

Merseyside, in 1805. Subsequent records were reviewed using the published BOURC criteria for considering historical records and also in the context of potential confusion with the extremely similar Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni* and Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum*. These two species were not considered when the earliest records were first documented. The analysis presented here, involving the inspection of a number of museum specimens, results in a definitive list of five early British records of Collared Pratincoles, the identification of two new records of Black-winged Pratincoles, including firsts for Britain and Scotland, and a new first Oriental Pratincole record for Britain and the Western Palearctic.

Introduction

The Collared Pratincole has an African and Palearctic distribution (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996), with two subspecies recognised: nominate *G. p. pratincola*, which is a migrant breeder to the Palearctic region, from North Africa and Iberia to Kazakhstan and Pakistan, overwintering in Africa south of the Sahara; and *fulleborni*, which is resident from Senegal to south Somalia and eastern South Africa. To date, only the nominate subspecies has been recorded in the Western Palearctic and is the only subspecies likely to occur.

Collared Pratincole was first noted as occurring as an extralimital vagrant to Britain in the early nineteenth century (see BOU 2022a). It remains a rare bird, with 106 records up to the end of 2021, and an average of just 1–2 records per year (Holt *et al.* 2022); spring/summer observations outnumber autumn observations by a ratio of 3:1 (Naylor 2023).

The assignment of British records to Collared Pratincole during the nineteenth century was undertaken without consideration of the other vagrant pratincole species that we know today could occur in Britain; indeed, many historical published notes state the species name simply as ‘pratincole’. Hence, some of these early observations could in fact relate to Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni* or Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum*.

Black-winged Pratincole has a summer breeding range from southeast Europe to central Asia, and a non-breeding range in south and west Africa (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). It is a very rare spring to autumn vagrant to Britain, with (before this review) only 43 records to the end of 2021, the first of which is from 1909 (BOU 2022a; Holt *et al.* 2022; Naylor 2023). It is so similar in appearance to Collared Pratincole that it was not formally recognised as a different species until 1842 (Nordmann 1842), and the species appears to have been unheard of in Britain until several decades later.



Fig. 1. Illustration by J. G. Keulemans of a Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* and two Black-winged Pratincoles *G. nordmanni* from Dresser's *A History of the Birds of Europe* (1871–1881). This is one of the earliest published illustrations of the two species together, showing their differently coloured underwings. The Black-winged Pratincole on the right in the foreground is a first-calendar-year bird, collected at Haskeuy, Turkey, on 19th October 1871 and housed in Dresser's collection. The small vignette at the extreme right shows the black underwing pattern of the species. The Collared Pratincole to the left is an adult (2CY+), collected by Dresser on 5th May 1866 near Barcelona, Spain. It shows the species' red underwing, along with a pale trailing edge to the secondary wing feathers and a deeply forked tail, all features important for its identification.

Oriental Pratincole has an Asian and Eastern Palearctic distribution, breeding from northern Pakistan to China and wintering in southern Pakistan, India, Indonesia and Australia (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). It is an extremely rare vagrant to Britain with just seven records, all during the summer and autumn, the first of which – also the first Western Palearctic record – was in 1981 (BOU 1991, 2022a; Holt *et al.* 2022; Naylor 2023). Owing to the species' easterly range and the absence of records in Europe prior to 1981, the species would not have been considered in the identification of extralimital pratincole records in Britain in the nineteenth century.

Recently, BOURC reviewed the first British record of Collared Pratincole (BOU 2022b). This resulted in the rejection of a record from Bowness-on-Solway, Cumbria, in 1807, and the acceptance of a specimen record from North

Meols, Lancashire & North Merseyside, from April 1805.

This paper develops the scrutiny of early British records of Collared Pratincole and presents results of a re-examination of 25 pre-1900 records and one record from 1908. The records are considered using BOURC's criteria for assessing historical records (BOU 2018), but also in the context of the potential confusion with Black-winged and Oriental Pratincoles. As a result, a list of five confirmed early British records of Collared Pratincole are presented, all of which have both robust identification and robust provenance. Two further records have been reidentified as Black-winged Pratincoles, including one that is a new first British record; another record has been reidentified as an Oriental Pratincole, a new first British record.

Methods

For assessing historical records, BOURC has published seven criteria relating to provenance that should be considered and judged to allow a record to be accepted or rejected in relation to the British List (BOU 2018). Additionally, for historical records of pratincoles, the species identification of each was also considered using plumage and biometric features from Prater *et al.* (1977) and Driessens & Svensson (2005) (table 1).

Table 1. Identification criteria for Collared *Glareola pratincola*, Oriental *G. maldivarum* and Black-winged Pratincoles *G. nordmanni*, from Prater *et al.* (1977) and Driessens & Svensson (2005).

