

Recent BOURC decisions: Mugimaki Flycatcher and Chinese Pond Heron

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Abstract British records of Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* and Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* have presented BOURC with particular issues regarding provenance. This paper sets out the circumstances surrounding each claim, outlines the concerns that arose during the review, and in each case explains the process that led to the decision on categorisation. In particular, occurrences prior to the imposition of the 2005 EU-wide ban on the importation of wild birds from China and elsewhere have greatly affected the assessment of both species.

The British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) is charged with maintaining the British List, a duty which includes considering potential additions (and deletions) of bird species and subspecies and also the question of their categorisation. These deliberations focus on not only the identification but also the provenance of potential new birds for the List. It is this latter aspect that consistently proves the most problematic since, in some cases, it is difficult to establish a natural origin – which is a prerequisite for admission to Category A. In the absence of definitive proof of origin, the Committee's task is to come to the best judgement possible based on the evidence available.

This was the task with the two species discussed here: Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* and Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*. In both cases the identification was established but determining the origin was far from straightforward; indeed they were among the most difficult (and controversial) files ever considered by BOURC, dividing opinion among both the Committee and the wider birding community. This paper is intended to provide an accurate account of how BOURC dealt with these two exceptionally challenging files. Not everyone will agree with the final conclusions reached but the arguments in each case are summarised here

in order to shed some light on the nature of the Committee's deliberations.

Mugimaki Flycatcher

Initial 1993 circulation

On 16th and 17th November 1991, a first-calendar-year (1CY) male Mugimaki Flycatcher was present at Stone Creek, Yorkshire (formerly Humberside). It was seen by a number of observers, and was well described and photographed (Parrish 1991; plate 200, fig. 1). Its identification was accepted by BBRC in 1992 and the record passed to BOURC, who considered the file on four separate occasions between 1993 and 2015. The arguments noted on the file, both for and against the species' admission to Category A, are set out here.

Mugimaki Flycatcher breeds in Russia, from southeast and south-central Siberia to Sakhalin, northern Mongolia, northeast China and North Korea. It leaves the breeding grounds by mid September to winter in southernmost China, Indochina, and south through the Malay peninsula to Sumatra, Borneo and the Philippines. (HBW Alive www.hbw.com/species/mugimaki-flycatcher-ficedula-mugimaki). Rogacheva (1992) reported that its breeding range was expanding westwards.

During the first circulation of the record,

BOURC members noted that such a breeding range and long-distance migratory strategy accord well with a number of other Eastern Palearctic passerines which reach Britain and western Europe, either very occasionally (e.g. Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*) or regularly, sometimes in significant numbers (e.g. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*). All agreed that Mugimaki Flycatcher was at least a potential vagrant and most considered its chances of natural vagrancy to lie somewhere between 'unlikely' and 'possible', although none considered it 'likely'. Some members made the point that the propensity to vagrancy varies from species to species and that there is no automatic 'read across' from, for example, Pallas's Leaf Warbler. In this context it should be noted that no Eastern Palearctic flycatchers are regular vagrants to Europe, with only Taiga Flycatcher *F. albicilla*, Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* and Dark-sided Flycatcher *M. sibirica* so far recorded in a wild state, all of these being extremely rare (Christensen 1960; Fleet 1982; Hirschfeld 1987; BOU 2006, 2010; www.birdguides.com).

In North America, a vagrant, 2CY male Mugimaki Flycatcher was recorded on Shemya Island, Alaska, on 24th May 1985, indicating that the species can occur as a spring 'overshoot' (ABA Checklist Committee 1986; Howell *et al.* 2014). At the time of the first three BOURC circulations, however, there was no evidence of autumn vagrancy apart from a single extralimital occurrence: a 1CY female collected at San Vendemiano, Treviso, Italy on 29th October 1957 (Giol 1959), the specimen of which is now held at the Museum Brandolini Giol, Oderzo, Treviso (Fracasso 2012; Semenzato *et al.* 2015). Some aspects of the Italian record were considered to support the natural occurrence of the Yorkshire individual, notably the date of its arrival, but other aspects were more troubling. In particular, there were concerns about a number of other records from the publisher of the original account, Americo Giol. This same observer had also reported the discovery of a number of other extremely rare birds, both in the province of Treviso and elsewhere in Italy (Semenzato *et al.* 2015). These included three

