Pastures CP	135	42	22	10	10	16	-	54	144	43	137	139
Jubilee River	8	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	20	10	6	-	-	-	-	-	110	-	25	9
Lower Farm GP	46	44	36	-	23	42	40	26	22	45	39	54
Moor Green Lakes	93	58	50	20	20	27	20	44	166	160	143	210
Padworth Lane GP	100	20	4	-	2	-	1	-	-	31	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	-	-	-	8	9	198	210	75	92	44
Thatcham Marsh	35	20	17	11	14	24	29	22	24	28	31	23
Theale GPs	361	92	65	-	15	41	225	222	753	865	1,169	1,387
Twyford GPs	84	69	37	16	10	27	35	81	92	73	163	142
Woolhampton GPs	30	25	12	-	9	-	28	15	10	20	15	19
Wraysbury GPs	60	-	10	-	-	-	4	-	20	19	-	19
No. birds at other sites	617	320	238	44	120	46	67	79	392	368	471	484
No. other sites	17	13	19	17	32	8	8	8	13	12	14	11
WeBS Count Totals	1,527	849	553	16	44	57	191	359	1,264	1,851	2,453	2,514
Total birds (minimum)	1,853	939	641	107	223	284	469	750	2,099	1,941	2,583	2,544

2010 although that is not thought to be significant [BBI 25yr]. Coots were found in 17% of the county's tetrads, a figure that has remained steady over the last five years. Numbers are boosted in the winter with arrivals from the continent and the table shows the maximum monthly counts at the main sites.

Wintering numbers were significantly higher in the second winter period than the first, with the largest flocks generally to be found at Main Pit, Theale, including a peak of 1,387 on Dec 13th. The largest flock elsewhere was 355 at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 10th. Breeding was reported from 29 sites across the county, though the number of nesting attempts was probably greatly under-recorded. Most sites registered one or two attempts, only bettered by five nests at Woolhampton GPs and six at Moor Green Lakes. Overnight sound recording revealed birds passing over Palmer Park and Wooseshill between Apr 5th and 14th.

CRANE COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Very rare vagrant (Amber)

A single adult flew over Horton Brook Quarry at 19:05 on Apr 27th (CDRH). Coming from the direction of Heathrow, it passed over Queen Mother Reservoir and travelled on towards the west.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

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

Records were submitted from 54 sites, mostly in mid and west Berkshire (see table). Again this year, the highest numbers were seen at Lower Farm GP, with 21 reported in August and 16 in September. Elsewhere, counts of five or more individuals at a time were recorded at Aldermaston GPs, Horton Brook Quarry, and Windsor Great Park, with 11 seen at Mill Pond, Swinley Forest, in May and nine at Waltham Place in July. The frequently seen winter increase in numbers, where resident birds are joined by migrants from elsewhere, was less



Little Grebe, Lower Farm GP, Feb 8th, Andy Tomczynski.

marked this year.

Little Grebe: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	2	4	2	2	-	2	4	2	5	2	5	5
Bray GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-
Dinton Pastures CP	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	1	4	4
Jubilee River	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Lea Farm Lake	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	2	4	6	-	4	14	14	21	16	8	2	3
Moatlands GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Moor Green Lakes	2	4	3	1	1	5	5	5	5	1	2	4
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	2
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	1	1	3	1	3	2	4	1	3	1	1	1
Theale GPs	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	3	-	1
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
No. birds at other sites	21	11	7	7	41	18	18	12	14	4	11	13
No. other sites	11	6	5	5	13	8	8	3	7	4	8	7
WeBS Count Totals	11	13	3	-	-	-	-	2	16	6	11	18
Total birds (minimum)	40	29	21	11	50	42	47	42	53	20	30	38

Evidence of breeding was reported from 14 sites, with a good total of 32 chicks seen.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Fairly common resident and winter visitor (Green)

Records were received from more than 80 sites across Berkshire this year. As usual, the largest numbers were recorded at Queen Mother Reservoir, with counts above 70 in seven months of the year, including 114 reported in July and 104 in December. Counts in excess of

30 individuals were reported from: Burghfield GPs in September and October; Theale GPs in August and from October to December; and Woolhampton GPs in July. Monthly counts from other locations are shown in the table.

Great Crested Grebe: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	12	7	7	-	-	-	-	10	6	24	-	19
Burghfield GPs	20	14	18	-	-	10	1	-	47	57	27	1
Dinton Pastures CP	8	4	9	3	5	7	-	8	6	5	10	10
Great Meadow Pond	5	5	5	-	7	10	12	9	10	7	4	6
Jubilee River	6	3	7	1	2	-	-	-	6	8	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1
Lower Farm GP	-	3	3	-	2	4	6	7	3	1	1	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	19	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	3	6	6	8	6	8	13	13	24	16	7	5
Padworth Lane GP	6	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	30	32	20	-	74	79	114	85	93	46	71	104
Thatcham Marsh	1	2	4	5	4	2	4	7	5	1	1	1
Theale GPs	5	2	18	-	4	23	20	37	20	36	66	45
Twyford GPs	15	18	17	6	7	14	14	18	20	27	22	16
Woolhampton GPs	3	6	8	-	6	6	30	25	19	14	8	6
Wraysbury GPs	8	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	7	7	5	8
No. birds at other sites	40	49	48	18	39	24	30	12	41	40	44	44
No. other sites	13	11	12	8	19	6	7	6	8	8	13	8
WeBS Count Totals	89	123	133	6	107	103	137	154	262	241	191	146
Total birds (minimum)	162	157	177	45	156	187	245	250	309	293	267	266

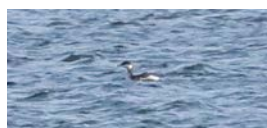
Breeding was reported from 18 sites, courtship display and nesting from several more. At least ten pairs raised young at Woolhampton GPs, with five successful broods reported at Moor Green Lakes. In all, 75 juveniles were seen.

SLAVONIAN GREBE

HORNED GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Red)

Three records of a single bird were made at Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 3rd (HN *et al.*) and 4th (CS). The previous sighting in Berkshire was in 2018.



Slavonian Grebe, Main Pit, Theale, Jan 3rd, Andy Tomczynski.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

Fewer Black-necked Grebes were seen in 2020 than in the previous two years, with a total of nine or ten reported. The first sighting of the year was of a single bird on Main Pit, Theale, on Jan 1st remaining until Jan 10th (AM *et al.*), but with three present on Jan 4th (KEM, RCr). A single bird at Lower Farm GP on Jan 11th may have been a bird from Theale passing through (NC, IW, JL). One was seen regularly at Lower Farm GP between Feb 8th and Mar 21st (with three there on Feb 11th), and by the end of its stay it had moulted into full summer plumage (MO). One bird, moulting into summer plumage, was subsequently seen on Main Pit on Mar 2nd (KEM, ABT). No details in the reports of these birds at Theale and Lower Farm GP suggested that the same birds were involved, and the significant gap between the January and the February sightings point to two distinct occurrences. In the

east of the county, three individuals – two in summer plumage and one winter adult – were recorded on Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 30th and Nov 14th respectively (CDRH).

STONE-CURLEW EURASIAN STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Scarce and localised summer visitor (Schedule 1, Amber)

Spring: the first record of the year was of a single bird at a regular site on the downs on Apr 23rd (CDRH). In Berkshire, Stone-curlews are rarely recorded away from traditional breeding sites but one was sound recorded around 01:00 over a Finchampstead garden on Apr 24th (RCM). **Breeding:** on the downs, pairs were present at two or three locations during the breeding season. At one location a bird was seen sitting on a nest on May 9th (NJB), a pair were seen with one very small chick on May 24th (MFW) and with two well grown young on Jun 28th (NJB). Up to five were seen at a nearby location, including a family party of three on Jul 1st (RDr), though these may have been the same birds. Some distance away, three birds were seen on Aug 6th (ABT). The observer later learnt that one was seen nearby at a site where a pair were seen in 2018, raising the strong possibility of a new breeding site. **Autumn:** there were no records in September on the downs, but a count of 13 was made on Oct 11th (ABT), before the last record of the year, of at least three birds, on Oct 16th (CDRH).

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER

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

Oystercatchers were recorded from around 37 sites. The maximum monthly counts are shown in the table.

Oystercatcher: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	-	3	2	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	3	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	3	2	2	3	4	2	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	3	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	2	6	4	2	4	4	5	2	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	1	2	3	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	2	6	14	5	4	4	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	1	3	8	4	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	-	15	11	-	3	3	5	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	3	23	24	23	20	19	16	4	-	-	-	-

Spring: the first record of the year was a single at Moatlands GP on Jan 23rd (ABT), the same first date as last year. What was presumably the same bird was around Main Pit, Theale, and Hosehill Lake to the month's end, when it was joined by a second bird on Jan 31st. A more general arrival occurred in early February, with twos or threes at another six sites by Feb 8th. On Feb 15th, six were recorded at Main Pit, the highest count for the year from any site. This species was recorded on an almost daily basis in the county through February

and March at some 15 sites. Presumed spring migrants were recorded by nocturnal sound recorders with two or three over Reading on Mar 31st and Apr 2nd, one over Finchampstead on Apr 24th, and two or three over Wokingham on Apr 30th.

Breeding: successful breeding was confirmed at only four sites. This compared to eight sites the year before but presumably indicates reduced coverage. At four sites, a single pair bred with the following outcomes: at Main Pit two pairs were reported on Mar 8th, then there was a pair with a chick on Pylon Island on Jun 7th and an adult with a juvenile on Jun 12th; an adult with two juveniles was seen at Searles Farm Lane GPs on May 25th; a pair with one juvenile was reported on the island at Loddon Nature Reserve on Apr 26th, May 11th (when juvenile was nearly full-grown) and May 16th; and at Moor Green Lakes a pair was seen with two newly hatched juveniles on Plover Island on Jun 16th, then only one juvenile was seen between Jun 19th and Jul 1st, by which time it was described as medium-sized. There was an interesting observation at this last site of an adult feeding on (duck?) eggs with two Jackdaws on Plover Island on May 17th (RCM). Oystercatchers were noted at several other sites but many were likely to be non-breeders or 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 one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 17th. In August there were one or two at Queen Mother Reservoir on 13th to 15th, 18th and 29th. The only other August records were one at Main Pit, Theale, on 15th and one heard over Bottom Lane Pit on 29th (SAG), which along with the bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on the same date (ABT), represents the last of the year.

AVOCET PIED AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Very scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Amber)

A pair circled Queen Mother Reservoir and then settled on open water on Mar 14th (CDRH) but left within the hour. One at Lower Farm GP on Aug 27th (IW, JB, NC) was reported to be blind in one eye.

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 around 90 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
Aldermaston GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Bray GPs	45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	44	-	-	-	-	-	2	12	2	-	4	50
Jubilee River	-	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	40	110
Lower Farm GP	153	27	-	-	2	26	18	83	82	240	264	240
Moor Green Lakes	14	27	2	-	4	23	70	102	130	51	157	70
Padworth Lane GP	100	-	10	-	-	-	-	33	-	32	18	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	3	3	2	5	2	2	96	106	40	103	60
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	7	-	-

No. birds at other sites	1,053	493	121	60	113	163	273	109	149	772	709	1,212
No. other sites	17	12	21	21	30	12	13	6	5	6	9	14
WeBS Count Totals	70	108	8	-	-	-	-	-	100	69	190	89
Total birds (minimum)	1,423	550	138	64	130	217	365	435	469	1,166	1,295	1,749

First winter: there were few large counts in the first winter period, with the highest being just 153 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 1st. **Breeding:** breeding behaviour was noted at 25 sites and was confirmed at eight of these. Approximately 35 pairs were recorded and the first display noted was at Compton Downs on Mar 7th. The first chick was seen on Apr 26th, when one was seen on arable at Jealott's Hill, and at least a further six broods were seen across all sites though information on numbers fledged is lacking. Just two pairs were estimated at Greenham and Crookham Commons in the BBOWT ground nesting bird report, but once again no young fledged [AEDH 2021]. **Autumn/second winter:** post-breeding flocks began to build by mid-June, with 55 at Kintbury on Jun 10th for example. Significant counts away from the wetland sites shown in the table during this period were 400 at Streatley Farm on Dec 2nd, 302 at Englefield on Oct 12th and 250 at Remenham Hill on Oct 7th.

GOLDEN PLOVER EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Golden Plovers were recorded at 22 sites, mostly in west Berkshire. The maximum monthly counts at key sites are shown in the table.

Golden Plover: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Englefield	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Greenham Common	70	-	34	91	-	-	-	-	2	60	132	45
Lower Farm GP	150	120	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	60	1	19
Remenham Hill	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	-
Streatley Farm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	210	18
No. birds at other sites	226	35	89	-	-	-	-	-	4	438	315	23
No. other sites	4	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	6	3	4
Total birds (minimum)	450	195	123	91	-	-	-	50	6	658	658	113

First winter: the majority of records in this period were from Greenham Common and Lower Farm GP (until early February). Few sites recorded more than 50 birds. Highest counts were of 150 at Lower Farm GP on Jan 11th and 18th, and 150 at Compton Downs on Jan 7th. The last record of this period was a single at Greenham Common on Apr 11th (JL). **Autumn/second winter:** the first returning birds were around 50 at Lower Farm GP on Aug 29th (JL). The following counts of at least 100 were reported: approximately 100 at Remenham Hill on Oct 11th; 251 (highest count of year) on a harrowed field at Yattendon on Oct 12th; 100 at Combe on Nov 23rd; 132 at Greenham Common on Nov 26th; and 210 at Streatley on Nov 28th. On Oct 1st at West Ilsley, a flock of 30 was watched fleeing a hunting juvenile Peregrine. Interestingly a single bird was recorded calling over Wooshill at just after midnight on Oct 10th.



Ringed Plover, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 26th, Marek Walford.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There was one record this year of a single bird, which circled Queen Mother Reservoir calling and then departed, on Oct 9th (ABT).

RINGED PLOVER COMMON RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce summer visitor (Red)

This species was recorded at eight sites across the county.

Spring: the first for the year was one over Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 21st, and two were there on May 21st (both CDRH). Two were at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 26th and a single there on Apr 2nd (both SCD). At Horton Brook Quarry there were two on Apr 12th, a single on Apr 21st, three from May 4th to 5th, three on May 9th and at least one on May 11th (all CDRH). Two were at Thames Drive, Charvil, on Apr 17th (KLa), one was sound recorded over a Finchampstead garden in the early hours of May 5th (RCM), one was at Crookham Common on May 31st (M Baker), and one was at Lower Farm Jun 20th (IW).

Breeding: there were no indications of breeding activity this year.

Autumn: Ringed Plovers were found at four sites in the autumn with the majority of reports coming from Queen Mother Reservoir. The first of the autumn was a juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 7th and 8th (CDRH). Up to four were seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on a further 12 dates until the final record for the county, a single over on Oct 1st (CDRH *et al.*). Up to two were at Lower Farm GP on four dates from Aug 14th to 25th (NC *et al.*), up to two were at Lea Farm Lake on four dates from Aug 19th to 27th (FJC, RRI), and a single juvenile was at Horton Brook Quarry on Aug 30th to 31st (CDRH).

RINGED PLOVER (*TUNDRAE*) *Charadrius hiaticula tundrae* COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*TUNDRAE*)

There were three records of this race, all in the spring. One was at Queen Mother Reservoir on May 18th, two there on May 31st, and then one at Datchet from Jun 4th to 8th (all CDRH).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

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

There were records of Little Ringed Plovers from 19 sites. **Spring:** the first arrival was at Horton Brook Quarry where four were present on Mar 14th (CDRH), two days later than the average first arrival date over the last 20 years. The next record was a single at the New Workings, Moor Green Lakes, on Mar 17th and by the end of the month the species had been recorded at five sites. Records came from seven sites in April, mostly of two individuals at a site but with a peak count of nine at Horton Brook Quarry on Apr 24th and 26th. There were two records of birds recorded calling over Palmer Park, Reading, during “nocmig” recording sessions on the nights of Apr 11th and Jun 20th.

Breeding: this was confirmed at six sites with at least nine pairs in total, and chicks were seen at all sites. At least eight chicks were believed to have fledged. At an agricultural site in west Berkshire, a grant from the BOC Conservation Fund enabled a landowner to set aside an area for their successful breeding attempt. Adults were seen regularly at two other suitable sites during May and June and may have bred, though there were no reports of breeding activity. **Autumn:** there were a few records of migrants away from the breeding areas in the autumn, with one at Lea Farm Lake on Jul 18th, two there on Jul 19th, one at Lower Farm GP from Jul 22nd to 27th, and then the last record was two here on Aug 31st (NC), which was eight days earlier than the average last date for this century.

WHIMBREL EURASIAN WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Red)

A total of 13 records of 19 birds was a fairly poor annual showing for this species. **Spring passage:** the first of the year was one sound recorded over Wooshill at 02:04 on Apr 22nd (PBT). Further birds sound recorded at this site were at least five at 02:06 on May 6th, and at least three at 23:52 on May 14th (both PBT), giving some indication of the numbers that pass over the county during the night. One flew over Horton on Apr 25th (CDRH), one flew over Moor Green Lakes and west to Fleethill Farm on May 3rd (RCM), and singles flew over Horton Brook Quarry on May 3rd (CDRH), Searles Farm Lane GPs on May 5th (JA), and Palmer Park on May 6th (FH). Another single flew over Emmer Green on May 7th (ABT), one was at Hosehill Lake on May 8th (PD), and the last of the spring was one over Queen Mother Reservoir on May 18th (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** one was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 16th (ABT, PNe) and one was heard at Sandford Lake on Sep 20th (FJC).

CURLEW EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

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

There were 33 records at ten sites over the year. **Spring/summer:** the first of the year was a flock of three circling over Queen Mother Reservoir on the morning of Mar 14th (CDRH). The next record was of one in a potential breeding area at Compton Downs on Mar 19th (RJC). Other records in potential breeding habitat were 17 sightings of up to four birds at Wellbottom Down from Mar 23rd to Jun 9th (MO), two at Welford on Apr 11th (RJC), and two at Lowbury Hill on Jun 6th (MJM). Migrants involved one over Burghfield Mill GP on Apr 1st (RCr), singles recorded overnight over Palmer Park, Reading, on Apr 2nd and 3rd (FH), one heard at White Waltham on Apr 26th (B Booth), and one over Fobney Meadow



Turnstone, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 16th, Andy Tomczynski.



Knot, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 11th, Marek Walford.

on Apr 29th (AA). **Breeding:** the only report indicative of breeding was of two birds chasing two Carrion Crows away from a presumed nest site at Wellbottom Down on May 21st (RJC). **Autumn passage:** one was on the island at Hosehill Lake on Jun 23rd (RHS), singles were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 17th, Jul 14th and 22nd (all CDRH), and Jul 17th (MFW), and then the last of the year was a single there on Nov 10th (PNe).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

2019 Correction: the date given for a bird that flew over Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH) should have read Aug 9th rather than May 9th. Thus, four birds were noted on spring passage and one in autumn. The table is correct.

2020: there were two records involving 18 birds on spring passage. One, probably a second calendar year female, was at Datchet on Apr 13th (CDRH) and a flock of 17 flew north-east over Horton Brook Quarry on Apr 28th (CDRH).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Red)

There were just five records of 13 birds this year, a poor showing. **Spring passage:** the first of the year were six seen resting on Plover Island at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 10th (H Wright). One was at Main Pit, Theale, on May 15th (KEM), and one at Horton Brook Quarry on May 17th (CDRH). **Autumn passage:** a bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 10th was identified as a summer plumage adult male of the Icelandic race *L.l. islandica* (CDRH) and four flew over Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 19th (CDRH).

TURNSTONE RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

2019 Correction: the statement that the party of six on Aug 14th was the largest flock reported so far this century is incorrect. At Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 24th 2013, a flock of nine was present before departing (ABT, CDRH). The next day, 21 were reported there including an impressive flock of 20 (CDRH).

2020: there were just three records of three birds this year, all on autumn passage. A summer plumage adult was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 19th (CDRH), one was on an island at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 14th (ABM), and a summer plumage adult was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 16th and 17th (CDRH, PNe, ABT).

KNOT RED KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were just two records of two birds this year, both in the autumn. **Autumn passage:** a juvenile was at Queen Mother Reservoir from Aug 16th to 23rd (ABT, CDRH, PNe), and another was there on Sep 11th (MFW, PNe).

RUFF *Calidris pugnax*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

There were seven records involving at least seven birds. **Spring passage:** two males were on

the main island at Hosehill Lake from May 12th to 15th (CMc *et al.*). **Autumn passage:** a female was at Lower Farm GP from Aug 17th to 25th (MJT *et al.*) and what may have been the same bird was at Crookham Common Pools on Aug 18th (AEDH). A juvenile was on an island at Main Pit, Theale, on Aug 17th (MFW, ABT, RHS), and another juvenile was at Horton Brook Quarry on Aug 30th (CDRH). The final record was of two in flight over Dorney Wetlands which had been flushed from Dorney Common (Bucks) on Oct 3rd (KPD).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were six reports involving 11 or 12 birds, all at Queen Mother Reservoir. **Spring passage:** three were seen to fly off from Queen Mother Reservoir on May 21st (CDRH), three were there on May 25th (CDRH) and a single was there on Jun 2nd (PNe). **Autumn passage:** three summer plumage adults were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 19th (CDRH). A bird seen flying around with a Dunlin in the afternoon of Aug 22nd may have been a different individual to one reported in the morning (CDRH).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Fairly common passage migrant, scarce in winter (Amber)

Dunlins were recorded from 11 sites with at least 53 individuals involved. **First winter:** one was flushed from Dorney Common with some Lapwings and flew into Berkshire towards Slough SF. **Spring passage:** the first migrants were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 6th with probably two individuals, and one was at Horton Brook Quarry from Mar 8th to 9th. The next was not until Apr 24th when one was recorded over a Wooshill garden at night during a nocmig recording session. Single summer plumage birds were at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 29th and May 5th, and at Horton Brook Quarry from Apr 29th to May 1st, with two there on May 2nd. There seemed to be a general movement in early May with at least three recorded in a nocmig session heading north over a Wooshill garden at 00:51, and one heard live as well as recorded over a garden near Palmer Park, Reading, at 23:22 on May 3rd. On May 4th, there was a flock of seven in varying degrees of summer plumage at Horton Brook Quarry, then eight at the same site on May 5th. A single that flew through there on May 9th



Dunlin, Queen Mother Reservoir, Jul 20th, Andy Tomczynski.

was the last of the spring.

Autumn passage: the first returning birds were two at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 18th, with one adult in worn summer plumage with Swedish-coloured leg rings. Then followed many reports, mostly of single birds, at the expected sites until Sep 29th. Dunlins were present on 24 dates at Queen Mother Reservoir, probably totalling 11 birds, and five singles were reported at Lea Farm Lake. Up to three birds were at Main Pit, Theale, between Aug 23rd and 28th, while Lavell's Lake, Moor Green Lakes, Horton Brook Quarry and Lower Farm GP also reported Dunlins. The last of the year was one that was recorded over a Wooshill garden during a nocmig session at 03:56 on Nov 11th.

WOODCOCK EURASIANWOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

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

The maximum monthly counts at key sites are shown in the table.

Woodcock: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bucklebury Common	-	-	-	-	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crookham Common	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greenham Common	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Swinley Forest	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ufton Nervet Woods	-	-	-	1	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	4	5	2	-	8	2	-	-	-	-	7	2
No. other sites	3	3	2	-	6	2	-	-	-	-	5	2
Total birds (minimum)	5	5	2	1	16	13	1	-	-	-	7	2

First winter: in the period up to the end of April, Woodcocks were recorded on 13 dates at nine sites, all singles except for two seen on three occasions. There was a report of one roding as early as Jan 12th. **Breeding:** spring and summer records after the beginning of May came from 13 sites, all of them traditional breeding areas. Roding birds were only reported from six sites, with peak counts as follows: Mortimer (two), Greenham Common (one), Padworth Common (one), Ufton Nervet woods including Roundoak Piece (one), Wildmoor Heath (one), Swinley Forest (one), and Swinley Park (one). These figures at face value indicate a total of only eight territories, compared to 29 territories in 2019. This will be due to lower coverage in 2020, with, for example, no specific survey of this species in west Berkshire. In addition to the roding reports, up to six were seen at Bucklebury Common, four at Roundoak Piece, three at Swinley Forest, two at Greenham Common, and singles at a further three sites, all of which are likely to be breeding birds. **Second winter:** there were eight reports in this period from Nov 8th to year end. These were all singles except for three seen flying over Lavell's Lake, Dinton Pastures, in the near dark on Nov 20th.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyrtus minimus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There were fifteen records at just six sites over the year.

First winter: the only records were from Horton, with five in one area on Jan 1st only, and then a single in a different area from January to Apr 11th (CDRH).

Autumn/second winter: the first birds of the autumn were again at Horton, with three flushed from a small flooded area on Sep 27th. These were still there on Oct 9th, increasing to four on Oct 14th, to nine between Oct 18th to Nov 21st, and then to 13 on Nov 27th



Jack Snipe, Hosehill Lake, Oct 1st, Andy Tomczynski.

(CDRH). Meanwhile, one was flushed from pools along the course of the old runway at Greenham Common on Oct 3rd (AEDH). One showed well on the island edge at Hosehill Lake from Oct 1st to 3rd (ABT, KPD, RHS), and singles were at Borough Marsh on Oct 8th (CDRH), Fleethill Farm on Oct 9th (JCMo), and Colnbrook on Nov 29th (CDRH).

SNIFE COMMON SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Snipes were recorded from 37 sites and in every month of the year. The maximum monthly counts at key sites are shown in the table.