	Collared Pratincole	Oriental Pratincole	Black-winged Pratincole
underwing colour	red	red	black
colour of trailing edge of secondaries	pale	dark	dark
depth of tail fork, adult (2CY+) (mm)	48–69 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)	17–33 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)	
	39–66 (Driessens & Svensson)	15–33 (Driessens & Svensson)	39–55 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)
depth of tail fork, juvenile (1CY) (mm)	29–35 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)	8–19 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)	23–36 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)
tarsus length (mm)	30–32 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)	30–35 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)	34–39 (Prater <i>et al.</i>)

Combinations of the plumage features and biometrics, whether from specimens or the literature, were used for species determination. For example, the depth of tail fork, for which there is little overlap in the measured ranges between species, can be a helpful feature.

For some time, it was generally believed that separation of Collared and

Oriental Pratincoles was straightforward, based on depth of tail fork, the presence (or not) of a pale trailing edge to the secondaries, and the relative wing/tail projection. However, a comprehensive review by Driessens & Svensson (2005) showed that variation in plumage characters within the two species is more extensive than previously thought. For example, a widely quoted feature is that the primary projection extends beyond the tail tip in Oriental Pratincole, whereas the tail tip is equal to, or longer, than the wing-tip in Collared Pratincole; however, Driessens & Svensson noted a broad overlap in this feature between the two species and urged caution in its use. Instead, they described a number of other features that can be used to separate the two species. Many of these features are described as 'indicative' rather than 'diagnostic'. For this review, we selected two features described as diagnostic that could be most easily examined and photographed on specimens held at museums: 'pattern of white and black on the outer tail feathers' and 'nostril shape'. Only Collared Pratincole exhibits a 'stepped' black tip at the shaft on the outermost tail feathers (R6) and a slit-shaped (rather than oval-shaped) nostril. Note that the tail feather tips may range from very dark brown to blackish or black, but for simplicity in this paper we describe them as 'black'.

During the BOURC review, specimens were either personally examined by one of the authors or their features were assessed in photographs supplied by museum curators.

The review used the following criteria to identify a bird as Collared, Oriental or Black-winged Pratincole. First, the underwing colour was examined on all birds and, if black, the identification as Black-winged Pratincole was secure; if the underwing was red, further features were used to determine whether the bird was Collared or Oriental.

Primary identification features:

Underwing colour

If black, diagnostic for Black-winged Pratincole.

Depth of tail fork

Although Collared Pratincoles might exceptionally have a short tail fork (due to feather loss or damage, for example), Oriental Pratincole never has a comparably deep tail fork.

Outermost tail feather pattern

Stepped pattern of black across shaft of R6 diagnostic for Collared Pratincole.

Nostril shape

: slit-shaped in Collared Pratincole, oval shaped in Oriental Pratincole.

Secondary identification features:

Trailing-edge colour of secondaries

: pale colour indicative of Collared Pratincoles, but absence does not confirm Oriental Pratincole.

Tarsus length

: variable but supportive for Black-winged Pratincole if relatively long; can be difficult to measure from mounted specimens. Noted here for record only.

All age classes of all three species undergo a complete moult on the non-breeding grounds. Therefore, all birds are in adult plumage by spring/summer of their second calendar-year and are thus aged as 2CY+.

Where historical British records did not distinguish between pratincole species and where no specimen exists, but where the provenance of the record appears sound, we suggest that birds can be accepted as 'pratincole sp.'. For records – with or without an existing specimen – where a wild origin was unclear, we propose that the record should be deemed not proven and not included in the British ornithological record.

Genetic analysis

For one bird – a specimen collected during 1908 on the Flannan Isles, Outer Hebrides – key characters were more equivocal and DNA analysis was used to confirm identification. DNA was isolated from a toepad of the specimen. PCR primers were designed for two short fragments, totalling 277 bp, of the *Glareola* mitochondrial *cytb* gene: GLmusF1 5'-AACCTTTTCGACCCCTTTTCAC-3' / GLmusR1 5'-AGGAGGATGGTGAAGTAGGT-3' and GLmusF2 5'-TCAGCCATCCCCTACATTGG-3' / GLmusR2 5'-GTTGGTGCCAGTTTCGTGGA-3'. Standard 35 cycle PCR with an annealing temperature of 55°C was used for DNA amplification. PCR DNA products were purified and sequenced. Primer sequences were trimmed and the resulting 237 bp of DNA sequence was used to identify the specimen.

Results of the review

The results of the review are presented below, with our decision given for each record. The eight records that remain accepted and identified to species-level following the review are summarised in table 2.