(!) Jouanin's Petrels *Bulweria fallax* (another Western Palearctic 'first') in 1953 (Giol 1957; Olson 1985) and a Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* in 1957 (Janni & Fracasso 2013), neither of which was subsequently admitted to the Italian List (Baccetti *et al.* 2014). Treviso is an inland province, around 50 km northwest of Venice, and is therefore neither an obvious 'vagrant trap' for passerine migrants nor, evidently, a likely site for pelagic seabirds. Perhaps most compellingly, Janni & Fracasso (2013) regarded the Mugimaki Flycatcher record as 'di dubbia origine' (of dubious origin) and it was not admitted to the Italian List either, being placed in Category D3 (defined as 'Doubts on reliability of the finding circumstances of historical records'; Baccetti *et al.* 2014). These concerns surrounding the origin of the Italian Mugimaki Flycatcher undermined support for vagrancy to western Europe.

As for the specific circumstances of the Yorkshire bird, some BOURC members argued that its age, apparently undamaged condition (captive birds sometimes show damaged feathers and bare parts), location on the east coast of England and the prevailing weather (a northeasterly airflow) all supported the possibility of natural vagrancy. They also considered the November date to be suggestive of natural occurrence and cited the arrival of a number of other Eastern Palearctic passerines in Britain at the same time.

Others, however, were of the view that its age was irrelevant (1CY birds were also being imported and sold in the bird trade) and that the bird's condition, location and the weather conditions could equally be applicable to an escape from the bird trade in continental Europe. As for the question of date, some noted that a November occurrence was rather late for a migrant from Siberian breeding grounds, which are vacated by mid September, and that while autumn 1991 did (as in most years) bring a number of Eastern Palearctic birds to Britain, these had, as usual, arrived mainly in October (Rogers *et al.* 1992). Examination of the records in the days immediately before and after the discovery of the flycatcher revealed just six potentially relevant birds: a Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* in Cornwall, a Pallas's Leaf Warbler,

two Yellow-browed Warblers *P. inornatus* and a Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* in Kent, and a Richard's Pipit in Norfolk.

In terms of the species' escape potential, UK Government import licence data for all wild bird species showed that very large numbers of birds (130,000) were being imported into Britain in 1991, down somewhat from 176,000 in 1990 and 185,000 in 1989 but still a significant figure (Parkin & Shaw 1994). This trade, much of it from China, encompassed a wide variety of passerine species, many of which were also potential natural vagrants to western Europe. For example, it was reported in 1993 that 'a single importer in the Low Countries possessed about 30,000 Eastern Palearctic passerines in (and around!) his aviaries' (Parkin & Shaw 1994). As a consequence of this trade, there had been previous records in western Europe of Asiatic flycatchers

which had probably been imported and subsequently escaped. These included, in continental Europe, Narcissus Flycatchers *F. narcissina* at Salies-du-Béarn, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France, on 19th August 1942 and at Falsterbo, Sweden, on 2nd June 1991 (Evans 1994); and a Dark-sided Flycatcher on Helgoland, Germany, on 16th–21st August 1982 (Stühmer 2005). In Britain, a Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *F. strophciata* was present on Lundy, Devon, on 17th November 1973 (Dymond 1975) and single Verditer Flycatchers *Eumyias thalassinus* at Denburn



Mick Turton



Graham Speight

200 and Fig. 1. First-calendar-year male Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* at Stone Creek, Yorkshire, 16th–17th November 1991.

Wood, Fife, on 3rd–4th October 1993 (Culshaw 1994; *Scottish Birds* 17: 100), and Landguard, Suffolk, on 12th May 1994 (Evans 1994).

There was also evidence of Mugimaki Flycatchers being present in captivity both in Britain and on the near Continent. The species was first noted being advertised for sale in Britain in mainstream trade during 1989 in *Cage and Aviary Birds* and was advertised there again in 1990. However, import licence data confirmed the species' presence in trade in Britain as early as 1986, when 16 were imported. Seven Mugimaki Flycatchers were imported in 1989 and ten in 1990, but although none were officially recorded in 1991 the species was still being sold in 1997. Although these numbers appear small, it was noted that most birds were not properly identified by the importer, often being attributed simply to a generic category such as 'flycatchers'. The official figures therefore probably under-represent the true numbers of imported birds. Furthermore, the existence of 'informal', undocumented trade means that the picture was probably even more incomplete.

