

Birds in view 2010



Photo: Teal by John Harding

Welcome to Birds in View...

...the newsletter for the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project (see back cover). If you are already involved in bird recording, welcome back! If you are new to bird recording, then I hope this newsletter will enthuse and inspire you!

In this edition of *Birds in View* we are celebrating volunteer bird recording by showcasing all the main bird surveys in Scotland. We are also sharing the personal experiences of volunteer co-ordinators for Garden BirdWatch (GBW), *Bird Atlas 2007-11* and the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and hearing from all of them about their very different reasons for getting involved in bird surveying.

If you are yet to decide which survey to sign up to, you can read 'What Survey is Right for Me?' which gives an overview of the main bird surveys you can take part in, including time commitment and difficulty level. Hopefully this will help you make the right choices to get the most out of your bird recording. We hope this edition of *Birds in View* will be a keepsake you can refer back to time and again.

Those of you who have taken part in this project have told us that signing up to surveys has not only helped conserve Birds in View 2010

birds in Scotland, it has also enhanced your pleasure and appreciation of the outdoors, made you more aware of the wildlife around you and added to your quality of life. How many more reasons do you need to get out there and start recording! Enjoy!

Mandy Cook

Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland

Mandy Cook

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See back cover for explanation of bird surveys referred to in the text

Keeping an eye on Scotland's birds

By Dame Barbara Young, the BTO's President

When I first started as Chief Executive of the RSPB in 1991, they said to me “Tell us about the bits of Scotland that you loved from your childhood”. So I told them about the hills where I knew the grouse and the deer and of the heather-purple views we had returned to year after year, on holiday. They took me there and showed me how overgrazing and inappropriate forestry had resulted in habitats that were degraded. I had already directly experienced the subtle way in which land looks the same but has lost its true value as wildlife habitat. Days on the horse in the fields as a kid were fraught with risk, as ground-nesting birds flew up from under the horse's hooves every 20 yards and peewits showed Oscar-winning performances to lure you away from nests. I can ride that re-seeded land now and never see a nest or a ground-nester. Better for the nerves, but lousy for conservation and the soul.



Photo: Snipe by Dawn Balmer

“And we know things can get better, forestry is radically improved from the dark days of the 1980s.”

That's why the work that volunteers do for the BTO is important. So that we can show through persuasive evidence what is happening to species and, by implication, the habitats on which they depend. I guess it is really difficult for those close to the land to see the subtle changes that have taken place over the last 50 years since I was a kid. That's where the BTO numbers come in – the work to count and assess year by year provides a coolly, rational account of what is really happening. And we know that things can get better; forestry is radically improved from the dark days of the 1980s.

Numbers matter. It was much easier at RSPB to make a real difference for conservation when we were standing on a firm platform of fundamental information about species and habitats, which is the stock-in-trade of the BTO. So go forth and count, survey, atlas, tetrad, constant effort, BirdTrack or whatever is your bag. I want to sit on a small, hairy horse in a bog-standard bit of Perthshire and worry endlessly about falling off, because there is a real chance that a Snipe or Meadow Pipit will take flight and his knees will go wobbly.

BirdTrack and Bird Conservation Targeting Project

by Nick Moran, BirdTrack Organiser, BTO

The very mention of the word ‘recording’ in any discussion about watching birds can engender reactions like “It’s too scientific for me!” or “It takes the joy out of bird-watching.” However, not only does the keeping and submitting of bird records provide crucial data to conservation organisations but it also offers observers an exciting new dimension to their hobby. Questions like “When did I see my first Swallow last year?” and “Has my local population of Wrens really declined following the hard winter?” are quickly and easily answered by the bird-watcher who keeps a note of his or her sightings. What’s more, many people already record birds without realising it, enthusiastically reporting unusual sightings to family, friends or neighbours who share the interest. The advent of the digital camera has opened up the once-exclusive world of bird photography to a much wider audience and the internet is alive with examples of people sharing their records of birds through the medium of digital imagery.



Photo: Yellowhammer by Jill Pakenham

BirdTrack is a free online bird recording package developed to provide safe and manageable storage for an individual’s bird records, whilst simultaneously increasing their conservation value at a local, regional and national scale. By logging sightings, BirdTrack users not only keep an eye on any changes in the species and numbers of birds they encounter but also contribute valuable data to a wide range of conservation schemes, such as the Bird Conservation Targeting Project (BCTP).

“These birds include several enigmatic and threatened species, such as Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Corncrake and Hawfinch. Other examples include Grey Partridge, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat and Yellowhammer.”

In this project, a total of 25 species of conservation concern are monitored. These birds include several enigmatic and threatened species, such as Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Corncrake and Hawfinch. Other examples include Grey Partridge, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat and Yellowhammer. BCTP results help to target valuable resource towards important Scottish bird sites, which are identified by mapping the distributions of farmland and woodland birds of current conservation concern. In this way, bird-watchers can all help to influence how millions of pounds in grant payments are distributed through agri-environment and woodland schemes.

To get more out of bird-watching and contribute to vital conservation projects in Scotland, register at www.birdtrack.net today!

Breeding Bird Survey in Scotland

The survey for anywhere and everywhere



Photo: south of Loch Ness by Pete Moore. Kate by Jacquie Clark

by Kate Risely, Breeding Bird Survey Organiser, BTO

Golden Eagle, Crested Tit, Ptarmigan and Dotterel. All of these are birds that are sadly lacking from my own Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) squares in the Norfolk fens. As the Breeding Bird Survey Organiser, based at the BTO headquarters in Thetford, Norfolk, it's my job to check through the annual survey results, and I will admit to a certain amount of 'survey site envy' when reviewing records from the more remote parts of Scotland. Sometimes volunteers even send me photos of the view from their squares, which doesn't help.

"I will admit to a certain amount of 'survey site envy' when receiving records from the more remote parts of Scotland"

I know, of course, that surveying these squares can be hard work, and numbers of birds at the more exposed sites can be low. I only hope that the volunteers are consoled by the knowledge that their records are disproportionately valuable when it comes to the massive task of calculating the population trends of the UK's breeding bird species.

