

# Rarities Committee news and announcements

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*P. G. Lansdown and the Rarities Committee*

**C**ommittee 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* 79: 451), Alan Brown started his term of membership on 10th April 1987, replacing Roy Dennis who retired as the longest-serving member. Roy served for two terms, totalling 19 years, and we are most grateful for his enormous contribution to the work of the Committee during this long period. Peter Grant's retirement from the Rarities Committee in December 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 22, 251) resulted in PGL taking over as Chairman and Steve Gantlett being co-opted to the Committee from 1st January 1987. Peter was a member for 16 years, 11 of them as Chairman, and his sound opinions and guidance, his efficiency and his progressive yet steadying chairmanship will all be greatly missed.

The following points of interest arise mainly from the Committee's annual meeting at Swanwick, Derbyshire, on 10th April 1987.

## **Removal of species from Rarities Committee list**

It is Committee policy (*Brit. Birds* 75: 338) that a species is automatically considered for possible removal from the list of those assessed by the Committee if more than 150 individuals have occurred during the past ten years *and* it has occurred at least ten times in at least eight of those years. Other species of slightly less frequent or consistent occurrence, especially those which are easy to identify, may also be considered for removal. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, with 445 individuals during 1976-85 (including 412 in the second half of that decade) and six of those years with ten or more records, whilst not conforming to the guidelines, generated the most debate in the meeting. Because of the identification problems, particularly relating to first-years, and the current high rejection rate, it was decided to obtain the reaction of the county and regional recorders to the removal of Ring-billed Gull from the Committee's list prior to making a decision. At the following day's Bird Recorders' meeting (*Brit. Birds* 79: 663), about 80% of recorders who expressed an opinion made it known that they were quite prepared to take on the responsibility of assessing records of Ring-billed Gull at local level. A subsequent postal vote amongst the Rarities Committee produced a majority in favour of the removal of Ring-billed Gull from its list of species considered. Several other species were discussed at the Committee's annual meeting and it was considered appropriate that records of Crane *Grus grus*, with 554 individuals during

1976-85 and nine of those years with ten or more records, should cease to be assessed by the Committee.

Records of the following species dated up to 31st December 1987 should continue to be submitted to the Rarities Committee, preferably via the local recorder, whilst those dated from 1st January 1988 should still be sent to the appropriate county or regional recorder:

Crane

Ring-billed Gull

Papers covering the identification problems of each of these species, highlighting pitfalls, will appear in this journal in due course. The Committee will, however, be pleased to continue to consider any particularly difficult or contentious record at the request of the recorder.

### Election of new members

Two vacancies will arise in the ranks of the Committee in March 1988: from Peter Grant's retirement (currently filled, in an ex-officio capacity, by Steve Gantlett) and from the automatic retirement of the longest-serving member.

The Committee's nominees are Steve Gantlett and Rob Hume. Both are long-experienced birdwatchers who are widely travelled in the Western Palearctic and have made various contributions to this journal on identification subjects (see below). Steve, a freelance ornithologist, is prominent in British rarity circles and lives in Norfolk. Rob, who lives in Bedfordshire, is well known for his work for the RSPB and authorship of a number of identification papers; his profile appeared in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 215-216).

As usual, we invite other nominations, which should be sent to me by 31st December 1987. If further nominations are received, a postal election will take place, in which county and regional recorders and bird observatories will vote.

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