Finally, there was also the curious issue of an anonymous letter, sent to the RSPB and apparently written by someone 'concerned with the shipping trade' and with 'connections with the airfreight trade' purporting to come from 'The Dock Complex, Felixstowe, Suffolk'. The letter alleged that 'this species [Mugimaki Flycatcher] recently figured in a shipment into the Netherlands, the origin being Bangkok' and that 'several birds from a very recent consignment were released into the wild in the latter days of October in Holland'. The letter was apparently an attempt to draw attention to the practice of releasing unwanted birds rather than a bid to discredit the vagrancy credentials of the Yorkshire bird but it nonetheless raised concerns. Despite attempts being made to identify and contact the letter's author, no corroboration of its claims could be made and although it was considered by most not to be a hoax, its contents were regarded by BOURC as 'inadmissible'. In any case, given that Mugimaki Flycatcher was already known to be in trade, the contents of the letter did not add materially to the argument.

Given the evidence, BOURC members considered the escape potential of Mugimaki Flycatcher to lie between 'possible' and 'likely'. All noted the worrying coincidence in timing between the species' appearance in the bird trade and the Yorkshire record.

The first circulation, in 1993, resulted in seven members voting to admit Mugimaki Flycatcher to Category D of the British List and four voting for Category A (BOU 1994). According to BOURC's constitution, any record where the identification is accepted but for which the categorisation option is either A or D/E requires a two-thirds majority, in the absence of which Category D is the default option. In this instance, therefore, the record was placed in Category D 'pending further information on patterns of natural vagrancy and the situation in captivity' (BOU 1994). The reasons for this categorisation were explained in more detail by Parkin & Shaw (1994).

Subsequent circulations

In accordance with BOURC procedures, whereby Category D records are reviewed every five years or when new information becomes available, the record was revisited in 1998, resulting in a similar balance of views (four votes for Category A and six for Category D; BOU 2001) and again in 2008 (five votes for Category A, three for Category D and two for Category E; BOU 2010). Thus, despite the record being considered by an ever-growing number of BOURC members, the general voting pattern did not change.

Subsequently, on 6th October 2011, a 1CY male Mugimaki Flycatcher was observed at Passo della Berga, Brescia, also inland in northern Italy (Barezzani & Ebels 2012), and was accepted by the Italian authorities as a wild bird (Janni & Fracasso 2013). Barezzani & Ebels (2012) reported another extralimital record of an adult male at Neftekamsk, Bashkortostan, European Russia, on 2nd August 2007. These new observations prompted a further BOURC circulation of the Yorkshire record in 2015. During this circulation some members noted that the Brescia bird's age (1CY) and date were consistent with a natural vagrant. Others pointed to the inland location (again) and were less convinced by the occurrence than they would

have been by one found on an island or at a coastal site in northwest Europe, a more typical locality for an Eastern Palearctic passerine vagrant.

For Category D records, BOURC procedures at the time stated that a record could be reviewed up to three times in order to establish whether the species should be transferred to either Category A or Category E of the British List. Under the rules, the 2015 circulation was therefore the third and final review. It generated four votes for Category A and four for Category E and the species was therefore placed in Category E (BOU 2016a). It is noteworthy (and unusual) that four different circulations of BOURC (involving 32 members) had been unable to come to a consensus on this record. However, this range of opinions also reflected those expressed outside the Committee in the wider birding community.

In a final twist, BOURC agreed in December 2016 to reverse its previous policy of time-limiting records in Category D (BOU 2016b). This step avoids moving species into Category E that are not obvious escapes and for which, given further time, additional information might be forthcoming. In this context, the review of the Mugimaki Flycatcher record was revisited and the species moved back into Category D.

It is important to note that records in either Category D or Category E can be reviewed at any time following new evidence, but that those in Category D are subject to ongoing review. In the case of Mugimaki Flycatcher, the occurrence of another in Britain or northwest Europe in autumn at a coastal migration site in suitable arrival conditions would constitute powerful evidence of natural vagrancy. In 2005, a temporary ban on the import of wild birds into the EU was imposed as part of measures to combat the spread of the H5N1 strain of the avian influenza virus, with this ban made permanent from July 2007 (European Commission 2010). Thus any new records will most probably originate from wild populations.

