

REPORTING AND RECORDING SENSITIVE BIRD SPECIES

It is imperative for all club members and other birdwatchers to be fully committed to the understanding that the welfare of all birds is of paramount importance and must not be threatened or compromised by any of our activities. In particular this applies to all birds in the breeding season and especially to those birds whose populations are particularly vulnerable in Europe, the UK or just in the club area. Schedule 1 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act itemises a number of rare breeding birds (see abbreviated list below) which require a special licence for any individual who may approach them whilst nesting. These licences, which are issued in order to keep disturbance to a minimum, are only issued to bona fide researchers, i.e. ringers, official nest recorders, photographers (occasionally) etc. Anyone disturbing any Schedule 1 species who is not in possession of a licence is breaking the law and liable to prosecution, as well as putting the breeding attempt at risk. If you accidentally find a nest, however, you are not breaking the law, as this was done without any foreknowledge. If however you return to that nest and this results in any form of disturbance, then that would be breaking the law.

It should be obvious that the purpose of the law is to protect these individual species from disturbance, thereby allowing them to breed without molestation and providing the greatest chance of success. It is important, therefore, to avoid circulating any information relating to the whereabouts of such breeding birds. The HBWC committee therefore asks that no such information should be posted by anyone using the club forum; to do so may encourage unlicensed individuals to visit these nest sites, for whatever reason, and could seriously compromise the well-being of the birds and their eggs or offspring. The information could also be used by those intent on persecuting species, stealing eggs or young.

Should you suspect that a Schedule 1 species is breeding within the club area then do contact Mike Denton (01484 646990) who holds the necessary licence to monitor and document proceedings.

Where you see any Schedule 1 birds, and even though there may be no evidence of breeding at that time, it is advisable not to advertise the locality of such sightings on the forum, or even verbally to others. It is possible that the bird(s) may be prospecting in the area for potential breeding sites and such reports may compromise their opportunity for success. By not advertising the whereabouts of these species or their nests you can be content in the knowledge that you are positively contributing to their protection by not inviting disturbance by others.

Please do remember, however, to submit all of your detailed records to the Club Recorder for inclusion in the annual report, although the detail included in the report will be appropriately circumspect. Such information is vital for use by relevant bodies (e.g. the rare birds breeding panel, conservation bodies etc) your records are a key component of maintaining an accurate picture of population dynamics which aids plans to conserve and protect them.

In addition to the above, if you are aware of the presence of any Schedule 1 birds in an area and you suspect that illegal interference may have taken place, or be about to take place, then contact Mike Denton or the recorder urgently. We have the contact details of the appropriate authorities that would allow us to alert them to these threats.

These comments, whilst directed primarily at Schedule 1 species, are pertinent for any nesting species and if you are uncertain about their status it is advisable to seek clarification from either Mike Denton or the Club Recorder. There are also a number of species (see additional list) that may not be threatened within UK but that are scarce breeding, or potential breeding birds within the club

area. It is by leaving these birds undisturbed during a critical time in their life cycle that you can feel gratified that you have had no detrimental effect upon the outcome.

Abbreviated list of Schedule 1 Species

Black-necked Grebe
Bittern
Pintail
Garganey
Honey-buzzard
Red Kite
All harriers
Goshawk
Osprey
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Avocet
Stone-curlew
Little Ringed Plover
Dotterel
Red-necked Phalarope
Little Tern
Barn Owl
Kingfisher
Firecrest

Additional List of Sensitive Birds in the Huddersfield Area

Nightjar
Buzzard
Raven
Short-eared Owl
Long-eared Owl