



NTBC

*Northumberland & Tyneside
Bird Club*

Registered Charity No. 517641

GUIDE TO SUBMITTING BIRD RECORDS

Why submit your records to the NTBC?

Records submitted to the County Recorder are used by the bird club to compile a monthly bulletin which is issued to all members either via email or as a hard paper copy. This shows details of species recorded in the county during the month and also forms part of the basis of the annual bird report for the county, *Birds in Northumbria*. This annual report is the definitive record of ornithological information for the area covered by the club which includes Northumberland and the Metropolitan Districts of Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside.

The records are permanently archived and, with prior arrangement, they are available for more detailed research. Club members wishing to carry out a detailed study of record cards should contact the County Recorder or any NTBC Committee member for more details.

What to report

The bulk of the records concern numbers, distribution, arrivals, departures and movements of our regular resident and visiting species. Quantitative and comparative data on breeding species are among the most important in the ornithological field and contributors are encouraged to submit this information. Records of species of conservation concern are of particular value: please see the leaflet *Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom* (available free from the RSPB or BTO) for what species at which times of the year. Other records involving the monitoring of vagrants and scarce migrants for the official Northumberland bird list. The appendices at the end of this guide show the main categories of records required. It is also useful to look through a few monthly bulletins to get an indication of what is relevant.

Please note that if you are carrying out fieldwork for surveys, records entered on the survey sheets are kept separately from bulletin records and will not automatically appear in the bulletin as well. If your fieldwork locates some interesting birds, please enter these on record cards or via the club's electronic record sheet as well so they can also be published in the bulletin and annual report.

Remember that in all bird recording, the welfare of the birds and their habitat must be your first consideration. This is especially true when dealing with breeding species.

How to submit your records

For most observations, the club asks that observers submit their records either on standard record cards or via email on a spreadsheet which is available, with guidance, from the Data Manager. For records of rare or unusual species (see Schedule A below) special 'Rare Bird' report forms are available (on the club website www.ntbc.org.uk or from the County Recorder) to provide the supporting evidence in greater detail than is possible on the cards or spreadsheet.

Record Cards or Spreadsheet?

The preferred method of submitting records is via the club's spreadsheet system as this enables ease of handling and less space used in storage. However, the club recognizes that not everyone has easy access to a personal computer or indeed may not wish to use one and hand-written record cards are just as acceptable.

Spreadsheet records

Any spreadsheet program compatible with Microsoft Excel (e.g. Microsoft Works, Open Office) may be used. Initially, you should obtain a Template in the standard Club format by sending an e-mail request to the Data Manager at NTBC.Records@googlemail.com (please specify which program/version you will be using if not a recent version of Excel). The template spreadsheet and full guidance notes will then be emailed to you

Completed spreadsheets should be emailed as file attachments to NTBC.Records@googlemail.com to arrive before (or at the latest on) the 8th of the month following that in which the records were collected. There is no requirement, as there is with Record Cards, to order records on the spreadsheet in BOU taxonomic sequence.

All records considered confidential, for any reason, should NOT be submitted via the spreadsheet but should be entered on to club record cards in the usual way (see below).

Record Cards

When sending in your observations on record cards please follow the guidelines set out below :

1. Please use only the club cards, or other cards of identical size (149mm x 102mm). Cards of any other size (even if just ½mm larger) or scraps of paper do not file easily together with the standard cards and have to be trimmed or laboriously re-written prior to archiving. Also please do not fold, tear or cut the cards nor use staples, clips or sticky labels, as these all cause problems in the permanent files.
2. Please write legibly and be as precise and concise as possible.
3. Please use only one card per species per month. Sightings of the same species on different dates in a month and/or different localities in Northumberland can be entered on the same card. Please also use separate cards for distinct subspecies, e.g. European and Greenland White-fronted Geese, Pied and White Wagtails, etc.
4. **SPECIES** : Please use the English names that appear in Monthly Bulletins, *Birds in Northumbria* or the County List (available on the web site at www.ntbc.org.uk).
5. **YEAR** : Enter the appropriate year
6. **OBSERVER(S)** : Write the observer's name(s) with **full initials and surname(s)**. If you only put initials we might know who you are but anyone analyzing the records in 20 years or 200 years may not.
7. **DATE** : Enter date(s) of sightings – day and month – in the relevant box and columns.
8. **NUMBER (AGE & SEX)** : Enter the number of birds seen and, if known or relevant, the age and sex.
9. **LOCATION** : Enter the place of the sighting. Please remember some place names are duplicated in the county and these need extra information to indicate the correct location e.g. Fenham (Lindisfarne); Fenham (Newcastle).
10. **GRID REF** : It is extremely helpful if a grid reference is also entered for the location. Little-known places especially should also be accompanied by reference to the nearest well-known place (e.g. Willimontswick 2km SW of Bardon Mill) and/or a grid reference (e.g. Prendwick NU0012) in the box provided. With surveys and other counts over large areas, the area covered should be indicated (e.g. five pairs of Dipper on 10km of the Wansbeck from NZ119851 to NZ201858; seven pairs of Yellowhammer on 45ha of farmland, etc.). Birds seen from boats offshore should be marked with the latitude, longitude and distance offshore (by GPS or otherwise normally available from the ship's officers). Nowadays many observers are familiar with **TETRAD** identifiers and these can be used as an alternative to grid references. A list of **LOCALITY/TETRAD** identifiers showing many birding locations in the county is available on the web site at www.ntbc.org.uk.

