

British Trust for Ornithology

Autumn Newsletter from your Regional Rep.

Peregrine Survey 2014: We surveyed 11 random squares (5x5 km) plus traditional known sites (mainly in the Yorkshire Dales National Park). In addition several observers informed me of sites with Peregrine activity hitherto unrecorded. Results are still been collected and will be analysed during the winter, a summary of the survey will be published in BTO NEWS and a formal paper produced in due course. This was the sixth Peregrine Survey organised by the BTO.

Winter Thrushes: This survey was conducted during the Autumn and Winter of 2012/13 and 2013/14, analysis of results started this September. Nationally nearly 2,000 observers covered 4,080 locations and more than 875,000 thrushes were recorded. over half a million Starlings were also recorded. 12 volunteers carried out the fieldwork in my Region.

Breeding Bird Survey: This on-going survey has been running for 20 years, when it replaced the Common Bird Census in 1994. Currently I have volunteers for 22 squares. The online recording system was modified for the 2014 season and an option for recording detection-type was introduced this year. The Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS) also went online for the first time this year, I only have two stretches of river covered for this valuable survey, please get in touch if you are interested in BBS or WBBS.

The Heronries Census: Established in 1928 this is the longest running bird survey in the UK. Plans are well advanced to introduce an online version for data submission, this will be part of an expanded "Colonial Birds Recording Scheme" which will seek to capture information on species such as Cormorant and Little Egret. I only receive information on seven heronries annually in my Region but I'm certain there must be more undetected or perhaps unreported sites. If you know of a heronry please don't hesitate to contact me, it might be one we already know about so please don't feel "put down" if I tell you it's been recorded for years!

Garden BirdWatch (GBW): Kate Risely (ex BBS) has taken over as National Garden BirdWatch Organiser and is working on a future strategy and a plan for an updated website to include garden information and a results page, aiming to help reverse the decline in GBW participation.

Woodcock Survey: Coverage obtained in 2013 was very good, however, one of the survey strata (the smallest woodland class in Northern England and Scotland) was under sampled, so additional coverage was required in 2014. A new population estimate of 55,000 males had been calculated, a 29% decline since 2003. Nine volunteers covered the allocated squares in my Region. The full results will be published next year.

New Surveys

House Martins: Pilot survey work was carried out this spring and summer to test the methodology and refine where necessary. The BTO Autumn Appeal is for House Martins (publicity already out) and it is hoped that funds will be raised to cover the costs. There will be a random square survey in 2015 and also a nest study in 2016, the aim of the survey in

2015 is to produce an accurate population estimate for the first time and to investigate how the population is distributed in the built environment. House Martins have declined rapidly since the mid 1980s and more so recently; both the Bird Atlas and BBS show striking changes in relative abundance over the last 20 years. Volunteers will be asked to search a one km. square looking for and recording complete and active nests on two visits between early June and mid-July. I will be asking for fieldworkers in due course.

Nightjar National Survey: The last national nightjar survey was in 2004, so a repeat is due in 2016. Because of the high conservation status of this species and the requirement to regularly report on its population status in the UK, within countries and in the SPA network. Funding is likely to come from the Country Agencies and possibly the Forestry Commission. The plan will be to repeat the coverage of the 2004 survey and augment it with further sampling from the results of the Bird Atlas.

Thanks to all who have contributed to surveys past and present. If you have never volunteered to carry out fieldwork and are not sure if we have one that suits you please do not hesitate to contact me, new volunteers are always welcome.

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