Table 2. The eight accepted early historical British records of pratincoles revealed by the review presented in this paper. These were identified by the analysis of pratincole specimens based on the listed identification features described by Prater *et al.* (1977), Driessens & Svensson (2005) and, in one case, DNA analysis. ¹No access to the specimen as it is in a sealed case. ²Equivocal (see main text).

	underwing colour	depth of tail fork (mm)	nostril shape	outer-tail-feather pattern	pale trailing-edge to secondaries	tarsus length (mm)	species identification, age and sex
1805, North Meols, Lancashire	red	54	slit	stepped black across shaft	yes	n/a	Collared Pratincole 2CY+
1840, Blakeney, Norfolk	red	57	slit	stepped black across shaft	no	30	Collared Pratincole 2CY+
1840, East Kingston, Sussex	red	60	slit	stepped black across shaft	yes	n/a	Collared Pratincole 2CY+
1857, Barton on Sea, Hampshire	red	'deep' ¹	slit	stepped black across shaft	no	n/a ¹	Collared Pratincole 2CY+ male
1858, Wisley Pond, Surrey	red	46	slit	stepped black across shaft	no	32	Collared Pratincole 2CY+
1868, Feltwell, Norfolk	black	41	n/a	n/a	no	35	Black-winged Pratincole 2CY+
1899, Montrose, Angus & Dundee	black	26	n/a	n/a	no	35.5	Black-winged Pratincole 1CY
1908, Flannan Isles, Outer Hebrides	red	20	slit? ²	stepped black across shaft? ²	no	31	Oriental Pratincole 2CY+ female

April 1805, adult (2CY+), North Meols, Lancashire & North Merseyside, shot

(Montagu 1808; Graves 1813, 1821; Bullock 1815; Yarrell 1845; Dresser 1871–1881; Harting 1872; Mitchell 1892; BOU 2022b). Mounted specimen at World Museum, National Museums, Liverpool (accession number D3193a).



Liverpool Museums

001–004 First British record of Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, shot at North Meols, Lancashire & North Merseyside, in mid April 1805, and now held at the World Museum, National Museums, Liverpool (accession number D3193a).

The specimen is held at the World Museum, Liverpool (plates 001–004; fig.

002), which allowed the identification to be confirmed: it had a red underwing, a deeply forked tail (54 mm), a slit-shaped nostril, a stepped black pattern on R6 and a pale trailing edge to the secondaries (table 2). Furthermore, the specimen's labels established its provenance, location and date: it was shot at North Meols, Lancashire & North Merseyside, during the 'Easter week' (the week following Sunday 14th April) 1805; and it was in the Lord Derby Museum, having been obtained from William Bullock, before entering the collections at Liverpool. Together, these data allowed BOURC to accept this bird as the first British record (BOU 2022b).

This record had previously been erroneously published as from 'near Liverpool' and 'Ormskirk, Lancashire' from, variously, 18th May 1804, 1807 and October 1809 (Graves 1813; Bullock 1815; Montagu & Rennie 1833; Yarrell 1845).



Fig. 2. Collared Pratincole. Illustration reproduced from Graves' *British Ornithology* (1813) based on the 1805 North Mecklenburg bird (plate: 104–105). The painting shows both the red underwing and a deeply forked tail, features that in combination indicate Collared Pratincole and were verified on examination of the specimen.

Our decision: Accept as Collared Pratincole; accepted by BOURC as the first British record.

1807,
exact date unknown,

Boldness

, Cumberland (now Cumbria), shot

(Graves 1813, 1821; Macpherson & Duckworth 1886; Macpherson 1892; Sellers 2021; BOU 2022b). Location of specimen unknown.

This record first appeared in print under the name 'Austrian Pratincole' in the first edition of Graves' *British Ornithology* (1813). The bird was reported as having been shot 'in the vicinity of Boldness, in Cumberland' in 1807.

However, no such place exists in the area (Sellers 2021). Macpherson & Duckworth (1886) and Macpherson (1892) both render it as 'near Bowness on the Solway' but without explanation or justification. No corroboration of the record has been found. Macpherson (1892) could find no mention of it in the papers of J. Heysham, the leading local ornithologist of the day, nor was he able to discover any reference to it in the local newspapers of the period (also scrutinised by RMS). As Graves does not state how he became aware of the bird, and no description is available, it is impossible to confirm that it was a Collared Pratincole (BOU 2022b).

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

November 1810

, adult (2CY+) male and female

, Breakwater, near Yarmouth, Norfolk, shot

(BOU 2009). Mounted specimens at Chelmsford Museum, part of the Boulton Collection (accession numbers CHMERD12003

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and CHMER D12004

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This record was previously considered by BOURC (BOU 2009) and, though the identification of the pair was secure, it was rejected partly based on the anomaly of two adults in breeding plumage collected in late November, with moult patterns inconsistent with such a collection date. Furthermore, that a pair was obtained at the same location was troubling, as a pair has never been subsequently observed in Britain up to 2021. Such 'pairings' of bird

specimens was a feature of Victorian taxidermy collections, being aesthetically pleasing and based on the misconception that many bird species migrated in pairs.

It is possible that this is a duplicate of the 1827 Breydon Wall record, also a pair and shot near (Great) Yarmouth. Because of concerns about the provenance of these specimens, we agree with the earlier BOURC conclusion that, although the identification as Collared Pratincole is correct, this record should be found not proven.

