

Harrop, A., Gilroy, J., McNerny, C., Dudley, S., Balmer, D., Batty, C., French, P., Lees, A., Musgrove, A. and Stoddart, A. (2020) British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC): 50th Report (October 2019). *Ibis*, 162(1), pp. 263-268. (doi: [10.1111/ibi.12762](https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.12762))

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British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC): 50th Report (October 2019)

This report covers the period October 2018 to September 2019. The 49th Report appeared in *Ibis* 160: 936-942.

CHANGES TO THE BRITISH LIST

The following changes have been made to the British List.

'Richardson's' Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii* (Richardson)

Add subspecies B. h. hutchinsii[†] (Richardson) to the British List

One, third-calendar-year or older, Holkham Freshmarsh, Norfolk, 6-23 February 1999 (photographed).

After many years of debate, some clarity about the taxonomic relationships, identification and distribution of the North American 'white-cheeked' geese of the genus *Branta* has been achieved (*North American Birds* 62: 344-360, *Br. Birds* 109: 677-684). This allowed the acceptance of Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* to the British List (*Ibis* 159: 238-242). However, at that time, it was felt that the first British record, from Plex Moss and Formby Moss, Lancashire during November 1976, could not be conclusively identified to subspecies.

Following this decision, a number of candidates were considered by BOURC for subspecies-level acceptance, resulting in a unanimous decision that the Holkham Freshmarsh individual from November 1999 showed features consistent with the subspecies *B. h. hutchinsii*. Furthermore, there was no evidence of a captive origin, with the bird seen in a flock of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*, a plausible carrier species for a vagrant crossing the Atlantic. Thus the record and subspecies was accepted to Category A.

Breeds in north and central Canada and Greenland, migrating to winter in Texas, USA and Mexico.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* (Linnaeus)

Add to Category C5

One, adult, Cowpen Bewley, Cleveland, 8 April 2018 (photographed, ringing recovery of colour-ring field sighting).

This species is already placed in Category C1 of the British List (and also in Category E*) (*Ibis* 160: 190-240), due to the presence of a naturalized population in England (<https://app.bto.org/mapstore/StoreServlet?id=59>).

However, the increase of a much larger naturalized population on the near

Continent in the Netherlands has resulted in the movement of these birds to other countries. The presence of an adult in Cleveland ringed with Darvik colour-rings in Amsterdam on 21 July 2017 confirmed that continental naturalized birds can reach Britain. This individual was with two other non-ringed birds, which were likely of the same origin.

As an immigrant species 'from established naturalized populations abroad' this made the record a 'Vagrant naturalized species' (*Ibis* 160: 190-240), and so eligible for Category C5.

Category C5 was added to the British List in 2005 (*Ibis* 147: 803-820) in recognition of increasing naturalized populations of several species on the near Continent. This is the first record of any species to be formally admitted to Category C5.

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* (Georgi)

Add to Category A

One, male, adult, Welney, Norfolk 9-27 December 1986; same Pitsford, Northamptonshire, 15 February to 5 April 1987; same Welney, Norfolk 20 August to 8 October 1987; same Thrapston/Ringstead, Northamptonshire 12 December 1987 to 6 March 1988 (photographed).

Falcated Duck has been considered for addition to the British List on a number of occasions, during which time it remained in Category D (*Ibis* 135: 493-499; 153: 227-232; 154: 212-215; 160: 190-240; 160: 936-942).

As is often the case with wildfowl, the issue was not of identification, which is relatively straightforward, but to decide the origin of individuals, which could either be from the wild or escapes from captive collections, as the species is kept widely. The most recent surveys of the wild population from 2002-07 estimated 89,000 individuals (*Biological Conservation* 141: 2301-2309), and extralimital birds have been recorded outside the eastern Palearctic range of the species. These observations support the notion that vagrants can reach Western Europe where, for example, the species has been added to the national list of the Netherlands.

After the careful consideration of a number of plausible candidates the Committee decided, by a two-thirds majority, that the Welney, Norfolk bird first seen in December 1986, subsequently observed at other sites in Northamptonshire and again at Welney, until March 1988, was eligible for Category A.

