

= British Birds Rarities Committee =

The British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) , established in 1959 , is the national bird rarities committee for Britain . It assesses claimed sightings of bird species that are rarely seen in Britain , based on descriptions , photographs and video recordings submitted by observers . Its findings are published in an annual report in the journal British Birds .

The BBRC covers around 280 species whose annually recorded sightings in Britain fall below a threshold deemed to signify rarity . Since the establishment of the committee , some previously included species have become more common ? or at least better recorded ; this has resulted in their removal from the committee 's list and their reclassification as " scarce migrants " .

The committee has a chairman , a secretary , and ten voting members , and is supported by others who serve in an advisory capacity . Since its inception , a total of 69 people have served on the committee as assessors . In addition to assessing annual records of rare birds , the committee conducts regular reviews of batches of previously accepted records on a species @-@ by @-@ species basis , to ensure that only those consistent with advances in knowledge of bird identification are retained , and to determine the subspecies of accepted records . Several species have been problematic for assessment , and extreme examples have taken more than 20 years from initial observation to acceptance . The committee has been criticised for its approach to assessing records where only one observer was present , for not publishing reasons for rejecting the validity of records , and for placing undue weight on descriptive detail when assessing record submissions . Seabird identification has proved particularly difficult , leading some observers to suggest that the committee sets too high a standard .

= = Role and status = =

The " Rarity Records Committee " (as it was originally known) was established in 1959 by the editors of the journal British Birds . Its original purpose was to provide a means whereby uniform assessment standards could be applied to all rare bird records across Britain . Prior to the establishment of the committee , records were assessed by local bird recording organisations using varying standards . The most recent statement of the British Birds Rarities Committee 's role is given in Bradshaw , Harvey and Steele (2004) :

BBRC aims to maintain an accurate database of the occurrence of rare taxa in Britain , in order to enable individuals or organisations to assess the current status of , and any changes in , the patterns of occurrence and distribution of these taxa in Britain .

Contradictory information has been published on the exact nature of the committee 's status . On its website , BBRC describes itself as the " official adjudicator of rare bird records in Britain " (although it does not say on what basis it has this status) . In Birders : Tales of a Tribe , author Mark Cocker erroneously describes the committee as a " statutory vetting body " (i.e. one established by an Act of Parliament) . BBRC 's constitution states that it " has no automatic or legal expectation that birders submit records " .

The committee does not assess records of birds from Ireland ; that task is carried out by the Irish Rare Birds Committee , which publishes its decisions in Irish Birds . Records of IRBC @-@ assessed rarities were included in BBRC annual reports for many years , although this ceased in 2002 at the request of IRBC . Although the British Ornithologists ' Union Records Committee does not regard records from the Isle of Man as contributing towards their British list , BBRC does include records from there in its totals . BBRC has had an ongoing sponsor in the German optical equipment manufacturer Carl Zeiss since 1983 .

= = Species covered = =

Over 580 bird species have been recorded in Britain ; some 250 have regular breeding or wintering populations , or are common migrants , and a further 50 are " scarce migrants " . The BBRC assesses the remaining species . A list of the species the committee assesses (known as " British

Birds rarities " , or " BB rarities " for short) is on its website , although the list has not been updated to account for the most recent changes . The committee generally considers only the records of species rare enough to meet its criteria for inclusion on the BBRC rarities list , based on a numerical threshold . In addition to considering full species , records of some rare subspecies are considered and , in a few cases , the committee considers indeterminate records (birds that belong to a pair or group of rare species that are particularly difficult to separate , such as frigatebirds or dowitchers) .

The committee keeps the list of species it considers under review and , from time to time , makes changes . These are usually because species have increased in frequency and no longer meet the numerical criteria for inclusion . A species is removed if it has more than 150 records in the preceding ten years , with ten or more in at least eight of those years . Different criteria were used in a review in 2006 (see below) . There have been three major " purges " of species since the committee 's formation . The first was soon after the committee 's formation , in 1963 , when 16 species were removed : red @-@ crested pochard , snow goose , pectoral sandpiper , Mediterranean gull , Sabine 's gull , melodious warbler , icterine warbler , yellow @-@ browed warbler , northern goshawk , golden eagle , red kite , Kentish plover , crested tit , bearded tit , marsh warbler and Dartford warbler . Records of the last eight species had been considered only outside their " normal " British range (e.g. crested tits outside Scotland , and red kites outside Wales) . The second was in 1982 , when ten further species were removed : Cory 's shearwater , purple heron , white stork , buff @-@ breasted sandpiper , Richard 's pipit , tawny pipit , Savi 's warbler , aquatic warbler , serin and common rosefinch . Savi 's warbler was re @-@ admitted to the committee 's list in 1998 , due to declining numbers of occurrences . Thirdly , in 2006 , a further 17 species were dropped from the list : ferruginous duck , Wilson ? s petrel , great white egret , black kite , red @-@ footed falcon , American golden plover , white @-@ rumped sandpiper , white @-@ winged black tern , alpine swift , red @-@ rumped swallow , red @-@ throated pipit , subalpine warbler , greenish warbler , dusky warbler , Radde 's warbler , Arctic redpoll and rustic bunting . Their selection was based on different criteria from those previously used : more than 200 records in Britain ever , and more than 100 occasions in the last decade .