Snipe: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	20	10	4	-	-	-	-	1	3	4	2	2
Jubilee River	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	10	1	2
Lower Farm GP	1	1	1	-	-	4	2	2	13	16	8	5
Moor Green Lakes	4	1	4	2	-	-	-	-	4	4	7	8
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	2
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	13	25	23	5	7	-	-	4	10	58	61	57
No. other sites	3	3	8	2	2	-	-	4	6	7	7	6
WeBS Count Totals	21	18	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	18	40
Total birds (minimum)	38	37	33	9	7	4	2	10	47	92	80	76

First winter: double figure counts in January were 11 at Streatley on Jan 1st and 20 at Sandford Lake on Jan 12th. In February, peak counts were ten at Dinton Pastures CP and at Fobney Meadow on Feb 1st, and 14 at Fleethill Farm on Feb 7th. The highest count in March was eight at Padworth Lane Floods on Mar 18th. An interesting observation was of one

drumming for ten minutes in the dark at 05:00 over the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 23rd (RJG), though there was no further evidence of breeding there in what is not really suitable habitat for this species. **Spring:** there were five records at four sites during April, with the last being two at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 22nd. Two records during May were a single at Horton Brook Quarry on 2nd and six at Bucklebury Common on 19th, though there was no indication of breeding activity. **Autumn passage:** the first presumed returning birds were four at Lower Farm GP on Jun 17th and there was a regular presence of small numbers at this site, peaking at 16 on Oct 21st. The highest count of the autumn was 23 flushed from stubble at Purley on Thames on Oct 27th. **Second winter:** there were ten double figure counts at five different sites during this period, with a peak of 40 at Fleethill Farm on Dec 10th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Fairly common passage migrant, has bred. (Amber)

Common Sandpipers were recorded from 32 sites over the year. **Spring passage:** the first of the year was one along the R. Thames at Thames Valley Park on Apr 6th. This was followed by singles on many dates until May 31st, with two recorded at Lower Farm GP on Apr 19th, two over a garden by Palmer Park, Reading, on May 1st, two at Queen Mother Reservoir from May 17th to 31st, and two flying along Jubilee River on May 30th.

Autumn passage: the first of the autumn was a single at Main Pit, Theale, on Jun 22nd, followed by singles at Moor Green Lakes, Streatley and at Horton Brook Quarry on Jun 28th. Records were then almost daily until the last two on Oct 8th: singles at Main Pit and Lower Farm GP. The highest numbers were at Queen Mother Reservoir, with nine on three dates in August, 12 on Aug 16th, and an estimated 14 on Aug 17th. Away from here, the next highest count was seven at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 14th. An interesting observation was of two birds at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 10th that followed each other around, showed threat postures and were fighting in the air and on the ground (ABT).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Fairly common passage migrant, scarce in winter (Amber)

This species was recorded in every month except May and from around 35 sites. The maximum monthly counts at key sites are shown in the table.

Green Sandpiper: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	7	1	-	-	-
Horton GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	6	5	6	5	1	1	-
Lower Farm GP	1	-	-	-	-	9	6	6	3	4	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	1	1	-	-	2	3	3	3	1	1	2
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-
Thatcham Marsh	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	6	-	6	6	-	5	17	25	13	14	8	11
No. other sites	4	-	3	3	-	3	12	10	9	8	5	9
WeBS Count Totals	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	5	3	4	1
Total birds (minimum)	9	7	8	6	0	23	39	52	27	23	12	14

First winter: there were records from nine sites in January and February, all singles except for three at Horton Brook Quarry area on Jan 12th, and six at Thatcham Marsh on Feb 12th. **Spring passage:** records at seven sites from Mar 5th to Apr 21st were all singles, except for four at Fleethill Farm on Mar 16th and three at Horton Brook Quarry from Apr 2nd to 13th, with four there on Apr 9th. **Autumn passage:** the first presumed autumn migrant was one at Lavell's Lake on the relatively early date of Jun 2nd, with the next being one at Fleethill Farm on Jun 7th. From mid-June, records came almost daily to the end of September, then a bit less frequent (16 dates) in October. The highest count of this period was nine at Lower Farm GP on Jun 25th, seven were at Lavell's Lake on Aug 5th and 18th, and six were recorded at four other sites. **Second winter:** there were records from 17 sites in November and December, mostly singles, occasionally two, and with a peak of four at Fleethill Farm on Nov 16th.

REDSHANK COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

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

Spring: the first of the year was one at Padworth Lane Floods on Feb 29th and the next were three at Main Pit, Theale, on Mar 8th. Later in the month, singles were at Eton Wick and Horton Brook Quarry on Mar 18th and 21st respectively, and regular records came from Fobney Meadow and Moor Green Lakes, with up to six at the former and two at the latter. During April, there were up to four at Moor Green Lakes while numbers at Fobney Meadow settled down to two. In addition, two were at Hosehill Lake on Apr 26th, and individuals were heard or sound recorded over a garden in Palmer Park, Reading, on two nights in late March and early April. During May, there was one record of a single at Moor Green Lakes on 5th and one at nearby Fleethill Farm on 27th, one at Crookham Common on 16th, and records on nine dates of usually a pair (three on one date) at Fobney Meadow. **Breeding:** the only breeding activity recorded was a pair mating at Fobney Meadow on May 16th but the last May record here was on 23rd followed by the last of year, a single on Jun 13th, so there was no evidence that they bred. **Autumn:** the first presumed autumn records were a single on Fobney Meadow and two at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 13th. The highest count of this period was three at Main Pit on Jun 26th, and the last record was one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 1st.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

There were just two records of this species, which was low compared to the numbers seen annually in the previous 20 years. **Spring passage:** one was at Fobney Meadow on the evening of May 16th (RCNP). **Autumn passage:** one was at Lea Farm Lake from Jul 4th to 6th (FJC).

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber)

The only record was a partial summer plumage bird on Colebrook Lake scrape at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 29th (RCM).

GREENSHANK COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

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

Greenshanks were recorded at ten sites, with probably 13 individuals involved. **Spring passage:** one was at Fobney Meadow from Apr 19th to 21st (RCNP), a summer plumage bird was at Datchet from Apr 24th to 29th (CDRH), and one flew over Searles Farm GP



Spotted Redshank, Moor Green Lakes, Apr 29th, Roger Murfitt.

calling on May 5th (JA). **Autumn passage:** the first of the autumn was one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 27th (CDRH), with further singles there on Jul 22nd (CDRH), 25th (ABT) and Aug 15th (PNe). The only multiple record was of three briefly at East Fen, Moor Green Lakes, on Jul 8th (CRG). Singles were seen at Lea Farm Lake on Aug 1st and Sep 7th (both FJC), Horton Brook Quarry on Aug 15th (ABT), and Wraybury GP on Sep 2nd (CL); the last was at Lower Farm GP on Oct 14th (IW).

KITTIWAKE BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Red)

An average year for this species with six records of single birds. The first was a well-watched adult at Lower Farm GP, present all day on Feb 10th and last seen on Feb 12th (MO).



Kittiwake taken into care, Queen Mother Reservoir, Feb 24th, Chris Heard



Kittiwake, Queen Mother Reservoir, Nov 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.

All other sightings for the year were at Queen Mother Reservoir. The first there was of a moribund winter plumage adult found in the car park on Feb 24th (CDRH); it was taken into care but died 40 minutes later. Then on Feb 27th a summer plumage adult was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH). This was followed by single adults on Mar 9th (CDRH) and May 26th (CDRH). The only other record was of a juvenile at Queen Mother Reservoir that appeared flying off the sailing club at 12:50 on Nov 2nd (ABT, PNe, CDRH). It remained until the following day, but was not seen to feed and was subsequently found dead at the water's edge.

BONAPARTE'S GULL *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Very rare vagrant

The finding of this species was probably one of the highlights of the year. Unfortunately, given the prevailing restrictions, it was only enjoyed by two birders. On Mar 21st a winter plumage adult was discovered flycatching with a flock of Black-headed Gulls on Village Pit, Wraysbury GPs (CDRH). The finder was the same birder who found the first for the county at Theale GP in April 2013! It was still present the following day, Mar 22nd (CDRH, LGRE), but there was no sign on Mar 23rd.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

This widely spread species was recorded at over 100 locations, with over 1,000 records submitted to the database. The monthly maxima table shows the winter months had the highest counts, reflecting the fact that it is an abundant winter visitor, mainly from eastern Europe [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

Black-headed Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	1	1	7	-	-	1	1	2	6	1	2	5
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	13
Dinton Pastures CP	600	1,500	600	9	10	25	-	31	76	30	1,020	1,130
Jubilee River	59	-	8	-	5	3	4	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	300	2,000	30	-	-	-	-	1	30	-	300	30
Lower Farm GP	63	128	31	-	2	18	150	400	320	254	400	800
Moatlands GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	580	120	242	280	250	310	230	265	530	300	200	700
Padworth Lane GP	120	150	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	14	7	20	-	-	20	110	60	400	15	53	12
Thatcham Marsh	241	288	72	7	8	30	153	193	64	53	164	205
Theale GPs	300	100	503	-	1,200	500	400	12	10	131	10	2,000
Twyford GPs	57	157	23	4	3	8	8	6	38	39	34	112
Woolhampton GPs	5	1	46	-	5	5	10	5	8	160	9	45
Wraysbury GPs	40	80	120	-	-	-	3	-	23	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	2,851	1,823	680	86	282	303	289	321	1,177	664	1,482	1,650
No. other sites	30	29	23	16	30	17	25	20	21	25	37	34
WeBS Count Totals	2,067	2,223	1,688	4	83	583	498	104	315	429	1,853	3,601
Total birds (minimum)	5,231	6,356	2,482	386	1,765	1,229	1,359	1,296	2,682	1,678	3,674	6,702

Two locations stood out in having the highest counts during the year. Dinton Pastures CP had about 1,500 birds during February, with about 700 at the adjacent Lea Farm Lake. So, about 2,000 birds were present in this area on Feb 2nd. At the end of the year, Dinton

Pastures CP also held over 1,000 birds in November (1,020 on 28th) and December (1,130 on 14th). Main Pit, Theale, held 1,200 on May 5th and about 2,000 on Dec 13th. An estimated 1,000 birds were also on the River Thames at Windsor on Jan 16th. Moor Green Lakes and Lower Farm GP regularly had counts of several hundred birds. Breeding was only reported at two sites: Moor Green Lakes and Main Pit. The only counts were from Moor Green Lakes, with 200 nests on May 16th and 180 juveniles on Jun 29th [MGLG 2020]. As a reference point, the Birds of Berkshire Atlas stated that breeding was proved in 12 tetrads [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

Recoveries of ringed Black-headed Gulls revealed the following movements [BTO Ringing]. There were 12 reports of birds with rings derived from the local Berkshire ringing project, of which many that subsequently travelled the furthest were encountered in Cornwall or Ireland. Birds recovered in Berkshire included one found at Moor Green Lakes on May 14th 2020 that had been ringed at Fishers Green, Essex, on Jun 14th 2019. A bird ringed as a nestling on Jun 10th 2010 at Bedfont CP, Greater London, was seen on the River Thames, Datchet, on Dec 12th, having first been seen there on Sep 25th 2011 and for several winters thereafter. The last was Dec 9th 2017.

Foreign recoveries included:

A bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 20th was ringed in a breeding colony (not necessarily breeding) on May 4th 2018 at Jerziorko, Podkarpackie, Poland.

A bird at Hosehill Lake on Sep 14th and Oct 1st was ringed, aged as at least two years, on Jun 6th 2020 at Lake Sominskie, Poland.

An adult Norwegian bird, ringed in a country park in Oslo, was seen at The Wharf, Newbury, on Dec 6th, having also been seen there on Nov 3rd 2019.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

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

There were seven records comprising 11 birds during the year, with just a single bird in the autumn. These were low counts compared to the average for the previous 20 years, which was 49 birds per year from 18 records. The first of the year was a winter plumage adult that was found at Lower Farm GP on Feb 16th (IW). A winter plumage adult was also at Wraysbury GP on Mar 25th (CDRH). Four individuals, two full summer plumage and two second winters together, were at the same location on Apr 5th (CDRH). On Apr 10th, two adults spent five minutes at Queen Mother Reservoir before continuing north-east (CDRH). On Apr 18th, a summer plumage adult was located at Moor Green Lakes (RCM, CRG, CJ). The last spring record was a summer plumage adult at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 23rd (CDRH). The last bird of the year was a second winter at Queen Mother Reservoir, watched flying above the reservoir for 30 minutes on Oct 15th (CDRH).



Little Gull, Moor Green Lakes, Apr 18th, Roger Murfitt.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

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

Seventy-five records were submitted to the database from 23 locations. A third of these were from Queen Mother Reservoir. March was the most productive month with up to eight birds

present in the county. The sightings are summarised in the table of monthly maximum counts.

Mediterranean Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	1	1
Moatlands GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	3	2	2	-	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	1
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	1	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	1	1	4	-	2	2	2	-	-	2	1	3
No. other sites	1	1	2	-	2	2	2	-	-	2	1	3
WeBS Count Totals	-	-	2	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	6	5	10	1	4	5	10	3	2	5	5	6

Close observations of the Queen Mother Reservoir roost on several dates showed three individual adults were present during January, along with a first winter bird from Jan 12th (CDRH). Also in January, one was at Eton Wick on Jan 2nd (DAC), an adult was present in the Moatlands Main Lake roost on Jan 25th (PBT) and a summer plumage adult was at Bray GPs on Jan 31st (CDRH). Three birds continued to roost at Queen Mother Reservoir during February (CDRH). A first winter was seen at Moor Green Lakes on Feb 2nd (CRG) and an adult at Black Swan Lake on Feb 15th (FJC). A few pairs of summer plumage birds appeared throughout March: a displaying pair was at Wraysbury GPs on Mar 1st (CDRH); then a different pair based on plumage features were at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 6th (CDRH); and presumably a single full summer plumage pair accounted for reports from Charvil, Dinton Pastures CP and Borough Marsh between Mar 12th and 15th (MO). The last March sighting was of a full summer plumage bird at Wraysbury GPs on Mar 21st (CDRH). The only record for April was a single bird at Moor Green Lakes on Apr 2nd (SCD). A first summer was a garden tick for one observer when it flew over at Woosehill on May 3rd (PBT), a single bird was at Sonning on May 23rd (KSeY) and two summer plumage adults flew off from Queen Mother Reservoir on May 28th (CDRH).

A report of a second summer bird around the islands at Main Pit, Theale, on Jun 7th (WeBs) might have indicated potential breeding, but there were no further records during June. However, breeding was confirmed on Jul 5th when a second summer was seen with two almost fledged young on one of the islands during a WeBS survey. Subsequently a fledged juvenile was seen with Black-headed Gulls on Jul 8th and 14th (ABT). This represented only the second time that Mediterranean Gulls successfully bred in Berkshire, after the first occurrence at Moor Green Lakes in 2019.

Elsewhere in this period, there were six one-day reports of single birds at widespread locations: Jubilee River on Jun 9th (CDRH); Sandford Lake on Jun 11th (FJC); Queen Mother Reservoir on Jun 15th (CDRH); Hosehill Lake on Jun 18th (ABT); Slough on Jun 26th and Jul 14th (CDRH); Horton GP on Jul 5th (CDRH); Fobney Meadow on Jul 6th (RCNP); and Lower Farm GP on Jul 23rd (NC). Meanwhile at Queen Mother Reservoir there were multiple sightings of up to three birds between Jul 1st and Aug 7th (ABT, CDRH, PNe) involving at least seven birds (two summer plumage adults, one second summer, one second winter, one first summer and two juveniles at least). This included a bird that had been ringed as a chick on Jun 7th 2018 at Riether Werder, Luckow, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany. It was

subsequently recovered on Dec 11th 2019 at Crossness Pumping Station, London, and on Jul 17th 2020 at Tice's Meadow NR, Badshot Lea, Surrey, prior to this year's sighting on Jul 25th and 26th at Queen Mother Reservoir (ABT, CDRH, [BTO Ringing]).

A juvenile going into first winter plumage was present at Lower Farm GP from Aug 18th to 31st (MO). During September, up to three birds were present on several dates at Queen Mother Reservoir: an adult winter, a second winter, and a first winter (CDRH). Single first winter birds were then seen at Smith's Lawn on Oct 4th (DJB), Moor Green Lakes on Oct 17th (MCo), and Lower Farm GP on Oct 30th and Nov 3rd (AEDH). A winter plumage adult was present on several dates at Queen Mother Reservoir in October and at Slough until Nov 1st (CDRH), and a second winter bird was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 25th (CDRH). In November, first winters were also seen at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 2nd (RJG), at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 8th (CDRH), and at Main Pit on Nov 30th (ABT). An adult winter was at Slough on Nov 8th and 29th (CDRH). A different adult winter was in the Queen Mother Reservoir roost on Nov 15th and 25th (CDRH).

An adult winter was at Lower Farm GP on Dec 5th (AEDH). On Dec 6th an adult was seen at Bisham (ABT) and at Temple GC (ADB). At Queen Mother Reservoir, two different adults were seen on several dates in December (CDRH). The last bird of the year adult was an adult at Eton Wick on Dec 30th (PEH).

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

A total of 129 records were entered on the database, from 52 locations. There were five records exceeding a count of 100 birds. The highest count was of a very large flock of 500 or more birds mixed with other gulls, moving from field to field over winter sown crops near the hamlet of West End on Dec 12th. The meadows near Remenham appear to be a favoured location for this species, where 357 were counted on Jan 1st and then about 300 on Oct 30th. At the Moatlands Main Lake roost, there were over 200 on Feb 6th and 159+ on Feb 26th. Hyde Farm had about 100 birds on Dec 6th.

Common Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	95	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	2
Jubilee River	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	13	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Lower Farm GP	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Moatlands GPs	-	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	29	51	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
Padworth Lane GP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	1	15	-	-	1	3	1	1	50	4	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	5
Twyford GPs	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	2	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	478	109	17	2	3	-	2	3	3	311	27	724
No. other sites	12	8	3	1	3	-	1	2	1	3	8	10
WeBS Count Totals	16	29	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	6
Total birds (minimum)	620	367	40	3	9	1	5	5	7	362	37	738

Overall, birds were recorded in 44 county tetrads (11%), six (3%) in west Berkshire, 19 (21%) in mid Berkshire and 19 (15%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region. Records are therefore biased to mid to east Berkshire, which was in keeping with the findings of the 2007 – 2011 survey [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. The monthly maxima table shows highest counts being from October through to March. From April to October, records mainly involved single birds; in June there was only a single record, a first summer at Queen Mother Reservoir. The first juvenile of the autumn was noted at the same site on Aug 8th.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

Seventy-one records from eleven locations summarised the year, with Queen Mother Reservoir providing over 50% of the records and the highest counts. Of the 52 birds at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 18th, 49 were adults. This figure was not particularly high compared with previous records. Away from Queen Mother Reservoir, the highest count was of 12 birds at Summerleaze GPs on Feb 2nd. In March and April, sightings were noted of presumably migrant birds flying over gardens in the Reading area, such as four flying east over Emmer Green on Apr 6th. The months of May to August provided counts of one or two individuals only, except for three at Queen Mother Reservoir in July. One of these birds was observed attacking Mallard fledglings and an Egyptian Goose gosling.

Great Black-backed Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Burghfield GPs	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Queen Mother Reservoir	52	2	-	-	-	1	3	2	4	28	12	13
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	1	12	9	8	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	-
No. other sites	1	1	2	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
WeBS Count Totals	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	6	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	56	16	15	14	1	4	3	3	6	28	17	16

HERRING GULL EUROPEAN HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, breeds (Red)

Two hundred and seventy-seven records were entered on the database, five of which referred to the *argentatus* race. Seventy-eight percent of the counts were of five birds or less. The monthly maxima table shows Moor Green Lakes as a significant winter roost location. It had the highest count of the year at 630 birds. Obviously, the significance of any site is determined by the observer coverage. Locations like Queen Mother Reservoir or Moatlands Main Lake may well have higher winter counts with greater observer coverage. A count of 180 at Moatlands Main Lake on Jan 25th was significant but that was the only count during the year for this site. Interestingly the adult to immature ratio in this count was 2:1. The high counts at Queen Mother Reservoir during the summer months comprised mainly non-breeding immature birds. An indication of the whereabouts of wintering birds away from

their roost sites in the county was revealed by the 250 birds seen at Shurlock Row, moving over three winter wheat fields on Dec 16th, and then 200 on Dec 20th. On Sep 27th, 140 birds were seen on recently rolled Oilseed Rape stubble at Park Farm, Bisham. On Oct 10th, 31 birds were seen loafing on Remenham Hill. During the autumn a few birds can be found associating with Lesser Black-backed Gull flocks on the downs, although few records were received. Thirty-four birds were noted at Compton Down on Sep 5th and ten on Cow Down on Sep 20th. A count of 100 birds in Maidenhead town centre on Dec 12th is perhaps unusual. On Aug 23rd a bird was seen feeding on a large dead Pike at Main Pit, Theale.

No breeding records were received. However, four birds were noted calling from rooftops in Reading town centre on Jun 19th.

Herring Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	2	-	1	-	6	-	-	2	3	1	3	3
Jubilee River	3	-	1	-	17	12	6	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	6
Lower Farm GP	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	16	10
Moatlands GPs	180	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	125	1	11	4	-	3	1	-	50	25	250	630
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	-	2	-	-	300	75	180	55	-	26	3
Thatcham Marsh	3	2	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	1	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	1	2	1
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	24	27	17	26	89	37	18	49	338	105	334	368
No. other sites	9	5	6	14	21	13	9	8	8	5	8	8
WeBS Count Totals	10	1	2	-	13	51	1	5	4	1	11	12
Total birds (minimum)	343	31	34	31	118	353	100	236	452	135	634	1,021

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

EUROPEAN HERRING GULL (*ARGENTATUS*)

Queen Mother Reservoir accounted for most reports of this race. They were all adults, as follows: one in the roost on Mar 19th, a late date for a full adult; another on Aug 30th; two on Sep 2nd; three on Sep 4th; and two on Nov 11th (all CDRH).

Away from Queen Mother Reservoir, an adult in the roost at Lower Farm GP on Nov 17th appeared to show yellowish legs, a feature suggestive of a form that is sometimes referred to as *omissus*-type (AEDH). The origin of these birds and the nomenclature is discussed in an article in British Birds [Garner 1997].

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Véry scarce autumn and winter visitor (Amber)

2019 Additional Comment: regarding the bird at Summerleaze GPs on Oct 4th that suggested the influence of Herring Gull genes, it is now known that that Caspian Gulls are regularly hybridising (usually with Herring Gulls) as far west as Holland (CDRH).

2020: during February, two Caspian Gulls (a first winter on Feb 22nd and 29th, and a second winter on Feb 24th and 25th) just across the county boundary with Buckinghamshire

Caspian Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Jubilee River	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-

near Cookham were seen flying into Berkshire airspace (CDRH). These two birds were also at Summerleaze GPs on Mar 11th and 14th (CDRH). Furthermore, the first winter was seen there on Mar 12th and again on Mar 18th, when it was also seen an hour later at the Jubilee River. Confirmation that the same individuals accounted for these multiple sightings was clinched by a plumage feature and photographs (CDRH). Another first winter was seen in the roost at Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 17th and 18th (CDRH).

A juvenile gull at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 15th was reported by ABT as a Caspian Gull and by CDRH as a hybrid. It had a yellow Darvic ring with black lettering on the left leg (XJHA) and was ringed in a mixed colony at Braunsbedra, near Leipzig, Germany, on Jun 8th 2020. ABT exchanged a number of emails and photos with the ringer who confirmed that it was a Caspian Gull. However, the BRC felt there were a number of features that were not quite right, e.g. the heavily marked greater coverts, and were unable to accept it as a pure Caspian Gull. CDRH also noted that “While they will know the proportions within the colony as a whole, they do not know the parentage of an individual nestling when they ring it...Indeed, the correspondent in this case (Ronald Klein) has said: “It is difficult to estimate the exact number of hybrids in these colonies; Germany produced 250 ringed chicks, of which the majority was expected to be Caspian Gull, but a substantial number must have been hybrid juveniles”.

A “classic” plumaged juvenile was seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 28th and 29th, and a bird on Sep 11th (CDRH) was presumed to be the same. A first winter was then seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 26th and again on Oct 1st (CDRH), but unusually there were no further signs of this species in the west London area in the next two months. The fact that Caspian Gulls were reported in neighbouring counties in this period led the observer to



Caspian Gull, Jubilee River, Mar 18th, Chris Heard.



Caspian Gull hybrid, Queen Mother Reservoir, Aug 15th, Andy Tomczynski.

comment that this was more due to the current distribution of landfill sites. At Lower Farm GP a first winter was present on Nov 22nd (NC). A first winter was seen in the roost at Main Pit, Theale, on Nov 27th and then a second winter on Nov 30th (ABT). In total, there were least nine different individuals seen during the year; this was slightly below the annual average in the past 20 years.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

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

A hundred records were entered into the database, derived from 14 locations. Queen Mother Reservoir provided nearly 40% of these records, thanks mainly to the frequent visits by ABT and CDRH. The monthly distribution of sightings is summarised in the table, which shows June to October typically being the peak months for this species in the county. The majority of records were supported with good details of the birds’ plumage states, allowing a better picture of the actual numbers of birds involved to be deduced when compared to the table presented here which, for consistency with other species, simply gives the totals of monthly site maximum counts. The complete set of 2020 annotated records for Yellow-legged Gull (and all other species) is available in the online database.

Yellow-legged Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	2	2
Moatlands GPs	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	-	1	-	1	5	8	8	6	1	1	1
Theale GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	4	2	5
No. birds at other sites	1	-	1	-	-	1	3	14	4	2	-	-
No. other sites	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	2	2	2	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	4	3	2	-	2	6	13	26	13	11	6	10



Yellow-legged Gull, Hosehill Lake, Jul 13th, Andy Tomczynski.



Yellow-legged Gull, Hosehill Lake, Jul 14th, Andy Tomczynski.

Low numbers from January to March included two adults reported at the Moatlands Main Lake roost on four dates between Jan 7th and Feb 6th. After none were reported in April, numbers increased at Queen Mother Reservoir in June with an adult, three second summers and a first summer reported on Jun 23rd. During July, records from Queen Mother Reservoir indicated that at least 13 different birds were seen: six adults, one third summer, two second summers, one first summer and three juveniles. Some of these adults may have been the birds seen at Colnbrook between Jun 3rd and 7th.

During August, the records suggested there were nine different birds seen at Queen Mother Reservoir: five adults, one second summer, one first summer and two juveniles. However, the Horton Brook Quarry, immediately adjacent to Queen Mother Reservoir, held ten birds on Aug 27th: eight adults, one first summer and one juvenile. These birds were considered to be additional to the group of five birds seen regularly at Queen Mother Reservoir in the month. This would indicate there were up to 15 birds in east Berkshire during August. At Queen Mother Reservoir, at least ten individuals were seen on various dates in September: four adults, two third winters, two second winters, one first winter and one juvenile. Away from the regular sites, an adult was seen following a plough at Lambourn on Sep 1st.

