

Rare Birds in North-East Scotland

Paul Baxter (on behalf of NESRC)

The British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) was formed in 1958. Its function is to apply uniform adjudication standards to claimed records of birds in Britain. BBRC deals with the very rare birds in Britain and has issued a standard record form, which should be used by all observers finding a British rarity. These forms and a list of species considered by BBRC are available from Paul Baxter or online at www.bbrc.org.uk. BBRC has an annual acceptance rate of 80%, and the great majority of rejections occur because of lack of detail, rather than misidentification. All observers are advised to take detailed notes on any rare bird they find. The circumstances can be important, but nothing is more important than a well-presented, detailed description of the bird. Records should be submitted on BBRC forms via Paul Baxter. The Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) came into being in 1984 with the aim of covering species of Scottish rarity, as well as dealing with scarce species for areas not covered by a well-established local records committee; such a committee was established in North-East Scotland in 1977. The North-East Scotland Rarities Committee (NESRC) aims to ensure that birds which are difficult to identify, or scarce in our region, are assessed in a fair and consistent manner. This means, in reality, that there is only a small list of species that occur within our area that are assessed by SBRC.

Each year, we are aware of several records of rare and scarce birds in the region that are not substantiated with a description and/or photographs, despite numerous attempts to obtain these requirements and 'save' the record. It remains the general policy of the bird report that no records of rare birds will be published without assessment and acceptance by the national or local records committee. We thank all observers who take the time and trouble to submit records. We remind observers that detailed notes are required to exclude all potential confusion species. The members of NESRC will be pleased to advise on writing descriptions, but as a general point, the assessment of records is greatly helped by the provision of as much detail as possible. Drawings, even if they are only very rough sketches, are very useful in documenting records, as are photographs. We would prefer to see original field sketches made at the time of observation as an accompaniment to written descriptions.

The NESRC may also request details of records of other species. Descriptions are requested for all 'Category D' or escaped species (e.g. Greater Flamingo, Red-headed Bunting), species not yet on the North-East Scotland list and all unusual subspecies/ races (e.g. 'small race' Canada Geese). The list of species considered by NESRC is given below, and observers finding species on the list are advised to take detailed notes and submit them, preferably on the North-East Scotland Rarities Report Form. These are available from the Local Recorder or myself. Completed forms should be returned as soon as possible after the sighting. Normally, descriptions will only be required from those observers who actually find a rare or scarce bird, but all observers are requested to take descriptions of any rare birds they see; these notes may be required as a back-up. Subsequent dates or additional details should be included in monthly records. The committee may still request descriptions of any species if, for instance, the date or site is unusual. As previously mentioned, only records accepted by the appropriate committee will appear in the *North-East Scotland Bird Report* and the *Scottish Bird Report*.