

Norfolk Records Committee Description Submission Form

Species: Blyth's Reed Warbler	
Date/time first seen: 13 th October 2015, 1500	Date/time last seen: 19 th October late pm
No. of Birds: 1	Age/Sex: unknown
Location: Wells Woods	
Finder: Ashley Saunders	Email:
Identifier (<i>if different</i>):	Email:
Submitter (<i>if different</i>):	Email:
Other observers:	
Any who disagrees with identification? Not to my knowledge	
Optical aids: Leica 8x42 HD	
Distance from bird: generally 8 – 10 metres	
Have you attached photographs? Yes	Was the bird videoed? Yes see link
If photos are available on websites then please give address:	
Have the photographs been published in magazines? If so, where:	
Species present for comparison: None	
Which species were alongside the bird: None [occasional Robin]	
Observer(s) experience of the species: Saw one the previous week on Shetland. Also seen in hand and in field on Fair Isle, and on Unst 2013	
Observer(s) experience of similar species on the same day or previously: Reed, Marsh, Paddyfield all familiar both in UK and overseas and all seen in last 6 months	
Weather : Overcast, occasional showers	
Wind direction and Force: Moderate North-easterly	
Light conditions (<i>good, dull, etc & sun behind, side etc</i>): dull	
Visibility (<i>distance</i>): Good	
Address of submitter:	
Phone No:	
And finally, is the record 100% certain? Yes	

In your description please include the following:

1. Circumstances of finding the bird (if applicable) but keep it brief
2. Plumage, bare parts etc and call (if possible)
3. Jizz (that 'indefinable something' about the way it behaved)

Description:

During an excellent spell for rare birds between Wells and Holkham, I visited Wells Woods on the afternoon of 13th October to complete my usual route, having found two Richard's Pipits and a Pallas's Warbler there in the last two days. Heading from the Toilet Block towards The Dell, along the bramble-covered ridge, I heard a single 'tchack' call which I presumed would have been delivered by a Blackcap. I was taken aback therefore when a pallid looking sandy brown passerine shot out of a Dog Rose just beneath me and into a dense tangle. Given such brief views, and the call, I was thinking perhaps it might turn out to be a Dusky Warbler. However, I soon located the bird at the back of the tangle and saw it looked most like an acrocephalus warbler, but could not see much detail. Ten minutes passed and it had completely disappeared, until a Robin flushed it and it flew from cover again with the same 'tchack' and this time perched in view before slinking down into Brambles again. I was not 100% sure at this point I had the bird in the correct genus as it looked quite long tailed and plain, but Blyth's Reed Warbler seemed the best fit so far.

I called Penny Clarke who was birding nearby and told her I thought I had a BRW, and she came to help me locate and photograph the bird. This attempt failed, as we did not see it again for over an hour. Penny left, and I widened the search area back towards the car park, checking the brambles at the edge of the birches. Here the bird called again three times, the same 'tchack' more Lesser Whitethroat like than Blackcap. This evenly spaced trio of calls became typical, each time with a 2 second pause between each individual call and never more than 3 calls in any one delivery.

This time the bird popped into full view for a prolonged period and I made the following observations:-

- Overall rather pallid sandy grey-brown appearance, notably so in flight when appeared especially pale
- Short wing – the blunt looking primary projection was less than half the length of the exposed tertials. This also contributed to the long-tailed appearance at certain angles.
- Cold white ground colour to underparts
- Plain face lacking bold markings – whitish fore-supercilium and no real eye ring
- Grey-brown upperparts contrasted with slightly rufous flight feathers, forming a slight panel
- Often adopted the so-called 'banana posture' when alighting following short flights
- Long bill created a snouty appearance with long sloping forehead

I returned to the site the following day and spent more time looking for the bird, which again while extremely elusive, could be located with patience by listening for the 2-3 'tchacks' from dense cover. The bird was not ever heard to make any other calls. This time I saw the bird better again and managed a short video which is attached and noted the following:-

- Again very short, stubby wing with projection no more than half of tertials – I knew it was important to judge this from all angles but especially in direct profile, which I was now able to do.
- Supercilium – clearly white and blob-like in front of the eye, where it was exaggerated by a darkish border to the crown a bit like on Paddyfield Warbler
- Olive cast to uniform brown upperparts, looked warmer than in slightly better light yesterday

- Supercilium extended as a white whisp above and behind eye.
- Bill seemed fairly pale overall, couldn't see a dark tip
- Legs cold grey, perhaps a touch paler to rear edge of tarsus but no yellow on legs
- Plain wing, with no dark centres to alula, greater coverts or tertials
- Rump concolourous with rest of upperparts

The attached photographs allowed for further details of the wing to be seen. Most notably the clear emargination to primary 4 [rarely seen by Reed] and the fact that primary 4 appears to form the wing point – both of these features are strongly pro- Blyth's.







Blyth's Reed Warbler at Wells – top two photos Nick Crouch, then Alan Lewis and Nigel Crowhurst

Continue on an extra sheet if necessary.