For those unfamiliar with the BBS, this is a national scheme based on annual breeding-season bird counts on randomly-located 1-km squares. Volunteers survey the same squares consistently year-on-year, enabling us to pick up changes in bird populations, such as the declines in the breeding population of waders like Golden Plover, Curlew and Lapwing, and the increase in the Stonechat population.

The squares are randomly located to ensure that the results are not biased by habitat or region, so we can be sure that Birds in View 2010

the results are representative of the country as whole. We can also break down the results to produce country-specific trends, showing how the fortunes of one species can vary dramatically in different parts of the UK – for example, since the start of the survey in 1994, Willow Warblers have declined by 32% in England, but their numbers have remained stable in Scotland.

As with other surveys, we need more volunteers in Scotland, to monitor our important populations of upland and moorland birds. Surveying a BBS square involves just two early-morning breeding-season visits, of around two hours each, to count all birds seen or heard while walking around the square. The aim of BBS is to look at changes in numbers of birds. BBS volunteers survey the same site every year and, over time, build up a detailed knowledge of their local bird populations. If you'd like to take on a square, please contact me, or visit the BBS website to get in touch with your Regional Organiser – it would be great to have new volunteers on board.

As for me, I'll have to remain content with Turtle Doves, Yellow Wagtails and Little Owls on my BBS squares – though if Natural England go ahead with the planned re-introduction of White-tailed Eagles to East Anglia, my surveys may have a slightly Scottish flavour in future.

Find out more, get a site and get involved!
bbs@bto.org
www.bto.org/bbs

Get it together for *Bird Atlas 2007–11*

Take part in the biggest stock-take of Britain's birds ever

by Ray Murray, *Bird Atlas 2007–11* Regional
Organiser & SOC Local Recorder, Borders

The atlas project produces all kinds of pluses for the folk who take part. It will produce not just one but many great books, when all the local tetrad atlases are added to the principle book that the main project is all about. All participants will be able to claim some sort of ownership of these books – ‘that’s my dot there’ will be the minimum claim but everyone should have the satisfaction of taking part in a truly massive project that will make genuine advances in our understanding of our birds.



Photo: Redshank by Mark Taylor

There is also the personal pleasure in just having a good day's birding, where every observation counts, even those Blackbirds or Carrion Crows, that are usually taken for granted. The atlas presents a reason for going over the doorstep. It's not just the usual stroll or drive around well-covered places, often chasing other folk's birds - you may go to places that no-one ever covers (at least not since the last atlas!) and make personal discoveries about birds, places and people.

I especially like the more social side of atlasing where you get involved with others to cover those less accessible or more remote places once all the easy to access tetrads have been surveyed. As before, it will be down to the hardy bands of enthusiasts to get out to these places. However, going off for the day with a car-load of people to blitz a remote valley or hillside that is much easier worked as a team has a lot to recommend it. What was impractical on your own becomes a much easier task when a bunch of your set out with arranged drop-offs and pick-ups to

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obviate the need to double back to your starting point. Comparing notes at lunch time or on the return trip adds to the satisfaction of surveying a 'hole' in the atlas coverage.

Better still is when you go into totally unknown areas away from home. Last spring I had the fascinating task of doing atlas work on my first visit to the Outer Hebrides, covering tetrads in the Uists and Benbecula. The differences between Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs) there and in the Borders were fascinating, in terms of what was present and/or common, and what was not. Doing the TTVs elevated the trip beyond just a good week's birding spent dropping in on the well-known sites and ticking off the standard highlights. I felt that I saw more of the real birds of the Outer Hebrides. The start of the final part of the Atlas should offer more chances to both cover remote areas and work with others. You'll be making one of the most important practical contributions that ordinary birders can make to our understanding of birds in Britain and Ireland.



BirdAtlas 2007–11

The aim of *Bird Atlas 2007–11* is to cumulatively survey the whole of Britain and Ireland over 4 winter and 4 breeding seasons. We are looking for birdwatchers to help in Scotland. Atlases are vital tools for conservation, and with your help, we can achieve comprehensive coverage which will allow us to compare the changes in distribution and numbers of birds with previous atlases. There are two ways you can get involved:

Roving Records – simply record whatever you see, whenever, wherever (something you can do day to day and you only need record the birds you can identify).

Timed Tetrad Visits – visit a two by two kilometre square twice in the breeding season and/or twice in the winter and record all the birds you see and hear for an hour or more.

Visit the website **www.birdatlas.net** to find your local organiser or to start recording.

Garden BirdWatch from the inside

What makes one Garden BirdWatcher tick

John I B Wilson, from Lothian, has discovered many additional benefits from his Garden BirdWatching.

I probably became a BTO Garden BirdWatch contributor through a general interest in outdoor activities, including gardening, and a more specific interest in the wildlife that we saw on our walks through the nearby countryside on this western edge of Edinburgh. Although I knew the more frequent species of birds, such as those that visited the garden most days, I was not an avid bird spotter. However, taking part in this survey has given me a better sense of what birds visit our garden, and when, than a more casual, interest could have given. It has also encouraged a closer observation of birds' behaviour towards each other; the whole family would have to confess to a greater awareness of the birdlife in the different environments that we each visit during the year.