At Main Pit, Theale, four adults were in the roost on Oct 1st, and five on Dec 8th. At Queen Mother Reservoir a third winter was seen on several dates between Oct 23rd and Dec 7th, with an adult and a first winter also putting in appearances, while at Lower Farm GP, there were sightings of up to two adults and a third winter on many dates between Oct 30th and Dec 17th.

The observations by ABT and CDRH at Queen Mother Reservoir, which were richly annotated with details of birds' ages, are aggregated and summarised in the second table. Even if no obvious conclusions can be drawn from the table (other than that summer plumage birds tend to occur in summer!), the table records and acknowledges their efforts.

Yellow-legged Gull: Maximum counts per plumage phase at Queen Mother Reservoir

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Juvenile	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	-	-	-
First Winter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
First Summer	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Second Winter	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Second Summer	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	1	-	-	-	-
Third Winter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	1
Third Summer	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Adult	1	-	-	-	-	1	6	5	4	1	-	1

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, breeds (Amber)

There were 558 records for the year from 72 locations. The table of monthly maxima shows the peak time for these birds is the post-breeding autumn migration period, as birds move south.

Over 3,000 birds were present in the county during August. The highest count was over 1,000 birds near the Knighton Bushes Plantation, Lambourn, on Aug 16th. In fact, the highest counts are regularly from the west Berkshire downs. A flock of 800 was on a field being cultivated on the Compton Downs on Sep 9th, while 225 birds were on Roden Down on Oct 19th. All these birds roosted at Lower Farm GP, Thatcham. A peak count of 700 birds was noted at Lower Farm GP on Nov 3rd. No roost counts were undertaken at Main Pit, Theale, or Moatlands Main Lake, where high counts have occurred in the past. As winter progressed, numbers reduced as birds moved south to complete their migration. The highest

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Burghfield GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	1
Jubilee River	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-
Lower Farm GP	3	86	2	-	-	3	4	18	22	182	700	150
Moatlands GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	83	3	18	-	3	3	-	-	50	32	34	214
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	1	8	-	-	30	40	25	10	-	2	1
Thatcham Marsh	2	2	2	5	5	4	2	2	5	3	3	4
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	6	30	3	3	10
Twyford GPs	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	2	-	2	1	-	1	2	1	1	3
Wrybury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-
No. birds at other sites	230	21	83	48	117	245	331	3,022	1,294	394	479	27
No. other sites	12	11	12	18	23	20	8	17	13	9	16	10
WeBS Count Totals	2	6	6	-	6	17	9	7	5	4	12	10
Total birds (minimum)	318	116	118	53	130	290	385	3,074	1,419	616	1,227	410

December count of 214 was at Moor Green Lakes on Dec 30th. A small number did remain on the downs during winter, as evidenced by 100 birds being present at Sheepdrove Farm, Lambourn, on Jan 20th.

Breeding: the only direct evidence for breeding came from Queen Mother Reservoir, where two pairs of adults nested, and one nest held two chicks on Jul 18th. Indirect evidence was possibly noted by the presence of eight birds, of which four were juvenile, at Fobney Meadow on Jul 22nd.

SANDWICH TERN *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

The year saw just four records, comprising 11 birds, a low total compared with the average of 20 birds per year since 2000. The first record was of a summer plumage adult at Queen



Sandwich Tern chased by Lesser Black-backed Gull, Queen Mother Reservoir, Sep 10th, Andy Tomczynski.

Mother Reservoir, seen resting on buoys on Apr 6th (CDRH). The only other spring report was of a bird that flew over a lucky observer's garden in Woodlands Park Fields on Apr 21st (DJB). On Aug 7th, a flock of six adults arrived mid-afternoon at Queen Mother Reservoir, departing south-east after a few hours (CDRH). Finally three birds, two adults and a juvenile, were present at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 10th (PNe, ABT). The juvenile was seen being pursued relentlessly by a Lesser Black-backed Gull.

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Very scarce passage migrant (Amber)

A group of three adults were seen together at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 31st (CDRH). They were moulting into winter plumage. The birds fed with Common Terns, briefly settled on a raft, and were present for about an hour. This was the 29th record since 2000, taking the total to 51 birds over this time period.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

The table of monthly maxima shows birds were predominantly present from April to September, with a late single bird seen at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 31st (CDRH).

Common Tern: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	16	-	2	2	3	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	5	5	1	6	-	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	1	17	2	1	-	1	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	1	-	65	22	5	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	1	2	2	4	3	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	5	10	-	6	11	1	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	40	12	15	9	4	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	9	8	30	70	8	1	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	2	4	5	4	1	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	10	28	18	32	23	3	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	8	6	7	1	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	10	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	16	61	28	27	12	2	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	9	25	15	11	3	1	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	-	-	-	-	21	17	11	5	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	93	156	159	153	150	15	1	-	-

The first birds of the year were on Apr 8th at Moatlands Main Pit (CMc) and Moor Green Lakes (RCM). Breeding attempts were observed at nine locations: Nature Discovery Centre, Thatcham; Lower Farm GP; Woolhampton GPs; Hosehill Lake; Main Pit, Theale; Lea Farm Lake; Moor Green Lakes; Summerleaze GP; and Queen Mother Reservoir. Confirmation of breeding success was hampered by inconsistency of observations and/or difficulty of observing nests. In summary, it appears that: a pair fledged two birds at the Nature Discovery Centre; at Lower Farm GP two pairs fledged four birds; at Woolhampton GPs two pairs fledged three birds; 21 nests were occupied at Hosehill Lake; at Main Pit (where it was difficult to observe the island nests) 32 adults and juveniles were seen over the island on Jul 20th ; 23 nests fledged up to 30 birds at Lea Farm Lake; at Moor Green Lakes there were

up to seven nests with at least ten chicks, then seven juveniles; at Summerleaze GP five pairs were nesting; and at Queen Mother Reservoir, three pairs and only two juveniles were seen. At Streatley, a pair that were present throughout the summer, although no nest was observed, were seen feeding three juveniles at Goring Lock weir.

On May 2nd a ringed bird was noted at Dorney wetlands. This bird was ringed as a nestling on Jul 2nd 2014 at Bedfont Lakes, West London. In subsequent years it was seen at Dorney Wetlands on several dates during May 2018, and during May and June 2019. On Aug 4th at Queen Mother Reservoir, three juveniles and an adult, together on a pontoon, all wore Darvic rings. Only the rings on the juveniles could be read, revealing that they had been ringed on Jun 30th 2020 at Bedfont Lakes, Greater London, which is 9km from Queen Mother Reservoir [BTO Ringing].

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce passage migrant (Amber)

No Arctic Terns were reported in spring, the season that accounted for about 50% of annual records over the previous 20 years. This was no doubt due to a lack of observer coverage in a period normally coinciding with the spring migration. Despite this, the return migration period produced 46 birds, slightly below the average over the past 20 years. The first record was of two adults at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 26th (CDRH) followed by another adult on Jul 29th (CDRH). On Aug 7th, a first summer bird with all black bill and striking white forecrown spent a few hours at Queen Mother Reservoir (CDRH). At 06:05 on Aug 25th, during heavy rain and windy conditions, 27 birds were seen feeding in a tight flock, dipping down to pick from the surface of the water at Queen Mother Reservoir (ABT). They flew off south-east at 08:00, but 34 returned at about 09:00. It is assumed they went to Wraysbury Reservoir and returned, whereupon they stayed a further 15 minutes before departing. The first juvenile to be recorded was also at Queen Mother Reservoir, only present for five minutes, on Aug 30th (CDRH). The only record away from Queen Mother Reservoir was of two juveniles at Main Pit, Theale, at 15:46 on Sep 9th that flew in from the east, calling constantly, flew to the west end of the lake, then turned back east and departed (ABT). The following day, Sep 3rd at 06:45, three birds with Common Terns at Queen Mother Reservoir departed south on their own, calling (ABT). A juvenile spent about ten minutes at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 2nd before departing south-west (CDRH). The last record of the year was also at Queen Mother Reservoir, when a first winter remained for 30 minutes on Oct 23rd (CDRH).

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce passage migrant (Green)

A very poor year for this species, with the lowest count in the previous 20 years. Only three birds were recorded. The first spent Apr 21st to 23rd at Black Swan Lake, Dinton Pastures CP (BTB, TAG, FJC). The second, also in spring, was at Hosehill Lake on May 28th (SRi). This was an adult seen late in the day at 20:02. The third record was of a moulting adult seen flying around the centre of Queen Mother Reservoir at 09:40 on Aug 15th, feeding from the surface of the water in murky conditions (ABT, CDRH). These three birds brought the total number of birds recorded since 2000 to 1,107.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua*

Very rare passage migrant (Amber)

Two adults were seen together on Aug 15th circling over Horton GPs for five minutes before continuing west, disappearing into low cloud (CDRH). This was the third instance of two

birds together; the others were in 1987 and 2014. This was the sixth record since 2000, comprising eight birds in total.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER COMMON LOON *Gavia immer*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

An individual was seen flying over the Queen Mother Reservoir car park at 10:40 on Dec 10th, before circling around and flying north-east, heading up the Colne Valley (CDRH). This was the 40th record of this species since 2000. They have been recorded annually since 2006.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Rare vagrant (Amber)

Early morning on Sep 5th, a bird was found at the eastern end of Main Pit, Theale (ABM, BTB, ABT). It was seen to dive several times, but just before 09:00 it flew to a group of Cormorants between the main islands to feed with them. It dived but mysteriously was not seen to resurface! This was the seventh record and the ninth bird since 2000; the last was in 2017.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

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

There were several reports this year of either one or two birds. On Mar 15th, a bird was seen initially circling with gulls over Moor Green Lakes (RRK per Mike Keel) and then heading off west. On Apr 23rd, a bird was sighted flying north over Moss End, Warfield (LRB). The following day one flew south over Newbury in the early evening (AEDH). In May, two birds, one of which was ringed, flew into Fobney Meadow (RCNP) and landed on a pylon before flying off; later that evening they returned to roost overnight and left early the following morning (AVL, RRI). On Jun 3rd, a bird was seen and photographed at Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, and on Jun 8th there was a report from a non-birder of one at Cock Marsh, but it could not be confirmed at either this site or at the site of the previous week's bird. The final bird of the year, confirmed by its ring to be from the Knepp Estate reintroduction programme, was seen in the Midgham and Colthrop area between Aug 22nd and 24th (MO), and had probably been in the area since at least Jul 14th (AEDH).



White Stork, Midgham, Aug 23rd, Roger Stansfield.

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 throughout the county. Monthly maximum counts of Cormorant at the most frequently reported sites are shown in the table.

The highest count of around 800 occurred at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 28th. Successful breeding was reported from Aldermaston GPs with 11 occupied nests. Birds were present at many sites during spring and summer, including sites where they have bred in the past, but no further details were forthcoming.

Cormorant: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	9	9	15	10	-	2	6	2	1	1	5	10
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-
Burghfield GPs	32	10	20	-	-	2	-	-	28	21	28	3
Dinton Pastures CP	7	7	3	1	-	5	2	8	12	9	12	12
Great Meadow Pond	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	7	5	3	4
Jubilee River	13	16	17	-	5	5	2	-	8	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	7	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	4
Lower Farm GP	29	18	23	-	13	25	34	34	60	35	44	37
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	36	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	46	50	58	23	12	12	14	5	3	14	69	62
Padworth Lane GP	11	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	2	3	2	-	-	7	60	800	50	260	400	500
Thatcham Marsh	7	4	3	4	2	2	6	8	11	7	5	3
Theale GPs	10	2	33	-	1	6	39	72	71	46	56	30
Twyford GPs	13	22	10	3	8	4	-	-	10	7	17	40
Woolhampton GPs	3	2	3	-	-	-	9	67	3	24	14	3
Wraybury GPs	6	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	15	15	-	10
No. birds at other sites	121	59	36	29	35	20	18	59	46	94	81	84
No. other sites	19	15	14	16	20	11	4	9	16	16	18	15
WeBS Count Totals	151	131	141	3	9	15	14	141	154	330	578	493
Total birds (minimum)	316	210	226	70	76	92	195	1,056	362	561	735	802

BITTERN EURASIAN BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

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

2018 & 2019 Correction: both the 2018 report and the correction published in the 2019 report should read: "A Bittern was reported from Great Meadow Pond on Sep 2nd (DJB) and Sep 8th (CDRH), and was each observers' earliest autumn record for the site."

2020: four birds were reported from three locations. As usual, the majority of reports were from Dinton Pastures CP. **First winter:** two birds were seen in the reedbed at White Swan Lake on Jan 1st (ABT), and then a single bird was reported several times during the first week of the month (EN, PBT, RCo). A bird was also reported at Lavell's Lake on Jan 12th (FJC). Assuming the White Swan Lake birds were still present, it would indicate that there were three birds at the park, but surprisingly there were no further reports in the area after this date. A single bird was reported from Great Meadow Pond on Feb 1st and Mar 18th (DJB), the last bird of the period. **Second winter:** reports from Dinton Pastures were of a bird on Dec 14th (WeBS) and at White Swan Lake on Dec 22nd (FJC). On Dec 19th, a bird was seen flying in the direction of Dinton Pastures at Woodlands Recreation Ground, Earley (KSp).

NIGHT-HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON

Very rare vagrant

One of the highlights of the year was a juvenile seen in the Dinton Pastures area over a three-week period in August. This was only the fourth record for the county, and the first since 1987. The first report was of a bird seen and photographed by non-birders at The Moor on Aug 6th. The next report was on Aug 8th, when it was seen flying south over Lea



Night-heron, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Aug 16th, Andy Tomczynski.

Farm Lake (FJC). Just over a week later on Aug 16th, it was seen perched on a post in front of the reedbed on the northern side of Sandford Lake (RHS). It gave excellent views to many observers and photographers. It was subsequently observed at Sandford Lake at various times over the next few days before its last appearance flying south over Lea Farm Lake on Aug 26th (Geoff Emmett).



Night-heron, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Aug 16th, Marek Walford.

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis* WESTERN CATTLE EGRET

Rare but increasing vagrant

At least seven birds were reported this year, one of which was a long stayer. On Apr 24th, two birds flew over Lea Farm Lake (FJC) and were later relocated in a horse paddock at Charvil. One was on the island at Sandford Lake on Aug 16th (RHS, ABT, MFW). On Sep 10th, one was seen on the south bank of the Thames in the Charvil area and was noted again the following day (Martin Kerby). On Sep 21st, one was seen on the island at Hosehill Lake (RHS); this may have been the same bird that was noted at Lower Farm GP a few days later on Sep 25th (NC). This bird was then seen regularly at Lower Farm GP, occasionally venturing onto Newbury Racecourse and neighbouring fields, until it was last reported there on Dec 23rd, a total of 90 days (MO). During the period this long stayer was present, two more birds were seen flying north over Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 29th (CDRH).



Cattle Egret, Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures CP, Aug 16th, 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	12	2	4	6	-	6	9	3	2	-	2	2
Bray GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	5	3	2	-	-	1	-	-	6	7	8	3
Dinton Pastures CP	3	1	3	-	1	-	1	3	5	2	4	3
Jubilee River	2	-	3	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	2	8	4	-	5	13	7	10	10	4	5	4
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	3	5	2	3	2	3	4	2	3	3	1	2
Padworth Lane GP	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	1	-	5	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	4	-
Thatcham Marsh	2	-	3	3	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	3	3	9	-	1	3	4	3	7	9	3	4
Twyford GPs	19	13	14	4	2	10	4	2	8	3	10	5
Woolhampton GPs	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	8	6	1
Wraysbury GPs	7	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	4	3	-	4
No. birds at other sites	44	35	31	38	39	28	19	13	37	23	36	29
No. other sites	17	20	21	24	26	20	11	12	24	12	22	16
WeBS Count Totals	60	46	47	4	4	13	10	10	43	41	47	32
Total birds (minimum)	119	71	80	54	53	68	60	39	88	66	79	57

Breeding was reported at ten locations: Lands End GP, Twyford (nine nests); Queen Mother Reservoir (four+ nests); Aldermaston GPs (three nests); Donnington Grove (three nests); Main Pit, Theale (two nests); Pangbourne (one nest); Sandhurst GPs (one nest); Woolhampton/Brimpton GPs; Lower Green, Inkpen; and Remenham. Probable breeding was also reported in the Moor Green Lakes, Jubilee River and Wraysbury areas.

GREAT WHITE EGRET GREAT EGRET *Ardea alba*

Rare but increasing vagrant

An increasingly regular sight in the county, with records from every month of the year. The majority of the reports were of single birds, including some long-stayers such as: in the Moor Green Lakes and Fleethill Farm area between Jan 2nd and Mar 22nd, and from Oct 13th to the year end; at Padworth Lane GP throughout January and again through December; and in the Woolhampton area between Oct 17th and Dec 15th. Multiple birds were noted at the following sites: Thatcham Marsh (two on Jun 28th); Sandford Lake (three on Sep 11th); Great Meadow Pond (two between Sep 20th and Oct 4th); Woolhampton GPs (two on Oct 20th Oct and Nov 1st); Main Pit, Theale (three on Oct 30th, Nov 4th and Nov 6th); and Padworth Lane GP (two on Dec 27th). A bird in Windsor Great Park on Jun 8th sported transitional bare parts, a dark bill with yellow base, but was in non-breeding plumage in other respects (CDRH).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Fairly common resident, first bred in 2006 (Green)

A common sight in the county and increasing. Monthly maximum counts at the most frequently reported sites are shown in the table.

Little Egret: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-
Dinton Pastures CP	6	1	2	-	1	2	-	6	1	10	4	1
Fobney Meadow	7	4	7	12	10	1	1	-	-	1	1	1
Great Meadow Pond	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Horton GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-
Jubilee River	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	2	-	-	1	1
Lea Farm Lake	1	-	3	-	2	-	2	3	3	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	5	1	-	-	1	22	9	14	7	2	1	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	6	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	2	2	2	2	-	1	1	1	1	3	2	3
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	1	1	5	-	-	-	1	1
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	1	-	-
Theale GPs	7	9	8	-	-	-	7	5	16	6	20	13
Twyford GPs	4	6	8	-	-	-	2	4	3	-	4	6
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	3	1	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	11	-	-	-	-	1	-	5	15	-	4
No. birds at other sites	60	31	34	22	29	46	44	46	20	22	37	25
No. other sites	16	14	17	17	16	18	16	13	13	15	16	11
WeBS Count Totals	18	26	17	-	-	1	5	5	16	8	19	17
Total birds (minimum)	93	67	64	40	46	75	76	84	68	81	80	56

Breeding was reported at two sites: one in the east of the county and one in the west. The highest count of the year was 22 at Lower Farm GP on Jun 17th, while six juveniles were seen at Bucklebury on Jul 31st.



Little Egret, Crookham Common Pools, Jun 25th, Andy Tomczynski.

OSPREY WESTERN OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Amber)

The lowest total for several years, with only four birds reported. The first of the year, and the only spring record, was on May 5th of a bird flying north-east over Horton GP, fairly low before departing north (CDRH). One flew in from the north-east over the sailing club at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 29th (CDRH). The next on Sep 11th was being chased by gulls at Queen Mother Reservoir before departing south-south-east (CDRH). The final record was on Oct 5th of a bird flying in from the south-east at Main Pit, Theale, before departing south (KEM).

HONEY-BUZZARD EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare passage migrant and summer visitor (Amber)

A pale morph was seen at a site in east Berkshire on Aug 28th (CDRH) flying low, just above tree-top height.

SPARROWHAWK EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common resident (Green)

Sparrowhawk numbers have remained fairly static for the last few years. There was no discernible change this year, with around 475 reports and a typical spread across the county. Mid and east Berkshire fared better than the more rural west Berkshire, presumably due to the higher human density providing more opportunity for observations, and also increased opportunity for the birds to utilise garden feeders to catch prey species. Indeed, at a garden in Kintbury, Sparrowhawks were twice observed flying at a net erected for bird ringing, and once became entangled briefly before managing to escape. The number of sightings was spread fairly evenly throughout the months of the year, with reports coming from 112 of the available tetrads (30%). Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of sightings are of single birds (96%), however for the first time (certainly in the last ten years) there were no reports of more than two together. Sparrowhawks were seen carrying prey items at seven locations indicating probable breeding nearby.

GOSHAWK NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare resident, first bred in 2018 (Green)

Following successful breeding in 2018 and 2019, there were at least two pairs in 2020. At one site, a pair bred successfully for the third year running, fledging three juveniles (RRi). At another site a pair fledged two juveniles (J Monkhouse). An adult and a juvenile were seen at a third site on Mar 3rd (MFW) and an adult male was seen at an undisclosed site in west Berkshire on Nov 19th (CDRH). There had been a large increase in the breeding population in the New Forest in recent years and it looked like we may be seeing a similar increase in Berkshire.



Goshawk, Mar 7th, Marek Walford

MARSH HARRIER WESTERN MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Very scarce passage migrant (Schedule 1, Amber)

Nine Marsh Harrier reports were received this year, which was fairly average, though this probably only related to four individuals. The first, on Jan 6th, was a bird flying through Lea Farm at dusk (ABT). The only spring record was of a female-type which went to roost at

Horton GP on Apr 7th (CDRH). A juvenile was seen at Great Meadow Pond on Aug 30th (DJB). Finally, what was presumably the same bird, made up the rest of the accounts for this species: a well-marked juvenile female was seen independently by the same two observers at Great Meadow Pond on several occasions between Sep 19th and Nov 1st (CDRH, DJB).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

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

The first, a ringtail, was seen at Roden Down, West Ilsley, on Jan 2nd (ABT), with another or the same bird a few miles away at Compton Down on Jan 5th (SRI). Another ringtail was seen at Lambourn Downs on Jan 24th and was possibly the same bird reported the previous November (CDRH). A further ringtail was reported from Bury Down on Feb 12th (NJB). It is conceivable that all these records related to one or maybe two birds. Finally, a juvenile ringtail was seen hunting at Woolley Down on three occasions between Oct 18th and Dec 20th. On one occasion, the bird was seen to be briefly mobbed by a Short-eared Owl, before being further attacked by a passing Peregrine (GDS).



Hen Harrier, Roden Down, Jan 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.

HARRIER SP.

A bird seen flying high over east Reading on May 7th was reported as a Hen Harrier. It was accepted as a harrier species, as it was not considered proven to species level.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Common and increasing resident (Schedule 1, Green)

The number of Red Kite reports continued to increase year on year, with a 30% increase in reports from 2019 (cf. Common Buzzard). Reports were fairly equally spread across the county from west to east, with reports received from just under 50% of tetrads, and breeding reported from ten locations. The birds make excellent use of agricultural practices to catch invertebrates, with some of the largest gatherings being on or associated with ploughing and tilling of farmland. There were numerous double figure counts, so the following figures are restricted to counts in excess of 25 birds and are maximum numbers for each site: a minimum count of 120 at the Jouldings Farm feeding station in the Blackwater Valley on Dec 29th; 48 at Streatley on Oct 29th; 48 at Woolley Down on Oct 31st; at least 40 at Crazies Hill, Remenham, on Sep 28th; 36 over Tilehurst on May 26th; and at least 28 over Farley Hill on Jan 12th. Two Red Kites fitted with wing tags were separately observed in May and traced to a tagging project in Dorset [BTO Ringing].

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Very rare vagrant, five 19th century records, recent records relate to a reintroduction project in the Isle of Wight (Red)

A report of one of these magnificent birds came from East Ilsley on Feb 11th. With attending Red Kites and a Buzzard, it was watched slowly drifting north-west into Oxfordshire (RP). Satellite tracking data has shown that immature birds from the Isle of Wight introduction scheme have been in the county this year (per PBT). Bird G318 spent all day in arable fields between Newbury and Hungerford on Apr 3rd, and a stiff southerly breeze encouraged it to head north on Apr 4th. On the same day, bird G324 passed over Wokingham around 13:45 and had reached Cambridgeshire 75 minutes later. The same bird returned in September, roosting at Stanlake Park just east of Twyford GPs on the night of Sep 6th and continuing over Wokingham the next day [Roy Dennis].

BUZZARD COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common and increasing resident (Green)

Although Common Buzzard reports for this year appeared to be broadly similar to the last few years, the number of large gatherings reported reduced significantly. This was possibly more likely to be due to familiarity with the species, resulting in fewer reports, than because of an actual reduction in numbers. There were just under 1,100 reports, with 98.6% of these relating to six birds or less. As usual, Buzzard reports were spread right across the county, but the spread of records was slightly surprising, with both mid Berkshire and east Berkshire having reports from more tetrads than the more rural west Berkshire. The double figure gatherings were: the largest gathering of 30 at Temple Farm between Henley and Wargrave on Sep 27th; 24 over Mortimer on Apr 11th; 19 at Bisham on Dec 6th; and 13 at Beech Hill on Nov 23rd. Breeding was noted at six locations.

BARN OWL WESTERN BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident (Schedule 1, Green)

A total of 109 reports of Barn Owls were submitted throughout 2020, with almost half of them referring to January or February. They were recorded in 8% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 9% of those in mid Berkshire and 12% of those in east Berkshire. The usual data from the Bisham and the Kennet and Pang Valley Barn Owl Groups were not available, but casual reports referred to four broods of Barn Owls raised in nest boxes (one in the observer's garden), and two further broods in other locations. The ringing groups' activities were limited in 2020 and consequently just 30 pulli were ringed in 2020, compared to 124 in 2019 [BTO Ringing].

A bird found dead by the A4 at Kintbury on Jun 13th had been ringed as a nestling near Fyfield, Wiltshire, on Jun 23rd 2014 [BTO Ringing].

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Fairly common but declining resident

Little Owls were recorded in 1% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 5% of those in mid Berkshire and 7% of those in east Berkshire.

Although just 51 records were received this year, many related to continued presence at a location, suggesting a territory being held. Breeding was confirmed at Chapel Green near Wokingham, and near Newbury, where an observer's evening walks in June were finally rewarded with the sight of a juvenile clambering along a branch outside a nest hole. Mating

was observed at White Place Farm, Cookham; territories were presumed at nine locations; and reports came from six other sites. Indeed, for a species as sedentary as the Little Owl, any record should be considered for its breeding potential. Interestingly, Little Owl song was reported independently by two observers coming from gardens in streets near Palmer Park, Reading, in February and March.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Rare resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

Five birds were seen in a regular winter roost in west Berkshire on Jan 20th (ABT), four were there on Jan 23rd (BTB) and two on Feb 6th (IW). One was seen after dark near a regular breeding site on Jun 27th (GDS). A migrant was seen perched in a Sallow at Colnbrook on Oct 9th (CDRH). It was mobbed by Magpies before circling overhead and flying off south-west at 11:30. Long-eared Owls are very vulnerable to disturbance so observers are reminded to only view from a distance.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

Just 15 reports of Short-eared Owl were received this year, of which four related to passage migrants. Connecting with this species in winter has become less of a formality.