A paper discussing this decision in more detail will be published in *British Birds* (Stoddart & McInerney In Prep.).

Breeds in Mongolia, eastern Siberia and north-east China. Migrates south to winter in northern India, south and eastern China, South Korea and Japan.

It should be placed after Gadwall *Mareca strepera* on the British List as follows:

Falcated Duck[†] A

***Mareca falcata* (Georgi)**

One record: male, adult, Welney, Norfolk, December 1986; same Pitsford, Northamptonshire, February to April 1987; same Welney, Norfolk August to October 1987; same Thrapston/Ringstead, Northamptonshire December 1987 to March 1988.

V monotypic.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* Bruch

Add to Category A

One, third-calendar-year or older, near Land's End and roaming, then Drift Reservoir and other sites, Cornwall and Devon, 7 May to 20 November 2016 (photographed).

The appearance of this individual in south-west England and its extensive stay resulted in much debate about its origin. From plumage details it was confirmed that the same bird had passed through Poland, Germany and France, before arriving in England. In some of these countries the record was also accepted to Category A of national lists.

As a first for Britain, BOURC had to decide whether this bird derived from wild populations in the eastern Mediterranean, or from a captive collection. Mediterranean populations have been increasing in numbers and wild birds are known to wander far from breeding areas (*Ibis* 150: 606-618). Conversely, the species is kept widely in captivity with a number of known escapes found in Western Europe, some of which have wandered surprisingly large distances, even between countries.

After careful consideration, and discussion with other European committees where this individual had been observed, BOURC decided that, by a majority decision, in the balance of probabilities, that the record was likely of wild origin.

A paper describing the background to this decision has been published in *British Birds* (*Br. Birds* 112: 403-406).

Breeds from south-east Europe to China, with birds moving small distances to winter from Greece to south China.

It should be placed after Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* on the British List as follows:

Family Pelecanidae

Dalmatian Pelican[†] A

***Pelecanus crispus* Bruch**

One record: third-calendar-year or older, near Land's End and roaming, then Drift Reservoir and other sites, Cornwall and Devon, May to November 2016.

V monotypic.

Little Auk *Alle alle polaris* Stenhouse

Add subspecies A. a. polaris[†] *Stenhouse to the British List*

One, female, adult, near Lerwick, Mainland, Shetland, 19 January 1956 (specimen Bolton Museum, INV:19160).

Examination of museum specimens confirmed that the 1956 individual had biometrics, particularly wing-length, which identified it to this taxon from the eastern edge of the global breeding range of the species. A paper describing this decision has been published in *Scottish Birds* (*Scott. Birds* 38: 297-303).

Breeds from Franz Josef Land (Russia) to St. Lawrence Island (Alaska), and wintering in the Barents Sea.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* (M.H.K. Lichtenstein)

Add to Category A

One, first-calendar-year, Hornsea Mere, Yorkshire, 14 October 2018 (photographed).

The series of excellent photographs helped confirm the identification of this bird, and excluded closely-related and similar looking congeners. There are no issues with provenance, as the species is not kept in captivity. Indeed, the species had long been a predicted vagrant to Britain, with a small migratory population in south-west Europe, where it is a summer breeding visitor from sub-Saharan Africa. In autumn 2018, numerous extra-limital swifts of the genus *Apus* with similar European distributions appeared in Britain, including relatively large numbers of Pallid Swifts *A. pallidus* and a single Little Swift *A. affinis*. So the appearance of this individual was likely associated with the same weather patterns.

Breeds throughout sub-Saharan Africa and Morocco with small numbers migrating to breed during the summer in Spain and Portugal.

It should be placed after Little Swift *Apus affinis* on the British List as follows:

White-rumped Swift † A

***Apus caffer* (M.H.K. Lichtenstein)**

One record: first-calendar-year, Hornsea Mere, Yorkshire, 14 October 2018.
V monotypic.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca halimodendri* Sushkin

Add subspecies S. c. halimodendri[†] *Sushkin to the British List*

One, first-calendar-year or older, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 16 October 2003 (photographed, trapped, DNA analysis).

One, first-calendar-year, Aberdeen, northeast Scotland, 5-21 December 2004 (photographed, trapped, DNA analysis).