Yet in the 25 years since the 1991 record, despite ever more Eastern Palearctic passerines being found in Britain and several new species being added to the British List (e.g. Eastern Crowned Warbler *P. coronatus*,

Pale-legged/Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *P. tenellipes/borealoides*, Chestnut-eared Bunting *E. fucata* and Rufous-tailed Robin *Larvivora sibilans*), there have been no further sightings of Mugimaki Flycatcher either in Britain or in northwest Europe. The only British record occurred at a time of known mass bird importation from Asia into Europe (including this species) and, ultimately, this was the key consideration in its eventual placement in Category D.

Chinese Pond Heron Norfolk and Hampshire 2004

On 31st October 2004, an adult Chinese Pond Heron in full breeding plumage was found at Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk (Bowman 2004; Gantlett 2004; pp. 335–344). It was seen by three observers, well described and photographed but was not present the next day. Subsequently, the same bird (identifiable by the presence of a small pale spot behind the eye) was relocated at East Dean, Hampshire, on 13th November 2004 (Gantlett 2004). Here it was seen by two observers and was also photographed, but it flew off and was not seen again.

The bird's identification was accepted by BBRC in 2005, with the record being discussed in its 2004 Report (Rogers *et al.* 2005) and formally published in Appendix 3 of the 2008 Report (Hudson *et al.* 2009). The record was passed to BOURC, who considered the file in 2005 and 2006. The arguments noted on file both for and against the species' admission to Category A are set out here.

The Chinese Pond Heron breeds in the Russian Far East, northeast and eastern China, northern Burma and northern Indochina, with northern populations moving south in autumn to winter mainly in Indochina, Malaysia, Borneo and Sumatra (HBW Alive www.hbw.com/species/chinese-pond-heron-ardeola-bacchus). At the time of the first circulation the species had also occurred elsewhere in Asia and reached the islands in the northern Pacific: in western India (Gujarat), Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Siberia (Lake Baikal), western China (Taklamakan Desert), South Korea, Japan and Guam (Parasharya 1983; Ali & Ripley 1989; Hoffmann 1996; Kushlan & Hancock 2005; Khan *et al.* 2015). The species had also

occurred outside Asia on three occasions: at Hellesylt, Møre og Romsdal, Norway, shot in October 1973 (Folkestad 1978); at St Paul, Pribilof Islands, Alaska, USA, on 4th–9th August 1996; and at Virágoskút fishponds, Hortobágy, Hungary, on 14th–22nd August 2000 (Ecsedi *et al.* 2000). All three birds were adults in breeding plumage. Of these extralimital records, the Alaskan bird was considered to be wild and admitted onto the North American ABA Checklist (Hoyer & Smith 1996; Howell *et al.* 2014). The Norwegian bird was initially accepted onto Category A of the national list but later moved to Category D as part of a general review (Mjøs 2002). The bird in Hungary was also initially considered to be wild but, following the Norwegian precedent, it was subsequently accepted onto Category D (G. Magyar *in litt.*).

BOURC members acknowledged that some heron species are capable of very long-distance movements and that the Chinese Pond Heron had vagrancy potential, noting that although the sample size was very small all three records beyond Asia fell in the autumn period. Some considered its chances of reaching Britain in a wild state to be ‘unlikely’, however, noting also that, contrary to the normal expectation, the extralimital records all involved adults. Other members were, however, less convinced that the age of

these birds counted against their vagrancy credentials, citing the example of shrikes *Lanius*, a genus which produces a high proportion of adult vagrants. Furthermore, the preponderance of adults might be explained by the much harder-to-identify immatures being overlooked, misidentified as young Squacco Herons *A. ralloides*. It was therefore possible that the true level of vagrancy was being understated.

As for the specific circumstances of the Norfolk and Hampshire individual, some members argued that its wariness, lack of a ring, apparently undamaged condition and initial location on the east coast of England all supported the notion of natural vagrancy. They also considered that the October date was suggestive of a natural occurrence and cited the arrival of a number of Eastern Palearctic passerines at the same time, most notably two British ‘firsts’ – Chestnut-eared Bunting and Rufous-tailed Robin. It was also noted that the Norfolk Chinese Pond Heron appeared to be on migration, moving on rapidly in a southwesterly direction to Hampshire and then quickly moving on again, a scenario that suggested a wild bird.