Many other species and subspecies have been removed over the years : Cetti 's warbler (in 1976) ; long @-@ tailed skua (in 1979) ; common crane and ring @-@ billed gull (in 1987) ; surf scoter , little egret , European bee @-@ eater , Pallas 's warbler and woodchat shrike (in 1990) ; green @-@ winged teal (in 1992) ; ring @-@ necked duck , short @-@ toed lark and little bunting (in 1993) ; white @-@ tailed eagle and Kumlien 's gull (in 1998) ; American wigeon , black @-@ crowned night heron and rose @-@ coloured starling (in 2001) ; and black brant (in 2005) .

Until 2009 , the parrot crossbill was an anomaly , in that it was on the committee 's list of species , even though a breeding population existed in Scotland . In 2009 , this species was removed , along with white @-@ billed diver and cattle egret .

Once removed , a species is classed as a " scarce migrant " : British Birds publishes a separate annual report summarising the occurrence of these species , and the data is also presented on the Scarce Migrants website . In addition to parrot crossbill , four species , Cetti 's warbler , little egret , long @-@ tailed skua and Mediterranean gull , have become so common that they no longer qualify even as scarce migrants .

= = Structure and personnel = =

The committee has ten voting members , a chairman (who may be one of the ten , or may be another , non @-@ voting individual) and a non @-@ voting secretary . BBRC was assisted in its assessment of seabird records by a Seabirds Advisory Panel from 1987 to 1996 . In 1999 , the BBRC set up the " RIACT " (Racial Identification Amongst Changing Taxonomy) group to advise on how records of rare subspecies should be treated . RIACT published its first report in 2006 , setting out the subspecies it believed were sufficiently diagnosable , and that occurred infrequently enough to justify being assessed by the rarities committee . Prior to this , a partial selection of rare subspecies had been routinely included in BBRC reports ; the RIACT report aimed to bring consistency to the selection for future years . When a record is of a species not previously recorded

in Britain in a wild state , BBRC deals with assessment of the bird 's identification , then passes the record to the British Ornithologists ' Union Records Committee , which decides whether the species should be included on the BOU 's British Bird list .

The committee has two permanent posts , a Chairman and a Secretary : they are appointed by the board of British Birds . There had been no fixed term for these appointments before 2008 , however , a three @-@ year fixed term , with a limit of ten years , was introduced with the change of chairman in that year . The current chairman , the committee 's seventh , is Adam Rowlands ; the six previous chairmen were Philip Hollom (1959 ? 72) , Ian Wallace (1972 ? 76) , Peter J. Grant (1976 ? 86) , Peter Lansdown (1986 ? 93) , Rob Hume (1993 ? 97) and Colin Bradshaw (1997 ? 2008) . The committee 's secretary is Nigel Hudson , appointed in 2007 . Its previous secretaries were G. A. Pyman (1959 ? 61) , Christopher M. Swaine (1961 ? 63) , Denzil D. Harber (1963 ? 66) , F. R. Smith (1966 ? 75) , J. N. Dymond (1975 ? 77) , J. O 'Sullivan (1977 ? 78) and Mike Rogers (1978 ? 2006) .

At least one (usually the longest @-@ serving) record @-@ assessing member retires every year , to balance experience with " new blood " . The committee usually nominates its own replacement candidate , but also invites nominations from others , and if any are received , holds an election among county bird recorders and the bird observatory network . A set of criteria for membership has been developed ? currently , these are " a widely acknowledged expertise in identification , proven reliability in the field , a track record of high quality submissions of descriptions of scarce and rare birds to county records committees and BBRC , considerable experience of record assessment , the capacity to handle the considerable volume of work involved in assessing upwards of 1 @,@ 000 records per year and the capacity to work quickly and efficiently " . The following 69 individuals have served on BBRC in a records assessment capacity :

A number of other individuals have served as the committee 's statisticians , museum consultants , archivists and avicultural consultants , or on the Seabirds Advisory Panel or RIACT .