Our decision: Not proven.

1811, exact date unknown, near Truro,

Cornwall, shot

(Graves 1813, 1821; Harting 1872; Rodd & Harting 1880; Penhallurick 1969).

Location of specimen unknown.

The published notes lack a detailed description, and the specimen is apparently untraceable. The record, though likely a pratincole, cannot be identified to species.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

16th

August 1812, male, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, shot

(Bullock 1815; Yarrell 1845; Gray 1871; Dresser 1871–81; Saxby 1874; Evans & Buckley 1899; Forrester *et al.* 2007). Location of specimen unknown.

Collected by William Bullock, whose collection was dispersed at a sale in 1819; the purchaser, Dr W. E. Leach, paid eight guineas for the pratincole (Bullock 1815; Gray 1871). Although the specimen was reported to have been deposited at the British Museum (Yarrell 1845), this was not the case. Mark Adams, Senior Curator at Natural History Museum, UK, Tring, has confirmed there is no evidence that the specimen ever arrived at that institution. As no description was published, the record cannot be accepted to species level.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

'Pre-1812', exact date unknown, Eude-Waters, Surrey, shot

(Graves 1813; Wheatley 2007). Location of specimen unknown.

The record is undated, the specimen was not seen by an experienced ornithologist, and the short description in Graves (1813) merely states 'Pratincole'. Furthermore, Eude-Waters appears to be another place-name misrepresented by Graves (1813) and which Wheatley (2007) tentatively identifies as Ewood Farm, near Newdigate. Consequently, with these deficiencies, we conclude that this record cannot even be confirmed as a pratincole sp.

Our decision: Not proven.

1827, 21st May, Breydon Wall, Yarmouth, Norfolk, male and female, shot

(Paget & Paget 1834; Yarrell 1845; *The Field* 9th November 1867: 385; Stevenson 1870; Stevenson & Southwell 1890). Location of specimens unknown.

Although this record is mentioned in a number of publications, no detailed description has been traced. Indeed, the specimens were portrayed by Stevenson (1870) as being 'extremely dirty and smeared with blood', being washed as 'stockings' and hung out to dry, so were clearly in poor condition after being shot. It is possible that this is a duplicate of the 1810 Breakwater record, also a pair and near (Great) Yarmouth.

As with that Norfolk record, there are concerns over a 'vagrant pair' and hence their provenance. We therefore conclude that this record cannot even be confirmed as a pratincole sp

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Our decision: Not proven.

15th August 1827, Branston Hall, near Lincoln, Lincolnshire, shot

(Yarrell 1845; Blathwayt 1912). Location of specimen unknown.

Yarrell (1845) states that a 'Pratincole was shot by Frederick Oats, Esq., of Branston Hall, near Lincoln... whilst flying about much like a [Barn] Swallow

[*Hirundo rustica*], and near the ground.' No plumage details were described so this can only be recorded as a pratincole sp.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

21st May 1835, Wilbraham Fen, near Quy, Cambridgeshire, shot

(Ventriss 1836; Yarrell 1845). Location of specimen unknown.

Though the specimen was placed in the collection of J. T. Martin of Quy Hall (Ventriss 1836), it is no longer traceable. No information is provided to identify it to species and so the record can only be assigned as a pratincole sp.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

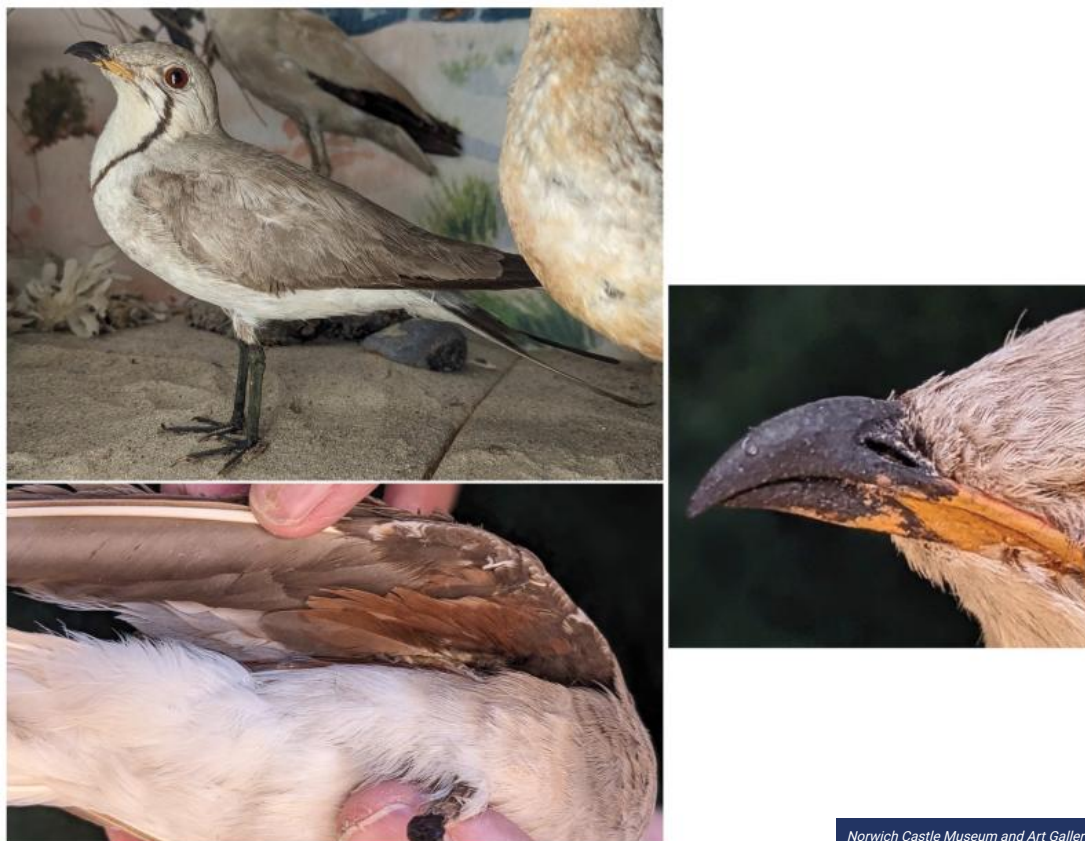
May 1840, adult, Blakeney, Norfolk, shot