11. NOTES & COMMENTS : Use this column to add any further relevant details such as behaviour, direction of flight of seabirds, local significance, etc.

12. For those species listed in Schedule B below, which require a brief description of the identification characteristics seen, the blank reverse side of the card can be utilized to provide your notes. Or alternatively you can provide these on a separate Rare Bird Report form.

13. For those rare species and sub species that require a full description (see Schedule A below) you should also send a completed Rare Bird Report form to the County recorder as soon as possible after the sighting.

14. Duplicate and un-necessary record cards waste resources and clog up the files. Small numbers of common birds at predictable places and times (e.g. two Goldeneye at Holywell Pond in January) can use up many cards, unless the observation is of interest in some other way. However, this is not the case if you use the spreadsheet method to submit records as these are all currently held electronically.

If you go out birding in a group, save on resources by ensuring that just one person sends in the details.

Once you have written your cards please remember to:

15. Sort them into new BOU order as in shown the bulletins, Birds in Northumbria and the County List.

16. Send them to the County Recorder to arrive before (or at the latest on) the 8th of the following month. Records received after this date may not appear in the bulletin but may be included in the annual report.

17. Please seal your envelope well and, very important, use enough stamps to cover the postage.

Supplies of record cards are available from the County Recorder if you send a suitably-sized, stamped, self-addressed envelope (again please ensure you have supplied sufficient postage stamps). Cards are also available at club meetings.

Confidential Records

Occasionally contributors may see a species in a locality that they feel should be kept confidential. These records may be submitted to the County Recorder in confidence by writing **Confidential** or **Confidential locality** on top of the card. If marked **Confidential** the record will not appear in the bulletin or annual report. If marked **Confidential locality** it will be published but without precise reference to the site, e.g. 'in the north of the county'.

Records typically treated in this manner include breeding records of those species at particular risk from illegal persecution (e.g. Hen Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Long-eared Owl, Raven). The County Recorder may choose to not publish any sensitive record. Note that confidential records may need to be discussed by the County Records Committee before the sighting can be accepted but observers can request that site names are withheld from the CRC or given vaguely by the County Recorder in such meetings.

Rare and Unusual Species

Sightings of rare or unusual species require supporting evidence, usually in the form of a detailed description on special forms available from the club web site (www.ntbc.org.uk) or the County Recorder. The current taxonomic and genetic debates over a number of species and subspecies mean that detailed field notes are vitally important in establishing records for both immediate publication and possible re-interpretation in the future. Taking field notes makes observations more rigorous and critical. Photographs and/or sound recordings can make the acceptance of such

records easier.

In the Appendices below, Schedule A gives a list of species for which full written descriptions (preferably on the standard club Rare Bird Report Form) are required and Schedule B those for which briefer notes are needed either on a Rare Bird Report Form or on the reverse side of the standard record cards if that will suffice. The lists in these schedules are not exhaustive and notes may be requested on *any* record by the County Records Committee, for example a species reported out of season or at an unusual locality. Please note that for brief notes species, identification details that prove the identification beyond reasonable doubt are still required.

The County Records Committee

The County Records Committee comprises the County Recorder, who acts as Chairman, and four others elected by the committee of the Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club. They are chosen not only for their ornithological expertise but also, importantly, for their knowledge of the county and its birds.

All records (not just rarities) are considered by the CRC during the course of about five meetings during the year. Where full details have been submitted, the first observer named on a particular report will be notified of the committee's decision on the record. To facilitate communication between the observer and the recorder, please ensure your address (and preferably email address) is given with the record.

The County Recorder will forward details of any record accepted as proven by the CRC and which requires consideration by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) directly to that committee. Decisions reached by the BBRC are published in *British Birds* and the County Recorder will also notify the first observer of their decision as it becomes available.

Generally non-acceptance of a record, by either the county or the national committee, is not a reflection of an observer's ability or integrity. By far the commonest reason for non-acceptance is insufficient details being available for the committee to accept the identification as 100% proven. In only a few cases is it felt that a genuine mistake may have been made in the identification.

and finally.....