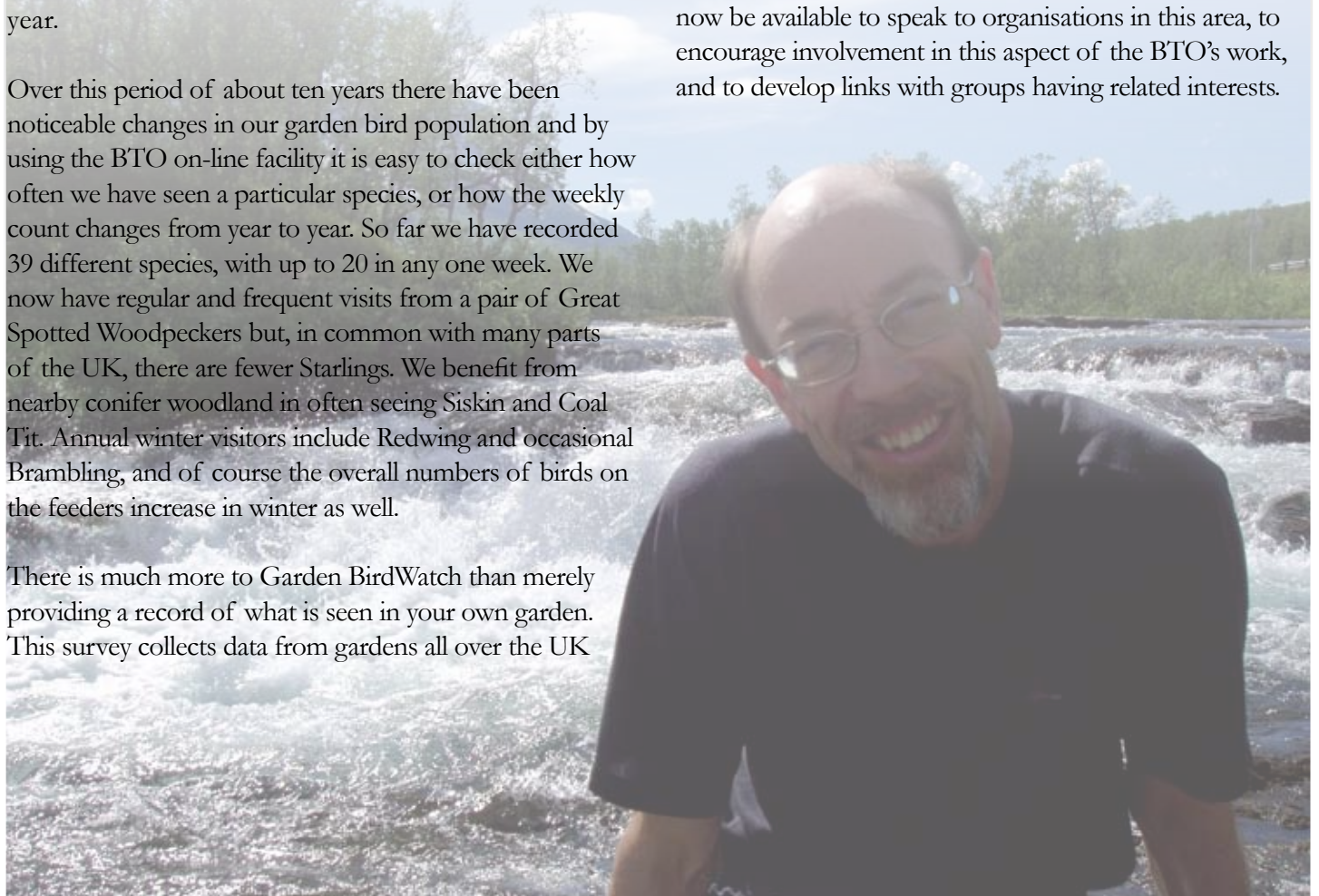
Over this period of about ten years there have been noticeable changes in our garden bird population and by using the BTO on-line facility it is easy to check either how often we have seen a particular species, or how the weekly count changes from year to year. So far we have recorded 39 different species, with up to 20 in any one week. We now have regular and frequent visits from a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers but, in common with many parts of the UK, there are fewer Starlings. We benefit from nearby conifer woodland in often seeing Siskin and Coal Tit. Annual winter visitors include Redwing and occasional Brambling, and of course the overall numbers of birds on the feeders increase in winter as well.

There is much more to Garden BirdWatch than merely providing a record of what is seen in your own garden. This survey collects data from gardens all over the UK

and is therefore a valuable resource for monitoring how birds use gardens and whether there are changes that can be correlated with other information. Any outcome is fed back to the GBW participants in the quarterly magazine *BirdTable* as well as via the website. It is also used to prepare scientific reports that will reach a wider audience and perhaps inform decisions on conservation issues. It is quite satisfying to know that your records are contributing in this way to research that has a bearing on larger concerns, like global warming.

"Over this period of about ten years there have been noticeable changes in our garden bird population"

Recently I was asked if I would help promote the GBW scheme in Lothian region and, although not a professional in life-sciences, I was pleased to accept this role of Ambassador. Following the launch in Autumn I will now be available to speak to organisations in this area, to encourage involvement in this aspect of the BTO's work, and to develop links with groups having related interests.



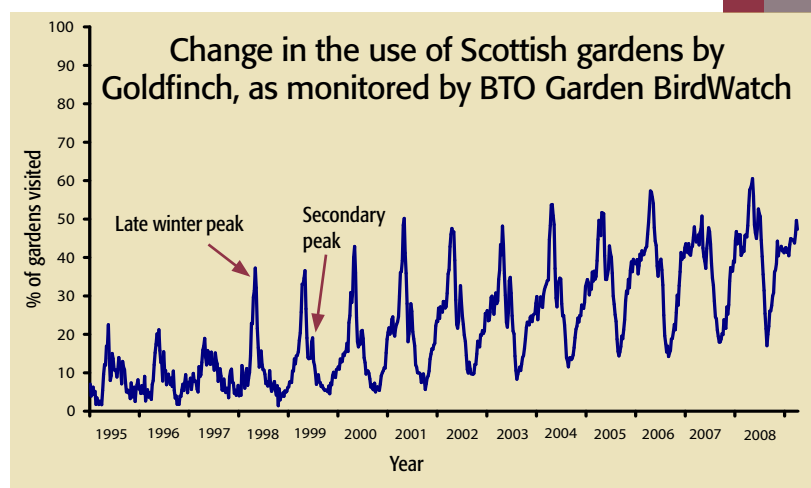
Mike Toms, Head of Garden Ecology highlights two species on the move in Scottish gardens



Photo: Goldfinch by John Harding

Goldfinches in Scottish Gardens

The growing availability of suitable seed mixes at garden feeding stations has allowed the Goldfinch to increase its use of gardens, something that is evident from the BTO Garden BirdWatch reporting scheme (see graph below). Data from some 1,000 Scottish gardens have made it possible to track this increase and, also, to highlight the strong seasonal pattern to garden use. Note the late winter peak and a smaller secondary peak, the latter matching the period over which these birds are producing eggs.