(Yarrell 1845; Newman 1866; Stevenson 1870). Mounted specimen at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery (accession number NWHCM: 1949.171.3).

One of two mounted pratincoles on exhibition at the Castle Museum. The specimen data are linked to a numbered gallery list of specimens. This bird (plate 005), and another from Feltwell, Norfolk (1868), was part of the Newcome collection, from Feltwell Hall, Norfolk (Stevenson 1870). The bird has a red underwing (plate 006), a tail fork depth of 57 mm, a stepped black pattern on the outer tail feathers and a slit-shaped nostril (plate 007); the tarsus length is 30 mm (table 2). The mount also has the tail slightly longer than the wing-tip, but note the reservations on usefulness of this feature mentioned above. The provenance of the specimen is secure as its history from the date of collection is documented: 'In May 1840, a Pratincole was shot... by Henry Overton, a fowler, and passed into the possession of Mr John Sparham, by whom it was presented to Henry Rogers, Esq., solicitor, at Thetford'; then it 'passed into the hands of the late Mrs Flower, of Feltwell, and is now in Mr Newcome's collection at Feltwell Hall' (Yarrell 1845; Newman 1866; Stevenson 1870), from where it entered Norwich Castle Museum. Edward Clough Newcome (1809–1871) had one of the country's most important collections of British birds; he was one of 20 original members of the BOU and a vice-president of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society (Anon 1872; Stevenson 1872).

Our decision: Accept

as Collared Pratincole; the second British record.



Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery

108–110. Second British record of Collared Pratincole, shot in May 1840 at Blakeney, Norfolk. The specimen is now at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery (accession number NWHCM: 1949.171.3).

31st August 1840, adult, East Kingston, near Lewes, Sussex, shot

(Griffith 1928). Mounted specimen at Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton (accession number BC204064).

Collected by E. T. Booth and exhibited at a British Ornithologists' Club meeting on 13th April 1928 (Griffith 1928). The extant specimen shows a red underwing, a tail fork of 60 mm, a slit-shaped nostril, a stepped black pattern on the outer tail feathers, and a pale trailing edge on the secondaries (plate 008; table 2); all these features confirm the identification as Collared Pratincole. The provenance appears secure, as the collection and mounting of the specimen is documented, as is its acquisition by the Booth Museum (Griffith 1928).

Our decision: Accept as Collared Pratincole; the third British record.



111. Third British record of Collared Pratincole, shot on 31st August 1840, at East Kingston, near Lewes, Sussex. The specimen is held at the Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton (accession number BC204064).

May 1844, Staxton Wold, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, shot

(Milner 1848). Location of specimen unknown.

Interestingly, the bird was shot 'when in company with a flock of [Eurasian] Dotterels [*Charadrius morinellus*]' (Milner 1848), but insufficient detail was provided in the published note to eliminate other pratincole species.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

February 1850, Bridlington, Yorkshire, shot

(Duff 1850; Gurney 1875). Location of specimen unknown.

The brief notes in *The Zoologist* do not describe any plumage detail, though the specimen entered the collection of the journal's editor, J. H. Gurney (Duff 1850; Gurney 1875). The date is concerning, as no other records of pratincoles in Britain have occurred during February. Because of these limitations, we conclude that this record cannot even be confirmed as a pratincole sp.

Our decision:

Not proven.

7th September 1851, Warren, Exmouth, Devon, two birds

(Powys 1852).