First winter: only three reports were received in the period, all from the traditional site on the Berkshire Downs, with up to three birds present between Jan 4th and 19th (ABT, CMC, DH). **Summer:** a bird flew high south-east over Hurst on Aug 10th (DNTR). **Second winter:** in October, there were three sightings in the east of the county. The first was hunting at Jubilee River on Oct 6th, before flying towards Dorney, Bucks (KPD). Another was watched from Queen Mother Reservoir hunting over Horton Brook Quarry on Oct



Short-eared Owl, Cow Down, West Ilsley, Jan 4th, Andy Tomczynski.

18th, 22nd and 23rd (CDRH), while one hunted over the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 25th before flying off high to the north (JRe). Two birds were at the traditional site on the Berkshire Downs in early November (MJD, MFW). At another downland site, numbers increased from the first single bird on Oct 18th to up to six by the end of the year. In that period, the observer (initials withheld) observed a successful vole capture, and lively interactions with other owls and raptors.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Common resident (Amber)

Tawny Owls were recorded in 11% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 20% of those in mid Berkshire and 22% of those in east Berkshire. Many reports related to birds in parks and gardens. The ease of detecting this species in suburban and urban locations may in part account for the relatively lower occupancy of the rural west of the county.

There were few reports of breeding; juveniles were reported at Caesar's Camp, Woosehill and Maidenhead, and noisy territorial activity was widely reported in November and December.

HOOPOE EURASIAN HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Rare passage migrant

Following the appearance of this scarce passage migrant in 2019 after a five-year absence, it was recorded again in 2020. One was observed near Lower Farm Trout Lake on the morning of Apr 19th, in an area of bare earth and short grass, and was still present an hour later when the observer left (NC).

KINGFISHER COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Fairly common resident (Schedule 1, Amber)

These beautiful birds that mostly inhabit rivers, lakes, ponds, and gravel pits were widely reported from across the county, with most reported sightings, as per previous years, in the autumn and early winter months. The table gives the number of sites along the main waterways of the county, including areas of still water with an adjacent river where appropriate.

Kingfisher: Sites on Berkshire Rivers

River	No. of Sites
River Blackwater	5
The Cut	5
River Dun	2
The Emmbrook	2
River Enborne	1
Foudry Brook	2
Jubilee River	2
River Kennet and K & A Canal	17
River Lambourn	3
River Loddon	6
Maidenhead Waterways	3
River Pang	2
River Thames	16
Other sites	14
Total	80

It can be seen that Kingfishers were well represented along the county's rivers. Kingfishers are a difficult species to prove breeding. Even on rivers with a healthy population, it can be hard to tell where territories meet, so estimating numbers is difficult. In 2020, breeding was confirmed at just four locations: a nest site was found at Cookham on May 27th; and adults were seen carrying fish for young at Eddington, Streatley and Bracknell. However, at many locations there were repeated sightings during the breeding season, a good indication that breeding was taking place in the vicinity. There were no reports of family groups and the highest count of four was made on Feb 7th at Sandhurst GPs.

WRYNECK EURASIAN WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Rare passage migrant, formerly bred

This scarce passage migrant was reported around the runway at Greenham Common on Sep 15th (R Young, ABM, ABT).



Wryneck, Greenham Common, Sep 15th, Andy Tomczynski.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dryobates minor*

Very scarce and rapidly declining resident (Red)

The status of this scarce and declining resident remained critical, as only three records were received for the year. At Greenham Common, one was seen and heard calling on Apr 3rd (JL), while the same bird or another was heard in a different part of the common on Apr 6th (JL, NDOC). More encouragingly, a male and female were watched in Windsor Great Park on Mar 24th, sometimes together so possibly indicating a territorial pair (CDRH). Sadly, the situation with this species in Berkshire is the same as in most of the rest of the country, where only a few strongholds for the species remain.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common resident (Green)

This common inhabitant of areas of mixed woodland, landscapes and parks with scattered trees and gardens was recorded from across the county in all months of the year. There were many reports of birds attracted to fat balls, sunflower seeds, and peanut feeders in gardens, in many cases involving young birds. There was also an indication in the population data that

the abundance of this woodpecker was slightly increasing but the current level of population was still well below the peak reached in about 2010, which resulted from the sustained growth from 1994 [BBI 25yr].

On a geographical basis, west Berkshire had records from 19% of its tetrads, whereas in mid and east Berkshire the corresponding figures were 40% and 33% respectively. A record from Newbury on Aug 2nd was particularly dramatic as it concerned a high-flying bird being hunted by a juvenile Peregrine Falcon, but the woodpecker managed to escape.

The breeding season started early with drumming first reported at Lower Earley on Jan 7th. Nestlings of this species are particularly noisy, no doubt enabling several nest sites to be found. One such nest in Binfield caught the attentions of a Grey Squirrel on May 20th; fortunately the female parent was on hand, and all survived the attack. In all, successful breeding was observed at 27 locations. Most counts of more than two birds occurred in spring and early summer so many of these probably referred to family groups, although a family group of four visited peanut feeders in Ashmore Green on Jan 14th.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

EUROPEAN GREEN WOODPECKER

Common resident (Green)

As in previous years, there were numerous records of this handsome bird from across the county from wooded and partially wooded landscapes, and several of these records included sightings from garden lawns and allotments where birds were observed feeding on ants. Despite a preference for more open habitats, especially when compared with the Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpeckers were relatively scarce on the Downs, with even fewer records than from urban locations. This was also seen in the distribution across the county: records were received from 17% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 33% of tetrads in mid Berkshire and 25% of tetrads in east Berkshire. In common with the national trend, Green Woodpeckers have shown a small decline since 2000 [BBI 25yr].

Breeding was confirmed at 13 locations, generally by the presence of dependant young, and was likely at a further six. However, a large number of records of more than two birds were submitted, but with no accompanying detail, so it is not known whether these referred to family parties or counts over a wide area. The highest count of nine was made at Crookham Common on Aug 29th.

KESTREL COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Common resident (Amber)

Five hundred and fifty records of this bird of prey were submitted in 2020, the majority being individuals, often witnessed carrying out their signature hovering. These were the most records for the previous four years, with a 40% increase from 2019. Kestrels were seen in 30% of all tetrads: 27% of those in west Berkshire, 37% of those in mid Berkshire and 30% of those in the east of the county. This represented a modest increase in occupancy in each of the regions. The Berkshire Bird Index indicates that there may be signs of decreasing numbers in recent years but that records are in too few surveys to yield statistically significant results. The highest number seen was seven birds hunting at Farnborough Downs on Aug 1st, including an adult with prey being chased by a calling juvenile. **Breeding:** a male and female were seen at an owl box at Moor Green Lakes on Mar 13th, and the first two juveniles were recorded there on Jun 26th. This number had increased to five on Jul 1st. Over the county, three pairs were seen mating this year and several records were submitted of juveniles.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

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

Twelve records this year in ten tetrads represented a relatively good showing for recent years. Sightings were from six west Berkshire tetrads, and two tetrads in both mid and east Berkshire, a typical distribution. **First winter/spring:** an individual was seen at Starveall on Jan 2nd (ABT) and one was hunting on the Compton Downs on Jan 4th (RRi). Bury Down had a record on Jan 29th (PB) and, further east, a single bird was seen at Remenham Hill on Feb 18th (CDRH) and a lone male at Trash Green on Mar 14th (ABT). **Autumn/second winter:** the first record of the season was a single bird at Cow Down (West Ilsley) on Sep 20th (ABT), followed by a sighting of a female or immature hunting on the Compton Downs on Oct 1st (CDRH). A thrilling spectacle of a female or first winter chasing hirundines and Meadow Pipits was witnessed at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 5th (CDRH), with the same recorder seeing one at Horton GPs on Oct 23rd. November saw individual birds at Washmore Hill on Nov 4th (ABT) and on Bockhampton Down, Lambourn, on Nov 26th (CDRH). The final bird recorded in 2020 was flying at speed in a south-westerly direction over the gallops at Woolley Down on Dec 19th (GDS).

HOBBY EURASIAN HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

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

Hobbies were recorded between April and October, with around 20% more records compared to the average of recent years. There was a distinct bias away from west Berkshire where 6% of tetrads held Hobbies, whereas they were reported in around 25% of tetrads in mid and east Berkshire. **Spring/summer:** the first report of the year was of two at Three Mile Cross on Apr 11th (BD). In May, Hobbies were reported from 33 sites. Good numbers were seen in this period, especially at Dorney Wetlands with the maximum count of 13 there seen on May 15th. Elsewhere there were eight hawking above a field in Speen on May 8th and six over the K&A Canal at Skinner's Green on May 14th. Breeding was successful at one site in mid Berkshire with a juvenile present at a nest on Aug 27th, and at a site in east Berkshire where there were several sightings of a family including one or two juveniles in late August and early September. Breeding was suspected at two other locations, but on the other hand one observer cited increased disturbance by walkers as the cause of two failed breeding attempts. **Autumn:** perhaps the most exciting observation was when the tables were turned in the Kintbury area, with an individual being mobbed by 50 House Martins on Aug 24th. Records increased in September with many reports of birds hawking for insects over lakes and meadows. The last record for the year was an individual at Fleethill Farm on Oct 13th (CRG).

PEREGRINE PEREGRINE

FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

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

An exciting year for Berkshire Peregrines, with 292 records from 49 tetrads, though doubtless arising from the same few highly mobile birds. Sightings were distributed over the county: 15 tetrads in west Berkshire, 19 in mid and 15 in the east. Sightings came from all larger towns in the county plus regular sightings elsewhere. Fobney



Peregrine, Remenham Hill, Nov 7th, Andy Tomczynski.

Meadow saw individuals and pairs in all months except July, whereas at Theale GPs records were submitted in predominantly June and July, with a pair seen on both Jun 15th and 24th. Queen Mother Reservoir also had regular sightings, including a juvenile unsuccessfully chasing a Black-headed Gull on Sep 18th. **Breeding:** confirmed breeding in the county! Tireless and meticulous observations by Ken and Sarah White in Newbury town centre, often at first light, documented the fortunes of a nesting pair. Three chicks were eventually on view on Jun 17th, with a first maiden voyage for one on Jun 24th, and two juveniles were watched chasing Feral Pigeons on Sep 13th (KGW). Evidence of other chases lay on the ground below the nest site in the form of the corpses of four Lapwings, two Woodcocks, various bits of pigeons, and single Golden Plover, Blackbird and Fieldfare. Bracknell also saw success; the regular pair there nested, with a chick seen in the box on Jul 3rd.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET

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

Recorded in 12% of tetrads, this was still predominantly a bird of east Berkshire, being reported from 24% of its tetrads. In mid Berkshire, it was recorded in 16% of the tetrads, and only 1% in the west. The previous three years had seen flocks of 2,000-2,500 at the M4 near Slough, but these huge roosting flocks were not recorded this year. This may have been due to major roadworks in the area disrupting the roost, or reduced observer presence at the right time. The peak counts in 2020 were 300 at Eton Wick on Dec 30th and 240 at Slough on Mar 24th. Mid Berkshire saw regular sightings at Dinton Pastures CP, with six being recorded on Dec 4th and 9th. In west Berkshire, one was watched overhead at Yattendon on Dec 12th.

JAY EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident (Green)

The Berkshire Bird Index classes this corvid's population as stable over the last 25 years [BBI 25], and the recent trend for increased numbers of sightings (629 in 2020, up 13% on recent averages) was probably in line with the fluctuations that occurred within that period. Records came from 86 tetrads, with a higher concentration in the middle and east of the county; Jays were found in 18% of tetrads in the west, 33% in mid Berkshire and 20% from the east. This accorded with the observation that breeding numbers were found to be higher in the east of the county and lower in the south-west [Berkshire Atlas 2013]. In spring, the highest counts were seven at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 17th and eight at Dinton Pastures CP on Apr 10th. Autumn saw more high counts at a similar level, with a maximum of ten at Fobney Meadow on Oct 1st. **Breeding:** Jays are secretive birds in the breeding season and reports of breeding in 2020 were typically sparse: four birds were seen at a probable nest site at Woolhampton GPs on Mar 21st; a pair were observed nestbuilding at North Ascot on Apr 7th; an individual was carrying nest material in Cookham on Apr 17th; and a pair with four young were recorded in Wokingham on Jul 11th.

MAGPIE EURASIAN MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Very common resident (Green)

There were 1,431 records covering 107 tetrads this year for this abundant resident, whose numbers have been remarkably stable over the last 25 years according to the Berkshire Bird Index [BBI 25yr]. Peak numbers were pre-roost gatherings of over 50 at Dorney Wetlands in January, a minimum count of 36 at Lower Farm GP on Nov 3rd, and 29 in Wokingham

on Jun 7th. Few extra details were added to reports of this corvid, but three were seen at Hungerford banging on pine cones to loosen seeds on Aug 20th, and an individual was observed feasting on newly emerged Common Toads at Whiteknights Park on Jun 6th. **Breeding:** Magpies were under-recorded as per previous years, with fewer than ten records of nestbuilding activity. Breeding was confirmed at Birch Hill, Maidenhead, Reading, Shaw, Waltham Place, Wokingham, and Woolhampton GPs.

JACKDAW WESTERN JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*

Very common resident (Green)

Jackdaws were recorded in 27% of Berkshire tetrads this year, 1,361 sightings compared to 958 in 2019. The Berkshire Bird Index states that numbers are growing significantly though showing signs of levelling off over the last five years [BBI 25yr]. There were not the huge pre-roost numbers recorded as of previous years. The largest gatherings were: 550 seen at White Place Farm on Aug 11th, where large groups were heading to the nearby roost; 350 feeding in a stubble field at Englefield on Jul 26th, and 300 there again on Sep 13th; and 200 observed both on fields at Beech Hill on Jan 18th and at Dinton Pastures CP on Oct 22nd. **Breeding:** this was confirmed or probable throughout the county. Two sizeable colonies were reported: 116 in old oak trees in Hamstead Park on Mar 20th, and 31 in Donnington Woods on Apr 3rd. Breeding was confirmed at eight locations and was probable at a further 16 across the county.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Very common resident (Green)

Numbers remained constant in the county, with the Berkshire Bird Index confirming that there has been no significant trend in the last 25 years [BBI 25yr], although there was an increase of records submitted, which were up by 37% since 2019. Most records were from west Berkshire, with 24% of its tetrads having sightings. Highest numbers were 500 at Cold Harbour (Knowl Hill) on Jul 25th and 250 feeding in stubble fields at Englefield on Jul 26th. Flocks of 200 were seen both at Widbrook Common on Jul 16th and at a now cultivated conservation area in Bucklebury on Aug 21st. A leucistic bird with pale buff/grey plumage was noted on the Roden Downs on Feb 5th. **Breeding:** the first appearance of 15 Rooks at their rookery was recorded at Pinkneys Green on Jan 28th. Rookeries were also recorded at: Compton Downs (100) on Mar 19th; Bucklebury (30) on Apr 6th; and at Welford (84) on Apr 11th. Fledged young were also observed at Woolhampton GPs, Kintbury, Boxford, and Wellbottom Down. An unfortunate juvenile crash-landed at Hungerford on Jun 1st but was fed by parents for some days.

[Ed. The counts above in brackets were assumed to be numbers of birds as no extra details were supplied. It would be appreciated in future if supporting details could be provided with records relating to breeding to make it clear what the count refers to, especially when BTO breeding codes (such as N and FL) are applied, when it might be implied by the observer or inferred by the reader that the count refers to numbers of nests or young.]

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Very common resident (Green)

There were 1,418 records throughout the year, from 29% of Berkshire's tetrads. The peak counts were: 300 at Widbrook Common amongst a mixed corvid flock on Jul 16th; 100 at Compton on Jun 14th; 90 on fields in Binfield on Feb 23rd; and the same number at Warfield Church on Oct 3rd. **Breeding:** very few of the reports received mentioned nesting behaviour, which is widely under-reported, but the Berkshire Bird Index reports no

significant change in the population over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr]. Breeding activity was reported from nine locations, including Upper Bucklebury where a chick crash-landed at the recorder's feet on Jun 9th.

RAVEN NORTHERN RAVEN *Corvus corax*

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

Ravens were recorded county-wide in every month, the majority being in mid Berkshire (43% of tetrads), followed by west Berkshire (29%), and lastly east Berkshire (27%). There were 438 records submitted this year, a 41% increase from 2019. This may be more due to recorder activity than species abundance. Most regular sightings were at Combe, Walbury Hill, the Bucklebury area, Crookham and Greenham Commons, and Wishmoor Bottom. High numbers were seen at their stronghold at Walbury Hill; 17 were soaring and displaying on Jan 3rd and the same number again on Aug 3rd, with 15 being seen at Combe Wood on Jul 31st. A surprise visit of three sitting on a house roof in Emmer Green was recorded on Sep 11th. **Breeding:** pairs were seen throughout the year; the earliest were a pair carrying nesting material on Jan 1st at Fobney Meadow and three pairs seen at Walbury Hill on Jan 8th. There was a nest with young at Bisham on May 2nd. Two adults and two fledged young were seen at Upper Lambourn on May 20th, and two young were with an adult bird at Crookham Common pools on May 31st.



Raven, Emmer Green, Reading, Dec 9th, Andy Tomczynski.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common resident (Green)

Coal Tit abundance had changed little over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr] and there was no suggestion of change in the data available for 2020. Much under-recorded, records were received for only 64 tetrads (16%), spread across the county; for comparison, the 2013 Atlas showed 72% of tetrads to have been occupied in 2008-11.

Whilst most records were of one or two birds, often at garden feeders, larger groups were occasionally noted in winter. Coal Tits normally nest in holes in trees so a pair with a nest

under the roof tiles of a house in Binfield was noteworthy. The largest party was of at least 30, recorded on Dec 28th feeding on the ground under pine trees at Wishmoor Bottom during a cold spell (CDRH).

One hundred and four birds were ringed during the year; there were no recoveries and no re-traps of note (BTO Ringing Report).

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

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

Marsh Tits have been subject to a long-term decline nationally, more particularly in the north of England, though there is some indication that the decline is slowing. The number of birds recorded in Berkshire in 2020 was similar to that of the previous five years and there was little evidence of changes in distribution. The great majority of Marsh Tits were recorded in west Berkshire, where records came from 39 sites in 30 tetrads (17%), compared with 15 sites in 13 tetrads (14%) in mid Berkshire and none in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region. Marsh Tits were relatively sparsely distributed in deciduous woodland, the largest numbers recorded being eight at Kintbury Chase and six in Combe Wood in spring. One bird was found close to the town centre in Newbury on Nov 26th.

Ten Marsh Tits were ringed in the year. One bird, ringed as an adult at Manor Farm in November 2016, was subsequently re-trapped there in January 2019 and February 2020.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

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

As in recent years, Willow Tit records were restricted to the Combe Wood and Walbury Hill area of the North Hampshire Downs. Whilst insufficient detail was given in the records to determine the number of territories with any certainty, it seems likely that Combe Wood held no more than two or three pairs. Reports of birds in the Walbury Hill area were all before March or after July and may have been wintering or dispersing birds.

BLUE TIT EURASIAN BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident (Green)

Our most abundant tit species, Blue Tits go largely unrecorded; however, national data [BTO Birdtrends] and local survey data [BBi 25yr] show the population to be stable.

A total of 1,459 birds were ringed in 2020. Of the re-traps, three had been ringed over five years earlier, the oldest, re-trapped at Greenham, having been ringed there five years and ten months previously. No notable movements were shown in the BTO Ringing Report.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident (Green)

Almost as abundant and widespread as Blue Tits, the Great Tit population likewise remained stable over the last few decades [BBi 25yr] and there was nothing to suggest a significant change in 2020.

A total of 795 Great Tits were ringed in the year. A male ringed as a juvenile at Great Shefford in July 2014 was caught again there in April 2020, and a first year male ringed at Greenham Common in February 2015 was recaptured there in March 2020.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

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

Jan-Mar: a bird had returned to Greenham Common on Jan 16th, where a fortnight later on Jan 29th at least five were displaying and singing. Two pairs were reported at Crookham Common on Mar 16th, six at Wishmoor Bottom on Feb 25th, and eight on heathland at the RMA, Sandhurst, on Mar 1st. **Summer/breeding:** the information for breeding localities is summarised in the table; for details of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, see [Crowley *et al.*, 2012]. We are fortunate that this area was fully surveyed this year by PJC and others, revealing a stronghold of 31 territories, topping the previous maximum of 30 territories recorded in 2006 in the Berkshire part of the area. At Greenham and Crookham Commons, 11 territories were estimated, somewhat less than the 16 in 2017 but nevertheless regarded as stable [AEDH 2021].

Woodlark: Breeding Season Summaries

Locality	Number of Territories	Max Count inc young	Notes
Inkpen/Combe area	4?	4	Up to 4 birds reported singing
West Woodhay	?	?	No reports received
Greenham/Crookham Common	11?	15	Breeding confirmed; Territories estimated from seasonal wardens' records as no survey (AEDH)
Bucklebury Common	1?	2	Based on single report
Aldermaston AWE	?	?	No reports received
Padworth Common	1	1	Based on 2 reports
Ufton Nerve	?	?	No reports received.
Buckler's Forest	2+	3	Formerly Transport Research Laboratory (PJC)
<i>Thames Basin Heaths SPA, (Berkshire locations):</i>			
Crowthorne Woods	?	?	Absent?
Wildmoor Heath	0	0	Survey by PJC et al.
Swinley Forest	13	13	Survey by PJC et al.
MoD Heathland/Wishmoor B	18	18	Survey by PJC et al.
Swinley Park	1	2	Breeding confirmed
South Ascot	?	?	No reports received
Buttersteep, South Ascot	?	?	No reports received

Sep-Dec: at least 16 were reported at Crookham Common on Sep 2nd and about ten at Greenham Common on Sep 14th. Slight movements were detected this year. A stray bird flew in to Moor Green Lakes on Sep 24th. Up to five were seen in October, including two at Marlston Farm flying near the River Pang on Oct 25th. The year ended with just one November sighting of one in flight at Common Wood, Streatley Hill, on Nov 22nd.



Woodlark, Greenham Common, Sep 12th, Marek Walford.

SKYLARK EURASIAN SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

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

In common with the national trend, this species showed a small and steady decline in Berkshire between 2000 and 2019 [BBI 25yr]. The table gives monthly totals in a selection of topographical areas (see page 156) – the totals are calculated by summing the maximum site counts for all sites within a topographic area.

Skylark: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Selected Topographical Areas

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Combe/Walbury Heights (D6)	102	2	20	-	13	12	6	9	10	30	4	15
Compton/Aldworth/Ilisley Downs (D3)	214	16	16	4	50	40	20	-	-	-	-	100
Farnborough Downs (D2)	82	8	14	19	16	7	15	-	8	26	1	20
Greenham/Crookham Plateau (HW5)	2	3	5	8	19	7	2	2	10	31	4	1
Lambourn Downs (D1)	-	2	14	17	24	17	17	16	15	21	5	32
Lower Kennet & tributaries (RK2)	-	64	32	1	61	44	41	-	33	263	87	134
Remenham/Hurley/Cookham Plateau (D7)	10	2	14	13	2	12	-	-	6	110	111	190
No. birds at other sites	59	35	73	152	114	97	22	1	22	220	80	89
No. other sites	10	9	23	38	33	21	6	1	5	22	10	7
Total birds (minimum)	469	132	188	214	299	236	123	28	104	701	292	581

First winter: three figure counts came from two downland sites: 100 at Combe on Jan 2nd; and 100 at Starveall near Aldworth on Jan 19th. Song was noted from Jan 9th. **Spring/summer:** although songsters were widely encountered, breeding was only confirmed at: Cabbage Hill; Cookham Dean Common; and Peacock Meadows, Bracknell. At Greenham and Crookham Commons, just nine territories were estimated, continuing the downward trend for this species [AEDH 2021]. **Autumn/second winter:** counts ranging from 100 to 250 were made at Compton Downs, Englefield, Remenham Hill, and Waltham St Lawrence between October and December.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Spring: three at Wraysbury GPs on Mar 17th marked a somewhat late arrival (CDRH). Passage was weak, with small isolated peaks in the middle of April and early May (see table).

Sand Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Spring

Week	08-Mar	15-Mar	22-Mar	29-Mar	05-Apr	12-Apr	19-Apr	26-Apr	03-May	10-May	17-May	24-May	31-May	07-Jun	14-Jun	21-Jun
Commencing	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	May	May	May	May	May	Jun	Jun	Jun
No. of sites	-	6	4	-	1	7	3	5	3	4	5	3	4	6	2	2
No. of birds	-	56	17	-	2	128	67	14	202	12	31	11	23	27	11	4

Breeding: reports of breeding were well down. It was probable or confirmed at Woodpeen, Newbury Station, Kennet Mouth, Searles Farm Lane GP, and Cookham. Holes were still in use at Searles Farm Lane GP on Aug 9th. **Autumn:** there was an early gathering of 500 at Main Pit, Theale, on Jul 27th. Passage was again weak (see table), with a maximum of 100 at Lower Farm GP on Sep 4th. The final record of the year was of two at Fobney Meadow on Oct 25th (RCNP), the latest departure date since 2000; the latest ever was Oct 30th in 1997.

Sand Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Autumn

Week	02-Aug	09-Aug	16-Aug	23-Aug	30-Aug	06-Sep	13-Sep	20-Sep	27-Sep	04-Oct	11-Oct	18-Oct	25-Oct
Commencing	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug	Sep	Sep	Sep	Sep	Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct
No. of sites	2	7	2	3	5	2	2	2	3	1	-	-	1
No. of birds	7	88	26	69	120	4	8	5	5	1	-	-	2

SWALLOW BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Spring: although arrival took place on the normal date of Mar 21st with one at Searles Farm Lane GPs (JA) and two at Summerleaze GPs (C Carlaw), few further birds were seen in March. Passage was poor (see table) with only one count above 60, which was an estimated 250 along the River Thames between Mapledurham Lock and the Sul Brook on May 11th.