These two records, which showed plumage features consistent with the taxon, were simultaneously considered by BOURC as the analysis of their DNA suggested that though both were subspecies *halimodendri*, each belonged to one of two 'subclades' (*Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 67: 72–85), with the North Ronaldsay bird in 'subclade 2b' and the Aberdeen bird in 'subclade 2a'. It seemed pragmatic to consider both records and formally accept them in case future research results in a taxonomic upgrading of these subclades.

So far, of the British *halimodendri* individuals genetically sampled, eight have been 'subclade 2b' and one 'subclade 2a'; all the other European *halimodendri* to date have been 'subclade 2b' (M. Collinson pers. comm.).

Breeds in south-east Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to north-west Mongolia. Winters south-west Asia.

Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris* Cretzschmar

Add to Category A

One, first-calendar-year, Troy Town, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 12-17 October 2017 (photographed).

Photographs of this individual revealed barring in the undertail coverts which is a crucial identification feature for the species, separating it from the closely related, and until recently conspecific, Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*. Furthermore, the feather detail pattern of the outer tail feathers was consistent with this identification.

Breeds from south-east Europe to central Asia, and migrating to winter in north-east Africa to the southern Arabian Peninsula, south Iran, south Pakistan and India.

It should be placed after Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* on the British List as follows:

Eastern Orphean Warbler[†] A *Sylvia crassirostris* Cretzschmar

One record: first-calendar-year, Troy Town, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, October 2017. V subspecies undetermined, but likely to have been nominate *crassirostris*.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii* (Nuttall)

Add subspecies Z. l. gambelii[†] (Nuttall) to the British List

One, second-calendar-year, Woolston Eyes, Cheshire, 30 April 2016 (photographed, trapped).

As a subspecies breeding in north-western North America this taxon seems an unlikely vagrant to Europe. However, a number of individuals showing the distinctive head pattern and bill colour of *gambelii* have been noted on the east coast of North America, so it is prone to vagrancy. Moreover, other north-western

Nearctic bird species, both non-passerines and passerines, have reached Europe, so such extralimital movements can occur.

There is a previous Western Palearctic record of a bird resembling *gambelii* from Corvo, Azores on 20-22 October 2013 (<http://birdingcorvo2013.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/white-crownedsparrow-still-on-show.html>).

The Cheshire individual showed characteristics of the subspecies *gambelii*. Its presence in late April accords with other European records of North American sparrows, which have often been found in late spring. There were no issues with provenance, as the subspecies is not reported in captivity.

Breeds in North America in Alaska and west Canada, migrating south through the western USA to winter to central Mexico.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys leucophrys* (Forster)

Add subspecies Z. l. leucophrys[†] (Forster) to the British List

One, male, second-calendar-year or older, Port of Ness (Port Nis), Isle of Lewis (Eilean Leòdhais), Outer Hebrides, 3-4 and 31 May 2016 (photographed).

Though there are a number of records of this species in Britain and north-west Europe, none had been confirmed as the nominate subspecies *leucophrys*. Breeding in central and north-eastern North America and moving large distances along the east coast to winter in south and south-east USA, this is the most likely subspecies to be a vagrant to Europe.

The Outer Hebrides individual was well photographed and described, allowing confirmation that it was the subspecies *leucophrys*. Previous records, including the first on Fair Isle, Shetland, in 1977, were noted as likely intergrades, showing some 'intermediate' characteristics with other subspecies.

Such a late spring sighting on a Scottish island is typical for vagrant Nearctic sparrows. Furthermore, there are no issues with provenance, as this subspecies is rarely reported in captivity.

Breeds in North America in central and eastern Canada, migrating south to winter in south and south-eastern USA.

IN ADDITION:

CATEGORY A

'Azorean' Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis*

New first record: one, near-adult, Craigston (Baile na Creige), Barra (Barraigh), Outer Hebrides, 10 September 2005 (photographed) pre-dates the previously

accepted record of this subspecies (*Ibis* 159: 238-242), and is therefore accepted as the first British record. A paper describing this record has been published in *British Birds* (*Br. Birds* 110: 666-674).