However, all members were concerned by the fact that the bird was still in full breeding plumage in late October and November, a time when it would be expected to have moulted into non-breeding plumage. Other

Phil Palmer



201. 2CY (first-winter) Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*, Hythe, Kent, 4th March 2014.

extralimital European birds had also been in breeding plumage, but the Alaska and Hungary records had been in August (when this would be expected) and the date of the Norway record (although probably October) was not exactly known. The apparently anomalous plumage state of the Norfolk bird therefore posed a conundrum. Could a wild vagrant exhibit such a plumage, or did it instead indicate that it had been kept in a captive environment resulting in the normal moult cycle being interrupted or delayed? Independent advice from multiple sources in Asia indicated that Chinese Pond Herons moult into non-breeding plumage by October with no known instances of birds still in breeding plumage in late October or November (Rogers *et al.* 2005).

Given this evidence, it was important to determine the species' status in captivity and its potential to occur as an escape. Following these investigations by the Committee's captive-bird consultant, it was established that London Zoo had held eight Chinese Pond Herons in 1999 and had successfully bred the species. In 2004, however, the zoo held only one individual and this was still present and in non-breeding plumage (Gantlett 2004). No other captive Chinese Pond Herons could be traced elsewhere in zoos or public collections. In contrast, both Javan Pond Heron *A. speciosa* and Indian Pond Heron *A. grayii* were held more widely in captivity. It was also recognised that zoo inventories could be out of date or inaccurate, information could be incomplete and misidentifications could occur. Furthermore, while the contents of zoos and public collections are normally well documented, the same could not be said for

private collections, since owners might, for a variety of reasons, choose not to register or reveal their holdings. It was therefore impossible to definitively rule out the possibility of an escape from an unknown, undocumented source, either in Britain or on the Continent.

BOURC therefore faced a dilemma. Chinese Pond Heron was a possible, though unlikely, vagrant to Britain, with other European records regarded as escapes and no pattern of natural vagrancy established. On the other hand, it appeared to be an unlikely, though possible, escape. Furthermore, the retention of breeding plumage by the Norfolk and Hampshire individual in October and November was undocumented in a wild bird, yet did not necessarily indicate a captive origin. In this context, six members voted to admit the species to Category E, with four voting for Category D. The record was therefore placed in Category E (BOU 2007).

Kent 2014

Almost ten years later, on 17th January 2014, a small heron with white wings was found at



Paul Rowe

202. 2CY (first-winter) Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*, Hythe, Kent, 8th March 2014.

Hythe, Kent (pp. 335–344). It remained in the Hythe and Saltwood area, although often elusive, until it was last seen on 13th March. During this time it was seen by many observers, photographed and identified as a Chinese Pond Heron (plates 201 & 202). It was found dead on 25th March, after which a DNA analysis was carried out, which confirmed its identity. Identification was accepted by BBRC in 2015, with the bird aged as a 2CY, and the record passed to BOURC, who considered the file in 2015 and 2016.

In terms of the bird's vagrancy potential, similar arguments were put forward as had been the case with the Norfolk and Hampshire individual. In the intervening years, Chinese Pond Heron had expanded its breeding range into Japan (Heron Conservation www.heronconservation.org/styled-5/styled-17), and was now regarded as a rare passage migrant in Mongolia rather than a vagrant, being recorded annually in recent years (Bräunlich & Buchheim 2009). There had also been an increasing number of observations outside the normal range in Asia, suggesting that the species was prone to vagrancy. To the west these included a bird in Bhutan in June 2013 (Khan *et al.* 2015) and a number of records in India where it is possibly overlooked, being very similar to Indian Pond Heron in non-breeding plumage (Choudhury 2010; Kaninde 2013; Poonia *et al.* 2013; Khan *et al.* 2015). It had also been found at high altitude in northern Pakistan in July 2011, and near Lhasa, Tibet, in August 2014 (Khan *et al.* 2015). To the west, in Oman (just within some definitions of the Western Palearctic) it occurred at Thumrayt in August 2010, and Qatbit in September 2012 (Eriksen *et al.* 2013). In addition, it had reached islands in the northern Pacific on two occasions: Attu in May 2010 and St Lawrence in July 2011 (Howell *et al.* 2014). Birds have also reached Australian territories on four occasions: the Cocos Keeling Islands in May 2006, Christmas Island in March 2008 and June 2011, and mainland Australia near Broome, Western Australia, in March 2008 (Birding-Australia <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/birding-aus/2008-03/msg00677.html>). More significantly for the Kent record, there had also been two further