As a sight record only, these birds were not described with enough detail to separate from other pratincole species.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

Mid November 1852, 1CY, Tilshead, Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, shot

(Smith 1853). Location of specimen unknown.

Though the bird was shot and identified as 'a bird of the year'

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which could in part explain the very late November occurrence, not enough detail was provided in the published notes to separate it from the two other pratincole species (Smith 1853). Indeed, immature pratincoles are even more challenging to identify than adults.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

May 1857, adult male, Hurst Beach, Barton on Sea, Hampshire, shot

(Kelsall & Munn 1905; Clark & Eyre 1993; Clark 2022). Mounted specimen at Chilcomb House, Winchester, Hampshire (accession number HMCMS Bi1983.2.3).

The Hampshire Cultural Trust website has images of many cased bird mounts, including this pratincole from the Hart Collection (<https://collections.hampshireculture.org.uk>). Measurement of the specimen was not possible as the bird is in a sealed case. However, the red underwing and a noticeably deep tail fork are both visible (plate 009). The depth of fork appears much greater than that of Oriental Pratincole. Further

images of the outer tail feathers and nostril show a stepped pattern and slit shape, respectively, both characteristic of Collared Pratincole (table 2). The wild British provenance of the specimen appears secure, with Kelsall & Munn (1905) stating that the 'specimen in the Hart collection was killed by Lieutenant Henn, at Barton, in the Parish of Milton, near Christchurch, in 1857' from where it entered the Hampshire Cultural Trust Collections, currently housed at Chilcomb House, Winchester (Clark 2022).



112. Adult male Collared Pratincole, the fourth British record, shot in May 1857 at Hurst Beach, Barton on Sea, Hampshire. Specimen held at Chilcomb House, Winchester, Hampshire (accession number HMCMS Bi1983.2.3).

Our decision: Accept as Collared Pratincole; the fourth British record.

'Pre-1858', exact date unknown, near Weston-Super-Mare, North Mendips, Somerset, shot

(Mathew 1881, 1888; *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society* 39: 127; Ballance 2006). Location of specimen unknown.

The skin of this bird is said to have been originally in 'Mr Stradling's collection' and then subsequently in the possession of a Mr Henry

Mathias. The original published note refers only to 'a Pratincole' and, although the Reverend Mathew saw the specimen and listed it as Collared Pratincole, no identification details were given (Mathew 1881, 1888).

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

1858, exact date unknown, adult, Wisley Pond, Portsmouth

Road, Wisley, Surrey, shot

(Nicholson 1926; Wheatley 2007). Mounted specimen at Haslemere Educational Museum, Surrey (accession number ZB-6-241).

The undersides of the wings are reddish/chestnut (Robert Neller *in litt.*), the depth of the tail fork is 46 mm, and photographs confirm a stepped black pattern on the outer tail feathers and a slit-shaped nostril. The tarsus length is 32 mm (table 2). Thus, the specimen (plate 113) can safely be identified as Collared Pratincole. Though the record lacks a precise date, the provenance of the specimen appears secure.



113. Fifth British record of Collared Pratincole, shot in 1858 at Wisley Pond, Portsmouth Road, Wisley, Surrey. The specimen is held at Haslemere Educational Museum, Surrey (accession number ZB-6-241).

Our decision: Accept as Collared Pratincole; the fifth British record.

August 1861, adult female, Old Hall Marshes, Tollesbury, Essex, shot

(*The Field* 31st August 1861: 206; Christy 1890). Location of specimen unknown.

The bird, 'an adult female', was 'shot by Capt. The Hon. G. R. C. Hill, about a fortnight back' and the specimen prepared by a Mr H. Shaw, taxidermist in Shrewsbury, who stated it was a 'fine bird... The stomach full of small beetles... and will in due course be placed in the collection of the Viscount Hill at Hawkstone' (Christy 1890). However, not enough detail was provided to separate it from the other pratincole species.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

October 1864, Stokes Bay, near Gosport, Hampshire, killed

(Fielden 1872; Kelsall & Munn 1905; Clark 2022). Location of specimen unknown.

Though the bird was killed by a Lieutenant Telfer 'knocking it over' with shingle and the specimen identified 'as a fine example of *Glareola pratincola*' (Fielden 1872), no plumage features were described to separate it from the two congeners. Since the specimen has subsequently been lost, it cannot be assigned to species.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

Early June 1868, adult, Feltwell, Norfolk, shot

(Stevenson 1869, 1870). Mounted specimen at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery (accession number NWHCM: 1949.171.4).