Breeds on northern Atlantic islands including the Azores, Canaries and Madeira.

CATEGORY E

The following has been placed in Category E

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

One, male, adult, non-breeding plumage, Wells Woods, Norfolk, 21-30 October 1988 (photographed).

The species is in Category A based on a subsequent record of a first-calendar-year male, on Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire (Sir Benfro) in 1996 (*Ibis* 160: 190-240). One other record has been accepted to Category A, with others placed in Category E. However, this Norfolk record, along with three others, was placed in Category D (*Ibis* 141: 175-180).

Though the Norfolk bird was found in mid-October, and coincided closely with an arrival of multiple North American species in Western Europe, other features about the record were concerning. The bird was an adult in unusual feather moult for October, and it is notable that all other autumn Western Palearctic records of this passerine, of which there are about 60, have been aged as first-calendar-year. Furthermore, a series of European observations the following spring remains unparalleled and may have involved birds which arrived via the bird trade; for example, MAFF data showed that up to 50 birds were imported to the UK from the Netherlands and Belgium during 1988. These considerations resulted in the Committee placing the record in Category E.

Breeds across eastern and central North America, with winter movements of birds south to southern North America, Central America and northern South America.

CHANGES TO THE BRITISH LIST AFTER THE ADOPTION OF VERSION 8.2 OF THE *IOC WORLD BIRD LIST*

The decision by BOU to adopt the taxonomy of the *IOC World Bird List* (www.worldbirdnames.org/) resulted in many changes to the British List: these were implemented in the 9th Edition using IOC version 7.3 (*Ibis* 160: 190-240; 241-248). Following a subsequent update of the British List to comply with the revised IOC version 8.2 (*Ibis* 160: 936-942), it was noted that one change was overlooked.

A revision in taxonomy of the Family Locustellidae resulted in some species of the genus *Locustella* being moved to the genus *Helopsaltes*. In the context the British List this results in Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler changing from:

Locustella certhiola to *Helopsaltes certhiola*.

Furthermore, the taxonomic order of Locustellidae is revised.

CHANGES TO THE BRITISH LIST AFTER THE ADOPTION OF VERSIONS 9.1 AND 9.2 OF THE *IOC WORLD BIRD LIST*

The release of version 9.1 of the *IOC World Bird List* resulted in the following change to the British List:

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris* is restored as a subspecies of Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*. This results in the deletion of *Lanius pallidirostris* and its replacement with *L. e. pallidirostris*.

The release of version 9.2 of the *IOC World Bird List* resulted in no further changes to the British List.

BRITISH LIST TOTALS

With the addition of Falcated Duck, Dalmatian Pelican, White-rumped Swift and Eastern Orphean Warbler, and the removal of Steppe Grey Shrike, the British List stands at 619 species.

Category	Total
A	601
B	8
C	10
Total	619

Species in Category D and Category E form no part of the British List.

All the changes listed here can be seen in updated versions of the British List, both in Excel and simple list formats, at www.bou.org.uk/british-list/

FILES UNDER CONSIDERATION

'Continental' Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*

Two records: female, adult, Christchurch, Dorset, February 1873, specimen at Natural History Museum, Tring, accession number NHMUK 1873.12.3.31 (*Ibis* 72: 245-246); male, adult, Orkney, 30 March 1873, specimen at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, accession number NMS.Z 1888.84.162 (*Scott. Birds* 38: 136-138). Both are being considered as the first records of this taxon.

'Mandt's' Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle mandtii*

One, second-calendar-year or older, Cut End, Witham Mouth, Lincolnshire, 7-10 December 2017, is being considered as a first record of this taxon.

'Taiga' Merlin *Falco columbarius columbarius*

One, second-calendar-year or older, Burnside, Scrabster, Caithness, 3-18 February 2018, is being considered as a first record of this taxon.

'North American' Horned Lark (*alpestris* group) *Eremophila alpestris* (*alpestris/praticolalhoysi*)

One, first-calendar-year or older, Askernish (Aisgernis), South Uist (Uibhist a Deas), Outer Hebrides, 9-14 October 2014, is being considered as the first British record of 'North American' Horned Lark.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*
Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*
Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

Following the review and rejection of two British first records, White-winged Lark *Alauda leucoptera* and Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, from East Sussex during the latter half of the nineteenth century, both associated with the taxidermist Mr. G. Swaysland & Son (*Ibis* 160: 936-942, *Br. Birds* 112: 89-98), five other British first records from the same source, area and period are being reviewed.