We hope that these notes will be of use to both our newer contributors and long-standing contributors alike and may help to enhance the already high standard of bird recording in the county. If you are not already a contributor, why not? Bird recording can be a very enjoyable and satisfying part of your hobby.

APPENDICES

1. Schedule A – full description required

All species and sub-species considered by the BBRC

Any species or sub-species removed from the BBRC list after publication of these notes

Any species or sub-species not previously recorded in the County

Any record for which the CRC have asked for full details

The following :-

Egyptian Goose	Corncrake	Tawny Pipit
American Wigeon	Common Crane	Red-throated Pipit
Ring-necked Duck	Stone Curlew	Water Pipit
Ferruginous Duck	Kentish Plover	Nightingale
Surf Scoter	American Golden Plover	Aquatic Warbler
White-billed Diver	Temminck's Stint	Marsh Warbler
Cory's Shearwater	White-rumped Sandpiper	Subalpine Warbler
Great Shearwater	Pectoral Sandpiper	Greenish Warbler
Balearic Shearwater	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Radde's Warbler
Wilson's Petrel	Red-necked Phalarope	Dusky Warbler
Night Heron	Grey Phalarope	Crested Tit
Cattle Egret	Sabine's Gull	Woodchat Shrike
Great White Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Chough
Purple Heron	Yellow-legged Gull (all races)	Rose-coloured Starling
Honey Buzzard	Caspian Gull	Serin
Black Kite	White-winged Black Tern	Arctic Redpoll
White-tailed Eagle	Alpine Swift	Parrot Crossbill
Montagu's Harrier	Bee-eater	Ortolan Bunting
Rough-legged Buzzard	Short-toed Lark	Rustic Bunting
Hobby	Woodlark	Little Bunting
Red-footed Falcon	Red-rumped Swallow	
Spotted Crake	Richard's Pipit	

2. Schedule B – brief description required

Bean Goose (all races)	Black Guillemot (away from	Yellow-browed Warbler (inland
Snow Goose	Farne Islands & Holy Island)	& Spring birds only)
Ruddy Shelduck	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Green-winged Teal	Bluethroat (autumn only)	Bearded Tit
Leach's Petrel	Icterine Warbler	Golden Oriole
Goshawk (coastal records only)	Barred Warbler	Great Grey Shrike
Dotterel	Pallas's Warbler (inland &	Common Rosefinch
Long-tailed Skua (juvs only)	Spring birds only)	Corn Bunting

3. Subspecies – notes as appropriate to confirm identification

'Continental' Cormorant <i>P. c. sinensis</i>	Yellow Wagtail other than <i>M. f. flava</i> & <i>M. f. flavissima</i>	Chiffchaff other than <i>P. c. collybita</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. f. intermedius</i> & <i>L. f. fuscus</i>	White Wagtail – <i>M. a. alba</i> (autumn & winter only)	'Northern' Willow Warbler <i>P. t. acredula</i>
Herring Gull – other than <i>L. a. argenteus</i> & <i>L. a. argentatus</i>	'Black-bellied' Dipper <i>C. c. cinclus</i>	'Northern' Treecreeper <i>C. f. familiaris</i>
Kumlien's Gull <i>L. g. kumlieni</i>	'White-spotted' Bluethroat <i>L. s. cyanecula</i>	Jackdaw other than <i>C. m. spermologus</i>
'Northern' Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>D. m. major</i>	Lesser Whitethroat all races except <i>S. c. curruca</i>	'Northern' Bullfinch <i>P. p. pyrrhula</i>
'Scandinavian' Rock Pipit <i>A. p. littoralis</i>		

4. Hybrids Any bird suspected of being a hybrid between two different species

These lists are not meant to be exhaustive and the County Recorder may ask for notes on any species at any time.

5. Target species

Each year the bird club selects two-three 'Target' species in the county and asks members to send in ALL sightings throughout the year. With several of the species being made a 'target' species in later years, this exercise has proved successful in attempting to indicate if there are any distributional changes over time. Generally, the results of this useful targeting are reported in the annual report often with supporting maps.

6. All other species

Please send in records as follows: -

Breeding studies and totals, population counts and large flocks.

Migration totals and observations, including early and late dates of summer, passage and winter visitors (please include brief descriptions for any well outside of normal times).

Records of species in abnormal areas or habitat, including local site rarities and inland records of coastal species (please include any known relevant information e.g. 'only the second record in 20 years at this site', and brief descriptions for species very rare inland, e.g. Common Eider, Purple Sandpiper, Razorbill, etc.).

Unusual behaviour or plumages.

Significant ringing recoveries.

Anything else interesting or unusual.

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