The committee has stated that it has a desire to be made up of members of " all age ranges and both sexes " ; however , all BBRC members to date have been male , a fact reflected in the nickname " the ten rare men " . Measures exist to ensure that the committee has a geographic balance amongst its membership ? BBRC 's constitution states that it " should attempt to provide a reasonable geographical spread with members having a detailed knowledge of each of the following areas : Wales , Scotland , Northern England , the Midlands , the Southwest and the Southeast of England " .

Documentation of records , including the members ' deliberations , are kept in the committee 's archives , which are deposited with the British Trust for Ornithology . Some older data is missing , as the committee 's files were originally held by the editors of British Birds , and they were not transferred to the new owners of the magazine when it was sold in the 1960s .

= = Annual report and other publications = =

The committee publishes an annual report on the rare birds occurring each year , in British Birds . This has usually been in the issue published in November of the following year , although the 2007 Report appeared in the October 2008 issue , and the committee has said that it plans to keep to this new timescale in future years .

The report typically begins with an introduction , summarising the most significant birds occurring during the year , and discussing any current issues relating to the committee 's work . This is followed by a list of accepted records in taxonomic sequence . Records for each taxon are listed by county , followed by comments about its occurrence during the year . Late @-@ accepted records and decisions to reject a previously identified record are included . This section of the report contains painted illustrations and photographs of some of the birds . The report lists records that have not been accepted , often noting the most significant that remain under consideration .

The committee also publishes frequent " Rarities Committee news " items (previously called " Rarities Committee news and announcements ") in British Birds .

= = Record reviews = =

BBRC reviews 1200 to 1500 records each year (when it was first set up , the figure was around 200 per year) . Of these , approximately 85 % are accepted : this acceptance rate has remained steady for many years . Species that have caused particular problems include black kite , great snipe , gyrfalcon , gull @-@ billed tern , and North Atlantic little shearwater . Peter Grant estimated that , during his tenure as chairman , approximately 2 % of accepted records are incorrectly accepted , and 5 % are incorrectly rejected .

Wallace (1973) addressed a number of criticisms of the committee including that it provides too little information on the reasons for rarity rejection . Alan Vittery and Sara McMahon have both argued that the committee should inform observers whose records are rejected of the committee 's reasons for doing so . This view also has the support of the editor of Birdwatch , Dominic Mitchell , who has made this the topic of editorials on a number of occasions .

BBRC has from time to time published material illustrating its assessment process in an attempt to explain to a wider audience how it arrives at its decisions . Much of these have appeared in a series called " From the Rarities Committees files " in British Birds magazine . Another short series was published in Birdwatch magazine : entitled " You : The Jury " , it featured six fictitious rarity accounts , with , in the subsequent issue , accounts from two rarities committee members stating how they would vote .

= = = Re @-@ reviews = = =

From time to time , BBRC has re @-@ reviewed records that it previously accepted , to ensure they are acceptable in the light of improved knowledge of the species in question . These reviews are carried out on a species @-@ by @-@ species basis . Old World warblers have proved particularly in need of re @-@ review . A review of greenish warbler records was initiated in 1983 . The purpose of this review was to establish whether records , particular those in late autumn and winter , of drab grey Phylloscopus warblers , which had previously been accepted as greenish warbler , were in fact this species , or were common chiffchaffs of the Siberian race tristis . 48 records between 1958 and 1970 were examined . Of these , 20 were rejected . A review of Arctic warbler records was begun in 1991 , with the aim of determining whether any greenish warblers had been mistakenly accepted as Arctics . The review was completed in 1994 , although as of 2009 , the results had not been published .

A review of spectacled warbler records was initiated in 1984 . This review resulted in the species being removed from the British list ; of the three accepted records , one , at Spurn , Yorkshire in 1968 , was re @-@ identified as a first @-@ year female subalpine warbler , while descriptions of the other two , at Porthgwarra , Cornwall in October 1969 and on Fair Isle in June 1979 , were not considered sufficiently watertight to permit their continued acceptance . Spectacled warbler has since been re @-@ added to the British list following an individual at Filey , Yorkshire in 1992 , and there have been further subsequent records . In the late 1990s , BBRC reviewed some of the accepted records of moustached warbler , and concluded that one , from Sussex in 1979 , was unacceptable , but that one other , from Buckinghamshire in 1965 , should stand . Two further records , from Hampshire in 1951 and Kent in 1952 , were reviewed as part of the 1950 ? 1957 review (see below) , and found to be unacceptable . Following these rejections , the Buckinghamshire record , and the remaining record , a breeding pair in Cambridgeshire in 1946 , previously accepted as Britain 's first , were scrutinised by the BOURC and found to be unacceptable , leading to the removal of moustached warbler from the British list ; it has not re @-@ occurred .

