Guidance on record submission to Rare Breeding Birds Panel

1. Data can be sent to the RBBP at any time, and you can check the deadline for each year at www.rbbp.org.uk; please try to submit as soon as possible after you have received the necessary data. We suggest that you do the RBBP data collation *before* you complete your local annual bird report. The totals calculated for RBBP can be used in the reports, and there will be chance for any questions, feedback or data from additional RBBP sources to be taken into account. We would recommend that you report numbers of breeding pairs of RBBP species in your report, and make reference somewhere that you contribute to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, by way of feedback to your local observers, who may not otherwise be aware.

2. Check the RBBP species list http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm to see which species to submit data for. Don't forget any rare and scarce breeding non-natives.

3. Please check all available data sources for each of these species. It is important to look at BirdTrack records for your area, as birders unfamiliar with local protocols may use BirdTrack in the assumption that their records are reaching the local county recorder.

4. Sort your data for each species into site order, so that you can review the data on each species on a site by site basis. Look across the series of records for each site to see if there are any records which provide evidence of breeding or a breeding attempt. Obviously pairs with nests or young should be included, but so should pairs in suitable habitat, and individual birds holding territories (e.g. singing males) – a nesting attempt does not need to have occurred, or a pair known to have been present, for a record to be relevant. If there is any doubt about inclusion, then contact the RBBP Secretary, or leave it in to be on the safe side.

5. From the evidence before you, for each species, the number of pairs (or territories) at each site needs to be worked out, and each record which represents a breeding or potentially breeding "pair" needs to be assigned to one of the breeding evidence categories (confirmed, probable, possible; note the special category of "singing males" used for some species traditionally counted by this method). Thus for each site you could have up to four different numbers for a species – you will need these numbers to fill in the Panel's downloadable data entry spreadsheet available via this link http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-data-entry-excel-form.xls. You may be able to copy the site information across from your files but please type in the numbers of pairs directly. Note that we do not want a straight copy of all the data you have – you are the local expert, and we are asking you to use that local knowledge to provide the best figures for each site based on the evidence provided. Sadly, it is not possible for the RBBP Secretary to know the status of all our 150+ potential breeding bird species at each of the 1000s of sites across the 80+ recording areas (though I do try).

6. There are some guidelines on our website for a few species (eventually we plan to build these for all species on our list) – see http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-recording.htm and we have uploaded the standard monitoring guidelines here http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-monitoring-methods.htm. We are always happy to provide advice in this area – just email the Secretary. Some additional guidelines on dates and potential passage birds are given in Appendix B.

7. We prefer it if all records are listed by site, including the site name and a grid reference (where possible, 6-figure for nests or small sites; 4-figure (or tetrad) for areas where a

territory is believed to be located; for large sites with several pairs, a tetrad or central grid-reference is acceptable). Even for species which in some counties can be relatively widespread (e.g. Greenshank, Hobby, Cetti's Warbler) it is best to list records by site so that duplicates can be readily identified if other data come in from other sources (e.g. Schedule 1 or Nest Records). Clearly some observers do not include grid references with their records, but for RBBP species please try to establish at least a 4-figure grid reference if you do not personally know the location of the site.

8. Where you feel the records provided do not reflect the full situation for that species in the county for that year (perhaps because a key site was not visited, or because recording levels of that species locally are low) then complete the County Estimates column for the species to give an indication of what you feel is a more realistic number.

9. Once you have the information to hand, then it needs to be sent to the RBBP Secretary. The recommended way is to use our bespoke spreadsheet, downloadable at http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-data-entry-excel-form.xls (and always linked to from our homepage). Use of this excel template facilitates the loading and checking of the data and the template itself includes instructions and tips on data entry. The file is set up so that it can only accept records for species on our current list, and allows you to save time by getting species names via a lookup (based on the BTO 2-letter codes) or from a dropdown list. The county/recording area is also accessible from a dropdown menu and once selected can be copied down the column. If you enter the number of singing males/possible breeding pairs/probable breeding pairs/confirmed breeding pairs the spreadsheet will automatically provide the total number for each site (i.e. row in the spreadsheet).

10. Records from previous years can be included (remember to change the year field as required). There is a limit of 200 rows in each file; if you have more records than that, then just load up another file from the template and carry on.

11. The excel file carries full instructions for every field on the Records sheet – just look at the sheet behind the Instructions tab – and also reminders on each heading of the Records sheet which can be seen by pointing your cursor at the heading. If you feel the help provided is unclear, or insufficient, then just let us know and we will try and improve it!

12. The final excel file can then be e-mailed to the Secretary.

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