These include: Black-throated Thrush, one, male, 23 December 1868, near Lewes, specimen at Booth Museum, Brighton, accession number BoMNH 000102; Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, one, male, nominate subspecies *C. g. galactotes*, 16 September 1854, Plumpton Bostall, near Brighton, specimen at Natural History Museum, Tring, NHMUK 1859.8.12.1; Common Rosefinch, one, caught late September 1869 near Brighton, held in an aviary until June 1876; Little Bunting, one, 2 November 1864, Roedean School, Brighton, specimen at Booth Museum, BoMNH 207569; Rustic Bunting, one, 23 October 1867, Roedean School, specimen at Booth Museum, BoMNH 189248 - previously listed as 204074.

BOU WEBSITE: WWW.BOU.ORG.UK

The BOU website is continually updated and contains the latest version of the British List, announcements and the most recent Committee reports. The website is for information purposes only and is not an official document or part of the permanent record. Announcements of changes to the British List do not come into effect until published in a Committee report in *Ibis*.

PUBLICATIONS BY OR, ON BEHALF OF, MEMBERS OF THE BOURC AND MEMBERS OF THE BOURC-CFSC, RELATING TO THE BRITISH LIST, SINCE THE 49th REPORT

French, P.R. & Harrop, A.H.J. 2018. BBRC and BOURC Chairmen's comments on Pale-legged Leaf Warbler: new to Britain. *Br. Birds* 111: 445.
French, P.R. & Harrop, A.H.J. 2018. BBRC and BOURC Chairmen's comments on 'Iberian Wagtail' in Yorkshire: new to Britain. *Br. Birds* 111: 698
French, P.R. & Harrop, A.H.J. 2019. BBRC and BOURC Chairmen's comments on

Eastern Orphean Warbler: new to Britain. *Br. Birds* 112: 152.
French, P.R. & Harrop, A.H.J. 2019. BBRC and BOURC Chairmen's comments on Red-winged Blackbird in Orkney: new to Britain. *Br. Birds* 112: 216
Harrop, A.H.J. 2018. BOURC Chairman's comments on Western Swamphen in Suffolk and Lincolnshire: new to Britain. *Br. Birds* 111: 514.
Harrop, A.H.J. 2019. Before Bristow: The Brighton Rarities. *Br. Birds* 112: 89-98.
McInerny C.J. 2019. The Dalmatian Pelican in Britain. *Br. Birds* 112: 403-406.
McInerny, C.J. & McGowan, R.Y. 2018. The *polaris* subspecies of Little Auk *Alle alle* on the British List. *Scott. Birds* 38: 297-303.
McInerny, C.J. & McGowan, R.Y. 2019. Scottish Birds Records Committee report on rare birds in Scotland, 2017. *Scott. Birds* 39: 99-121.
McInerny C.J. & Stoddart, A. 2019. Bearded Vultures in north-west mainland Europe and Britain. *Br. Birds* 112: 26-34.
Stoddart, A. & Batty, C. 2019. The Elegant Tern in Britain and Europe. *Brit. Birds* 112: 99-109.

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(†) Rare species and subspecies for which descriptions are required by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). For species and subspecies not on the British List but considered by BBRC see www.bbrc.org.uk

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (SEPTEMBER 2018 - SEPTEMBER 2019)

Andrew Harrop (Chairman - September 2018 to March 2019)
James Gilroy (Chairman - from March 2019)
Chris McInerny (Secretary)
Steve Dudley (*ex officio* non-voting member; BOU Chief Operations Officer)
Dawn Balmer
Chris Batty (from April 2019)
Paul French (*ex officio*; BBRC Representative)
Alex Lees
Andy Musgrove
Andy Stoddart

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Bob McGowan (Museums)
Keith Naylor (Historical Records)
Andrew Owen (Captive Birds; Bird Trade)