Swallow: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Spring

Week	08-Mar	15-Mar	22-Mar	29-Mar	05-Apr	12-Apr	19-Apr	26-Apr	03-May	10-May	17-May	24-May	31-May
Commencing	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	May	May	May	May	May
No. of sites	-	2	2	2	20	22	37	19	25	15	30	20	16
No. of birds	-	3	5	4	35	169	141	94	79	567	74	54	50

Breeding: Swallow numbers slumped in Berkshire in 2018 and 2019 [BBI 25yr] but reports suggested signs of recovery in 2020. Breeding was likely or confirmed at: Wellbottom Down; Lower Green; Kintbury; Great Shefford; Boxford; Folly Farm, Sulhamstead; Wickcroft; Grazeley; Swallowfield; Wokingham; Maidenhead; Cookham; and Strand Water. **Autumn:** passage was generally poor (see table). Modest counts of up to 58 in August probably involved a mixture of local birds and migrants. Numbers remained down in September, with only three counts over 100: 150 at Lower Farm GP on Sep 2nd; 400 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 24th; and 200+ at Wraysbury GP the same day. After the first week of October, small numbers continued to be reported throughout the month, until one flew over Horton Brook Quarry with Skylarks on Oct 25th. Then there was a five-week gap until the very last bird of the year was seen over the STW by the New Workings at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 30th (MIAn). There had been just one report later than this since at least 1974, on Dec 1st 2015.

Swallow: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Autumn

Week	02-Aug	09-Aug	16-Aug	23-Aug	30-Aug	06-Sep	13-Sep	20-Sep	27-Sep	04-Oct	11-Oct	18-Oct	25-Oct
Commencing	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug	Sep	Sep	Sep	Sep	Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct
No. of sites	14	15	17	13	19	16	16	13	16	19	2	6	2
No. of birds	104	292	235	266	381	303	169	745	116	291	5	13	3

NB Table does not include bird seen on Nov 30th.

HOUSE MARTIN COMMON HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

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

Spring: the arrival of three at Beale Park Wildlife Park on Mar 16th was on the early side (JEH). Passage was undistinguished (see table). Most counts were below 50, and only two above 150: an estimated 240 along the River Thames between Mapledurham Lock and the Sul Brook on May 11th; and 350+ at Hambleden Lock on May 13th.

House Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Spring

Week	08-Mar	15-Mar	22-Mar	29-Mar	05-Apr	12-Apr	19-Apr	26-Apr	03-May	10-May	17-May	24-May	31-May
Commencing	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	May	May	May	May	May
No. of sites	-	1	1	-	12	9	14	15	22	15	24	12	20
No. of birds	-	3	4	-	26	170	45	165	218	714	79	100	159

Breeding: this species has suffered a considerable and ongoing decline in Berkshire since 1994 [BBI 25yr]. Breeding was probable or confirmed at: Wellbottom Down; Eddington; Great Shefford; The Wilderness, Kintbury; Welford; Boxford; Enborne; Greenham Common; Ufton Nervet; Sulhamstead Abbots; Pangbourne; Beech Hill; Reading; Hambledon Lock, Remenham; Emmbrook; Moor Green Lakes; Hurley; Shurlock Row; Littlewick Green; Bracknell; Cox Green; Frost Folly; Cookham; Holyport; Ascot Heath; and Eton Wick.

Autumn: passage remained modest until a series of three figure counts were made between Aug 29th and Oct 6th (see table). Maxima were 300 at Lower Farm GP on Sep 4th and 300+ at Searles Farm Lane GP on Sep 24th. Passage eased off in the last three weeks of October, and a single passing through Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 27th represented a normal final departure date (CDRH).

House Martin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts in Autumn

Week	09- Aug	16- Aug	23- Aug	30- Aug	06- Sep	13- Sep	20- Sep	27- Sep	04- Oct	11- Oct	18- Oct	25- Oct	1- Nov
Commencing	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug	Sep	Sep	Sep	Sep	Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct	Nov
No. of sites	10	7	11	10	10	11	19	17	19	1	3	1	-
No. of birds	151	96	534	661	224	529	998	858	888	3	5	1	-

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

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

Nearly 500 records were logged of this resident species, which is locally common at wet localities in the river valleys. Records at the main sites are summarised in the table, showing concentrations of breeding birds, especially along the Kennet valley. A bird at Battemead Common on Oct 15th was thought by the observer to be the first at the site, while a bird at North Town, Maidenhead on Nov 8th was possibly the first in four years.

Cetti's Warbler: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Bray GPs	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
Burghfield GPs	2	1	7	14	-	1	1	1	9	7	2	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	1	2	2	3	2	-	1	2	1	1	-
Horton GPs	2	-	-	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	4	-
Jubilee River	5	1	4	10	5	4	-	-	4	4	-	2
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	6	3	-	-	1	7	-	-	2
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	3	3	23	14	23	17	2	4	9	-	8	3
Theale GPs	-	1	1	3	9	2	2	3	1	4	2	1
Twyford GPs	-	-	1	2	2	4	1	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	3	4	2	1	-	1	2	1	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-
No. birds at other sites	10	9	14	35	33	23	2	6	19	11	14	17
No. other sites	8	6	7	14	18	14	2	6	11	7	13	9
WeBS Count Totals	1	1	4	-	2	6	1	1	10	7	1	1
Total birds (minimum)	23	20	55	94	83	59	11	18	55	33	33	25

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident (Green)

There was no shortage of records (over 600) for this species, which is common across Berkshire. The highest counts were: c.50 at Hyde Farm, Temple, on Nov 28th; 46 at Wraysbury GP on Jan 28th; and 40+ at Moatlands Main Lake on Sep 5th. Breeding was confirmed or probable at 19 locations. The Berkshire Bird Index shows that there has been no significant change in the abundance of Long-tailed Tits over the 25 year survey period [BBI 25yr].

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

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

2019 Correction: the account of the bird at Dinton Pastures CP on May 1st should have credited FJC as the finder.

2020: the decline of Wood Warbler as a breeding species in southern Britain is well known and the majority of recent Berkshire records were of lone birds in spring, when its bold song makes the species detectable. There was only one Berkshire record of this species in 2020, at Bucklebury Common on May 2nd to 4th (DJR *et al.*).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Amber)

There were 408 records in 2020, from 101 sites in 18% of tetrads across the county, with the highest density of records in mid Berkshire (29% of tetrads). The Berkshire Bird Index shows a reduction in abundance of this species in Berkshire of over half from 1994 to 2019.

Spring: the first record was on an early date of Mar 19th at Sandford Lake, Dinton Pastures, (FJC), with several other sites also recording singing males before the end of March. The highest count at any one site was 14 at Crookham Common on Apr 12th. Nearby Greenham Common had nine birds on May 6th, while Snelsmore Common had seven on May 17th. In mid Berkshire the highest spring counts were three at Main Pit, Theale, on Apr 8th and three at Ufton Nervet on May 25th. In east Berkshire, there were six at Wildmoor Heath on May 25th, and other multiple counts were made at Wishmoor Bottom and Swinley Park. There were only three records east of Swinley Forest, with two singing birds at Jubilee River on Apr 6th, one singing bird at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 15th and one in Windsor on Apr 25th.

Summer: in the summer months, the majority of records were from west Berkshire, with singing birds reported from Greenham, Crookham, Snelsmore and Bucklebury Commons, Woolhampton GPs, Ufton Nervet, Lower Farm, Crowthorne Wood, and Lavell's Lake. An adult was feeding three juveniles at Crookham Common on Jun 9th, with additional confirmed records of breeding at Shaw and Wildmoor Heath, both on May 7th.

Autumn: the highest autumn count was of nine at Greenham Common on Aug 27th. A bird ringed as a juvenile in Aberdeenshire on Aug 5th was caught by a ringer at Wraysbury GPs on Aug 27th [BTO Ringing]. There was late summer song into September with the last at Clayfield Copse on Sep 13th, and the final record of the year came on Sep 23rd at Greenham Common (IW, JL).

CHIFFCHAFF COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

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

There were 1,487 records of Chiffchaff in 2020 across all months, and the species was reported from 36% of tetrads across the county. Chiffchaff was the third most widely

reported bird species in Berkshire in 2020, which no doubt reflects its role as one of the earliest avian indicators of spring migration, its song making it easy to detect and recognise. The Berkshire Bird Index shows a substantial increase since 1994, although perhaps a relative downturn in recent years [BBi 25yr]. **First winter:** in January, an estimated 40 birds at mostly wetland sites included at least 14 at Eton Wick on Jan 21st, and singing as early as Jan 8th at Sandhurst STW.

Spring/summer: numbers climbed rapidly in March, with 17 at Thatcham Marsh on Mar 17th, and a high count of 48 singing at Burghfield GPs on Mar 23rd. Other high counts were: 32 at Searles Farm Lane GP on Apr 12th; 22 at Enborne on Apr 14th; 16 at Dinton Pastures CP on Apr 10th; 14 at Boxford on Apr 5th; 14 at Colebrook Lake on Apr 9th; 12 at Lavell's Lake on Mar 21st; and 12 at Fobney Meadow on Mar 30th. Widely reported throughout spring and summer, five juveniles were huddled together while being fed by an adult at Wokingham on Jun 8th. Further confirmed breeding was at Jealott's Hill on Jun 2nd, Nuptown on Jun 7th, and Moor Green Lakes on Jul 13th.

Autumn: during autumn migration, both double figure counts and singing birds were regularly reported until the end of September, and a late singing bird was reported on Nov 8th at Woolhampton GPs. **Second winter:** records converged on rivers and wetlands sites in the colder months, and an estimated minimum of 21 birds were reported in December, with three at Fobney Meadow on Dec 12th, two at Woolhampton GPs on Dec 25th, and two at Bray GPs on Dec 29th.

SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*TRISTIS*)

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

2019 Correction: the top line should have read Siberian Chiffchaff and not Scandinavian Chiffchaff (which is *Pc.abietinus*). Also, the reports on Jan 20th and Feb 13th related to the same bird, so just one bird was reported in 2019.

2020: this eastern subspecies is detected with increasing regularity, wintering alongside Common Chiffchaffs at wetland sites. In 2020 there were three records: at Eton Wick on Jan 7th and 8th (ADB, ABT); at Horton GPs on Feb 6th and relocated at Wraysbury GPs on Feb 8th; and finally one at Colnbrook on Dec 6th (all CDRH).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There were 189 records from 58 sites in 37 tetrads, which is 9.5% of the total. The Berkshire Bird Index suggests a decline, but data are incomplete and national results shows no overall trend [BBi 25yr]. **Spring:** the first was at Fobney Meadow on Mar 31st (RCNP), some way ahead of the next records: Jubilee River on Apr 5th; Holybrook Linear Park on Apr 7th; Thatcham Marsh on Apr 8th; and Horton GPs on Apr 8th. The highest counts were of 13 at Thatcham Marsh on May 27th, ten at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 15th, nine at Enborne on Jun 20th, eight at Southcote Meadows on Apr 22nd, and seven at Fobney Meadow on Apr 27th. A singing bird at Whiteknights Lake from Apr 12th to 15th was a welcome record for the site. Sedge Warbler does occasionally show up in atypically dry locations and a bird sang all day in a front garden in Wokingham on May 24th. A bird ringed as a first-year in France in 2018 turned up for its second summer at Jubilee River on May 20th (NMa, [BTO Ringing]). **Breeding:** many of the records were naturally of singing birds, but as an inhabitant of dense reedbeds and damp undergrowth, confirmed breeding was restricted

Sedge Warbler: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	1	2	-	-	-
Enborne	-	-	-	3	5	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fobney Meadow	-	-	1	7	7	3	4	2	-	1	-	-
Horton GPs	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	10	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	7	13	12	2	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	37	36	9	6	4	3	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	15	15	8	4	4	3	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	1	75	74	38	17	10	7	1	-	-

to four records: Eton Wick on Jun 16th; Newbury on Jun 16th; Enborne on Jun 20th; and Thatcham Marsh on Jun 23rd. **Autumn:** there were five records in the second half of August and six in September, the last of which was two birds at Lavell's Lake on Sep 14th. A final late record was at Fobney Meadow on Oct 7th (AVL).

REED WARBLER EURASIAN

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

REED WARBLER

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There were 251 records from 59 sites in 43 tetrads, which is 11% of the total. The Berkshire Bird Index data suggest an upward trend over the 25-year period, consistent with the national picture [BB 25yr]. **Spring:** the first record of the year was on Apr 7th at Horton GPs (CDRH), which was the fifth earliest date in the past 20 years. This was followed by singles at Thatcham Marsh on Apr 11th and at Strand Water, Eton Wick, and Whiteknights Park by Apr 12th, plus two on that date at Thames Valley Park, and ten at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 15th. By the end of April, at least 16 sites had reported multiple singing birds.

Summer/breeding: the highest counts were: 21 at Thatcham Marsh on May 27th;



Reed Warbler, Hosehill Lake, Jun 17th, Andy Tomczynski.

Reed Warbler: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bray GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	3	3	-	-	-
Englemere Pond	-	-	-	2	4	6	5	-	-	-	-	-
Horton GPs	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	10	5	7	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	1	8	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	2	4	2	4	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shaw	-	-	-	6	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Strand Water	-	-	-	2	4	11	10	-	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	6	21	19	5	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	7	-	4	1	1	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	2	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	3	5	5	2	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	18	47	28	15	6	4	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	9	19	12	7	3	2	-	-	-
WeBS Count Totals	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	61	111	97	53	11	10	-	-	-

11 at Strand Water on Jun 15th; eight at Boxford on Jul 19th; and eight at Lea Farm Lake on Jun 3rd. The majority of records involved singing birds at suitable wetland sites. There were four records of confirmed breeding: at Enborne on Jun 20th, Thatcham Marsh on Jun 23rd, Woolhampton GPs on Jul 18th, and Strand Water on Jul 19th. **Autumn:** there were three at Woolhampton GPs on Sep 5th, and three at Lavell's Lake on Sep 6th. The last records of the year were singles at Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 27th and at Lea Farm Lake on Sep 29th (FJC), which was typical of recent departure dates.

Recoveries of three Reed Warblers that had been ringed in 2019 revealed migration between Berkshire and France [BTO Ringing].

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

Grasshopper Warblers are in decline in Berkshire, and in 2020 there were only five records of six birds. **Spring:** the first record was of one male reeling from scrubby grassland at Speen Moor Plantation on Apr 30th (AEDH). Another was in song at Battlemead Common on May 12th (LA). Two were recorded at Thatcham Marsh on May 27th (RJC). **Autumn:** an adult female was ringed at Greenham Common on Aug 12th (IW, JL), and a final bird was flushed near Hungerford on Sep 10th (CDRH).

BLACKCAP EURASIAN BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

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

There were 1,217 records of Blackcap across all months; this was the fourth most widely distributed species, being reported in 135 tetrads (35% of the total). **First winter:** there

were an estimated 28 wintering birds seen in January, many reported multiple times as they visited gardens and feeders, and several gardens had both male and female in residence.

Spring/summer: the first singing bird was on Mar 12th at Burghfield GPs, and by Mar 20th there were seven males in song or subsong at the same location. Numbers mounted in April and high counts were made of: 49 at Searles Farm Lane GPs on 12th; 35 at Moatlands Main Lake on 22nd ; and 105 at Burghfield GPs on 19th (RCr). Other sites reporting high counts were 21 at Dinton Pastures CP on May 8th, Enborne with 26 on May 9th, and Thatcham Marsh with 32 on May 27th. Elsewhere the species was widely reported throughout the summer months, and breeding was confirmed at nine locations. **Autumn/second winter:** Blackcaps were abundant in early autumn, but with fewer records after mid-October. An estimated 37 birds were seen in December at sites across the county, most of which were gardens.

Three ringed Blackcaps had undertaken journeys between Berkshire and Belgium, while one ringed at Wraysbury on Aug 7th 2015 was in Cádiz province, southern Spain, on Mar 9th [BTO Ringing].

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Garden Warbler: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldermaston GPs	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greenham Common	-	-	-	6	10	3	8	2	1	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	5	12	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	4	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Padworth Lane GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	9	9	2	3	1	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	4	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	43	84	29	3	6	-	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	25	42	13	3	5	-	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	75	137	42	23	9	1	-	-	-

There were 301 records from 93 sites in 65 tetrads, which is 17% of the total. **Spring:** the first record was at Greenham Common on Apr 12th (JL), which was a typical date, with wider arrivals from mid-month. Two at Greenham Common and four at Thames Valley Park on Apr 20th were the earliest records of multiple singing birds. The highest count was of 12 at Moatlands Main Lake on May 1st, with further counts in the Theale area of nine at Main Pit on Apr 26th, and nine at Hosehill Lake on May 6th. There were ten at Greenham Common on May 6th, with seven at Crookham Common on May 13th. Counts of four or more singing birds were reported from river and gravel pit sites such as Charvil CP, Woolhampton GPs, Moor Green Lakes, Fobney Island, Thames Valley Park, and Kennet Mouth.

Breeding: there were two confirmed breeding records, at Woolhampton GPs on Jun 28th and at Moatlands Main Lake on Jul 19th. **Autumn:** there were still eight at Greenham

Common on Jul 29th, but birds were reported from only six sites in August. There was only one September record, at Greenham Common on Sep 7th (IW, JL).

Two Garden Warblers ringed on Jul 21st and 24th at Wraysbury GPs were both subsequently found in northern Spain in late August [BTO Ringing].

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Curruca curruca*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

Lesser Whitethroat: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
Crookham Common	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	3	2	-	-	-
Greenham Common	-	-	-	2	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lea Farm Lake	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	24	32	12	1	5	2	-	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	18	26	10	1	5	2	-	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	33	42	17	6	13	4	-	-	-

There were 160 records from 62 sites in 50 tetrads, which is 13% of the total. **Spring:** the first record was on Apr 12th at Thurle Down (NJB), which was the second earliest arrival date of the previous twenty years. This early start was followed by one calling at Lavell's Lake on Apr 17th, and singing birds at Greenham Common, Fobney Meadow, Streatley, and Jubilee River, all on Apr 19th. The highest counts were of three, recorded at: Fobney Meadow on Apr 23rd and 27th; at Dorney Wetlands on Apr 29th; at Jealott's Hill (of which two were ringed) on May 17th; and at Crookham Common on Jun 14th. **Breeding:** a large proportion of records was of singing males, with the last song recorded on Jul 1st at Fobney Lock. There was one confirmed breeding record of recently fledged young at Bucklebury on Jun 15th. **Autumn:** there were several records of Lesser Whitethroat accompanying tit flocks, such as at Bottom Lane Floods on Jul 18th and at Colnbrook on Aug 7th. There were five records in September, including a juvenile at Englefield on Sep 5th, with the last at Clayfield Copse on Sep 13th (HRN).

WHITETHROAT COMMON WHITETHROAT *Curruca communis*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant (Green)

There were 597 records from 151 sites in 100 tetrads, which is 26% of the total. **Spring:** the first record was on Apr 10th at Greenham Common (JL). Reports of this species came from 19 sites in the following week, including: five singing at Southcote Meadows on Apr 12th; four singing at Frost Folly on same date; and eight singing in Cottage Lane (Burghfield GPs) by Apr 19th. The highest counts were: 17 on Jun 1st at Englefield; 15 at Enborne on May 9th; 15 at Churn Road, Compton, on Jun 14th; 13 at Wellbottom Down on Jun 9th; 13 at Jubilee River on Jun 3rd; 12 at Colebrook Lake on May 13th; 11 at Southcote Meadows on Apr 22nd; 11 at Crookham Common on Apr 25th; and ten at Fobney Meadow on Apr 27th, Boxford on May 17th and Compton Downs on Jun 14th. **Breeding:** this was confirmed at eight sites, with the earliest record of fledged young being on Jun 3rd at Jubilee River.

Whitethroat: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghfield GPs	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dinton Pastures CP	-	-	-	-	4	-	1	1	2	-	-	-
Englefield	-	-	-	-	16	17	13	9	2	-	-	-
Crookham Common	-	-	-	11	7	8	2	8	2	-	-	-
Greenham Common	-	-	-	8	12	3	6	9	3	-	-	-
Jubilee River	-	-	-	1	6	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Farm GP	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moatlands GPs	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moor Green Lakes	-	-	-	3	12	1	2	1	1	-	-	-
Queen Mother Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thatcham Marsh	-	-	-	1	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Theale GPs	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Twyford GPs	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wellbottom Down	-	-	-	2	12	13	5	4	-	-	-	-
Woolhampton GPs	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wraysbury GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
No. birds at other sites	-	-	-	110	208	118	37	42	6	1	-	-
No. other sites	-	-	-	45	75	33	16	16	4	1	-	-
Total birds (minimum)	-	-	-	148	286	180	68	74	16	1	-	-

Autumn: this species is quite commonly seen in family groups and a post-breeding group of nine together was seen at Englefield on Aug 24th. Whitethroats remained well-reported in September, with the last of the month on Sep 22nd at Greenham Common. The latest record of the year was at Fleethill Farm on Oct 13th (JCMo), which is the third latest date in the past 20 years.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Curruca undata*

Scarce and localised resident (Schedule 1, Amber)

Dartford Warblers were reported in all months, with 236 records split between a stronghold at Greenham Common in west Berkshire (two tetrads) and a wider distribution at several sites on the east Berkshire heaths (11 tetrads). **West Berkshire:** this species was reported from Greenham Common throughout the year. Breeding appeared to have been successful, with two juveniles reported from Jul 11th, and a high count of four birds on Oct 18th. Dartford Warblers were reported from Crookham Common in most months, with a high count of three on Aug 23rd, and a pair and one juvenile together on Oct 25th. Estimates from the records of the seasonal wardens suggested that there were six or seven territories across Greenham and Crookham Commons in 2020 [AEDH 2021].

East Berkshire: surveys recorded 22 territories across the wider Swinley Forest area (PJC *et al.*) at several locations, with just over half on MoD land. At Wildmoor Heath, at least two family groups were recorded on Jun 6th, and groups of at least four were seen at Wishmoor Bottom and Buttersteep Hill. A single bird was seen at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on Mar 26th and a pair was seen from late March to mid-June at Wellington College.

Other locations: there were several records away from the regular heathland sites, including a first record for the farmland site of Englefield, with a single bird seen on Oct 23rd and 28th (RCr). Also out of the usual range was the bird seen on Dec 25th at Fobney Island (RRi). At Moor Green Lakes, a single bird seen on Aug 28th (RCM, RJG) was followed by two birds seen together on Oct 28th (RCM). A female or first winter was seen at Woodlands Park

on Oct 5th and 16th (DJB). Finally, at the east end of the county, a first winter was seen at Horton GPs on 3rd Nov and the same or another was then seen at Colnbrook from Nov 22nd to Dec 27th (all CDRH).

FIRECREST COMMON FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce resident and passage migrant (Schedule 1, Green)

Firecrests were well reported in 2020 and can be regarded as firmly established in areas where the habitat is suitable, namely mixed and coniferous woodland. Two areas received particular attention from birders: Bucklebury (DJR, RAL) and Finchampstead (RCM, DJS). Their observations (and others’) showed these areas to be highly significant centres of breeding activity. The table shows the number of territories located between March and July in various areas of the county.

Firecrest: Territories by Topographical Area

Topographical Area	Territories	Additional Birds	Observers
Farnborough Downs (D2)		1	RJC
Snelsmore Common (HW2)		2	JL
Greenham/Crookham Plateau (HW5)		1	JL, IW
Compton/Aldworth/Isley Downs (D3)		1	MFW
Curridge/Hermitage & Bucklebury Plateau (HW3)	7	10	DJR, RAL, RCr
Lower Kennet & Tributaries (RK2)		1	MFW
Eastern Downs & Woods (D4)	1		PBT
R Thames: Goring Gap to Reading (RT1)	1		NJB
Pang Valley & Sul Gap (RP0)		1	RCo
Greater Reading (U Re)	2	3	HRN et al.
Loddon Valley above Winnersh (RB2)	1		JB
Crowthorne/Finchampstead (HW8)	17	9	DJS, PBT, RCM
Remenham/Hurley/Cookham Plateau (D7)	1	2	ABT, BCr, PNe
Blackwater Valley (RB1)	3		DJS
Maidenhead (U Ma)		1	BCr
R Thames: Wargrave to Maidenhead (RT3)		1	PNe
Swinley Forest (HW9)	8	1	SA, CJ, RD
Windsor Great Park & Forest (HW10)	1	2	SA, ARe, CDRH

The areas and their codes are the topographical areas described on page 156 of this report. The number of territories is based on the received reports where observers provided additional information that represented BTO probable or confirmed breeding, or where territorial behaviour could be deduced from multiple reports. The additional birds column gives an estimate of the number of birds in addition to any within territories where the notes attached to the record suggested BTO possible breeding at best. Two areas that were probably under-reported are Swinley Forest and Windsor Great Park.

Outside the breeding season, Firecrests continued to be reported from the breeding areas but in smaller numbers, and there were several reports of birds singing well into October. Away from these areas, Firecrests were found at Moor Green Lakes, Thatcham, Warfield, and Wraybury in January, and at Moor Green Lakes and Burghfield Common in October.

There was an interesting account of a Firecrest imitating a Goldcrest song at Ashley Hill Forest on Jun 2nd. The observer could hear a Goldcrest song but only see a Firecrest. When he played a Goldcrest song on his phone, a Firecrest flew out and landed alongside, initially singing as a Firecrest but afterwards as a Goldcrest (ABT). Just one other instance of similar behaviour could be found: a birder/ecologist who had recorded Firecrest mimicry in Wales.



Firecrest, Ashley Hill, Jun 2nd, Andy Tomczynski.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

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

Goldcrests were reported from 16% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 26% in mid Berkshire and 18% east Berkshire. This compared with around 21% uniformly in 2019, and whereas the Berkshire Bird Index indicates that winter weather severity is the predominant driver for population fluctuations [BBI 25yr], inconsistent observer coverage was likely to be a factor here too. Breeding was either probable or confirmed at 11 locations in west Berkshire, and just one in mid Berkshire. Most reports of Goldcrests were of ones or twos, sometimes visiting gardens in mixed flocks of tits, and even attracted to bird feeders. The largest count of Goldcrests was 12, coming from across Wishmoor Bottom on Jan 19th.