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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: NUTHATCH

MARCHING EVER NORTHWARDS

The recent range expansion in the Nuthatch population brought the first confirmed breeding record for Scotland (1989 from the Scottish Borders). The 1990s saw a period of rapid colonisation within the Borders, the bird making use of the suitable woodland habitat to be found on many of the larger Scottish estates. By 2004, the breeding population within the Borders had risen to exceed 220 pairs – a remarkable achievement given the Nuthatch's sedentary nature. A similar, though less dramatic, colonisation was noted in Dumfries and Galloway, with birds also reaching Ayrshire.

Since 2000, we have seen Nuthatches reported from across much of Scotland, the first records in an area often coming from garden feeding stations, highlighting the role that BTO Garden BirdWatchers can play in helping to chart the establishment of this species within Scotland.

1970



1990



2010?



Photo: Nuthatch by Tommy Holden

Nest Record Scheme

The Surprise Survey!



Carl Barimore, the BTO's Nest Record Scheme Organiser, tells us how people are taking to recording nests in their gardens and local birding spots



Photo: Dunnock nest by Carl Barimore

Sometimes there's merely a glimpse - wasn't that Wren carrying a massive beakful of moss? - but other times we are brought to attention: a Yellowhammer springing up from the grassy verge at our feet, or the clamour of a Coot careering out of the rushes. And as we peer toward the vacated spot, we are treated to a sight of that most substantial and yet hidden part of a bird's life cycle: its nest.

Every year, at the beginning of April, when Robins are tending young in the ivy and early Chaffinches are on eggs in Blackthorns, I begin to receive a steady stream of e-mails and telephone calls from people eager to tell me about what they have just stumbled across whilst out bird recording or in their garden shed or where they walk their dog. And each call leads to the same question: I've found this beautiful nest, what now?

My answer is, welcome to the BTO's Nest Record Scheme! This fascinating survey has been running since 1939 and is designed to monitor the productivity of UK breeding birds by compiling observations on their nesting habits. Every year, over 400 volunteer nest recorders visit nests, carefully count eggs and the chicks, monitor adult activity,

and record each nest's outcome. They then send these 'nest records' to the BTO - over 30,000 of them every year - and the data collected are used to produce trends in breeding performance for species ranging from Robins to Redshanks.

So, when I get a call about a surprise Dunnock nest in a garden hedge, I send the caller a 'Quick Start' guide to nest recording, which tells them how to unobtrusively find and monitor nests and complete nest record cards. A few months later, I can expect several completed cards back; not just a record for that surprise Dunnock nest, but also a Robin and perhaps a Song Thrush nest that the person has gone out and found. And so the hobby begins...

If you're interesting in discovering a new way to enjoy bird watching, why not give nest recording a try? The Nest Record Scheme Quick Start Guide is free and tells you everything you need to know to get started. Then, when the next Yellowhammer flits off by your feet, or that Coot nest is spied between the reeds, you'll be able to further help the BTO monitor these birds for conservation.



Photo: Chaffinch nest by Carl Barimore

To order your free BTO 'Quick Start Guide' to nest recording, go to <http://www.bto.org/nrs>, email nrs@bto.org or tel: 01842 750 050.

Ringling - YOU can help to complete the story

Keep your eyes peeled for colour-ringed birds

by Mark Grantham, Ringing Team, BTO



Photo: Colour-ringed Greenshank by Adrian Langdon

Every year, volunteers in Scotland ring over 125,000 birds, ranging from Storm Petrels caught at night and Gannets on barely accessible islands to autumn migrants on the coast, with a whole range of species in-between! But how can YOU get involved in ringing?

The easiest way to get involved is to simply be the 'other half' of a movement... For all of the effort that ringers put in to get rings onto birds, we are equally keen to recruit people to complete the story by reporting ringed birds to the BTO. This can be as simple as checking any dead birds you find for rings: it's amazing how many Barn Owls and seabirds you find that are ringed, and it isn't at all as grisly as it might sound!

But there are also a wealth of birds out there carrying unique combinations of colour rings, so why not see what is happening near you and keep your eyes peeled? Some of the current projects run by the different regional ringing groups are listed below.

A selection of colour ringing projects in Scotland

Borders Ringing Group

Colour-ringing: Common Sandpiper and Dipper
Other projects: Barn Owls, Sand Martin, Chaffinch, Siskin

Highland Ringing Group

Colour-ringing: Greylag and Pink-footed Geese (neck collars), Red Kite (wing tags)
Other projects: raptors, geese, cannon-netting shorebirds, Linnet, Twite

Much has been discovered about birds by watching and counting them, but such methods rarely allow birds to be identified as individuals. This is essential if we are to learn about how long they live and when and where they move, questions that are vital for bird conservation.

Placing a lightweight, uniquely numbered, metal ring around a bird's leg provides a reliable and harmless method of identifying birds as individuals. Each ring also has an address so that anyone finding a ringed bird can help by reporting where and when it was found and what happened to it. Some ringing projects also use colour rings to allow individual birds to be identified without being re-caught or found dead.

Report a ringed, or colour-ringed bird, online at **www.ring.ac**

You might be surprised at what you find as well! Some of the foreign-ringed birds found in Scotland in 2009 were:

- Belgian-ringed Canada Goose in Highland
- Russian-ringed Woodcocks in Highland and South Ayrshire
- Black-headed Gulls from Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden
- Russian-ringed Herring Gull seen five times in Moray

Some of the most impressive movements of Scottish-ringed birds in 2009 included:

- Red-throated Diver to Norway
- Gannet to Tunisia
- Osprey to Senegal
- Great Black-backed Gull to Morocco – a first!
- Sandwich Terns to Namibia and the Ivory Coast
- Swallow to South Africa

Photo: Colour-ringed Waxwing by Steve Plume

Tay Ringing Group

Colour-ringing: Blackbird, Osprey, Ring Ouzel and Dipper, Starling, Wood Pigeon, Peregrine, Hawfinch, Redshank

Grampian Ringing Group

Colour-ringing: Cormorant, Waxwing

Nationally

Colour-ringing: Mute Swan, Shag, Great Black-backed Gull, Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Oystercatcher, Purple Sandpiper, Sanderling, Crossbill

Choosing the right survey.