This is one of two mounted pratincoles on exhibition at Norwich Castle Museum. The specimen data are linked to a numbered gallery list of

specimens. These were formally part of the Newcome collection. This specimen (plate 114) was documented in the ornithological literature as a Collared Pratincole and was accessioned as such when the Newcome collection went to Norwich Castle Museum. Mounted birds generally had their wings pinned closed, so inspection of underwing colour would have required some manipulation; evidently, the identification was taken at face value. Following an enquiry for this review, the curator David Waterhouse reported that the underwing colour was black (plate 115), showing that the bird was in fact a Black-winged Pratincole. The relevant suite of identification characters for the Feltwell specimen are a black underwing, a tail-fork depth of 41 mm and tarsus length of 35 mm (table 2). The provenance of the specimen appears secure with its collection and its addition to the Newcome collection was documented (Stevenson 1869). For Newcome's credentials, see the 1840, Blakeney, Norfolk record. Together, these data allowed BOURC to accept this bird as the first British record (BOU 2024).



114 & 115.
First British
record of
Black-
winged
Pratincole
*Glareola
nordmanni*
shot in ear
June 1868
at Feltwell,
Norfolk. The
specimen
held at
Norwich
Castle
Museum
and Art
Gallery
(accession
number
NWHCM:
1949.171.)

Our decision: Accept as Black-winged Pratincole; accepted by BOURC as the first British record.

19th October 1871, male, between Ruswarp and Whitby, Yorkshire, shot

(Simpson 1871). Mounted specimen previously held at Whitby Museum.

The specimen was apparently lost in the 1950s following water damage to a gallery at Whitby Museum (E. Hoyle pers. comm.). *The Zoologist* note published by Martin Simpson of the Whitby Museum states that this male

specimen 'agrees so well with Montagu's description' and mentions 'a single red feather in the lower wing-coverts on either side' (Simpson 1871), which is arguably consistent with Collared Pratincole. However, the note does not describe features to exclude Oriental Pratincole.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

8th June 1874, adult male, The Lizard, Cornwall, shot

(Rodd 1874; *The Field* 27th June 1874: 628; Rodd & Harting 1880; Dresser 1871–1881). Location of specimen unknown.

The male specimen was examined and described as a pratincole with 'nothing peculiar in the colour of the plumage from the general description of the adult bird by Mr Yarrell' (Rodd 1874). Although the description 'exterior tail-feathers taper away into almost as filament' is suggestive of Collared Pratincole, 'the wings exceeding the tail by at least half an inch' is instead suggestive of Black-winged Pratincole. Based on this limited information, the bird could not be confirmed as Collared Pratincole.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

14th August 1885, River Erme, Flete Park, Devon

(D'Urban & Mathew 1892).

As a sight record only, this bird was not described in the published note with enough detail to identify the bird to species level.

Our decision: Accept as pratincole sp.

4th November 1899, 1CY, Mill Burn, Rocksands, Montrose, Angus & Dundee, shot

(Harvie-Brown 1900, 1906; Forrester *et al.* 2007). Mounted specimen at Montrose Museum, Angus (accession number ADMUS NH 1977.106).

The specimen had been originally identified as 'a pratincole' by a Mr Milne, the bird having been shot by W. Stormont. It was subsequently sent, already prepared as a mount, to J. A. Harvie-Brown, with the wings wired tight to the

body in the contemporary manner. Both Milne and Harvie-Brown considered it a Collared Pratincole, with the latter publishing it as such (Harvie-Brown 1900, 1906). The specimen (plate 116) had apparently never been critically scrutinised until RYM examined it in July 2022, when the underwings were inspected after removal of the wires that pinned the wings. This examination revealed a black underwing, a tail fork of 26 mm and tarsus lengths of 35.5 mm (right leg) and 35.7 mm (left leg), all indicating Black-winged Pratincole (table 2). The unusual November date for a British vagrant could in part be explained by the bird being in its first year. The provenance of the specimen is secure, as it was examined by contemporary ornithologists (Harvie-Brown 1900, 1906).



116. Juvenile (1CY) Black-winged Pratincole, shot on 4th November 1899, at Mill Burn, Rocksands, Montrose, Angus & Dundee. The second British and first Scottish record. The specimen is held at Montrose Museum, Angus (accession number ADMUS N 1977.106)

Our decision: Accept as Black-winged Pratincole; the second British and first Scottish record.

13th July 1908, adult female, Eilean Mòr, Flannan Isles, Outer Hebrides, shot

(Clarke 1908, 1912; Forrester *et al.* 2007). Mounted specimen at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh (accession number NMS.Z 1908.130).

The specimen was examined by RYM and showed a red underwing. It was originally identified and accessioned as Collared Pratincole by W. E. Clarke. However, the depth of the tail fork is 20 mm (plate 117) and the length of the tarsus was noted as 31.1 mm (table 2), within the published range for Oriental Pratincole. There is a hint of a stepped black pattern on the R6 tail feathers (plate 118) but the tail is abraded along the outer webs makes this feature equivocal: short 'steps' of several mm are possible in Oriental Pratincole (see *Dutch Birding* 27: 19). However, the nostril appears slit-shaped, more indicative of *Collared Pratincole*. Because of these equivocal features, genetic analysis was carried out. A 237-bp mitochondrial *cytb* gene DNA sequence derived from the specimen showed that it was identical to Oriental Pratincole and 6% (14/237 bp) different from Collared Pratincole: this confirms the identification as Oriental Pratincole. The provenance of the specimen is secure: it was collected by R. Anderson, the Eilean Mòr lighthouse keeper, and forwarded to W. E. Clarke at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, now part of National Museums Scotland (Clarke 1908, 1912). If accepted by BOURC, this becomes the new first British record, and the first record for the Western Palearctic.