WREN EURASIAN WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident (Green)

Despite the fact that the Wren, one of the country’s most common birds, is one of Berkshire’s most frequently reported species (with 1,276 records in 2020), assessing its status is made difficult by inconsistent reporting across the county. West Berkshire accounted for the majority of records by far, where relatively few locations were the subject of BirdTrack ‘complete lists’. But in reality, Wrens were apparently at their greatest density in mid Berkshire, reported from 33% of its tetrads as opposed to 24% elsewhere. The systematic BBS surveying method that results in the Berkshire Bird Index found that there had been a small increase in Wren numbers since 1994 [BBI 25yr]. At a handful of sites (mostly in west Berkshire), some observers have been including Wrens in the species that they specially survey over many years; this year’s dramatic reduction in numbers at Burghfield GPs prompted the creation of the table, where it can be seen that for all other sites the 2020 figures fall within the usual range of fluctuations.

Maximum Spring Counts of Wrens at Selected Sites in Last Ten Years

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Barton Court, Kintbury (JLS)		20	32	26	33	32	30	33	33	
Boxford (RJC)	24	24	27	26	24		18	18	28	25
Burghfield GPs (RCr)	61	81		109	124	102	121		142	59
Enborne (RJC)		16	9	32	34	32	39	21	32	24
Thatcham Marsh (IW, JL, RJC)		13	19		30	29	48	34	33	39
Welford (RJC)	22	23	21	19		22	23		10	15
Winterbourne (JL)			17	16	21	25	25	15	23	24

The diligent collection of data by the observers, identified in brackets, over these and earlier years is gratefully acknowledged.

Breeding was confirmed at only five locations and was probable at a further 12, including a pair using a bat box at Upper Bucklebury on Jul 28th.

NUTHATCH EURASIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Common resident (Green)

The Nuthatch maintained its status as a common resident. Although reports from west Berkshire far exceeded reports from the rest of the county, this species was found in just 21% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, compared to 30% of those in mid Berkshire and 25% of those in the east of the county. It was frequently found visiting garden feeders, and breeding was reported at ten locations. For the third year, a pair at Little Sandhurst converted a 'woodcrete' Tawny Owl nesting box for their own use by reducing the entrance hole. The only ringing recovery involved a bird at Great Shefford, which had been ringed over three years previously in the same vicinity.

TREECREEPER EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident (Green)

The Treecreeper has similar habitat requirements to the Nuthatch, but, as a largely insect-eating bird, is not attracted to feeding stations to the same degree. There was one record of a Treecreeper visiting a feeding station, and only two records of visits to gardens, both rural. There were four reports of breeding, including a family party of six at Snelsmore Common on Jun 10th. The Berkshire Bird Index reports no evidence of change in Treecreeper abundance over the 25 year period [BBI 25yr].

STARLING COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Starlings were reported from 22% of the county's tetrads, a figure close to that of the previous three years, perhaps indicating a slowdown in its recent decline. The resident population is boosted by winter visitors, and the second winter period saw the largest gatherings. Several observers enjoyed the spectacle of a murmuration viewed from either Thatcham NDC or Lower Farm GP, with numbers variously estimated at 5,000 to 7,500 in December, whereas the peak count at a Lower Farm GP roost in the first winter period was 500. Elsewhere, a flock of over 3,000 was found on Bury Down in November. Smaller flocks of several hundred were found throughout the year across the county. These included significant numbers of juvenile birds, suggesting a successful breeding season. Breeding was confirmed at 13 locations.



Starling, Finchampstead, May 8th, Roger Murfitt.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

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

The Song Thrush maintained its widespread presence. The Berkshire Bird Index shows a significant increase in abundance of around 20% since 2000 [BBI 25yr], while the number of tetrads where Song Thrushes have been reported remained fairly constant over the last five years, at around 27% of the county's total. Successful breeding was established at 14 locations. Proof of presence of these birds can rely on hearing their singing, which is much more in evidence from the start of the year to late spring. This may account for the dearth of records in August and September. Some observers commented on their apparent reappearance in autumn; nocturnal sound recording detected seven flying over Wooshill on Oct 12th and others were seen flying over southwards around that date in daylight hours.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common resident (Red)

According to the Berkshire Bird Index, the abundance of Mistle Thrushes halved over the last twenty-five years, reflecting the national trend [BBI 25yr]. The number of tetrads where Mistle Thrushes were recorded also showed a decline, steadily reducing from 26% of the county's tetrads to 23% over the last five years. This effect was experienced equally in east, mid and west Berkshire. Breeding was noted at five locations with two birds gathering nesting material at Borough Marsh on Feb 14th being the first activity of the year. Notable counts included 20 at Bagnor on Oct 30th, and at least 17 in the far south-west of the county at Summertons Down on Oct 3rd in a mixed flock with Linnets, Yellowhammers and Meadow Pits.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

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

Redwings continued to be common across the county in winter, with proportionately more birds reported from east and especially central Berkshire than the west.

First winter: the largest flock reported was 200 at Moor Green Lakes on Jan 22nd, with five flocks of at least 100 elsewhere. There was a trickle of reports in the first week of April, and eight birds at Shaw on Apr 17th were the last reported (IW). **Second winter:** the first autumn birds were recorded on Sep 29th: 13 over Greenham Common (IW, JL); five at Horton (CDRH); and one over Woosehill detected in an overnight recording (PBT). This was one day later than the previous year. There was a significant arrival on Oct 12th, with several observers noting flocks of ten to 100 birds flying in a westerly or north-westerly direction, particularly in the early hours of daylight. The largest overall totals on that day were: 810 over Crookham Common; 792 over Greenham Common; 500 over Fobney Meadow with possibly 500 more feeding in the bushes there; and 900 over Woosehill, where it was noted that few of the birds were calling. This suggested that the additional 69 calls recorded overnight represented a substantial underestimate of the numbers actually passing over. This passage continued at a slightly reduced level across the county (with totals up to 350) in the following days, up to Oct 16th. Later in the year, flocks of at least 100 birds were encountered at seven locations, with 200 near Cookham Dean on Nov 13th the largest.

BLACKBIRD COMMON BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

The Berkshire Bird Index shows a significant small increase in abundance since 2000 [BBI 25yr], while the number of tetrads where Blackbirds have been reported remained fairly constant over the last five years, at around 32% of the county's total. As may be expected, there was plenty of evidence of successful or attempted breeding, with reports of confirmed breeding at 25 locations. A garden in North Ascot had two nesting pairs, one with three broods, the other two, and including one case of predation by Magpies. Elsewhere, a Blackbird first ringed in 2013 as a juvenile at Harvey's Meadow, Hungerford, was caught by ringers for the fifth year, each time in the same location. There were several reports of 20 to 30 birds, which probably arose from counts over large areas, while 15 males in a garden in Tilehurst on Nov 23rd represented the largest flock.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

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

While Fieldfares are to be found across the county, they prefer the more agricultural west. There are fewer reports of Fieldfare visiting gardens than for Redwings, emphasising this preference. Reported arrivals showed larger numbers arriving slightly earlier than in 2019; this was also observed with Redwings.

The largest flocks were nearly all in west Berkshire, and included 300 at West Ilsley on Jan 19th and 250 at Swallowfield on Dec 7th. Both counts were significantly fewer than the maxima of recent years. The last report of departing Fieldfares in spring was of four over Kintbury on Apr 21st (JLS), three days earlier than in 2019. The first autumn arrivals flew over Remenham Hill on Oct 11th (CDRH), eight days earlier than in 2019, with many flocks observed flying mainly westwards in the following week.



Fieldfare, Emmer Green, Dec 26th, Andy Tomczynski.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Scarce passage migrant (Red)

After a run of good years with typically eight to 16 Ring Ouzels reported annually, 2020 was not a good year, with just three birds in total. The only spring sighting was a female at Colnbrook on Apr 20th and 21st (CDRH). Two birds, including a well-marked male, were seen with Blackbirds at the top of birches on Greenham Common on Sep 29th (IW, JL).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Scarce but declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

The first report of the year was of a bird at Horton, presumably on passage, on May 5th (CDRH). Further spring reports followed over the next few weeks, all from potential breeding locations. **Breeding:** between May and July, birds were recorded at 24 sites, twice as many as the previous year. Most were suitable breeding sites and adults were seen feeding young at six of the sites. One observer who covered a quarter of the woodland in Kintbury Chase reported ten to 12 birds on Jul 29th. Whilst most of the sites were in west Berkshire, there were four breeding season records from east Berkshire, though no breeding evidence was provided. There were no breeding season records in east Berkshire in 2019.

Passage: during August and September, Spotted Flycatchers were reported from a number of sites where they had not been seen earlier in the year. These included several in central and east Berkshire: Woolhampton; Tidmarsh; Clayfield Copse; Fobney Meadow, where seven were counted on Aug 30th; Lavell's Lake; Maidenhead Thicket; Moor Green Lakes; Poyle; and Colnbrook. A party of seven seen on Sep 3rd at Basildon Park, a known past breeding site, may have been passage birds. The last record of the year was of two birds on Sep 25th at Fobney Meadow (AVL).



Spotted Flycatcher, Streatley, May 19th, Andy Tomczynski.

Spotted Flycatchers were recorded in 38 tetrads (9.7%): 21 (12%) in west Berkshire, eight (9%) in mid Berkshire and nine (7%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

ROBIN EUROPEAN ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident (Green)

The Berkshire Bird Index shows that Robin abundance varied little over the 25 years to 2019, and the Atlas surveys in 2008-11 showed it to occupy 99% of tetrads. As with most abundant species, it is much under-recorded; in 2020, Robins were recorded in only 120 tetrads (31%).

In suitable habitat, high densities of territories may be encountered. The highest counts of singing birds in spring were at Thatcham Marsh (29), Dinton Pastures (35), and Burghfield GPs (43). In autumn, high counts were reported at Thatcham Marsh (38), Greenham Common (30), and Enborne (28). **Breeding:** nest material collection was reported from late January, and fledged young from Apr 9th.

Robins are not known for mimicry in their songs, so it is of interest that a male on territory in a Reading garden opened its otherwise normal song with an excellent imitation of a Red Kite's call.

NIGHTINGALE COMMON NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Scarce summer visitor (Red)

The first arrivals at the main sites were on Apr 8th at Theale GPs (RCr) and Apr 9th at Greenham Common. **Breeding:** the numbers of singing males reported are summarised in table. Other than one singing bird at Enborne, there were no territories reported west of

Newbury. Nine territories were reported in both 2019 and 2020 at Greenham and Crookham Commons according to BBOWT's 2021 ground nesting bird report [AEDH 2021]. The Theale area population was surveyed in 2019 and 51 territories were reported, considerably higher than the 22 territories identified from casual observations in 2020. **Passage:** single April records east of Reading at Charvil CP, Reading STW and East Park Farm probably related to birds on passage. There were no records after two at Theale on Jul 17th (RCr).

Nightingale: Territories and Singing Males

	April	May	June	Observers
River Kennet west of Newbury	-	-	-	
Enborne	1	1		RJC
Greenham/Crookham Commons	7	9		AEDH <i>et al.</i>
Woolhampton GPs		1		LRB, RF, DWK
Brimpton GPs		3	1	RCWD, JPM, KGW, GEW
Theale & Burghfield GPs	22	10	1	RCR <i>et al.</i>
Fobney island		1		JLe, Rri

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER

Very scarce passage migrant, has bred (Red)

Two birds were found on Snelsmore Common on May 24th (JL), and the female, which was observed over the next two days, was seen to enter a nest box (IW). Previously, the Pied Flycatcher was a rare breeder in the 19th century, and a handful of breeding attempts in the late 1980s and early 1990s coincided with a temporary increase in breeding records in south-east England [Berkshire Atlas 2013].

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Very scarce passage migrant, occasionally breeds (Schedule 1, Red)

A male was singing at a building site in Wokingham from Apr 3rd (PO), in the same area occupied from April to June 2019. Some 109 observations by PO on an almost daily basis were rewarded when a pair of adults and four juveniles were seen on Jul 6th. Subsequently, when sightings of the female declined, suspicions of a second brood were realised on Aug 9th when the first juvenile was seen. Three juveniles were seen on Aug 18th, and sightings continued thereafter until the last on Oct 16th. A detailed account of this breeding can be found on page 23.

A female was photographed in a front garden in Whitley Wood on Apr 8th (RHo). Another female was at Greenham Common on Apr 17th (JL), possibly the same bird as that reported (no sex details given) on the previous day (NC). There were no reports from the usual breeding area in Reading town centre.



Black Redstart, Barkham, Dec 11th, Andy Tomczynski.

In the autumn, a first winter was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 15th and 16th (CDRH), and another first winter was feeding from the solar panels by Woolhampton GPs on Nov 8th and 9th (RRK *et al.*). An adult male frequented a housing estate in Barkham from Dec 8th to 11th (S Orino *et al.*), and a final adult male passed through Queen Mother Reservoir on Dec 24th (CDRH).

REDSTART COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Scarce passage migrant and very scarce summer visitor (Amber)

Redstarts were recorded in 16 tetrads (4.1%): six (3%) in west Berkshire, four (4%) in mid Berkshire and six (5%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

Spring passage: the first report of the year was of a male at Wishmoor Bottom on Apr 25th (M Callaghan). Indeed, all spring records were of birds on the well-watched breeding site of Wishmoor Bottom and elsewhere in Swinley Forest. **Breeding:** no surveys were reported, however at Wishmoor Bottom there were records of singing males, of a pair using a nest-hole, and of a bird feeding young, which probably involved two or three pairs. Within the Swinley Forest area, single birds were reported from two other sites, and sightings continued up to Sep 2nd.

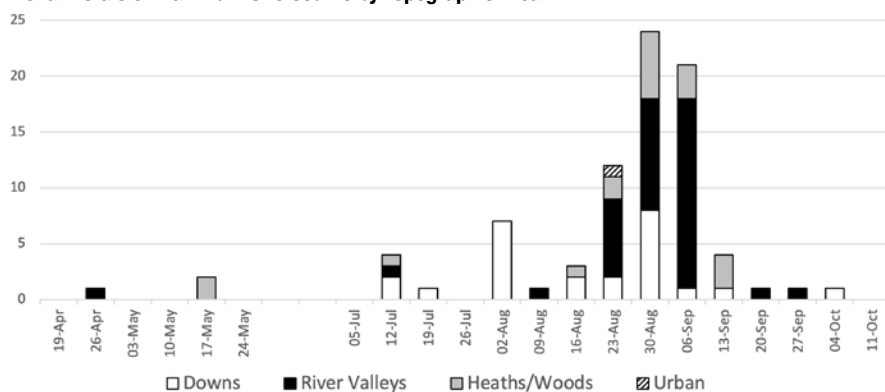
Autumn passage: all records away from the known breeding sites came in autumn, starting with a scaly-breasted juvenile at Colnbrook on Jul 1st, present to Aug 3rd by which time its moult, to a first winter male, was almost complete. There were numerous records between Jul 3rd and Oct 12th, mostly of single birds, at Greenham and Crookham Commons, with a maximum of five on Aug 31st. Elsewhere there was a particular concentration of records in the period Aug 20th to Sep 6th, with 12 birds reported from ten locations, including Bracknell, Wraysbury Scrub, Lardon Chase and Walbury Hill, Wellbottom Down, and Upper Lambourn on the Downs. The last record of the year was of a female at Greenham Common on Oct 12th (IQ).

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Fairly common passage migrant, formerly bred (Red)

Whinchats were recorded in 28 tetrads (7.2%): ten (6%) in west Berkshire, seven (8%) in mid Berkshire and 11 (9%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

Whinchat: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



Spring passage: there were only two spring records. One was at Streatley Farm on Apr 26th (NJB); the second was of two at Wildmoor Heath on May 17th. **Autumn passage:** Whinchats were recorded at 24 sites, more or less equally spread across the county, mostly from farmland or heaths. The first returning bird was on the early date of Jul 12th at Englefield, a site that held Whinchat over much of the autumn, with a maximum of five on Sep 6th. Many reports came from the downland areas, with high counts of seven on Compton Downs on Aug 2nd and five on Lambourn Downs on Sep 1st. At Washmore Hill on the Lambourn Downs, on Jul 21st, a fully-fledged juvenile, still with partly spotted plumage, was noted. Elsewhere some 30 reports of ones and twos came from 11 river valley sites in mid and east Berkshire, mostly popular birdwatching sites. The last record of the year was of a single male at Remenham Hill on Oct 10th (ABT).

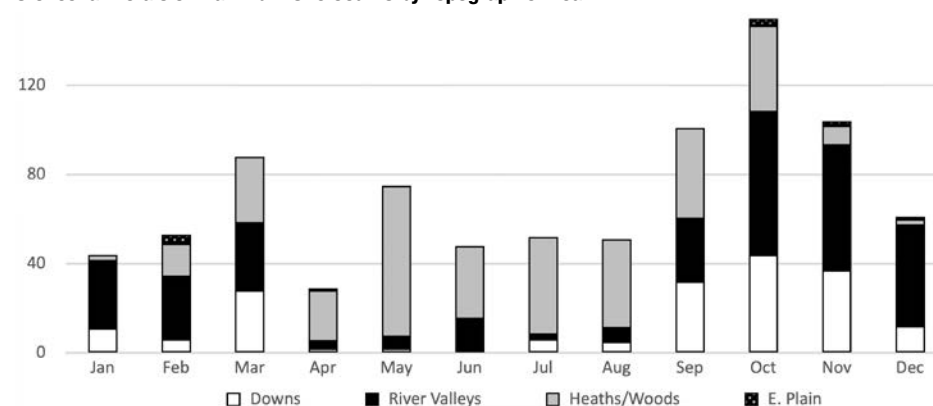
STONECHAT EUROPEAN STONECHAT *Saxicola rubicola*

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

Stonechats were recorded in 74 tetrads (19%): 33 (19%) in west Berkshire, 17 (19%) in mid Berkshire and 24 (19%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region. Good numbers were recorded all year and record numbers were present in autumn 2020.

First winter: with another mild winter, the year started with around 47 Stonechats recorded, a number typical of recent years. Increasingly, records are coming from the river valleys, where Stonechats are now widespread in winter. Nine birds were counted on Fobney Meadow on Feb 17th, and five were at Englefield on Feb 26th, but the highest winter count was 11 at Greenham Common on Feb 27th. **Breeding:** some early March records probably related to birds on passage, for example four at Temple on Mar 8th (where neither wintering nor breeding was recorded), and parties of four to six birds at downland sites with no evidence of subsequent breeding. BBOWT's report on ground nesting birds concluded that Greenham and Crookham Commons held approximately 30 territories in 2020 [AEDH 2021]. On Bucklebury Common, four territories were counted. Though there were reports of pairs and young at several sites, no survey data were received for the Swinley Forest and Ascot area. Confirmed or probable breeding evidence came from several Downs sites: Compton, East Ilsley, and Lambourn, where a female carrying food was seen on the early date of Mar 16th. In the river valleys, two sites were occupied between March and June; ten Stonechats were reported from two broods at Fobney Meadow in June; and a pair were at Fleethill Farm. There were also single records from nine other sites. **Autumn/second winter:** the October peak

Stonechat: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



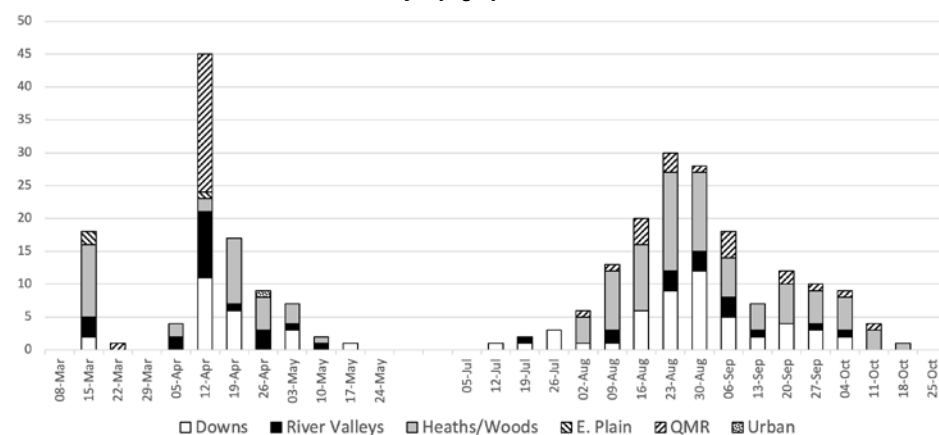
count (161 birds) was the highest on record, nearly three times the average of the previous 20 years. This was 57 (range 24 to 105), with no significant trend. How much this reflected a good breeding season in Berkshire, or a larger influx of birds that bred elsewhere, is not possible to assess. Unusually high counts were recorded from many sites. The highest were: 33 at Greenham Common on Aug 16th; 11 at Moor Green New Workings on Sep 29th; 15 at Walbury Hill on Oct 1st; 15 at Colnbrook on Oct 11th; and at least 12 on Fobney Meadow on Nov 1st. Although falling away after October, counts remained high to the end of the year.

WHEATEAR NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Fairly common passage migrant (Green)

Wheatears were recorded in 36 tetrads (9.2%): 17 (10%) in west Berkshire, nine (10%) in mid Berkshire and ten (8%) in east Berkshire. Percentages relate to total number of tetrads in each region.

Wheatear: Totals of Maximum Site Counts by Topographic Area



Wheatear, Lowbury Hill, Sep 28th, Andy Tomczynski.

Spring passage: the first arrivals were recorded on Mar 16th, a male at Walbury Hill (IW) and a very early female on Lambourn Downs (CDRH). Small numbers were reported from sites across the county during the rest of March and early April, until a fall of 21 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Apr 17th. The peak count elsewhere was eight at Crookham Common on Apr 19th. A female “Greenland type” was seen at Englefield on May 14th, and the last record of the spring was on May 17th on Compton Downs. **Autumn passage:** the first returning bird was on Jul 16th at Wellbottom Down; birds were then recorded at 24 other sites across the county through the autumn. The majority of records came from Greenham and Crookham Commons, where counts of five or more were not infrequent, and nine were counted on Sep 3rd. High counts elsewhere were five at Combe Gibbet on Aug 23rd, five at Compton Downs on Sep 5th, and four at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 16th, and Sep 9th and 10th. The last bird of the year was at Greenham Common on Oct 18th (JL).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common but declining resident (Red)

A vocal and conspicuous species generally living in colonies, which 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. More recently, the numbers have stabilised in Berkshire, with this year having a significant increase in recorded sightings. There were 448 entries compared to 254 in 2019, while the number of urban sightings more than doubled (221) when compared to 2019 (93).

House Sparrows were recorded in 15% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 26% of those in mid Berkshire and 14% of those in the east, no doubt greatly under-recorded. Likewise, breeding was confirmed or suspected at just 18 locations, mostly in urban areas.

A total of 12 locations recorded a count of 20 or more birds. The three highest counts were of birds coming to feeders in a garden in Cookham Rise, where a peak of approximately 95 birds were seen on Sep 7th. Also of note was the census of singing males carried out around the Westfields area of Newbury by AEDH over a period from Jun 9th to 16th. During this time, a total of 80 singing males were recorded in the area comprising approximately 40 hectares of urban streets and gardens; the area is bounded to the south by the main railway line, to the north by the Kennet and Avon canal, to the east by Bartholomew Street and to the west by farmland. The highest concentrations were found on streets with older houses of more eclectic design with very few on newer builds. Counts of above 20 were recorded across the county, mainly in urban, downland and river valley areas.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Very common resident (Amber)

A common species that is significantly under-reported and inconsistently reported within the county. Observers submitted 1,231 records covering 136 locations, but just 10% of these locations accounted for 70% of all records, and all but one of these locations fell in west Berkshire. A better picture of distribution is gained by looking at the occupancy of tetrads; during the year, Dunnocks were recorded in 84 tetrads, comprising 21% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 29% of those in mid Berkshire, and 17% of those in the east. A downward trend in these figures in recent years is probably not significant due to under-reporting; the Berkshire Bird Index found the Dunnock population to have remained stable over the last 25 years [BBI 25yr]. A handful of double figure records probably all represented counts over a wider area, such as 16 at Burghfield GPs on Apr 19th and 18 at Greenham Common on Oct 18th.

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. A rapid decline of the species nationally since the 1980s has resulted in its status being moved, on the Birds of Conservation Concern, 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. Yellow Wagtails were reported from 12% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 9% of those in mid Berkshire and 5% of those in the east. The figures for west and mid Berkshire have remained fairly constant over the last five years, while in east Berkshire there has been a steady decline since the 10% occupied in 2016. There were no reports in 2020 from the former breeding haunts near Waltham St Lawrence. The table gives totals of monthly maximum site counts.

Yellow Wagtail: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	-	7	8	6	3	15	16	1	-	-
Number of birds	-	-	-	8	14	15	15	62	80	1	-	-

Spring passage: this was light. It started on Apr 10th, with singles at Streatley Warren (NJB) and Temple (PNe), and two birds at Sulhamstead Abbots (PH). These were the latest returning dates this century and a possible indicator of the continued decline of this species in the county, though observer travel restrictions may have been a contributing factor. A further three birds were reported in April in the west of the county, including one back on the breeding grounds at Wellbottom Down on Apr 17th.

Breeding: with the exception of two males and a female at Horton Brook Quarry on May 15th, all reports in the period May to July came from west Berkshire in the following areas: the Lambourn Downs; Welford; and locations near the Ridgeway in the vicinity of East Ilsley, Compton and Aldworth. On the Lambourn Downs, a bird was watched at a probable nest site at Wellbottom Down on Jun 9th, and a female was seen carrying food nearby at Eastbury Down on Jul 12th. Two pairs bred at an undisclosed location on the Lambourn Downs, and a party of at least 12, containing ten or more juveniles, were subsequently seen there on Jul 21st. Yellow Wagtails were seen in May and June near RAF Welford, with two on Jun 23rd including a female carrying food. Finally, along the Ridgeway there were several reports of up to four birds near Compton between May 3rd and Jul 12th, but no evidence of breeding. Nor was there from the isolated reports around East Ilsley. Closer to Aldworth, an adult with three juveniles were seen on the Roden Downs on Jun 30th. A combined total of five or six breeding attempts was an encouraging sign after recent even poorer years; however, the numbers were still very low.

