

## Record Submission to RBBP: which records should be included?

The most frequent question about the work of the RBBP is which records to include, and it is clear that some records get missed because of uncertainties about what to include; I sometimes spot them in county bird reports. We recognise that we have not been entirely clear in our guidance over the years, but there is a firm commitment to make our records as consistent as possible, across counties and across years, including our archive.

This short appendix gives three examples to help with some common questions. We concentrate on records which might relate to Possible or Probable Breeding – Confirmed Breeding records are much more clear-cut as they will always relate to a nest or a brood or some other indication like an adult carrying food for young.

### **Migrant wildfowl such as Garganey.**

Garganey are difficult because they tend to occur on passage in the same habitats that they breed in. As county recorder you will know whether there is a history of breeding in your area – if not, then a record is only really appropriate for RBBP if a pair remains at a site for over a week and are still present in mid-May (although, as with all scarce species, there is always the first time!). But in counties where Garganey are a frequent breeder, and where there may be many potential sites, suitable records should be identified by date. As a rule, assume passage has stopped by mid May, and then look at pairs present after then. Sites where there is a pair for up to a week from that cut-off date onwards can be classed as Possible Breeding. If they stay longer then there is an indication of a 'territory', or if there is then only a male visible and he remains for a while, in all likelihood this is a case of a male 'guarding' a sitting female. Both of these can be classed as Probable Breeding. If in any doubt, summarise the numbers and dates and submit these details for each site, and we can discuss the cases if necessary via email.

### **'Resident' wildfowl such as Pochard.**

In some areas, Pochard is both a winter visitor and a breeding bird. They are normally relatively late breeders and care needs to be taken not to include pairs early in the season before they move on. Again, this is where your local knowledge can come in, determining when winter birds have departed and leaving what we assume is the breeding population. You will only want to include counts from sites where breeding does or has recently occurred, as other sites may be places where local breeding birds gather before they disperse to the actual breeding sites. Then you could look at the range of counts from the remaining sites from May to July and base your estimate of probable breeding pairs on the maximum number of females recorded; any additional males can be included as possible breeding pairs (as females may already be out of sight on or near nests). Of course you are dependent on your observers counting the sexes separately; if they don't, estimates are much more difficult. This might be an area where you could improve the quality of your data by requesting separate counts.

**Singing passerines.**

If you look at RBBP reports from before the early 2000s you will see that any singing passerine (on the RBBP list) was reported, even when the record was from a coastal site known to attract migrants. Such records are not generally included now, but care must still be taken as species such as Marsh Warbler may breed in such situations. However, as a general rule, we only report singing passerines if they occur in potential breeding habitat and if they hold a territory for at least a week. Our advice in these situations is not to report birds which occur for only a day or so at sites where they are likely to be passage, or where intensive searching indicates they did not linger. Report other birds, but provide dates and other potentially useful information so that the details are maintained on our database. We will log the records but will report them according to our current philosophy.

Updated August 2015