

Submitting records using the CBC Spreadsheet

by Mark Hawkes

Many CBC members already submit their records by e-mail using the CBC spreadsheet, but there are some who do not. This may be because of a basic unfamiliarity with spreadsheets. I hope I can encourage a few more members to send in their records by providing an overview of the CBC database and by giving a few hints and tips. Regular contributors may also find this useful, and I urge everyone to read the following.

With so many Spreadsheets being sent from many observers, it takes many hours to compile, sort and tidy the main database. To help keep this process efficient (and avoid mistakes creeping into the database), it is helpful if observers can try to follow the (fictitious) example given below. It is also helpful if observers don't alter the settings of the sheet. I have also provided some hints and tip for helping to fill-in the Spreadsheet.

Each species has been given a code, which allows records to be sorted in a particular order.

Code	Species	Date	Location	No.	Comments	Observer
8	Black-necked Grebe	1-Apr-06	Grafham Water	2	found by CDA	CDA, MLH
33	Bewick's Swan	4-Dec-06	Ouse Washes (Mepal)	210	in field	MLH
40	Canada Goose	27-Sep-06	Grafham Water	212	large count for this site	MLH
76	Ruddy Duck	4-Dec-06	Ouse Washes (Pymoor)	1	drake	MLH
89	Osprey	31-Aug-06	Grafham Water	1	adult, present until 6/9	MLH et al
93	Eurasian Hobby	5-May-06	Paxton Pits	3	Also singles on 10/5 and 20/5	MLH
107	Common Coot	31-May-06	Grafham Water	*	10 breeding pairs	MLH
159	Common Greenshank	7-Sep-06	Grafham Water	7	peak in month, otherwise 1-5	JDL, MLH
177	Black-headed Gull	12-Feb-06	Grafham Water	1	albino - seen again on 16/2, 22/2	MLH et al
199	Black Tern	5-May-06	Grafham Water	12		MLH
199	Black Tern	5-May-06	Paxton Pits	5		MLH
199	Black Tern	2-Jun-06	Godmanchester GP	2		MLH
216	Tawny Owl	31-Mar-06	St. Neots (Flawn Way)	*	heard regularly during the month	MLH

Code and Species: A commonly encountered problem is what to do when a particular species is seen more than once. The best way around this is to insert blank rows below the species and use 'Copy' and 'Paste' tools to add the Code and Species (see Black Tern above). It is best to avoid typing the Code and Species because this can lead to errors, which are very difficult to pick up. It is particularly important to stick to the standard species names. Annual report and bulletin section writers can sort them correctly using these names. For example, Common Shelduck and Shelduck will not be sorted together using the species name, even if the Codes are correct. The use of filters allows quick access to a particular species and saves scrolling down large numbers of rows. If several sightings of a species are made at the same site, during the same month, then add extra records in the comments box (see Eurasian Hobby above), this helps to minimise the size of the Spreadsheet (which can exceed 36,000 records per year!).

Date: The date is best entered as dd-mm-yy. This allows dates to be easily changed into the required format (which will occur automatically on the new Spreadsheet). Dates entered in other ways (e.g. 7th Jan 2006) require editing, which is time consuming and can lead to errors. The dates for birds seen throughout a particular month, can be added as the last date in the month, with a specific qualifier in the comments section (see Tawny Owl above). The same

principle applies to records that cover a prolonged period of time (e.g. breeding records, see Common Coot above).

Location: Please use the standardised site names as much as possible. A useful list of sites can be found in the Annual Report gazetteer, or on the CBC website, under the “What’s About?” page. If records relate to a particular area of a larger location, please include the sub-site in brackets afterwards (see Bewick’s Swan and Tawny Owl above). Often it is required that the database be sorted by site names, and if a standard format is not followed, this makes additional work for those involved. For example if listed “Long Drove”, this would place all the Long Doves together, yet those at Cottenham and Haddenham are clearly different sites – please list as “Cottenham (Long Drove)”

Numbers: This is self-explanatory, and often the most notable count for a month will suffice, with other numbers noted in Comments box.

Observer: This is fairly straightforward – a list of observer initials can be found in the latest Cambs Bird Report. Multiple observers should be listed in the same column (see Black-necked Grebe above).

Any additional information can be added in the comments section. Unusual behaviour, breeding details or plumage aberrations are good examples of this. It is also a good place to highlight high counts or notable site records (see Canada Goose and Black-headed Gull above). The report section writers will occasionally use these comments.

Column H is used to distinguish between Hunts (h) and Old Cambs (c). This is so Hunts records can be sorted easily for use by the Hunts Flora and Fauna Society. The map on the back cover of the Annual Report is an excellent reference. Column I is used to distinguish Peterborough Bird Club area records (PBC). The area covered can be viewed at http://pbc.codehog.co.uk/area_map.htm.

This is just a quick guide to using the Spreadsheet, so please contact me if you have any questions. For an idea of what kind of records to submit, please refer to the ‘Guidelines for the submission of records’ in the CBC Annual Report. However, if you are not sure, please submit the records (especially any breeding data for any species, as this is an area where we would like to receive more records).

Mark Hawkes.