A review of olivaceous warbler records commenced in 1986 , and continued through the 1990s . The results of this review were published in 1999 : six of the previously accepted records were rejected as not meeting modern identification standards . In 2003 , following the split of olivaceous warbler into two species , the accepted records were all reviewed again to ascertain which of the two they were ? all nine proved to be eastern olivaceous warblers . Following the split of Bonelli 's

warbler into two species , the committee reviewed all the 121 accepted records , and concluded that 51 were western and two were eastern ; for the remainder , not enough evidence was available to make a firm decision . The committee had previously stated that it would regard as western Bonelli 's warbler all except proven eastern Bonelli 's warblers , however , this announcement rescinded that decision . In 2003 ? 04 , all desert warbler records were reviewed , and it was concluded that all were referable to the newly split Asian desert warbler , rather than African desert warbler .

A review of American and Pacific golden plover records was begun in 1991 , with the purpose of evaluating whether any individuals previously accepted as " either American or Pacific " could now be definitely assigned to one species or the other (and vice versa) . The results (a small decrease in the number of accepted American golden plovers , and a small increase in the number of accepted Pacifics) were published in the committee 's report for 1996 , with a comment that a detailed paper on the subject was being prepared , although as of 2009 , this has not been published . A review of isabelline shrike records commenced in 1986 . This review , the results of which were published in 1989 , established a racial identification for a number of adult isabelline shrikes previously accepted to species level . A further review , with the same aim , was begun in the late 1990s . A preliminary set of results of this review was published in 2003 ; four previously accepted individuals were rejected , including one , in Cambridgeshire in 1978 , which is now thought have been a hybrid with red @-@ backed shrike . The full results of this second review were published in 2007 ; some of the previous racial attributions were withdrawn , but the committee felt able to confidently assign a race for a number of more recent individuals , although it stressed that this could only be done with adult birds (the committee 's 2005 report mentions that a further article is in preparation) . A review of black @-@ eared wheatears was conducted in 2002 ? 04 , with the aim of assigning individuals to the eastern and western races where possible ; this was possible with nine records ; both western *hispanica* and eastern *melanoleuca* were shown to have occurred .

A review of semipalmated sandpiper records took place in the 1970s , resulting in seven of the twelve records being rejected . A review of black @-@ headed wagtail records was initiated in 1983 . The results were published in 1994 and 1995 , and nine previously accepted records were judged to be unsound , due to possible confusion with grey @-@ headed wagtail . A review of rufous turtle dove records took place in 1994 , and concluded that three of the eight accepted records should no longer stand . A review of lesser kestrel records , begun in 1994 , and completed in 1995 , concluded that six accepted records of this species should no longer be regarded as acceptable . Five of the six were from autumn , whereas the overwhelming majority of records the committee continued to accept are from the spring / summer period . All 24 spring records of Siberian stonechat were reconsidered in 2002 ? 04 , in the light of new information on the variability in appearance of European stonechats in spring ; the committee decided that all but five should remain accepted . In 2003 , the committee revised its assessment criteria for male pine buntings , redefining some birds previously considered hybrids as acceptable , but requiring an overall greater level of precision in descriptions , and reviewed past records in the light of these changes .

As of 2007 , the following reviews are underway : a review of past records of Macaronesian shearwaters , reviews of all redhead and royal tern records , a review of great white egrets to establish if any are of the Nearctic race , a review of sandplovers , a review of records of the eastern race of redstart , a review of Orphean warbler records aimed at determining the race of each , and a review of subalpine warblers to determine which individuals are ascribable to the race *albistriata* . It has also been suggested that reviews should be conducted of records of great snipe , as older records show a very different temporal occurrence pattern than more recent birds , the large numbers of gull @-@ billed tern records from the English south coast from the 1960s , and desert wheatears , to establish racial identifications .