Use this handy guide to find out which survey is the one for you!

www.bto.org/survey

Are you able to recognise some common birds by sight?

YES

NO

Are you able to recognise a range of common birds by sight, song and call?

YES

NO

Are you able to recognise most birds by sight, song and call?

YES

NO



Wetland Bird Survey (Large Sites)

Help monitor the UK's internationally important waterbirds by adopting a site and counting the birds once per month.

Time commitment & skill level

Ability to recognise all species of waterbird at selected site. For larger sites, ability to be able to estimate numbers accurately.

One visit per month, ideally at least September to March. Duration of visit varies depending upon size of site.

www.bto.org/webs



Breeding Bird Survey

BBS is the major survey for measuring the populations of widespread breeding bird species in the UK. The survey involves recording all birds seen and heard in randomly selected 1-kilometre squares.

Time commitment & skill level

Able to identify birds by sight, song and call.

3 visits between April and June. Visits take approximately 1.5 hours each to complete.

www.bto.org/bbs



BirdTrack

An online project which plots the departure of migrants and the distribution of species throughout the year. Taking part in BirdTrack is easy and it's a great place to store your birdwatching records.

Time commitment & skill level

No minimum time commitment. Only record birds that you can identify with confidence.

www.birdtrack.net



Waterways Breeding Bird Survey

Like BBS, but measuring changes in breeding bird populations along rivers and canals.

Time commitment & skill level

Able to identify birds by sight and call.

3 visits between April and June. Visits take approximately 1.5 hours each to complete.

www.bto.org/survey/w



Count the eggs you find and You can submit any habitats.

Time commitment & skill level

One of the simplest. You can check single garden.

www.bto.org

g part in BTO surveys is fun and rewarding. To help you get the most from your survey work we offer a wide range of training courses designed to increase your skills and confidence. These include **Bird Identification (Beginners and Improvers)** and **Bird Survey Techniques**.

www.bto.org/training

Nest Record Scheme

s and chicks in any nests that
send in your observations.
nit records for any species in
it, including gardens.

Time commitment & skill level

Simplest surveys to take part in.
Choose whether to monitor a
nestbox or to carry out a
larger study.

www.bto.org/survey/nest_records



Bird Atlas 2007-11 Roving Records

An exciting 4-year project which will
map the distribution and abundance
of all the birds of Britain and Ireland.
Just record any bird, any time, any
where. If you see it, record and we'll
map it!

Time commitment & skill level

Only record birds that you can
identify with confidence.
No minimum time.

www.birdatlas.net



Garden BirdWatch

By recording the birds using your
garden each week throughout the
year, you can help provide vital
information about this important
habitat. Anyone can take part,
whether you have a window box or a
mansion.

Time commitment & skill level

Able to identify common garden birds
by sight.
No minimum time commitment.

www.bto.org/gbw

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Bird Atlas 2007-11 Timed Tetrads

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Time commitment & skill level

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Wetland Bird Survey (Small Sites)

Help monitor the UK's internationally
important waterbirds by adopting a site
and counting the birds once per month.

Time commitment & skill level

Ability to recognise the restricted
number of species of waterbird at your
selected site.

One visit per month, ideally at least
September to March. Duration of visit
varies depending upon size of site.

www.bto.org/webs



Ringing Scheme

Marking birds with individually numbered rings allows
us to follow bird movements, calculate their chances of
survival and monitor their populations.

Time commitment & skill level

Training to ring requires time and dedication, and to
reach the level to ring independently you will need to
train for at least 18 months. Basic bird identification
skills and a reasonable level of dexterity are
advantageous.

If you find a ringed bird, report it at

www.ring.ac

www.bto.org/ringing



Bird Atlas 2007-11 Timed Tetrads

Help to cover every 10-km square of Britain and Ireland by taking on a 2x2 kilometre
square and record all the birds you see and hear in the winter and breeding seasons.

Time commitment & skill level

Able to identify all birds likely to occur by sight, song and call. Minimum of 2x one hour
visits.

www.birdatlas.net

BBMS and the Scottish Local Recording Network

by Clive McKay, Scottish Bird Record Co-ordinator, SOC

Many years ago, when I was much younger, the main aim of handing in my bird records to the Local Recorder was to get my records into the Local Bird Report - and hopefully see my initials next to them! The most successful ploy was to see lots of rare or scarce species - guaranteed to get into the bird report. But only a few of these come your way in any one year. So I employed another tactic - trying to produce some meaningful comment on the status or distribution of a species that would merit inclusion in the report, e.g. "first breeding record for Blackburn Meadows (CRM)". Most of my bird watching life since then has centred around trying to produce useful information on the birds in my area - from Wood Pigeons to Whooper Swans, and Goldcrests to Golden Eagles. But the aim is no longer to get my initials in Local Reports - honest!

"Most of my bird watching life since then has centred around trying to produce useful information on the birds in my area."



Photo: Wood Pigeon by Rob Robinson

The Scottish Local Recorders network consists of 21 Local Recorders - one for each recording area, covering the whole of Scotland (see <http://www.the-soc.org.uk/soc-recorders.htm>), and even including the North Sea Bird Club! Local Recorders are volunteers, and each year they perform the massive task of collating all the bird records for their area and synthesising them for use in a Local Bird Report. You can help by submitting your records to your Local Recorder, or by offering to help with the task of record collation or report compilation. It really is a team effort, and everyone has skills that can be usefully employed.

"With the coming of the digital age, we now have new ways of submitting and storing this information"

With the coming of the digital age, we now have new ways of submitting and storing this information (see Nick Moran's article on BirdTrack), and most bird clubs are now using spreadsheets or databases to store their information. Records can now be analysed at the touch of a few buttons, provided that they are received in a standard format. The use of web-recording and spreadsheets can greatly help to standardise place names and species names, as well as making the whole recording process simpler and more valuable, by giving added value to each record - e.g. by automatically providing a grid reference for well known bird watching locations.

