



Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club

Registered Charity No. 517641

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY RECORDS COMMITTEE

POLICY & PROCEDURES FOR RECORD ASSESSMENT

1. AIMS

The County Records Committee (CRC) aims to assess all bird records received for publication in the county annual bird report *Birds in Northumbria* which provides a comprehensive, accurate & verifiable ornithological history for the county.

The records assessed include not only rare and scarce migrants but all species which may involve breeding, passage, wintering or out-of-season information.

The CRC also monitors, discusses and advises on the taxonomy and nomenclature used in *Birds in Northumbria* and other NTBC publications. It also maintains the County List.

2. MEMBERSHIP

Members of the CRC are appointed annually by the committee of the Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club (see NTBC Constitution for details). The County Recorder is automatically appointed and normally acts as Chair.

Members are appointed for their broad and in-depth knowledge of the county's birds not just an expertise in rare and scarce species. They are expected to attend a minimum (and often more) of five CRC meetings per year.

3. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

- 3.1 Details of records to be assessed will be circulated by the County Recorder to all CRC members at least one month prior to a meeting. This may be in the form of electronic media (CD, memory stick, etc.), which is the preferred option, emails with attachments, or paper copies. After each member has reviewed the records, the County Recorder & other members should be informed of their decision on each record (either accepted, not proven or pended for further information) prior to the meeting.
- 3.2 Records to be assessed will include those species for which a written description or notes has been received by the County Recorder. All members will review records published in the NTBC Monthly Bulletins and provide the County Recorder with details of those considered to require assessment by the CRC.
- 3.3 Each member, including the Chair (County Recorder), will have one vote per record.
- 3.4 The number of votes required for a record to be accepted will depend on the type :-
Rare or Scarce Species

A County 'first' or species considered by BBRC :

The optimum is a unanimous decision for acceptance. Should a unanimous decision not be reached then the CRC will fully discuss the record at a normal meeting and decide on the appropriate course to follow.

Other rare & scarce species :

A simple majority will suffice for acceptance. However, if a unanimous decision is not reached then the record will be reviewed at the meeting prior to formal acceptance.

Note that rare, scarce & sub-species that require supporting documentation are listed on the NTBC web site and in *Birds in Northumbria*.

All other Species

A simple majority will suffice for acceptance. However, if a unanimous decision is not reached then the record will be reviewed at a meeting prior to formal acceptance.

In this way it is hoped that all records will receive equal treatment in the assessment process.

Photo-only Records

Photographs are an excellent source of supporting evidence, particularly for records of rare & scarce species and observers are encouraged to submit images wherever possible. However, they are not considered a substitute for written descriptions made in the field. Photo-only records will be considered on an individual basis and should show all of the necessary features to confirm the identification of the species claimed. Essential details including date taken, location, etc. should also accompany all photos submitted.

Call-only Records

These records will be assessed on an individual basis taking into account the circumstances of the record and the description received.

- 3.5 The County Recorder will inform the first-named observer of a record assessed by the CRC of their decision (either Accepted or Not Proven) in writing. If the decision is Not Proven then an explanation of why this decision was reached will be made.
- 3.6 The County Recorder will forward directly to the Secretary of the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) a copy of any description of a species which is also assessed by that national committee and has been Accepted by the County Records Committee. In the event of the CRC finding such a record as Not Proven then the County Recorder will inform the observer accordingly. Generally, if suitable descriptions have been received then records required by the BBRC will be 'fast-tracked' by the CRC.
If the decisions of the CRC and BBRC are at variance then the CRC will fully review the record again.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information, including a *Guide to Submitting Bird Records* and *Description Writing for Bird Records*, and various reports about county records are available at the NTBC Web Site (www.ntbc.org.uk) together with the appropriate forms for observers to submit their records.

5. This Policy & Procedures document will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as necessary.