

# CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL RARITIES TEAM

## GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING SCARCE COUNTY BIRD RECORDS

1. A description should outline the circumstances of the record, including dates, observers' names, optics, light conditions, and distance from bird. It should include key features of the species claimed. Supporting plumage, jizz, and vocal details, together with sketches and/or photographs should be included. Experience of the claimed and similar species should also be indicated. Where possible the standard Rarity Form should be used.

2. Records based solely/mainly on identification by call or song should be supported with a description of the call or song. Ideally, the bird should have been heard more than once and also, ideally, should have been seen at least well enough to eliminate anything else that may have been making the sound heard. Other details should include the number of times the call was heard, the previous experience the observer has had of the species and all possible confusion species, a full description of the call to include a description of the call notes (including length) and if the bird is seen, a description of the 'jizz' of the bird eg: size, shape, mode of flight.

3. The description should contain sufficient detail to eliminate common or confusion species, including eliminating possible hybrids. It should also contain, where possible, sufficient detail to support age and sex determination.

4. Records based solely on unambiguous photographs can be accepted, provided the team is satisfied with the provenance of the photograph.

5. While the experience and reliability of the observer is a factor in evaluating a record, the description needs to be of a standard where someone who does not know the observer would consider that it is far more likely that the identification is correct than that it is not. The level of certainty will depend upon factors such as the rarity status in the county, or any complexities of identification of the species claimed.

6. Acceptance or otherwise of records is based upon the votes of the six team members. In the first round of voting members are not aware of the opinions and comments of other members until after voting is complete. Team members should not make assumptions about things not included in the description. Team members can vote to pend a record if they have questions about the description, require more information or would value a discussion with their fellow team members.

7. The process for evaluating the record will be on the basis of votes cast to either accept, or reject/deem not proven, or pend for further discussion. The voting system is applicable to all circulations of the record.

6:0 = accepted

5:1 = accepted, unless the team secretary decides, on the basis of comments received, to pend it. The team does feel that it is important that a majority of evidence for acceptance is employed in this case.

4:2, 3:3 or 2:4 = pended

1:5 = rejected/not proven, unless the team secretary decides on the basis of comments received to pend it for discussion.

0:6 = rejected/not proven

Pended records are discussed at a team meeting, taking into account the team's comments from the first circulation. The team members should make a firm decision after the discussion/second circulation, unless further information becomes available. If the decision after the final circulation is still not at least 5:1 in favour of acceptance, the record is considered rejected/not proven.

8. For records submitted by team members, the secretary, in consultation with the County Recorder and other team members, will decide how to resolve them; this may simply be via a vote by the other team members.

9. Team members' comments about reasons for acceptance or rejected/not proven should be filed with the description by the secretary. The reasons for non-acceptance of records should, in a timely fashion, be fed back to the observers who submitted the record. Options to publish either accepted or not proven records in the CAWOS newsletter *Bird News*, or on the CAWOS website, should be explored to facilitate good practice on a regular basis.

**Rarities Team: Steve Barber, Allan Conlin, Howard Fearn, Hugh Pulsford, Jane Turner, Steve Williams**