When you help with record collation or report compilation, it soon becomes obvious how important standardisation is - computers struggle to understand that Loch of Lintrathen is the same place as Lintrathen Loch, Lintrathen Resr or Lintrathen Reservoir! So by making bird recording easy for observers at the input stage, Local Recorders are striving to make life easier for all - from field notebook to annual report production. This way, bird reports will go from strength to strength, and our bird records will be of maximum value to conservation agencies and thus give something back to the birds themselves - after all, they give us a lot of pleasure.

N.B. this article contains my name or initials twice! Old habits die hard.

Schedule 1 Species and Countryside Access

by Mandy Cook, Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland

Scotland's wide range of habitats and open spaces make it the perfect home for some of the most impressive birds you can see, including the Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle and Osprey. Of no less importance are the somewhat smaller gems like the Corncrake, Scottish Crossbill and Crested Tit. Laws protecting birds and their habitats have helped to secure the conservation of these Schedule 1 listed species.

SCHEDULE 1 SPECIES

The main legislation protecting wild birds in Scotland is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WACA), as amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (NCSA). The Acts make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take, damage, destroy, obstruct or interfere with any wild birds nest, whilst being built or in use, or their eggs and young.

Species listed on Schedule 1 of the WACA 1981 (as amended by NCSA 2004) have additional protection from 'disturbance' during breeding (whilst they are building or using their nest or disturbance to their dependent young). There is also a new specific offence of disturbance to lekking species on Schedule 1 (i.e. Capercaillie in Scotland).

Surveys of Schedule 1 species that involve close approach to nest sites or any risk of 'disturbance' as defined by the 1981 Act (and more recent amendments) should be carried out only under licence issued by Scottish Natural Heritage to accredited people.

For further details please refer to:

Birds and The Law in Scotland (Scottish Executive)
<http://www.snh.org.uk/wildlifecrimeschools/documents/Birds%20Leaflet.pdf>

Scotland's Wildlife: The Law and You
www.snh.org.uk/publications/online/wildlife/law/law.asp

Schedule 1 Species and Licences
http://www.bto.org/ringing/resources/schedule1_specieslist.htm
http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/taking_part/schedule1.htm

COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND CARRYING OUT SURVEYS AS A VOLUNTEER

Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water, as long as these rights are exercised responsibly. Equally, land managers must manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights. Detailed guidance on access rights is provided by the The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).

The SOAC makes it clear that access rights extend to people *"undertaking surveys where they have a recreational or educational purpose"* and goes on to recommend that *"if you are organising a survey which is intensive over a small area or requires frequent repeat visits, or a survey that will require observation over a few days in the same place, consult the relevant land managers about any concerns they might have and tell them what you are surveying"*.

For further details: www.outdooraccess-sotland.com

Scotland's Moorland Forum recommends that the SOAC advice should be followed and states that *"although not all ecological surveys require consultation with landowners, it is considered courteous to advise landowners or land managers that a survey is to be carried out. It may not always be practically possible to make contact before surveying (e.g. because of difficulties in determining who owns and manages the land) but surveyors should be encouraged to approach appropriate people and discuss the survey with them when out in the field. Surveyors should be aware of the likely impacts of their activities on land management operations, and respect reasonable requests to avoid sensitive activities. Equally, landowners and land managers should respond courteously and reasonably, and facilitate access for surveyors to carry out their work"*.

For further details: www.moorlandforum.org.uk/assets/documents/3102008144837_survey_work_best_practice.pdf

Photo: Golden Eagle by Luke Delve

Working Together...

Connecting Schiehallion, the Bird Atlas, the John Muir Trust and Teaching

by Richard Paul, BTO Regional Representative, Perthshire

I have been lucky enough to live just to the west of Schiehallion since 1977 and so have had the opportunity to climb it more than 80 times. I can walk straight from my house and so, in a sense, look on it as a rather extensive back garden.

For many years I taught at Rannoch School and now teach at Pitlochry High School where, as part of the 'Curriculum for Excellence', many pupils are taking the John Muir Trust Discovery Award. In part fulfilment of the Award, the Head of Science has arranged for these pupils to go on a residential course in Kinloch Rannoch. They have explored the surrounds of Schiehallion, including cycling round Loch Rannoch and walking to Macgregor's Cave (where it is said that the redcoat soldiers hunted down three members of the Macgregor clan and then

chased them onto rocks in the river below where they were killed). In addition, they have carried out conservation work at the Dun Coillich community land project, the land of which lies to the east of the John Muir Trust East Schiehallion reserve. This community land was bought using a grant from J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series of books. I was invited to be a Trustee two years ago to encourage the educational use of the facilities. The other Trustees have been very kind in providing their time and expertise to help with school visits.

In order to gain further insight into the John Muir Trust Award I decided to embark on a Conservator Award myself, based upon Schiehallion. The study is intended to cover many fields such as entomology, archaeology, botany, vertebrates, geology and of



Photos: Schiehallion by Richard Paul. Black Grouse by Edmund Fellowes.

course ornithology. The latter fits in well with *Bird Atlas 2007–11* and the fact that I survey an Atlas square (tetrad) within the Schiehallion area is a huge bonus towards gaining my Conservator Award.