Autumn passage: by August, most birds had left the breeding locations, and the relatively large number of reports (70% of the year's total) came from quite different locations spread across the county, starting with one at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 16th. At Greenham and Crookham Commons, there was a continuous presence amongst the grazing cattle from Aug 23rd to Sep 28th, with greatly fluctuating numbers. This may have indicated a regular turnover of migrants or maybe just their flighty nature. Peaks in that period were 20 on Aug 28th, 30 on Sep 6th, and 20 on Sep 13th. Elsewhere, counts of five or more comprised: five at Freeman's Marsh on Aug 20th; six with cattle at Midgham on Aug 23rd; five at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 23rd and six there on Sep 7th; six in pony paddocks at Kintbury



Yellow Wagtail, Wellbottom Down, May 25th, Andy Tomczynski.



Yellow Wagtail, Crookham Common, Sep 12th, Andy Tomczynski.

on Aug 26th; seven flying south along the R. Loddon at Lavell's Lake on Sep 6th; and six in paddocks and stubble at Wokingham on Sep 10th. Several birds were detected flying over rural and suburban settings, including four over Newbury town centre on Aug 22nd. The final sighting of the year was of a single bird along the R. Thames between Reading and Pangbourne on Oct 17th (WeBS).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

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

A species that is distributed throughout the wetland areas of the county in moderate numbers. Although there is significant year to year variation in the abundance index, there is no evidence of the decline in the breeding population locally that has led to the Grey Wagtail being added to the Red List nationally [Berkshire Bird Index]. The species received a total of 497 records during the year from around 104 locations, an increase from the 400 records during 2019. The data confirmed a presence in 24% of the county's tetrads, a statistic that has steadily increased from 21% five years previously, with particular increases in west and mid Berkshire. The monthly status of recorded sightings is given in the table.

Grey Wagtail: Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	21	14	27	21	38	25	20	12	30	33	34	16
Number of birds	26	21	48	33	58	52	37	31	71	51	43	20

With Grey Wagtails favouring the same habitats at any time of year and usually only being seen in ones and twos, its partial status as a passage migrant and winter visitor is not readily apparent. From the table, it can be seen that Grey Wagtails were generally present at more sites in the winter than during the breeding season, perhaps indicating dispersal. Likewise, most of the reports of Grey Wagtails visiting garden ponds were between September and November. Grey Wagtails were only reported at Queen Mother Reservoir in September and October, with five there on Oct 9th, while one flew over Walbury Hill on Oct 14th.

Breeding: this was confirmed at ten sites. Some sizeable family groups were noted: nine at Jealott's Hill STW on Jun 2nd; and eight at the STW adjacent to Moor Green Lakes on Jul 27th. The ten birds seen at Cleeve Lock, Streatley, on Sep 11th may have derived from the pairs that bred there and nearby at the Streatley STW.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Scarce passage migrant

2019 Additional Comment: regarding the absence of autumn records in 2019, CDRH has drawn attention to Peter Adriaens' work on morphological hybrids [DB 32:229-250], in which the 'goalposts' have moved and the determination of autumn birds in particular is now more demanding.

2020: this, the nominate race *Motacilla alba*, is a common and highly migratory species that 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. This year's poor showing of seven birds continued the recent downward trend; 35 birds were reported in 2017.

The small spring passage started with a bird photographed at Lavell's Lake on Mar 28th, with a first summer male being photographed at Horton Brook Quarry the same day. Two males were reported at Datchet on Apr 10th, with a later sighting of a bird with a "blurred border between black hindneck and mantle", indicating it to be an adult female, on Apr 14th. The final sighting of the spring passage was of a single bird at Bucklebury on May 1st. The only autumn report was of a single bird at Greenham Common, associating with three Pied Wagtails, on Aug 23rd.

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 species and as such any changes in population levels are significant. In recent years, analysis from the BTO has shown that the UK population was subject to some variation, but overall, the national population remains stable. As a result, the status is currently listed as "Green" in the BTO's Birds of Conservation Concern. In Berkshire there has been a decrease in population levels by around 50% 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 some positive signs for 2020, with significantly more records received (499 compared to 379 in 2019) and larger monthly totals for most months. There was also a steady increase in the number of tetrads where Pied Wagtails were recorded, from 17% of the county's total in 2017 to 22% this year. However, numbers of birds recorded were still below historic levels. The majority of records submitted for this species were in single figures. Some larger flocks were encountered in autumn and winter periods, with one increasing to at least 120 at Queen Mother Reservoir by Oct 2nd, and another flock in a field near Woolhampton, where sheep were eating turnips, that peaked at 80 on Nov 17th. Brimpton Airfield hosted approximately 50 birds on Dec 8th, while a minimum of 35 were seen flying from the roof of Reading's Travelodge Central on Oct 30th.

Breeding was confirmed or likely at 13 locations, with family groups of six seen at Ockwell's Park and Bucklebury.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

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

First winter/spring: this period was uneventful. Many small flocks were spread across the county but only two exceeded 40: 40+ at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 15th; and 43 at Streatley on Jan 25th. Unusually, hardly any passage movement was noted. One of two birds at Sulhamstead Abbots on Mar 14th showed a distinct pinkish hue to its underparts (ABT).

Summer/breeding: the only confirmed breeding was at Walbury Hill and Wellbottom Down, plus possibly at Crookham Common. The figure of at least seven territories estimated across Greenham and Crookham Commons in the BBOWT ground nesting bird report was regarded as a significant underestimate as it was not possible to achieve the usual coverage [AEDH 2021]. As in 2018 and 2019, no summer or breeding records were received for central or east Berkshire. **Autumn/second winter:** numbers were remarkably deflated. Passage was observed on Sep 9th, when about 40 were flying south-west over Fleethill Farm, followed by a minimum of 65 heading roughly north-west over Lea Farm Lake during two hours on Sep 10th. However, little further movement was evident and counts were well below normal, the highest being about 100 at Queen Mother Reservoir on Sep 21st and again on Oct 13th.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant (Red)

A migrant recorded over Woosehill on Apr 8th (PBT) provided the first record of the year, a normal time of arrival, while the first bird reported in a breeding locality was in song at Crookham Common on Apr 12th. **Spring/summer:** the breeding information is summarised in the table; for details of Swinley Forest Special Protection Area, see Crowley *et al.*, 2012, *The Birds of Berkshire 2012*, 9-16. Although reports for the latter area were up on 2019, likely as a consequence of survey work, evidence for breeding elsewhere remained sparse. BBOWT's report on ground nesting birds at Greenham and Crookham Commons concluded that no territories were held in 2020 [AEDH 2021].

Tree Pipit: Breeding Season Summaries

Locality	Number of Territories	Max Count inc young	Notes
Lower Green	1?	1	1 report
Combe	1?	2	1 report
West Woodhay Down	1?	1	1 report
Snelmore Common	0	0	Present in 2019
Greenham/Crookham Common	0	1	
Bucklebury Common	1	2	
Padworth Common	1?	1	1 report
<i>Thames Basin Heaths SPA</i>			
<i>(Berkshire locations):</i>			
Swinley Forest	1?	1	
Wildmoor Heath	1?	1	1 report
MOD Heathland/Wishmoor Bottom	6-8	10	Both areas
Swinley Park	2?	5	
Swinley Brick Pits	2?	2	

Autumn: singles occurred regularly at Greenham Common from Aug 13th until the final departure on Sep 18th (IW, JL), a normal time, with two on Aug 24th. Elsewhere, single migrants were noted at Newbury, Woosehill, Queen Mother Reservoir, and Walbury Hill, where two were seen on Aug 11th.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

Winter/spring: records were fewer than in most recent years. They commenced with singles at Horton on Jan 3rd (CDRH) and Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 4th (CDRH). A bird at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 14th flew over to Horton (DJB), with another at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jan 16th (ABT). One was reported at Horton between Feb 22nd and Mar 1st (CDRH), then singles at Wraysbury GP on Mar 9th (CDRH) and Queen Mother Reservoir on Mar 16th (DJB). Three were found at Fobney Meadow on Apr 6th (AVL). **Autumn:** one appeared at Queen Mother Reservoir on Nov 7th (PNe), then on dates between Nov 14th and Nov 28th (CDRH). One was flushed from the same pool at Horton on Nov 21st and Dec 20th (CDRH), and one was at Fobney Meadow on Dec 17th (AVL).

ROCK PIPIT EUROPEAN ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor (Green)

The drop in numbers since 2017 continued into 2020, when all the records were in October. One was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 5th and 6th (CDRH). Three were seen together at the same site on Oct 16th (MFW), followed by one on Oct 20th and Oct 24th (CDRH). Elsewhere, singles were located at Borough Marsh on Oct 8th (CDRH) and at Horton Brook Quarry on Oct 11th (CDRH).



Rock Pipit, Queen Mother Reservoir, Oct 16th, Andy Tomczynski.

CHAFFINCH COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Green)

Although appearing abundant, it is still in decline both nationally and in Berkshire [BBI 25yr]. Chaffinches were recorded throughout the county, in 46 tetrads in west Berkshire, 34 tetrads in mid Berkshire and 33 in east Berkshire. Successful breeding was reported from ten locations.

The population had been stable until around 2007, since then there has been a rapid decline, attributed to trichomonosis [BTO Birdtrends].

There were few reports of winter flocks. A count of 63 at Freeman's Marsh on Jan 16th was the highest in the first winter period; in the final days of December, flocks of 100 were at Parkfarm Down near Lambourn and Pound Copse, Arborfield, while 250 were found at Waltham St Lawrence. Chaffinches were observed migrating in the autumn, with four reports of totals of at least 50 birds in the period Oct 10th to 15th, comprising small groups of birds mostly flying in a westerly direction.

A recovery from the ringing data for 2020 shows that an adult female ringed in Raassum, Norway, on Sep 14th was caught by a ringer at Temple Farm on Dec 22nd, having travelled 1,208km during that time [BTO Ringing].

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

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

Following on from the winter of 2019, there were just six reports of single birds in the first winter period. The last of these was a bird singing and calling at Finchampstead Ridges on Apr 8th (RCM). During the second winter period, reports were slightly more numerous but the majority were of single birds. The first bird of this period was noted at Moor Green Lakes on Oct 13th (RCM). A flock of 88 birds at Remenham Hill on Dec 22nd was the only double figure count for the year.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Very scarce winter visitor, formerly a scarce resident (Red)

There were few reports of this finch species in 2020, and all were in the Combe area. A flock of 14 was seen on Jan 24th (SRI). Smaller numbers of birds from this flock were seen by other observers on Jan 25th and 29th (ABT, RHS). There was a single sighting of three birds on Nov 23rd (CDRH). Ignoring the unprecedented influx of the 2017-2018 winter, this year saw the highest annual total and largest individual flock this century, but a typically low number of reports.

BULLFINCH EURASIAN BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Fairly common resident (Amber)

There is suitable habitat throughout the county for this finch species. Bullfinches were recorded in 18% of tetrads in west Berkshire, 30% of those in mid Berkshire and 18% of those in east Berkshire. These figures vary somewhat from year to year, but the west Berkshire figure was significantly lower than the recent average. Winter reports included high counts of six at Binfield and Woolhampton GPs in February, and of eight in Bowdown Woods on Nov 22nd. There were also many sightings at garden feeders. The table shows the number of sites where Bullfinches occurred during the year and the number of birds reported.

Bullfinch: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	32	22	25	24	32	23	20	18	13	10	27	20
Number of birds	74	55	45	39	55	41	36	43	26	25	60	36

There were reports from six sites of juveniles and young being fed. Breeding is probably under-reported for this finch species due to its unobtrusive nature.

GREENFINCH EUROPEAN GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

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

The decline of this finch species in Berkshire reflects the national trend. The Greenfinch population has been in rapid decline since 2005, primarily, it is believed, due to trichomonosis. In 2020, it was around 25% of that in 2000 [BBI 25yr].

Greenfinches were recorded in 76 tetrads (19%) of the county. Breeding was confirmed at just two locations, but there were many reports of juveniles in late spring, sometimes coming with adults to gardens, especially in the outer suburbs of Reading. Many observers reported sightings from garden feeders. There were some larger flocks of between 70 and 120 seen during December, feeding on a Sunflower crop near Bisham.

LINNET COMMON LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

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

Linnets were recorded in 71 tetrads (18%) of the county. The trend graph shows this species in decline since 1994, but there has been no significant change in the abundance index over the last fifteen years [Berkshire Bird Index]. There was no confirmed proof of breeding and little evidence of probable breeding, despite plenty of reports in the breeding season. These were mainly from the west of the county, where they were found at 23 locations, but at only four in mid Berkshire and six in east Berkshire. In the two previous years, BBOWT's surveys of ground nesting birds had found over 50 Linnet territories at Greenham and Crookham Commons, but in 2020 this species was not included in the seasonal wardens' estimates [AEDH 2021].

Sizeable flocks were seen during the winter months, with the highest count of approximately 400 at Waltham St Lawrence on Dec 31st. This was the only high count recorded in the east of the county, with the majority of large flocks of between 100 and 350 being seen in mid and west Berkshire.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

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

Lesser Redpolls were recorded in nine tetrads (5%) in west Berkshire, eight tetrads (9%) in mid Berkshire and ten tetrads (8%) in east Berkshire. Following on from the few sightings at the end of 2019, the number of reports increased during the first winter period, though the peak count was no more than eight birds. After Mar 25th, no reports were received until Sep 18th, and therefore there was no evidence of breeding. There were more reports in the second winter period, when this finch species started to be seen again in small numbers in September. However, the majority of sightings were of fewer than ten birds; the peak count of 30 was at Greenham Common on Oct 12th. Many reports involved birds attracted to garden Niger feeders. Away from gardens, birds were reported feeding in Birch trees in the second winter period, but in Alders in the first winter period, presumably as the preferred Birch seeds had been exhausted earlier in the winter.

CROSSBILL RED CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Scarce resident whose numbers are increased by occasional irruptions, occasionally breeds (Schedule 1, Green)

This finch species favours the coniferous woodlands found in east Berkshire, so more records came from there, with 19 tetrads (15% of the region's total), compared with nine tetrads (5%) in west Berkshire and five tetrads (5%) in mid Berkshire. Compared to 2019, there was an

increase in sightings in west and mid Berkshire, and over twice as many reports overall for 2020.

Following on from the second winter period of 2019, when sightings ceased after the end of October, this species was not seen again until March, when up to five were reported from Swinley Forest. From May, reports were more frequent and widespread (see table), and included ten on Wildmoor Heath on May 25th and 11 over Goring & Streatley GC on Jun 14th. There was a significant invasion of Crossbills from the continent into the UK in the autumn; the first signs of this in Berkshire were probably at the end of June when eight flew over Cold Ash on Jun 24th and five headed south over Bowdown Woods on Jun 25th, ahead of more widespread reports in July.

Crossbill: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	-	-	1	-	4	5	6	4	6	11	11	5
Number of birds	-	-	5	-	19	27	69	76	32	89	85	27

From July until the end of the year, Crossbills were well reported, especially in Swinley Forest and the woods around Cold Ash. The highest count of 40 was at Fence Wood in west Berkshire on Jul 11th, and 20 birds were also seen here on Nov 24th. Crossbills remained at various locations in the south-east of the county and yielded peak counts of: 17 at Gorrick Plantation on Aug 5th; 32 at Buttersteep Hill on Aug 27th; 20 at Wishmoor Bottom on Sep 21st; 18 in Swinley Park on Oct 16th; and 20 at Buckler's Forest on Oct 17th.

As for evidence of breeding, a heavily streaked juvenile was seen in a flock of Crossbills in Swinley Forest on May 28th. Six other reports of juvenile birds came in July or later, so were less likely to relate to birds reared locally.

GOLDFINCH EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

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

Reports of Goldfinches came from 118 tetrads (30%) across the county. Goldfinch numbers have increased over twofold since 2000; this finch species increased significantly in abundance both nationally and in Berkshire over the period 2000 to 2019 [BBI 25yr]. The population changes in this period can be explained almost entirely by changes in annual survival rates, which may have resulted from increased use of other food sources such as garden bird tables and Niger feeders [BTO Birdtrends].

Although there were few reports of breeding outcomes, Goldfinches were widely reported in the breeding season. Post-breeding flocks of at least 50 birds came from seven locations, including 120 at Englefield on Sep 11th.

SISKIN EURASIAN SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce in summer (Green)

Siskins were recorded in 20 tetrads (11%) in west Berkshire, 20 tetrads (22%) in mid Berkshire and 25 tetrads (20%) in east Berkshire. In the first winter period, up to 50 were recorded until Mar 20th. There were no records in April, then a few birds were seen each month until September when they began to be reported again in higher numbers than for the first winter period (see table). The peak count was 80 at Northcroft Park, Newbury on Dec 9th.

Siskin: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	9	4	10	-	2	4	3	3	25	20	21	21
Number of birds	133	74	31	-	2	7	6	9	259	252	352	302

In the period May to July, there were reports of one or two Siskins from ten locations, all close to suitable breeding habitat; the majority were in or close to Swinley Forest. The best evidence for breeding in the county was a report of four juveniles seen in Swinley Forest on Jul 11th.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Fairly common resident on the downs, rare elsewhere (Red)

Again, there were no records from mid or east Berkshire; all sightings came from the downland in the west of the county. However, a bird singing at Streatley Farm on May 16th was the first there for some years and was somewhat detached eastwards from a core area for this species around Compton and Aldworth. The table shows higher numbers than the previous year, particularly for the first winter period. The highest count was 200-300 on fields south of Lower Chance on Compton Downs on Jan 4th. On this date, 100 were also seen at Roden Downs, followed by 120 at Lambourn on Jan 10th, and approximately 150 on winter feed piece near Lower Chance, Roden Downs, on Jan 19th. In the breeding season, observers were surprised to encounter two large flocks: 75 on Roden Downs on Apr 18th; and 60 on Hodcott Down on May 16th. Both were at a time when most birds had taken up territories. In the second winter period, 100 were reported at Cow Down on Nov 7th and 100 at Crow Down on Dec 12th.

Corn Bunting: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	8	5	5	11	9	12	7	5	4	6	5	5
Number of birds	588	31	141	137	141	89	56	20	111	69	174	196

As for breeding, there were just two reports of birds seen carrying food. However, multiple visits by two observers in particular helped to provide a good picture of the number of territories held: around 18 between West Ilsley and East Ilsley (GDS), and around 41 at sites close to the Ridgeway between East Ilsley and Aldworth (NJB). An analogous count of five for the Lambourn area is probably an underestimate due to insufficient records.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Common but declining resident and winter visitor (Red)

Numbers of Yellowhammers approximately halved in the last 25 years, a decrease much greater than the national average (c. 20%) [BBI 25yr]. This species was seen across the county, in 18% of the tetrads in west Berkshire, 23% of those in mid Berkshire and 18% of those in the east. The table shows the number of sites where Yellowhammers were recorded and the number of birds at those sites. It reveals that significantly more birds were seen during the first winter period than for the rest of the year. The peak count was of 135 at Roden Downs on Jan 26th. A single Yellowhammer flew over south-west with Chaffinches at Queen Mother Reservoir on Oct 18th.

Yellowhammer: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	14	9	21	30	37	34	17	10	11	13	11	8
Number of birds	270	187	101	77	84	95	85	35	88	85	40	149

A report on the ground nesting birds of Greenham and Crookham Commons found no confirmed territories in 2020 (estimated from seasonal warden records). This species formerly bred on the commons (two territories were confirmed at the Crookham restoration area in 2015) but it is now a scarce visitor [AEDH 2021]. Reports have been few since 2015, with only four records for Crookham Common in 2020. Likewise, Yellowhammers continue

to be absent from the south-east of the county, in particular from Swinley Forest which possesses habitat that was previously regarded as ideal.

Although there were many reports of singing birds, breeding was only confirmed at Wellbottom Down.

REED BUNTING COMMON REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor (Amber)

Despite its name, the Reed Bunting breeds in a variety of habitats from reedbeds and wetlands to drier habitats such as arable farmland. Outside the breeding season, this species is dependent on weed seeds and will join other species in winter flocks on farmland stubbles. It will also visit garden feeders as noted by many observers. Throughout Berkshire, Reed Buntings were recorded in 11% of the tetrads in the west, 22% of those in mid Berkshire and 10% of those in the east of the county. The table shows the number of sites which were occupied each month, and totals of the maximum counts at those sites.

Reed Bunting: Totals of Maximum Site Counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	18	16	17	15	29	25	11	7	9	10	7	8
Number of birds	70	46	37	36	59	82	33	10	20	28	31	20

A report on territory mapping surveys at Greenham and Crookham Commons concluded that there were no confirmed territories in 2020 (estimated from seasonal warden records). In 2015, a territory was confirmed at Crookham pools, the first known recorded evidence of probable breeding for the site, and territories were confirmed from 2017 to 2019 [AEDH 2021]. Small numbers were reported at the Commons during autumn and winter months.

Breeding records included: 38 reports of singing birds; a female with a brood patch was caught at Jubilee River on May 20th; a female was seen collecting nest material; and a male was seen carrying food. Recently fledged young were seen at The Wilderness, Kintbury, in June, and juveniles were seen at Fobney Meadow on two dates in July.

ESCAPES

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Widespread in Africa and South America

One was at Hosehill Lake on May 8th.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Breeds in central Asia; winters in north India

Long-staying birds were recorded in the Dinton Pastures CP area from Jan 5th to Oct 19th, and at Great Meadow Pond from Feb 21st to Nov 29th. Elsewhere, singles were recorded: at Summerleaze GPs from Jun 25th to Jul 24th; Englefield on Sep 11th and 16th; presumably the same bird at Main Pit, Theale, on Sep 30th and Oct 1st, and at Wigmore Lane from Dec 5th to 15th; and at Bisham from Dec 4th to 6th.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Breeds in north North America; winters in south and west USA and north Mexico

The surviving member of the Eversley flock was seen at Moor Green Lakes on Aug 21st.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*

Breeds in central Asia and Mongolia to south east Siberia; winters in south east China

One was with the Greylag and White-fronted Goose flock at Wigmore Lane on Dec 5th.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Resident in Australia and New Zealand

One was on the River Thames at Bray on Jan 27th.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Breeds from south Europe to central Asia, north-west Africa and Ethiopia; winters in north Africa and the Oriental region

A long-staying adult male was at Theale, either at Main Pit or Hosehill Lake, from Jan 3rd to Aug 23rd. Presumably the same bird was seen at nearby Home Farm, Sulhamstead, on Jan 19th. Sightings at Lower Farm GP from Aug 29th to Oct 1st probably related to the Theale bird, although it was seen again at Main Pit on Oct 3rd. Two birds were seen together at Lower Farm GP on Oct 7th and at Midgham Lock on Oct 22nd.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Resident in North and Middle America and in South America from south Texas to north Argentina

The three birds seen at Thatcham Marsh Discovery Centre in the latter half of 2019 were present throughout 2020. Elsewhere, three were seen at Bagnor on Apr 3rd and May 5th, and one was at Caversham Bridge, Reading, from Mar 8th to May 12th.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Widespread in North America; winters from south USA to north Mexico

One was on the Holy Brook at Fobney Meadow on Jan 27th. Presumably the same bird was seen in that area on seven occasions between Apr 14th and May 16th.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Widespread resident in Africa

An adult with three juveniles was seen at Bucklebury on Aug 30th, presumably having escaped from Bucklebury Farm. Four were at Fleethill Farm on Oct 16th.

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*

Resident in North and Middle America, south east USA and east Mexico

One at Upper Bucklebury on Dec 6th was reported along with a photo on a local community Facebook page.

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Resident in north and central China

A male was seen at Pound Copse on Dec 2nd and 31st.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Resident in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

One was heard calling from the grounds of Warfield Hall on May 12th and one was at Crookham Common on Jun 7th.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Widespread in the Oriental region

A singing bird was at Fobney Island from Apr 25th to Jul 8th.



Ruddy Shelduck, Hosehill Lake, Jul 8th, Andy Tomczynski.

HYBRIDS

Geese

Canada Goose × Greylag Goose

One or two were recorded on the River Thames between Reading and Pangbourne from Jan 1st to Oct 17th (NJB). Elsewhere, one was at Moor Green Lakes on Nov 19th (MCo).

Ducks

Aythya Hybrids

Ring-necked Duck type

One, described as a Ring-necked Duck x Tufted Duck with “most features of the former”, was seen and photographed at Moatlands GPs on Jan 11th (ABT).

Pochard type

A returning drake, described as a Pochard x Ferruginous Duck, was seen at Horton GPs from Jan 4th to Mar 27th (CDRH), with a trip to nearby Heron Lakes, Wraysbury, on Mar 19th. It was clearly smaller than a Pochard, with a dark grey back mantle, plum-coloured breast, grey-brown flanks and only slightly whitish undertail coverts.

Tufted Duck type

A drake, described as a Tufted Duck x Pochard, was at Horton GPs on Jun 28th (CDRH), returning for its fifth year. About a month earlier than usual, it was not yet fully in eclipse plumage, so not easily overlooked. It was initially spotted by its dark grey back, slightly larger size, lack of tuft feathers and darker eyes. It remained until Sep 30th by which time it was in eclipse plumage, making the eye colour one of the best ways of picking it out. Possibly the same bird was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 17th and Sep 14th (CDRH).

Gulls

Caspian Gull type

A colour-ringed juvenile was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Aug 15th (CDRH). It was ringed at Braunsbedra in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, on Jun 8th. The June 2021 issue of British Birds described this as a “large mixed colony” and added that “in Germany Caspian Gulls are recorded breeding with both Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls as well with Herring Gulls”, so the exact parentage of this individual is open to question. The observer submitted excellent notes as to why it was a hybrid: “Several features indicative of *cachinnans* genes: long wings, fairly long legs & slim bill – but not as long as most & had prominent gonys. Plumage generally OK – incl dark bar across bases of gr cs (but only on outermost; innermost strongly barred); tert pattern closer to *michahellis* – with submarginal mottling on shorter ones. White rump quite heavily spotted – greatly reducing contrast. Underwing uniformly dusky-grey – without any whiter panels & consequently no ‘landing lights’. Spread wing revealed wholly dark upper pp = no paler panel on innermost pp & no pale slats on inner webs; consequently didn’t look Casp-like in flight... more like a YLG or even an LBB!”