European sightings, both of adult birds in Finland: at Rautavaara on 17th July 2007 and at Turkansaari, near Oulu, in August 2012 (*Dutch Birding* 29: 317, 34: 324).

As for the Kent individual, it was noted that it was wary, unringed and apparently undamaged, and its age (2CY) was consistent with that of many vagrants. The habitat choice of garden ponds was also not inconsistent with that of a wild bird as in its natural range the species is often found on small waterbodies in urban or populated regions. In an attempt to throw further light on the subject, some of the bird's feather and bill remains were subjected to stable-isotope analysis in 2015. The results were consistent with the diet and native distribution in East Asia, although other regions of the world share these isotopic attributes; in other words, the data were consistent with rather than diagnostic of a native-range origin.

As for the issue of captive origin, the overall number of bird imports from Asia in 2013 was at a significantly lower level than previously, following the bans imposed on the trade in 2005 and 2007. There could therefore have been no recent legal imports into the EU. Zoo listings (notably 'Zootierliste') indicated that Squacco, Javan Pond and Indian Pond Herons were held by a number of European zoos, in decreasing order of numbers. By contrast, no Chinese Pond Herons were listed as currently held (although nine former holdings – undated – were listed in Germany, the Netherlands and Britain). Subject to the caveats noted above about zoo records, the undocumented trade and misidentification, it appeared that Chinese Pond Heron was rare in captivity prior to the import ban and was now even rarer, indeed it was not known to be currently held in captivity anywhere in Europe. In particular, there were no breeding pairs and no known successful rearing of young in captivity. Such captive breeding would have been necessary for the Kent bird, a second-calendar-year, to be an escape.

Furthermore, given the relatively greater numbers of Javan Pond and Indian Pond Herons in captivity, the near-complete lack of records of escaped birds of these two species in Europe was striking. In contrast, Chinese

Pond Herons, apparently absent in captivity, were steadily accumulating European records, all of which were unringed, creating an emerging and plausible pattern of vagrancy by wild birds.

As a result, given the growing evidence of vagrancy, a minimal (and decreasing) likelihood of escape and nothing untoward about the habits, plumage, stable-isotope analysis or condition of the Kent bird, BOURC members voted unanimously to accept Chinese Pond Heron to Category A of the British List (Hudson *et al.* 2016; BOU 2016a).

Reconsideration of the Norfolk and Hampshire 2004 record

The acceptance and publication of the Kent bird as Britain's first Chinese Pond Heron inevitably raised questions over the categorisation of the Norfolk and Hampshire 2004 individual. As a consequence, the observers of the Norfolk bird resubmitted the record in 2016 and the file was reconsidered by BOURC.

Any lingering doubts over the species' ability to occur in Europe as a natural vagrant and concerns over its escape potential had been dispelled during the consideration of the Kent record. It was now an established vagrant to Europe with, by contrast, a minimal and decreasing escape risk. The only issue to be addressed in the case of the Norfolk and Hampshire bird, and the chief obstacle to its acceptance to Category A on its original circulation, was the apparently anomalous plumage state – full breeding plumage in late October and November.

On this issue, further information had now emerged, and this was referred to in the resubmission: photographs taken in Bangkok, Thailand, on 15th and 18th October and 24th November 2014 illustrating an adult Chinese Pond Heron in full breeding plumage (Garner 2014). Although such a plumage state in late autumn in a wild bird was thought to be exceptional, it had nevertheless now been demonstrated to be possible. This being the case, eight members voted to admit the record to Category A, with one voting for Category D. The record was therefore accepted as the first Chinese Pond Heron for Britain, pre-dating the Kent record (BOU 2016b).

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