Schiehallion is a fascinating area of mixed habitats, with mountain birds like Golden Eagles and Ptarmigan, moorland birds such as Black Grouse and Hen Harriers and water birds like Whooper Swans, geese and ducks. The route that I take through the tetrad leads from my house across fields to a creek in the River Tummel that surrounds a wooded island where Scottish Wild Cats have been found. On the far side of the island is a magical hidden spot where the Tummel rushes past, Ospreys plunge for fish and Otters may be seen. From here, it is possible to look up to the majestic shape of Schiehallion and back to the Dippers, Grey Wagtails, Goosanders and occasional Kingfisher of the river. I make my way back towards Schiehallion and up onto heather-clad moorland where there are Buzzards, Meadow Pipits, Red Grouse and, in the fringing trees, Black Grouse. I like this tetrad for its variety of habitats and birds. I have seen two Ospreys at once from my kitchen window, Hen Harriers and numerous geese can be seen from the living room and I have seen Peregrines and a Golden Eagle from the garden. Appreciation of the wilderness is deep in the ethos of the John Muir Trust and it is easy to combine the inherent reverence for nature, which is an integral part of the Conservator Award, with the privilege of surveying for the Atlas close to Schiehallion. I am also acting as the Atlas Regional Organiser for Perthshire. In this task I am indebted to Ron Youngman (former bird recorder) and Bob Swann (Scottish Atlas Organiser) who are the ornithological experts who validate records for Perthshire. My role is to assign volunteers to their chosen squares for Atlas surveys.

Scottish education is at a time of great development and one initiative is the implementation of a country-wide schools computer network called GLOW. I am one of the teachers in Perthshire who has volunteered to help disseminate information about GLOW to other teachers and I will be sharing information about the JMT Award Schiehallion project through GLOW as well as via a separate website. Pitlochry High School also makes use of the Schiehallion area for the Duke of Edinburgh Award (Bob Burrell) and for the Rural Skills course organised by Deputy Head, Linda Watson.

Find out more
John Muir Trust Award:
(<http://www.jmt.org/jmaward-about-the-award.asp>)
GLOW network:
(<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/glowscotland/index.asp>)
Richard's site:
(<http://www.rannoch.net/Schiehallion/index.htm>)



If, like Richard, you fancy the challenge of taking on an Atlas tetrad in rural Perthshire, please contact Richard Paul by emailing Richard@rannoch.net or if you are interesting in taken on a tetrad elsewhere, please contact Bob Swann, Scottish Atlas Organiser (email bob.swann@bto.org or telephone 01862 894329).

A Focus on Wetland Birds - Size isn't everything...

There's more to WeBS than counting birds on vast estuaries



by Neil Calbrade, WeBS Low Tide Organiser

Photo: Moorhen by John Harding

With over 150,000 water bodies from the vast Forth Estuary and Loch Lomond to tiny lochans and burns, Scotland is a haven for many species of waterbird. However, we know precious little about what birds use many of these sites. The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) is the monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK, which has been running for over 60 years, and in the last 5 years, just 1,400 of these wetlands has been counted.

"...it is the small lochans and pools that get neglected. Indeed just 5% of all waterbodies of less than 10 hectares have long-term WeBS count data..."

Most of the larger estuaries, reservoirs and lochs do get counted regularly, but it is the small lochans and pools that get neglected. Indeed, just 5% of all water bodies of less than 10 hectares have long-term WeBS count data, many of which may hold under-recorded species such as Little Grebe, Moorhen or Snipe. Other species such as Goosander often favour rivers, which are not well monitored by WeBS and so may go unrecorded. In order to effectively monitor these species, we need to have a better idea of how abundant they are at small wetland sites throughout the wider countryside. This information will then help to provide sensible national population estimates.

Neil Bielby, WeBS Local Organiser, Stirlingshire describes his reasons for taking on small WeBS sites, and the benefits it can bring.

"Although estuaries and the larger inland sites undoubtedly hold the bulk of Scotland's wintering waterbirds and provide the greatest range of species; not everyone is able, willing, or indeed has the opportunity, to be involved in counting these. Finding myself in this very situation, but keen to get involved in wildfowl monitoring, I started my WeBS career over 15 years ago by prospecting the numerous small to medium sized inland still waterbodies in what was Central Region."

"With only four being covered at that time, I virtually had a blank canvas. Not only did this prove to be an interesting, even exciting, journey of discovery (during which I was able to add over a 100 new sites), but it also provided an ideal way of developing my ID skills (without affecting the results too much!), while adding to the knowledge of our local wintering waterbirds."

"Although the aforementioned objectives are both virtuous in their own right (the monthly inland numbers of several species being equal to, or exceeding, those logged on the Inner Forth estuary), such is the continuing appeal of visiting 'my' sites - where even the smallest have their own charms and rewards with, now and then, scarce (or on notable occasions, rare) species turning up to set the old pulse racing - that I still look forward in keen anticipation to the varied monthly rounds."



Photo: Mallard by Jill Pakenham

WeBS has just released a new leaflet, 'Make your day out count' aimed at filling in these gaps in our knowledge. Anyone who enjoys the countryside and visits one of these small sites, whether you are a walker in the hills or a family going on an outing to a park lake, could make a big difference by recording the birds seen there. Even if there are no waterbirds present, this information is just as important.

If you would like copies of this leaflet or know of a suitable place where they could be distributed, please get in touch with BTO Scotland. Alternatively, to download a copy of the leaflet, please go to www.bto.org/webs and follow the links.



Neil Bielby carrying out his WeBS count

FIND OUT MORE

If you are interested in taking on a WeBS count at a site near you, please visit www.bto.org/webs/index.htm and follow the links to find the contact details of your local WeBS organiser or call the WeBS team on 01842 750050.



Neil Bielby recording at his WeBS site. Anyone can help by counting their local pond or lochan. Why not get involved?

Making Butterflies and Moths Count!

by Paul Kirkland, Director of Butterfly Conservation Scotland



Photos: Painted Lady & Northern Brown Argus by Paul Kirkland. Silver Y Moth by Neil Calbrade

Butterflies and moths are beautiful, emblematic insects that contribute to our quality of life. But they are also sensitive indicators, being quick to respond to changes to their environment. They are therefore very useful tools to measure the health of our townscapes and countryside.

We have three main recording schemes to which volunteers' contributions are both invaluable and essential:

Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM) is the distribution recording scheme for butterflies in Britain and Ireland, and is co-ordinated by Butterfly Conservation in conjunction with the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club. The BNM dataset is on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and two atlases have now been published comparing distribution for the periods 1970-82, 1995-99 and 2000-04. This data comprises over 5 million records from more than 10,000 observers.