117 & 118. Adult female Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum*, the first British and Western Palearctic record, collected on 13th July 1908 at Eilean Mòr, Flannan Isles, Outer Hebrides. The specimen is held at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh (accession number NMS.Z

Our decision: Accept as Oriental Pratincole; in circulation with BOURC as the first British (and Western Palearctic) record.

Discussion and conclusions

This review focused on examining and critically evaluating 26 British historical records of birds previously accepted as Collared Pratincole up to 1908. The lack of detailed descriptions in published material meant that many records were not identifiable to this species as they do not distinguish the record from Black-winged Pratincole or Oriental Pratincole. Ornithologists did not consider Black-winged Pratincole until the early 1900s, when the first British record was obtained, and, until then, 'pratincoles' were all assumed to be Collared Pratincole. Similarly, Oriental Pratincole was not contemplated as a possible British species pre-1900, and was added to the British List only in 1981 (BOU 1991).

One could infer that the formal addition of Black-winged Pratincole to the British List followed the resolution of identification issues for the species. However, as recently as their first report in 1956, the Taxonomic Subcommittee of the BOU (BOU 1956) recommended that Black-winged Pratincole be treated as a colour phase of Collared Pratincole, as evidenced by claimed intermediate individuals cited in Meinertzhagen's *Birds of Arabia* (1954). That position was viewed scathingly by David Bannerman in his pratincole section in *The Birds of the British Isles* (Bannerman 1962). Bannerman refused to follow the Taxonomic Subcommittee's position and noted that Meinertzhagen had earlier accepted the two pratincoles as two species in *Nicholl's Birds of Egypt* (Meinertzhagen 1930). He continued: 'I believe Colonel Meinertzhagen was quite right in 1932 [*sic*] to prefer to retain these two birds as distinct species and quite wrong to persuade the taxonomic subcommittee in 1956 when he had changed his mind – and no doubt swayed his small committee with his arguments as it is only too easy for a forceful chairman to do.' Coincidentally, in 1956, a short paper detailing other plumage features for separating the two species in the field was published by Hayman (1956). Bannerman alluded to this paper, while pointedly calling the BOU position 'premature'. This position was revised by BOU when Collared and Black-winged Pratincoles were recognised as separate species in the 1971 BOU British Checklist (Snow 1971).

The review presented in this paper confirms the identification of five of the 26 historical records of (supposed) Collared Pratincoles in Britain, and

establishes a new British first record for the species, in 1805 from North Meols, Lancashire & North Merseyside (BOU 2022b). Of the remaining 21 records, 14 were reassigned as 'pratincole sp.', while four were found not proven due to doubts about the wild British provenance of the birds.

Two of the records were rejected since they were found to relate to Black-winged Pratincoles, both of which pre-date the current first British record; and one was rejected since it was reidentified as an Oriental Pratincole, which also pre-dates the current first British record.

Following this review, the total number of British records up to 2021 becomes 86 for Collared Pratincole, 45 for Black-winged Pratincole and eight for Oriental Pratincole.

The results of this review emphasise the importance of museum collections and long-term storage of bird specimens that are accessible for study. These public collections facilitated the critical re-examination of the specimens described here to confirm or correct their identification and to ensure their rightful place in the British ornithological historical record.

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	underwing colour	depth of tail fork (mm)	nostril shape	outer tail feather pattern	pale trailing- edge to secondaries	tarsus: length (mm)
1805, North Meols, Lancashire	red	54	slit	stepped black across shaft	yes	n/a
1840, Blakeney, Norfolk	red	57	slit	stepped black across shaft	no	30
1840, East Kingston, Sussex	red	60	slit	stepped black across shaft	yes	n/a
1857, Barton on Sea, Hampshire	red	'deep' ¹	slit	stepped black across shaft	no	n/a ¹
1858,				stepped		

Wisley Pond, Surrey	red	46	slit	black across shaft	no	32
1868, Feltwell, Norfolk	black	41	n/a	n/a	no	35
1899, Montrose, Angus & Dundee	black	26	n/a	n/a	no	35.5
1908, Flannan Isles, Outer Hebrides	red	20	slit? ²	stepped black across shaft? ²	no	31

Table 2.

The eight accepted early historical British records of pratincoles revealed by the review presented in this paper. These were identified by the analysis of pratincole specimens based on the listed identification features described by Prater *et al.* (1977), Driessens & Svensson (2005) and, in one case, DNA analysis. ¹ No access to the specimen as it is in a sealed case. ² Equivocal (see main text).

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