

Bird Atlas 2007-11

Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds



Bird Atlas 2007-11 in Hampshire

(V3 GCE 05/02/09)

Guidelines for Hampshire observers

Bird Atlas 2007-11 is both a county project (Hampshire Ornithological Society) and a national project (British Trust for Ornithology). It is an ambitious but immensely important project. At the start of previous atlases the task has seemed daunting but the publications on your bookshelf are a testament to the hard work of all concerned, and to the enduring appeal of Atlasing. The aim of this document is to provide guidance on survey work in Hampshire. It is all compatible with the national survey and your results will be used both for the local and national projects. But the rules of the game may be slightly different in regions of the country that are not doing full tetrad-based surveys.

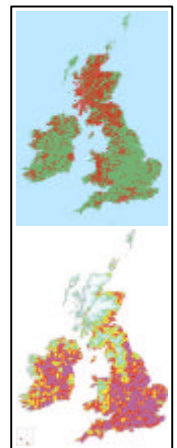
1. Aims of Bird Atlas 2007-11

Bird Atlas 2007-11 aims to:

- ? map distributions of birds in the breeding season and winter
- ? map broad scale patterns of relative abundance
- ? assess change in distribution and relative abundance
- ? produce population estimates

The national project aims to do this at the 10-km scale, whilst in Hampshire we'll be aiming for the finer tetrad scale (2km x 2km square).

To fulfil these aims we need two things – lots of *Roving Records* which, as they accumulate, will help to produce virtually complete species lists for **every tetrad in Hampshire** (nationally, every 10-km square in Britain and Ireland) – and we need *Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs)* in which observers count the individual birds they encounter within a tetrad in order to describe broad patterns of relative abundance. Both of these methods are equally important; we need to achieve full coverage with *TTVs* whilst also gaining comprehensive species lists. Any observer can do either, or both methods. Some brief details about each method are given below in section 2. Some further information is given in section 3.



2. The field methods

A brief summary follows.

2.1. *Roving Records*

Basically these are casual records and can take many forms, for example:

- ? one-off records (e.g. a Barn Owl seen from car);
- ? regular visits to a site (e.g. garden, local wood);
- ? a trip out birding, perhaps through several tetrads;
- ? a dedicated trip around a square (tetrad) looking for species;
- ? any other activity that generates casual records.

Nationally, records can be submitted at the 10-km square scale or the tetrad scale. But in Hampshire, and most other adjacent counties, *Roving Records* at the tetrad level are essential. Any and all records of species and levels of breeding evidence can be submitted. Birds **flying over** must be recorded separately using the code **F** in the Code column, but all records should only relate to live birds (not corpses, pellets, etc.) The records need to be completed during the breeding season and winter to help produce separate species lists for breeding and

wintering birds. The online system and forms are identical in the breeding season and winter, and breeding evidence can be provided 'out of season', for example for early nesters like Crossbill. Counts can also be noted on *Roving Records*, and in winter, counts of flocks of birds would be most useful eg Golden Plover, Fieldfare, Linnet.

Roving Records can appeal to **all** observers because it can be done at whatever level they choose, from the most casual, to the intensive. *Roving Records* data can be submitted on paper (the PDF that can be downloaded from www.birdatlas.net) or noted on paper and then submitted online.

2.2. Nocturnal Coverage

We would like **every tetrad** to receive at least one Rover style visit at dusk/night during the breeding season, to check for nocturnal/crepuscular species, namely Water Rail, Corncrake, Spotted Crake, Quail, Stone Curlew, Woodcock, owls, Nightjar, Nightingale and Grasshopper Warbler. In practice it might be necessary to make specific visits for each of these species, or at least to the relevant habitats. There is no such requirement in winter as there are fewer nocturnal species present. No particular field methods are required and sightings can be logged on the *Roving Records* form.

2.3. Timed Tetrad Visits

The *Timed Tetrad Visits* method applies in the breeding season and winter. In any given breeding season or winter a selected tetrad will receive an early visit and a late visit. **A tetrad does not need to be covered in each of the four years.** Further, we do not want repeat visits in subsequent years. In the breeding season this means a first visit in April/May and a second in June. In winter it means a first visit in November/December and a second in January/February. The field method for an individual visit is as follows. The observer is asked to walk around the tetrad for two hours, counting all the individuals of each species they encounter. **It is important that counts from the first hour and counts from the second hour are kept separate.** The route taken should cover the range of habitats present in the square, and not just concentrate on the best bits. A different route can be taken in the second visit if wished.

The TTV online system and paper recording form have comprehensive species lists (tailored for the breeding season or winter) and provides separate space for the first hour of counting and the second hour of counting. There is space to list anything additional seen after the timed component (e.g. a new species seen whilst walking back to the car) and in the breeding season any evidence of breeding (standard codes, e.g. FF = carrying food). Finally, there is an **optional** column for the observer's crude estimate of the number of individuals in the whole tetrad based on their two visits (Tetrad Population Estimate – see below). Here we are looking for **very general figures**, for example, to the nearest 10 if less than 100, to the nearest 100 if in the hundreds, nearest 1000 in the thousands. This is optional.

2.4 Tetrad Population Estimates

The Tetrad Population Estimate (TPE) is another way of gathering information that may be helpful when producing population estimates. It will work better for some species than others, but we are keen to try it for all species at present. It is entirely optional.

The Tetrad Population Estimate should be based on the species you recorded during your TTV visits and any 'extra' species recorded on the same day. Please do not use counts of species made on other dates when you are estimating the population for the tetrad.

2.5 Evidence of breeding

During *TTVs* and *Roving Recording* observers are asked to provide evidence of breeding. The main point to get across is that this does not require searching for nests of every species because there are many other observations that can confirm breeding. The evidence of breeding codes are copied below.

