



Rarities Committee news and announcements

P. J. Grant and the Rarities Committee

Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page. In the absence of further nominations (*Brit. Birds* 78: 473), John Marchant started his official term of membership on 1st April this year, having earlier filled (as a co-opted member) the vacancy left by David Holman, who resigned in July 1985. David's presence will be greatly missed by the Committee, and we thank him for his valuable contribution to our work during more than eight years' membership.

The following points of interest arise from the Committee's annual meeting at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 22nd March 1986.

Escapes

The Committee agreed that it should make every effort to record all occurrences of free-flying individuals of species on its list, even those suspected or known certainly to have escaped from captivity. We therefore welcome receipt of such records, which should be submitted in the usual way. Certain escapes, and those considered by the Committee as likely to be of captive origin (*Brit. Birds* 77: 292) will be mentioned in the species-comments in our annual reports, but not included in the systematic list or in the running totals. In this way, we hope to establish a picture of the escape likelihood of each species, which will be useful for assessing the likely origin of other occurrences.

Observer credits

Up to three observers' names are included, in alphabetical order, after each record in our annual report. Generally, only the names of those who have actually submitted evidence (individually, or as a joint report by several observers) are included. If more than three observers send descriptions, priority is given to those who first found or identified the bird, whenever this is made clear in the details submitted. When this is not clear or is disputed, or when the finder or identifier does not submit a description (or one is not submitted on his/her behalf), a more arbitrary choice of three names unavoidably has to be made from among those who have sent descriptions. As a result of several requests, the Committee considered whether it was possible to indicate (for example, by means of a symbol or different typeface) which of the named observers was the finder or identifier, thus giving them the desired greater credit. After lengthy consideration of all the ramifications of adopting such a system, however, the Committee decided that it would be no easy task, and might well produce problems.

In any case, it was felt that such a system might dissuade observers from sending in reports of rarities of which they were not the finder or identifier. Such back-up reports often greatly assist the assessment process, and we encourage their submission. The Committee generally disagreed with the

view held in some quarters that the submission of such back-up reports constitutes a form of ornithological poaching. We understand this point of view, however, and urge all submitters of back-up reports to state who was the finder or identifier: if this information is not known, the submitter should at least state clearly that he/she was not one of them.

Election of new member

The Committee's nomination for the next vacancy (which will arise on or before 31st March 1987 from resignation or the longest-serving member's automatic retirement) is Alan Brown. Alan is secretary of the *Scottish Birds Records Committee*, recorder for East Lothian, and joint compiler of the *Scottish and Lothian Bird Reports*. He is widely travelled in the West Palearctic, and his knowledge of the Scottish birdwatching scene would also be valuable to the Committee's work. As usual, we invite any other nominations, which should be sent to me by 31st December 1986. If further nominations are forthcoming, a postal election will take place, in which county and regional recorders and the bird observatories will vote.

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249. Members of the 'British Birds' Rarities Committee, Bedfordshire, March 1986. Left to right, Keith Vinicombe, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (Managing Editor), John Marchant, P. J. Grant (Chairman), Alan Dean, Iain Robertson, M. J. Rogers (Secretary), Tim Inskipp, and D. J. Britton. (R. H. Dennis, P. G. Lansdown and S. C. Madge were unable to attend this meeting)

(Erika Sharrock)