= = = Problematic records = = =

Most records received by the committee are processed within a year and published in its annual report in *British Birds* . Some records prove problematic , and for some species , it has taken the committee many years to come to a decision . This has particularly been the case where the species

or subspecies in question was new to Britain ? examples include northern harrier (Britain 's first , in Scilly in 1982 , accepted in 2007) , long @-@ toed stint (Britain 's first , in Cornwall in 1970 , accepted in 1994) , least tern (Britain 's first , and to date only record , accepted in 2005 , after first occurring in 1983) , black lark (Britain 's first , from Spurn , Yorkshire in 1984 , accepted in 2004 after a second set of notes came to light) , Sykes 's warbler (the first three records , from 1959 , 1977 , and 1993 , accepted in 2003) , Iberian chiffchaff (the first two records , from 1972 and 1992 , accepted in 2000) , and Hume 's leaf warbler (the first 27 records , the earliest from 1966 , accepted in 1998) . Occasionally , decisions have been delayed due to non @-@ ornithological factors , perhaps most notably with the loss by the Royal Mail of a file on Britain 's first lesser short @-@ toed lark .

The first three field records of Blyth 's pipit , including an atypical pale individual on the Isles of Scilly , proved difficult , but following the occurrence of trapped individuals , on Fair Isle in 1993 and Suffolk in 1994 , these were accepted . Some records of citrine wagtail and short @-@ toed treecreeper were accepted only after prolonged consideration . Prior to the publication in 1984 of Jonsson and Grant 's stint identification paper , a number of stints (*Calidris*) proved difficult to assess ; a paper covering four such cases was published in 1986 . It included accounts of a bird on Fair Isle , originally thought Britain 's first red @-@ necked stint that turned out to be a sanderling ; and a bird in Suffolk , The " Felixstowe stint " , which most observers at the time believed was a western sandpiper , but was in fact a semipalmated sandpiper . A previous paper details four early claims of red @-@ necked stint , none of which were acceptable .

As of 2007 , records of Wilson 's snipe (from 1985 and 1998) , elegant terns (from 2002) , a number of eastern whitethroats and lesser whitethroats , and several apparent North African common chaffinches , are still under consideration .

= = = Problematic seabird records = = =

BBRC has had particular problems with a number of rare seabirds . The " Chalice petrel " , a dark @-@ rumped storm petrel seen and photographed in the Southwest Approaches in 1988 , and believed by its observers to be a Matsudaira 's storm petrel , was eventually rejected as other similar species could not be ruled out . Martin Garner and Killian Mullarney subsequently wrote a critical review of this decision , arguing that the evidence points to the bird having been a Swinhoe 's storm petrel , the only dark @-@ rumped storm petrel species otherwise recorded in the North Atlantic . They argued that the Seabirds Advisory Panel 's assessment of the record was at fault , and a critical reappraisal of the evidence should have been prompted by the (then relatively recent) discovery in the North Atlantic of Swinhoe 's storm petrel , and that the committee was instead too heavily swayed by the views of a single expert .

A petrel seen from Dungeness , Kent and believed by its observers to be Britain 's first herald petrel was rejected , although the committee noted that the bird was clearly " an amazing seabird " . This decision sparked a number of letters to British Birds questioning whether the committee 's stance is too strict . Fea 's petrel is now officially accepted as having occurred , but for many years , the identification of these birds was accepted only as Fea 's / Zino 's / soft @-@ plumaged petrel , followed by a period where they were referred to Fea 's or Zino 's ; however , following BOURC acceptance of two birds in Scilly waters as Fea 's petrels , BBRC published a paper arguing that all birds are likely to have been Fea 's .

The occurrence in Britain of southern (i.e. south polar / brown) skuas is also unresolved . A series of reports of south polar skua , from 1982 to 1993 , were all eventually rejected after being assessed for several years . Two other birds (from the Isles of Scilly in 2001 , and Glamorgan in 2002 have been accepted (by the BOURC) as belonging to one or other of these two species , while a bird from Dorset in 1996 remains under consideration .

= = = Criticisms of level of detail required and approach to single @-@ observer records = = =

In 1996 , Alan Vittery raised the question of whether the level of detail required by the committee for

a description to be acceptable was too high . Similar points were made by Keith Vinicombe and Mike Pennington in 2001 . In the light of the rejection of a record of Blyth 's reed warbler on Shetland in 1997 , Vinicombe and Pennington wrote to British Birds to question the decision . They suggested that the committee was becoming too focussed on minutiae in assessing bird descriptions , ignoring more obvious evidence , Vinicombe saying that " the Committee has prevaricated to the point where it ' cannot see the wood for the trees ' " . David Walker and Owen Leyshon , David Ferguson , and Andrew Duff have criticised the committee on similar grounds in relation to its approach to the assessment of rare seabirds , citing the Dungeness herald petrel claim as an example . Vittery , and Moss Taylor both expressed concern that BBRC was adopting too strict an approach for records of birds seen only by their finder .