Herring Gull × Lesser Black-backed Gull

An adult was at Queen Mother Reservoir on Jul 19th (CDRH). It had a darker, denser grey mantle than Yellow-legged, and was smaller and more compact, with a shortish bill and rounded head, and with distinctly shorter wings than both Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed.

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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 2020. Locations and observers' initials are not included, but can be found in the Systematic List. This creates space to include the extreme dates for these species this century. Where the 2020 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			
	2020	Earliest	Average	Latest	2020	Earliest	Average	Latest
Garganey	18-Mar	11-Mar	08-Apr	18-May	19-Sep	16-Aug	06-Oct	22-Nov
Quail	20-May	21-Mar	17-May	20-Jun	29-Jul	06-Jul	13-Aug	08-Oct
Nightjar	05-May	23-Apr	05-May	15-May	01-Sep	12-Jul	18-Aug	28-Sep
Swift	12-Apr	30-Mar	14-Apr	21-Apr	02-Oct	28-Aug	14-Sep	01-Nov
Cuckoo	05-Apr	01-Apr	08-Apr	16-Apr	03-Oct	20-Jul	23-Aug	03-Oct
Turtle Dove	16-May	04-Apr	26-Apr	17-May	22-Aug	16-Jul	25-Aug	24-Sep
Stone-curlew	23-Apr	18-Mar	03-Apr	05-May	16-Oct	04-Sep	26-Sep	18-Oct
Little Ringed Plover	14-Mar	03-Mar	12-Mar	19-Mar	31-Aug	18-Aug	08-Sep	06-Oct
Common Tern	08-Apr	24-Mar	04-Apr	14-Apr	31-Oct	05-Sep	04-Oct	13-Nov
Osprey	05-May	13-Mar	30-Mar	05-May	05-Oct	08-Jul	23-Sep	15-Nov
Hobby	11-Apr	04-Apr	14-Apr	22-Apr	13-Oct	02-Oct	12-Oct	04-Nov
Sand Martin	17-Mar	28-Feb	11-Mar	21-Mar	25-Oct	19-Sep	06-Oct	25-Oct
Swallow	21-Mar	12-Mar	22-Mar	01-Apr	30-Nov	14-Oct	01-Nov	01-Dec
House Martin	16-Mar	10-Mar	25-Mar	08-Apr	27-Oct	06-Oct	27-Oct	10-Dec
Willow Warbler	19-Mar	17-Mar	24-Mar	13-Apr	23-Sep	16-Sep	30-Sep	14-Nov
Sedge Warbler	31-Mar	15-Mar	01-Apr	12-Apr	07-Oct	15-Sep	03-Oct	17-Oct
Reed Warbler	07-Apr	02-Apr	11-Apr	19-Apr	29-Sep	24-Sep	09-Oct	29-Oct
Grasshopper Warbler	30-Apr	04-Apr	15-Apr	30-Apr	10-Sep	16-Jun	21-Aug	02-Oct
Garden Warbler	12-Apr	03-Apr	12-Apr	21-Apr	07-Sep	01-Sep	15-Sep	05-Oct
Lesser Whitethroat	12-Apr	10-Apr	17-Apr	26-Apr	13-Sep	08-Sep	21-Sep	02-Oct
Whitethroat	10-Apr	31-Mar	07-Apr	14-Apr	13-Oct	12-Sep	27-Sep	21-Oct
Ring Ouzel	20-Apr	12-Mar	05-Apr	20-Apr	29-Sep	17-Sep	11-Oct	29-Oct
Spotted Flycatcher	05-May	23-Apr	04-May	16-May	25-Sep	12-Sep	24-Sep	05-Oct
Nightingale	08-Apr	28-Mar	06-Apr	12-Apr	17-Jul	04-Jul	03-Aug	05-Sep
Redstart	25-Apr	18-Mar	07-Apr	25-Apr	12-Oct	05-Sep	28-Sep	13-Oct
Whinchat	26-Apr	04-Apr	19-Apr	29-Apr	10-Oct	24-Sep	11-Oct	25-Nov
Wheatear	16-Mar	03-Mar	12-Mar	26-Mar	18-Oct	14-Oct	26-Oct	27-Nov
Yellow Wagtail	10-Apr	10-Feb	28-Mar	10-Apr	17-Oct	25-Sep	17-Oct	17-Dec
Tree Pipit	08-Apr	16-Mar	03-Apr	15-Apr	18-Sep	23-Aug	16-Sep	10-Nov

Extreme Dates for Winter Visitors this Century								
Departure					Arrival			
	2020	Earliest	Average	Latest	2020	Earliest	Average	Latest
Goldeneye ¹	30-Sep	13-Aug	07-Oct	30-Oct	04-Apr	28-Mar	17-Apr	13-May
Goosander	28-Sep	16-Sep	25-Oct	16-Nov	02-Apr	24-Mar	18-Apr	17-Jun
Golden Plover	29-Aug	02-Aug	30-Aug	30-Sep	11-Apr	23-Feb	19-Apr	11-May
Bittern ²	14-Dec	18-Aug	25-Oct	19-Dec	18-Mar	23-Jan	13-Mar	24-Apr
Fieldfare	11-Oct	03-Sep	03-Oct	19-Oct	21-Apr	02-Apr	19-Apr	19-May
Redwing	29-Sep	14-Sep	27-Sep	06-Oct	17-Apr	02-Apr	18-Apr	09-May
Brambling	13-Oct	13-Sep	12-Oct	05-Nov	08-Apr	08-Apr	30-Apr	31-May

1 ignores the three birds on Aug 13th 2016

2 ignores summering bird in 2003

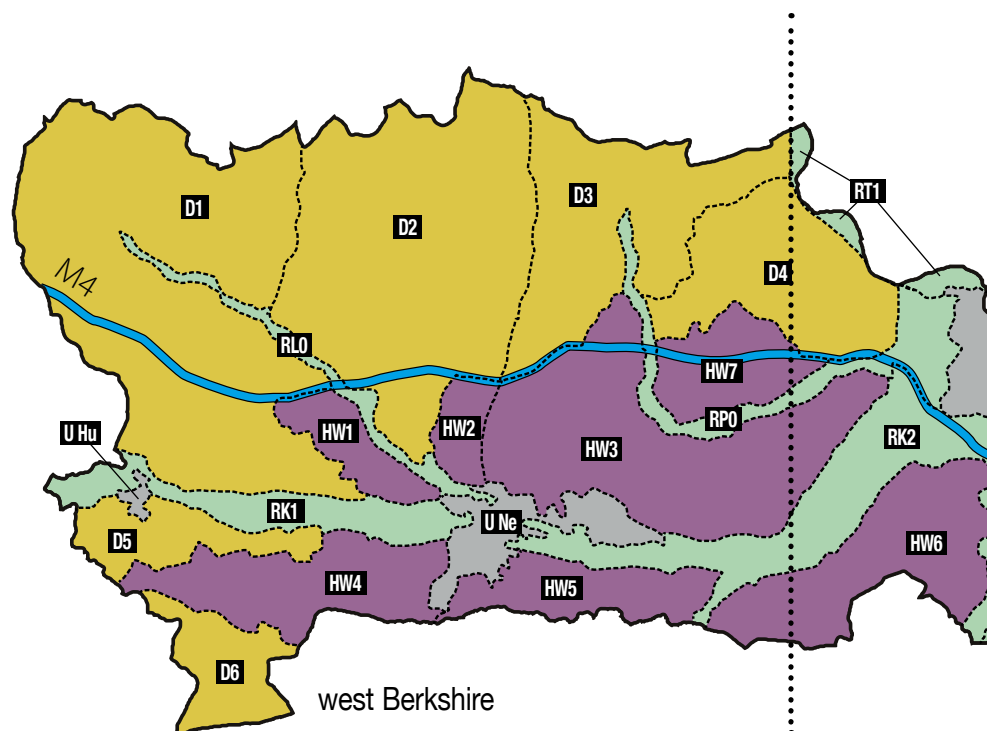
Contributors to the Systematic List 2020

Abbott P	PAb	Blundell L R	LRB	Clayton I	IC
Abbott S D	SA	Bolton A	AB	Cleal D	DCI
Absolom A	AA	Bookless D		Cleere N	NC
Absolom J		Booth R		Clews B D	BDC
Ahlgren L	LA	Booth A	Abo	Collins R	RCo
Akkaraju A		Boydell M		Cooper M	MCo
Alexander T O	TOA	Brannan K		Cooper A	ACoo
Allison S	SAl	Brant P	PB	Coote M	
Alliss R M	RAlI	Bright-Thomas P	PBT	Cottingham F J	FJC
Amphlett M J	MJA	Briston M		Craig P	
Anderson P		Bristow P		Craig C	
Andrews D	DAn	Brookes C	CB	Crathorne B	BCr
Andrews J E	JA	Brooks C		Crawford R	RCr
Andrews J K		Brown V F		Crawford D	
Angus R	RAn	Brown O		Crouch J	JCr
Aradas S		Brown S A	SAB	Crowley P J	PJC
Asquith D		Brown W	WB	Cullura S	
Bach T		Brown G	GBro	Cumming S N	
Baker M		Brownlow H	HB	Cummins T	TCu
Baker T		Buckel F C	FCB	Dalton N	
Ball T G	TGB	Buckler D		Daly K	
Bamford P		Bucknell N J	NJB	Davidson I	
Bampfield R		Burch C	CBur	Davies L	LD
Barker S R J	PBu	Burden P	PBu	Davies R C W	RCWD
Barker D J	DJB	Butler J	JBut	Davies C	
Bass C G		Calcutt D	DC	Davies S	SD
Bass N		Callaghan M		Dawson R	RD
Bassett A D	ADB	Callister T		Dear M J	MJD
Bates E	EB	Carlaw C		Denison-Pender R	
Batho G S	GSB	Carley T	TCa	Devereau S C	SCD
BBOWT Nightjar Survey		Carter D A	DAC	Dickinson B	BD
Beadle D		Chamberlain J		Dodds D A M	DAMD
Bell S		Charlson E	EC	Donegan T	
Bennett B T	BTB	Claridge R J	RJC	Driver P W	PD
Birkett J	JB	Claridge J		Dryden R	RD
Birkett T		Clark F C	FCC	Duffy M	
Bishop A	ABi	Clark J M	JMC	Duncan K P	KPD
Bishop J	JB	Clarke D		Duncan D	

Earl S	Hutchinson F	Milligan R F	Scott S	Sumner G J	Wang E
Edwards D	l'Anson M	Mills D J	Scudamore P	Sussex D J	Warren J E
Edwards E J	Jenkins M	Mitchell M J	Seligman P M	Swallow J L	Watkins T
Edwards J	Jinks R	Mitchell J E	Seymour K R	Sweetland T	Watts R C
Evans L G R	Johnson M	Monkhouse J	Sharman K D Z	Tainton D	Watts P J
Everitt S	Johnstone M A	Moore K E	Sharp M	Taylor J J	Wearing S
Ezard C	Johnstone E	Morgan J C	Simmonds H	Taylor K	Werran R
Fairley M	Jones C	Morgan M	Slade I	Taylor A	West I
Farrell G R	Jones K	Murfitt R C	Slater A	Taylor M J	West Farmland Birds
Faulkner A	Jones B	Murphy S	Slocombe G	Theobald R C	Weston I L G
Fewtrell-Smith I	Josey R	Murray J	Sluman N	Thornton G	Wetland Bird Survey
Fincham N	Kalveitis M	Mustafa E	Smith M J	Tomczynski A B	Whitaker M S F
Firth T	Kearns J J	Napper E	Smith R G	Trout N S	White K G
Fisher D	Keel R R	Ne L	Soane J C	Truby S	White D
Forsey C J	Kelson DW	Neal S M	Sparks K	Tucker P	Why M
Forster T	Kendall P	Needes J	Spence I M	Turton M H	Williams R
Foster CW	Kennelly A D	Netley H R	Stansfield R H	Twinning M	Williamson C & S
Frankum R	King S	Newbound P J	Staves L	Tyler D	Wilson G E
Friend M	Kirby A J	Newcombe C	Stephens R	Underwood A	Wilson J
Fuller D	Kirby M	Norman M	Stevens C	Vaughan J	Wilson C R
Gardiner A	Kirsopp G	O'Neil P	Stevenson S	Vogel M	Winkworth M P
Gardner M	Knox T	Oram A	Stewart G J	Wadsworth P	Wordley G V
Garner-Langham L	Kujawa S	Orino S	Stewart C	Walford M F	Wright H
Garrett C S	Lamsdell C	Palfrey M	Stoney A	Walker B J	Wright F
Gent C R	Langley G B	Panchaud D	Stow A N	Wall L	Yates S
Gilham R	Lanxon K	Parkes A J	Suckling N	Wallace R	Young R
Gipson P	Larkins S	Parsons R	Sulston C	Wanelik K	
Godden R J	Latham M J	Peck R			
Goriup P	Lawrence S	Peterson L			
Graham S A	Lawson A V	Piercey B			
Griffin M A	Leech R	Plank K			
Gutteridge A	Legg J	Powell R S V			
Guyatt T A	Lerpiniere R J	Price R C N			
Halder S	Lerpiniere J	Price M			
Hammatt N	Levy D	Proddow S K			
Hampton DW	Lewis P	Quelch I			
Hardy R	Liley M J S	Rainsden P			
Hargreaves R	Loades J R	Rampton N			
Harley S	Long D F	Reaney A			
Harrington J E	Longstaff E	Reedman R			
Harris N G	Lucas R O	Reeve B			
Harrison A	Luscombe A	Reid J			
Harrison M	Lyle R A	Reynolds D J			
Harvey A	Lynch S	Rhodes K			
Hastings D	Mackenzie D	Ricks S			
Heard C D R	MacKenzie C S	Rider S C			
Hedley C	Mackley N	Righelato R			
Hickman A E D	Manly R	Rimes D N T			
Hickman P	Mann L	Rivoire J R			
Highfield M	Mannion P	Roberts A			
Hogg D	Manston S	Robertson S			
Holder R	Marriner N	Robjohns A			
Hollway W	Marsh R	Rogers S			
Holmes C	Marsh D B	Rose J E			
Horscroft A M	Martin J P	Rothwell D			
Hotchkis B	Massey A	Rowe A J			
Hubbard M J	Matthias N	Rudgley R			
Hughes F	McAvoy S	Sandell J			
Hunt M S	McEwan C	Sargeant M			
Hutchins J E D	McMahon A	Savage J D			
Hunt S N	Meads S M	Scammell B			
Hutchins P E	Merrick A B	Scholey G D			

Topographical Areas - A Resource for Records Analysis

To facilitate analysis of bird records in relation to habitat types, all sites in the bird record database have been assigned to one of 37 topographical areas grouped into five broad topographical classes (TC): Downs, heathlands, river valleys, the Eastern plain between Reading and Windsor and the urban areas. The classes relate to the underlying geology and



TC: The Downs/Chalk areas

DC

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

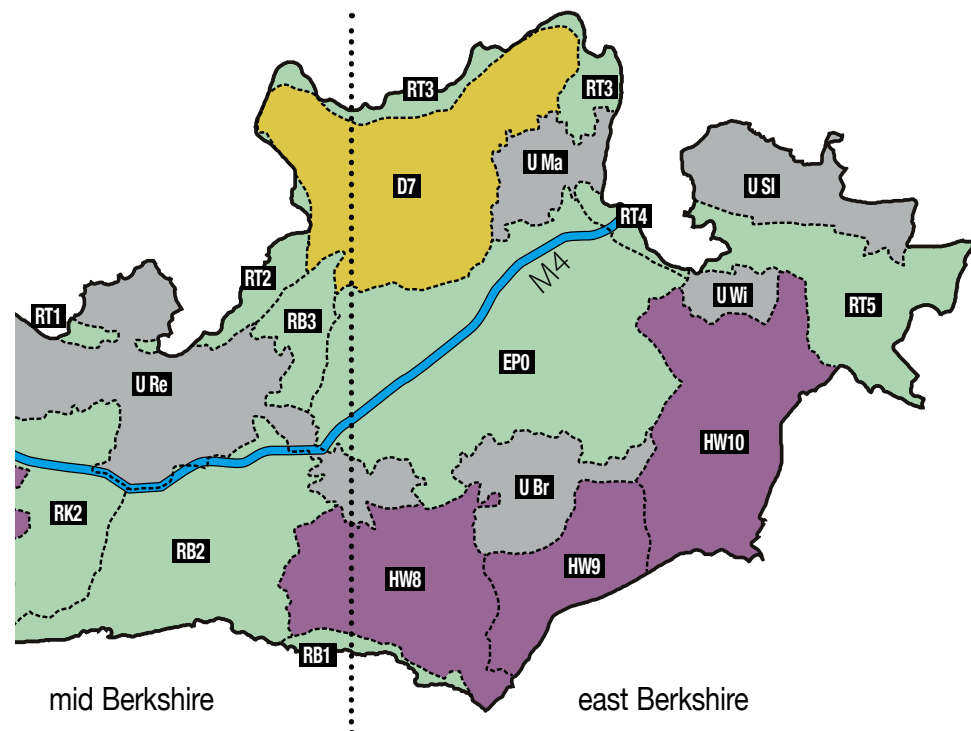
TC: Heaths/Heathland Woods and associated areas

HW

Wickham Heath	HW1
Snelsmore Common	HW2
Curridge/Hermitage & Bucklebury Plateau	HW3
Inkpen Plateau	HW4
Greenham/Crookham Plateau	HW5
Wasing/Burghfield	HW6
Yattendon/Frilsham	HW7
Crowthorne/ Finchampstead	HW8
Swinley Forest	HW9
Windsor Great Park & Forest	HW10

topography, which, together with human activities, determine the types of habitat to be found. The 5,000 or so sites for which there are bird records in our database have been assigned to the appropriate area, allowing records to be analysed by these habitat-related classes.

Thanks are due to Neil Bucknell for his detailed analysis of Berkshire topography and to Robert Godden, Renton Righelato and Marek Walford, who, together with Neil, assigned the sites in the database to their topographical areas.



TC: River valleys

R

Thames: Goring Gap to Reading	RT1
Thames: Reading to Wargrave	RT2
Thames: Wargrave to Maidenhead	RT3
Thames: Jubilee River to Windsor	RT4
Lower Thames & Colne	RT5
Kennet: West of Newbury & Dun	RK1
Lower Kennet & tributaries	RK2
Lambourn valley	RL0
Pang Valley and Sul Gap	RP0
Blackwater	RB1
Loddon Valley above Winnersh	RB2
Lower Loddon	RB3

TC: Eastern Plain

EP

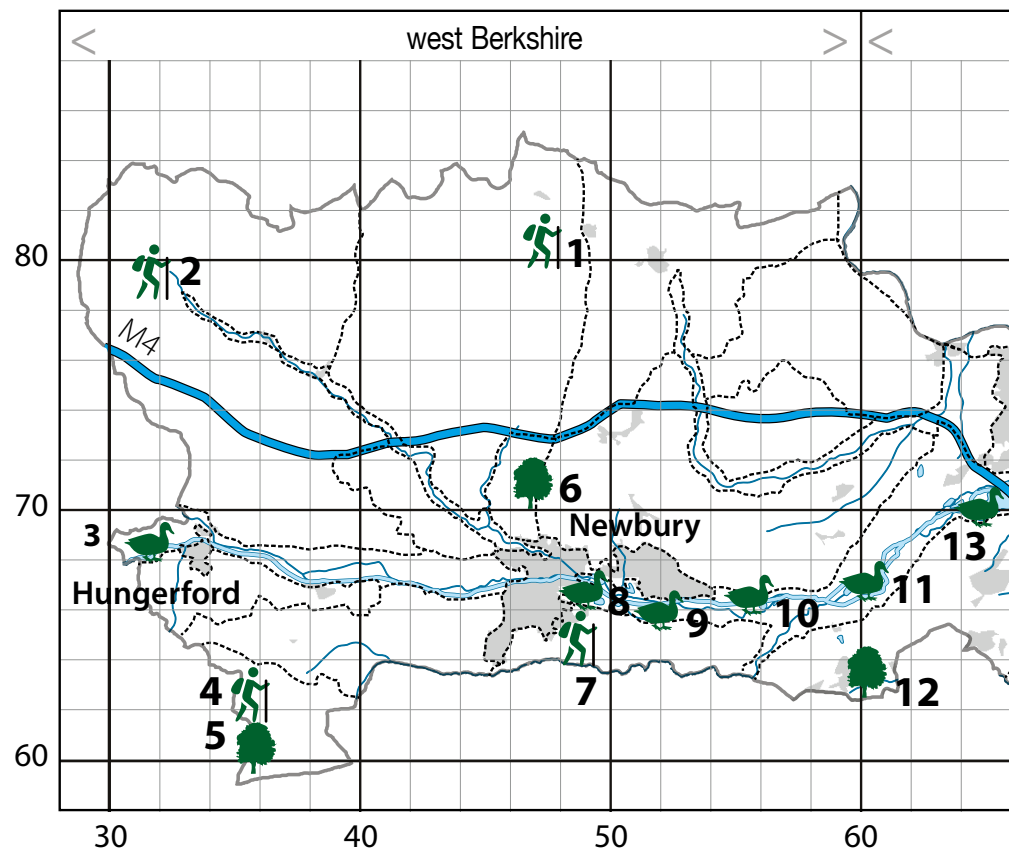
Twyford/Binfield/Windsor Plain	EP0
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TC: Urban Areas

UR

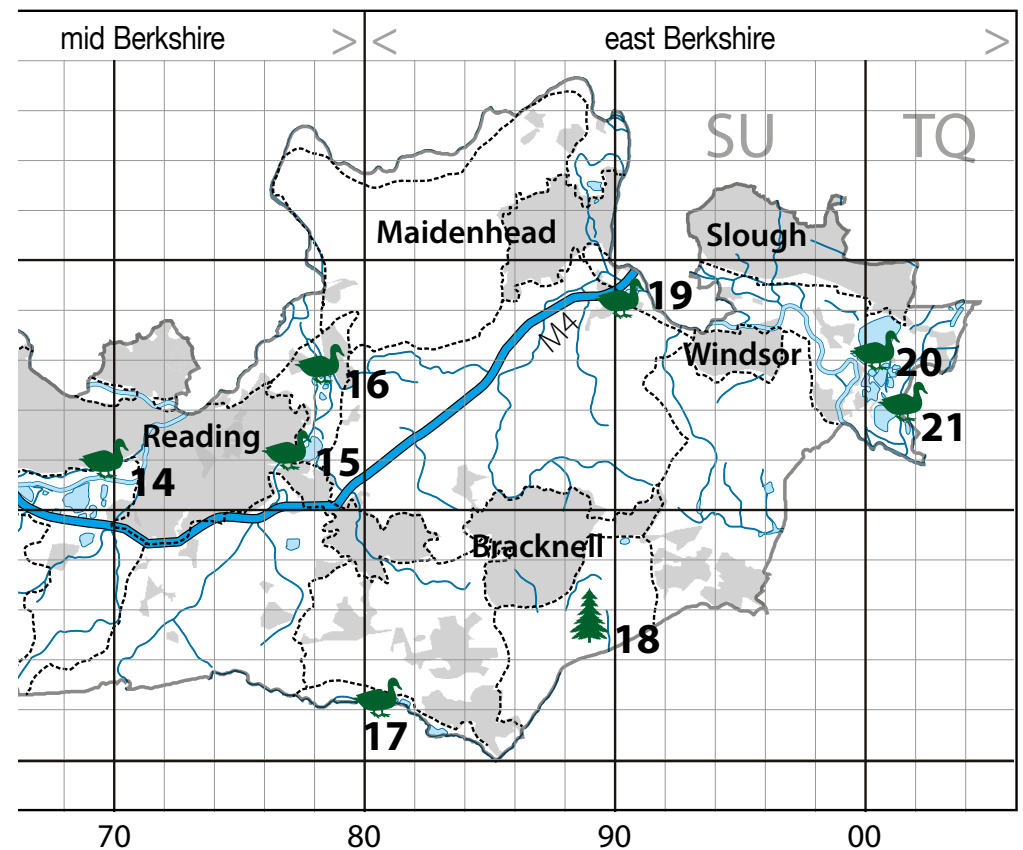
Hungerford	U Hu
Newbury-Thatcham	U Ne
Greater Reading	U Re
Bracknell	U Br
Maidenhead	U Ma
Windsor	U Wi
Slough & Langley	U SI

Some Birdwatching Sites in Berkshire



- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Berkshire Downs: West Ilsley | 12. Padworth Common |
| 2. Berkshire Downs: Lambourn | 13. Theale & Hosehill Lakes |
| 3. Freeman's Marsh | 14. Fobney Island and Meadows |
| 4. Walbury Hill | 15. Dinton Pastures and Lea Farm Lake |
| 5. Combe Wood | 16. Twyford Lakes |
| 6. Snelsmore Common | 17. Moor Green Lakes |
| 7. Greenham & Crookham Commons | 18. Swinley Forest & Wishmoor Bottom |
| 8. Lower Farm Gravel Pit | 19. Dorney Wetlands |
| 9. Thatcham Marsh | 20. Queen Mother Reservoir |
| 10. Woolhampton Gravel Pits | 21. Wrybury Gravel Pits |
| 11. Padworth Lane Gravel Pit | |

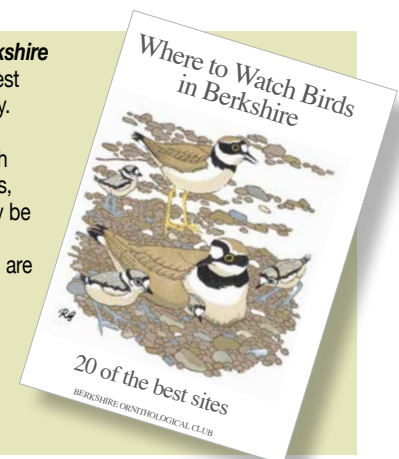
Some of the better-known birding sites in the county are shown here. For access details and more information visit <http://berksoc.org.uk/countysites/>



- 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.

Chair: Simon Weeks
See <https://www.mglg.org.uk>

THEALE AREA BIRD CONSERVATION GROUP

<https://www.facebook.com/ThealeAreaBirdConservationGroup>

A local club devoted to the conservation of birds in the Theale area, west of Reading. Indoor and outdoor meetings, and survey work.

Catherine 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 of Conduct, with modifications.)

At the time of publication, this is being updated, but is available from the BTO at <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u10/downloads/taking-part/health/bwc.pdf>

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.