The general aim is to try to place each species in the highest category Possible \approx Probable \approx Confirmed but it is much easier to note down that actual evidence encountered, hence we use the codes. Field instructions stress that during *TTVs* it is much better to use the time for counting and not to spend excessive periods trying to raise the level of breeding evidence. Instead, the majority of breeding confirmation will come from *Roving Records* effort or from returning after the timed part of the *TTV* is completed.

In winter, the breeding code column should be left blank for the majority of species. Only record genuine instances of breeding in the winter eg fledged young Crossbill, Woodpigeon on nest, Egyptian Goose with goslings.

The codes are listed below. **All codes for Possible, Probable and Confirmed breeding must relate to individuals in suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season.** Code F (Flying over) must only be used on the *Roving Records* form.

Non-breeding

F – Flying over

M - Species observed but suspected to be still on Migration

U - Species observed but suspected to be summering non-breeder

Possible breeder

H - Species observed in breeding season in suitable nesting habitat

S - Singing male present (or breeding calls heard) in breeding season in suitable breeding habitat

Probable breeding

P - Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season

T - Permanent Territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour (song etc) on at least two different days a week or more part at the same place

D - Courtship and Display (judged to be in or near potential breeding habitat; be cautious with wildfowl)

N - Visiting probable Nest site

A - Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of nest or young nearby

I - Brood patch on adult examined in the hand, suggesting Incubation

B - Nest Building or excavating nest-hole

Confirmed breeding

DD - Distraction-display or injury feigning

UN - Used Nest or eggshells found (occupied or laid within period of survey)

FL - Recently Fledged young (nidicolous species) or downy young (nidifugous species). Careful consideration should be given to the likely provenance of any fledged juvenile capable of significant geographical movement. Evidence of dependency on adults (e.g. feeding) is helpful. Be cautious, even if the record comes from suitable habitat.

ON - Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest (including high nests or nest holes, the contents of which can not be seen) or adults seen incubating

FF - Adult carrying Faecal sac or Food for young

NE - Nest containing Eggs

NY - Nest with Young seen or heard

2.6 Colonial nesting species (inland and coastal)

A new approach has been used in Bird Atlas 2007-11 to collect information on colonial nesting birds (gulls, terns, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Sand Martin and Rook). The minimum we are asking for is a tick to say that a colony is present in a tetrad. If a volunteer is able/willing to make an estimate of the number of birds, then the maximum count (from either the early or late breeding season visit) should be entered on the TTV Colony Table. The Colony Table has been shaded so that the most appropriate counting method for each species is used: either counts of individuals or counts of Apparently Occupied Nests.

3. Some details

3.1. Roving Records

For the distribution maps in the final Atlas to be as complete as possible, and so we can make comparisons with previous Atlases, we need to aim for species lists to be generated for **every tetrad in Hampshire**. Although *TTVs* will contribute to the species list, we expect that the bulk of the records will come from *Roving Records*. Paper *Roving Record* forms are available, but we hope that the majority of

records will be submitted online at www.birdatlas.net , or via the BirdTrack system at www.birdtrack.net . We very much hope that *Roving Records* forms will generate a huge number of distribution records in summer and winter. To cope with this volume of data we will encourage as many people as possible to submit these records online – it will be much cheaper and allow quicker feedback. Any help you can provide in promoting use of the www.birdatlas.net website would be much appreciated.

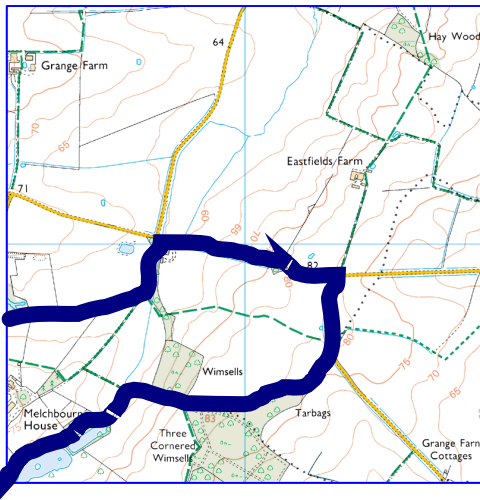
3.2 Timed Tetrad Visits

3.2.1. Sequence of visits

As far as possible volunteers should avoid splitting pairs of TTV visits between seasons, but we accept that in some circumstances, late visits may have to be postponed and even 'early' visits postponed to subsequent seasons. So it is highly desirable that pairs of visits are in the same season, but if this really cannot be achieved then it is acceptable for visits to be split between seasons.

3.2.2 Routes in a tetrad

No guidance was given in the 1988-91 Atlas regarding routes taken in a tetrad. This was discussed by the Atlas Working Group and agreed that different routes can be taken on the first and second visit. The route for the first hour should try to cover the main habitats if possible, in order for it to be comparable with the 1988-91 Atlas. In many tetrads there is only one sensible route to take, whilst in others, particularly sub-urban habitats there are a number of options and often a wide range of habitats to cover.



As a guide, in many habitats it is possible to walk about 2-3km in one hour (although this will vary).

The map (left) shows a suggested route in a tetrad that takes in the range of habitats present. Note that it is not essential to cover all parts of a tetrad in one hour. The route here goes through open land, past woodland and water.

3.2.3 Pausing the clock

You can 'Pause the clock' to count flocks of birds eg Lapwings, Golden Plover, ducks, geese, wildfowl or when you encounter a flock of birds in a wood. You should not 'Pause the clock' to drive between habitats in the tetrad as some species will be missed that you would normally encounter whilst walking. In some tetrads it may be necessary to re-trace your steps to get back into the tetrad, and in these cases it is okay to pause the clock and walk back, taking care not to double count any species.