In 1998 , BBRC explained its approach to the assessment of single @-@ observer records . The committee explained that while it understood that geographical and social circumstances make it likely that some people are more likely to find rare birds on their own , it is " very cautious about observers with a high proportion of single @-@ observer records " and that its policy is to watch patterns closely and review those observers ' past records on a regular basis . This approach has attracted criticism . Former BBRC chairman Ian Wallace and others have written about the subject in Birdwatch magazine . Wallace believes that the committee has a blacklist of observers , from whom it automatically rejects records unless there are other observers able to corroborate the sighting . He mentions two specific observers , both of whom live in remote parts of northern Scotland . Ken Shaw , a former BBRC member , has claimed that BBRC would not accept a single @-@ observer record of a species new to Britain without photographic evidence , regardless of the track record of the observer . Graham Bell , another former member , writing in response to Shaw 's article , has accused the committee of adopted unfounded suspicions , arguing that just because a competent observer moves to an underwatched part of the country , their abilities do not change . One of the observers who Wallace claimed was blacklisted , Alan Vittery , also contributed to the debate , stating that he had been informed by the BBRC that they would not consider any single @-@ observer record he submitted , unless supported by a photograph . Vittery contrasted the BBRC 's attitude with that of other national rarities committees , arguing that the result of the approach is to distort rarity statistics . Vittery invited the BBRC to reply in public , but this request was declined .

= = = The Druridge Bay curlew = = =

The BBRC conducted a detailed review into the controversial identification of a curlew seen at Druridge Bay in Northumberland in 1998 , coming to the conclusion that it was , as had been believed by many observers , a first @-@ summer slender @-@ billed curlew . This identification was accepted by the British Ornithologists Union 's Records Committee , leading to the addition of this species to the British List . The record is currently being reviewed again by BBRC to establish whether this earlier decision should be upheld .

= = = Review of 1950 ? 57 records including an Ascension frigatebird sighting = = =

A subcommittee was set up in 1997 to undertake a review of rare bird records from the years immediately prior to BBRC 's establishment . The purpose of the review was to ensure that all records from 1950 onwards (the cut @-@ off date for Category A of the BOU British List of birds) have been subjected to a similar level of scrutiny . Not all of the 1 @, @ 100 records of species considered to be rarities at that time were assessed , but only those related to species not recorded more than 100 times by 1997 , as well as a few records of less rare species under particularly unusual circumstances , which were termed " sore thumbs " . Much of the original documentation was unavailable for the review , as it had been lost , and so for many records , the review was based solely on published accounts of the birds . The most notable outcome of this review was the reidentification of a frigatebird record from Tiree in 1953 . Previously identified as a magnificent frigatebird , the BBRC review concluded that the bird was in fact an Ascension frigatebird , the only individual of this species ever identified in Europe (Walbridge , Small & McGowan 2003) . The full

results of the review were published in 2006 . Of the 126 records reviewed , 37 were rejected as unacceptable . These included a claimed white @-@ tailed eagle , which broke into a chicken @-@ run in a garden and stole a chicken , three little crakes , three European scops owls , the only late December record of tawny pipit , three black @-@ eared wheatears , a record of two White 's thrushes together in April , a spring lanceolated warbler , two moustached warblers and a pine grosbeak . Furthermore , issues were found with the identification of Britain 's first western sandpiper , on Fair Isle in 1956 , and these led the BOURC to reject this record . The western sandpiper has been recorded several times subsequently in Britain however , and remains on the national list . The subcommittee 's final report also hints at the prospect that some records from immediately prior to 1950 may be incorrect ; because these fell outside the timeframes of the review they were not reassessed .

= = = The Chipping Ongar hermit thrush = = =

Only a single known case of fraud involving a record submitted to BBRC has become public . In autumn 1994 , Nigel Pepper , a birdwatcher from Essex , claimed to have recorded a hermit thrush in a garden in Chipping Ongar . Doubts about the record were raised in Birdwatch and BBRC reviewed the record in 2002 , but decided that it should stand . In 2009 , Pepper revealed in Birdwatch magazine (Birdwatch 204 : 46 @-@ 47) that the record was a deception , made in protest at perceived secrecy surrounding rare birds in the county .

= = = Principal works = = =

= = = Annual reports = = =