The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme is run by Butterfly Conservation and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. Volunteers record butterfly abundance on

over 1000 sites each year, and has been running since 1976. The data gathered now contribute to official UK and Scotland biodiversity indicators.

The National Moth Recording Scheme is part of the Moths Count project which began in 2006. It is run by Butterfly Conservation on behalf of a very wide partnership, but is built on the system of county moth recorders that has been running for many years. Moth records are collated from all sources – from garden moth traps to rare species surveys. The data are now on the NBN.

We are very keen to receive your butterfly and moth records, whether they are from your back garden or further afield. For more information visit www.butterfly-conservation.org/scotland, www.ukbms.org and www.mothscount.org

To contact us, email scotland@butterfly-conservation.org, tel: 01786 447753 (office hours) or write to us at Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Balallan House, 24 Allan Park, Stirling, FK8 2QG. Many thanks!



Photos: Common Blue, Small Magpie Moth & Hummingbird Hawkmoth by Su Delve



...and so to the end!

by Mandy Cook, Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland

The Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland (BBMS) project is now drawing to a close, after three very successful years. The aim of the project, to engage more volunteers in bird recording and survey work in Scotland, has focused on delivering a programme of activity, which has included the provision of free and accessible 'taster day' events. The project has delivered 19 such events across the whole of the country, from Inverness to Dumfries, with around 400 potential new volunteers taking part. The 'taster

"So, where do we go next? Remote, inaccessible areas are just one of the challenges facing those who monitor the country's birds."

days' have ranged from taking hillwalkers out to record Wheatears, Stonechats and Meadow Pipits in the mountains of Glencoe and inputting them into BirdTrack, to learning about WeBS and counting flocks of Barnacle Geese at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve in Dumfries, and showing gamekeepers in Perthshire how important recording their sightings of Golden Plover, Curlew and Lapwing is for bird conservation in Scotland.

Such a fantastically successful programme of training would not have been possible without the help and support of BTO and SOC volunteer trainers, co-ordinators and helpers, and we would like to express our very grateful thanks to everyone involved in making these events happen.

As well as the *Birds in View* newsletters (if you missed the previous editions, they can be downloaded at http://www.bto.org/regional/bto_scotland/bbms/newsletter.htm), the BBMS project has also produced three leaflets, one about *Bird Atlas 2007-11*, one about using BirdTrack to record upland birds and one providing an introduction to bird recording in Scotland. Hard copies of these leaflets are still available from BTO Scotland (contact details overleaf) or they can be downloaded at www.bto.org/scotland (follow links).

We would also like to express our thanks to all those volunteers who have given so generously of their



Photo: BBMS participants by Robin Anderson

own time to take part in bird recording. Your efforts have helped produce a uniquely rich and detailed body of scientific work, which government agencies, conservation campaigners, policy makers and land managers can rely on.

So, where do we go next? Remote, inaccessible areas are just one of the challenges facing those who monitor the country's birds, and the need for volunteer bird recorders to contribute to monitoring and building an understanding of Scotland's biodiversity is as great as ever. The BTO and SOC will continue to explore novel survey and data collation approaches and new sources of volunteers to help improve bird monitoring coverage in Scotland. We have a long term commitment to providing training to volunteers for specific surveys, with an emphasis placed on matching the right people with the right type of bird recording.

Finally, we would like to thank our partners and funders, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Gillman Trusts and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, for their invaluable support.

Photo: Meadow Pipit by Steve Gantlett

BUILDING BIRD MONITORING IN SCOTLAND

Birds in View is funded by the "Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland" project, which aims to engage more volunteers in bird recording and survey work in Scotland. The project is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, The Gillman Trusts, BTO Scotland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.



The British Trust for Ornithology has existed since 1933 as an independent, scientific research trust, investigating the populations, movements and ecology of wild birds in the British Isles. Our speciality is the design and implementation of volunteer wild bird surveys. Our partnership between a large number of volunteers and a small scientific staff has proved to be a powerful, productive and cost-effective way of monitoring wild birds. The trust exists independently of both the conservation campaigns and the government agencies responsible for environmental protection. This means that the data we gather and the survey results we publish are objective and unbiased. A wide range of government bodies, conservation agencies, commercial bodies and private individuals rely on the BTO for information and advice.

**BTO Scotland, School of Biological and Environmental Sciences,
Cottrell Building, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA**

Tel: 01786 466560 Fax: 01786 466561

Email: scot.info@bto.org www.bto.org/scotland



The Scottish Ornithologists' Club plays a central role in Scottish birdwatching, bringing together amateur birdwatchers, keen birders and research ornithologists with the aims of documenting, studying and, not least, enjoying Scotland's varied birdlife. The SOC is Scotland's national bird club with 2,500 members and 14 branches around the country.

SOC, Waterston House, Aberlady Bay, East Lothian, EH32 0PY

Tel: 01875 871 330 Fax: 01875 871 035

Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk www.the-soc.org.uk

The Gillman Trusts



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

Details of bird surveys and bird recording projects referred to in the text

Bird Atlas 2007-11 - mapping Britain and Ireland's birds. A joint project between BTO, SOC and BirdWatch Ireland. www.birdatlas.net

Ringling Scheme - following bird movements, calculating their chances of survival and monitoring their populations. www.bto.org/ringing

Garden BirdWatch - the largest year-round study of garden birds in the world. Run by BTO. www.bto.org/gbw

BirdTrack - the online bird recording scheme. A partnership project between BTO, RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland and SOC. www.birdtrack.net

Local Bird Recording - gathers bird records through the Local Recorders Network. Run by SOC. www.the-soc.org.uk/soc-recorders

Wetland Bird Survey - the scheme which monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. A partnership between BTO, RSPB and JNCC and supported by WWT. www.bto.org/webs

Breeding Bird Survey - the primary scheme for monitoring the UK's common and widespread species. A partnership between BTO, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and RSPB. www.bto.org/bbs

The Nest Record Scheme - part of the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring programme funded by a partnership of the BTO and the JNCC (on behalf of Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Council for Wales, and the Environment & Heritage Service in Northern Ireland) www.bto.org/nrs