

THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

The DOS has been running our “Think Before You Click” campaign for some time now to educate birdwatchers in the responsible use of social media in reducing the potential for disturbance of rare breeding species, or those species sensitive to disturbance at any time of the year.

Social media is very useful as a fast and simple means of informing people what is around and we all use it from time to time to report the presence of interesting species or to obtain information on where to see them. Facebook sites are now very common e.g. Derbyshire Birders Facebook Group (I am a member, by the way) and various Twitter feeds both from organisations and personal blogs. Most act responsibly and provide a quick and reliable service all year round for keen birders and the DOS has no problems with their existence and use. However, we must all use them wisely and always with the best interests of the birds in mind and we have a duty to follow the Birdwatcher’s Code of Conduct.

Schedule 1 breeding birds are especially vulnerable and important (a list is available on the BTO website) and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. **It is an offence to intentionally disturb any of these species for any reason during the breeding season without a valid licence.** Publicising their presence and breeding sites on social media should not happen at any time to reduce the risk of disturbance.

In addition, the following is a list of species we treat as sensitive in Derbyshire and with our limitations on publishing records:

Pintail	Spring and summer records
Garganey	Spring and summer records
Ruddy Duck	All year
Quail	Caution required during the breeding season
Bittern	Springtime booming males
Little Egret	In heronries
Black-necked Grebe	March to July at likely breeding sites; wetlands, however small, with dense vegetation
Red Kite	If showing signs of breeding e.g. stick-carrying
Hen Harrier	All year, general location for winter records e.g. Dark Peak
Goshawk	All year as largely resident
Corncrake	Singing birds
Little Ringed Plover	Breeding season records unless obvious migrants
Ringed Plover	Breeding season records unless obvious migrants
Oystercatcher	Breeding season records unless obvious migrants
Mediterranean Gull	Pairs in Black-headed Gull colonies
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Showing signs of breeding
Turtle Dove	Any summer birds, especially singing
Barn Owl	Breeding sites at all times of the year
Long-eared Owl	Breeding sites at all times of the year
Short-eared Owl	Breeding sites at all times of the year
Nightjar	Singing birds or on moorland
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	If showing signs of breeding e.g. drumming, April to July
Merlin	Any breeding activity
Hobby	Any breeding activity
Peregrine	Any breeding activity
Raven	Any breeding activity



The Derbyshire Ornithological Society

Firecrest	Singing birds April to August, even in deciduous areas
Woodlark	Any March to August, especially re-stocks and industrial areas
Dartford Warbler	April to August, especially on moorland areas
Wood Warbler	Care required to avoid pressure from photographers
Ring Ouzel	Care required to avoid pressure from photographers
Black Redstart	April to August in urban/industrial areas
Hawfinch	April to August in woodland, churchyards or similar
Twite	Do not give precise locations, especially moors and quarries
Corn Bunting	Any summer birds, especially singing

Extreme care is required when reporting all records for Schedule 1 breeding species and bear in mind the limitations above for some other species e.g. Short-eared Owl. Clearly at well-known sites, e.g. the Derby Cathedral Peregrines, and where circumstances allow we relax the guidelines above and show some discretion, but we still consider the welfare of the birds concerned. Please resist posting along the lines of “I’ve just seen a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker drumming and nest building at 13 Acacia Avenue, Mickleover” or “displaying Mediterranean Gulls at Belper River Gardens”. It is better not to post anything at all to reduce the risk of disturbance to zero.

You should continue to report records of these and Schedule 1 species to the DOS so that they can go into the county permanent record (The Derbyshire Bird Report for the year in question) and they will be stored in our database and marked as CONFIDENTIAL as will any records where you ask for the record to be treated in confidence. The County Recorders are experienced and have dealt with sensitive information for many years and can give you advice.

If in doubt, do not publish and always THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK.

Dave Richardson
DOS Chair