



The Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland Project

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Supported by:



The Gillman Trusts



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Summary

The Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland Project

Background

Skilled volunteer bird surveyors currently provide a high proportion of the evidence base that underpins bird conservation policy and management in Scotland, and throughout the UK. Volunteers involved in British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)-led schemes alone contribute an estimated £34 million of volunteer work in the UK each year. In the current climate of financial austerity, this volunteer effort provides ever-increasing and exceptional value for money. Engaging, educating and involving people in bird monitoring is thus important for the future of sustainable bird conservation but finding volunteers to assist with bird surveys is particularly challenging in Scotland due to the low human population density and the challenging and remote terrain in many areas.

The Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland (BBMS) Project 2007-2010 aimed to motivate more birdwatchers and other countryside users to get involved in bird recording through a range of activities to support and inspire them, and by providing support to BTO and Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) local voluntary representatives to empower them to engage more volunteers themselves. BBMS activities included: three central national weekend meetings to share best practice amongst regional volunteer coordinators; 19 one-day training events for existing and potential volunteers; an annual bespoke newsletter for volunteer bird recorders; three new promotional leaflets; and the advertising of opportunities for volunteers through a range of media and in collaboration with a range of partner organizations (particularly those associated with hillwalking and countryside management communities of potential volunteers).

Main findings

- The national BBMS meetings were excellent events for building relationships and understanding, for sharing knowledge, skills and new ideas, and for ensuring a true partnership approach to the project. They attracted a good proportion of BTO and SOC regional volunteer coordinators.
- Of the 19 training days, nine were designed to meet the needs of regional BTO and SOC existing and potential volunteers identified by regional coordinators, and 10 were designed for more novel audiences (two for countryside managers, two for hillwalkers and five for beginner bird recorders). The events were attended by 389 participants, 82% of whom lived in BTO regions that specifically required targeting to increase the volunteer base. Many events were over-subscribed.
- Of the 304 training participants who could be tracked in the BTO's Membership Database, 53 (17.5%) took up a total of 74 new surveys. More than 20 (>5% of) participants signed up to each of BirdTrack and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), with a further 3% signing up for the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and 2.6% for BTO Garden BirdWatch. In addition, in a follow-up questionnaire six months after each training day, 7.9% of participants said they had increased the level of their existing survey work and 2.2% said they had started bird recording for SOC.
- Participants with some previous survey experience were more than twice as likely to take up a new survey following training (25%) than those that had no previous survey experience (12%). Those that already did entry-level recording (like the BTO Garden BirdWatch survey) were more likely to take on a new survey than intermediate or very experienced surveyors (who may have already been doing as much voluntary survey work as they could fit in).

- The training events received very favourable feedback from participants. The three most frequently stated benefits of the training were: improved confidence; improved understanding of survey techniques; and improved understanding of the value of survey work. The two most frequently stated reasons for not taking up new survey work after training were the belief that their bird identification skills were still not good enough or insufficient time to get more involved.
- The most frequently stated suggestions for extra training support in future were: more guidance on bird identification by sound; the chance to go out and learn from an experienced bird recorder (mentoring); and more guidance on bird identification by sight.
- The number of volunteers who took up a new survey following a training day was very positive but was nowhere near as high as the number who suggested they would get more involved in surveying when they filled in a questionnaire on the training day itself. This suggests that follow-up 'care' following training would increase the chances of participants signing up to surveys, and the step to take part may be a difficult one, particularly for those that have not been involved in a survey before. The latter implies that the various routes through which new surveyors meet BTO and SOC must be as simple to understand and welcoming as possible, and actions to improve this are already being taken within the BTO marketing and volunteer engagement strategy.
- We did not measure formally the success of the promotional materials and advertising that was carried out, but many positive comments were received about the newsletter, leaflets and the talks that were given. Overall, the BTO Membership Database showed that more than 2,000 new volunteers signed up to five BTO-led core surveys in Scotland during the BBMS project, including >900 to the Bird Atlas, >750 to Birdtrack and >200 to Garden BirdWatch. The BBMS project played an important role in this positive survey uptake, alongside the continued hard efforts of all local volunteer coordinators and BTO survey organisers during the period of BBMS. Numbers of BBS volunteers in Scotland fell between 2007 and 2008, as a result of the priority attached to the new Bird Atlas project, but the continued promotion of bird recording by the BBMS project helped to prevent further falls in BBS coverage during the busy Bird Atlas period.
- BBMS allowed BTO and SOC to find out a lot more about the needs of potential bird recording volunteers and how to engage them in future. A number of ideas for future development, that are ongoing or for which funding will be sought, are explored further in this report. Lessons learnt from the project will be shared and adapted for use as appropriate in other parts of the UK and lessons learnt are applicable to, or can be adapted for use with, taxa other than birds. The project has provided a firm foundation for future initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of volunteers in biological recording and monitoring in Scotland.

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Project Overview

Background

- Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland was a joint British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Scotland and Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) project, funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, the BTO and The Gillman Trusts. It had the overall aim of increasing the number of volunteer surveyors available to carry out bird monitoring work in Scotland and ran from October 2007 to March 2010.
- The project was timely because of the need to recruit surveyors for the Bird Atlas 2007-2011, a comprehensive bird survey of the UK, which began in November 2007, at the same time as maintaining coverage within existing key national bird monitoring schemes, such as the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Finding volunteers to assist with bird surveys is particularly challenging in Scotland due to the low human population density and the challenging and remote terrain in many areas.
- Skilled volunteer bird surveyors currently provide a high proportion of the evidence base that underpins bird conservation policy and management in Scotland and throughout the UK. They contribute an estimated £34 million of volunteer work to bird conservation in the UK each year. In the current climate of financial austerity, this volunteer effort provides ever-increasing value for money. We consider that engaging, educating and involving people in bird monitoring is important for the future of sustainable bird conservation in Scotland. This is exactly what the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project aimed to do.

Project activities

- The project comprised: three national (Scottish) meetings of local/regional bird survey volunteer organisers; provision of a programme of local training events for potential new and existing volunteer audiences; provision of promotional literature; and a programme of promotional talks. These elements were delivered by a partnership of BTO Scotland staff, SOC staff and BTO and SOC voluntary local representatives.
- The three *national meetings* were held at a central location (Stirling University) and the project budget included funding to provide modest travel expenses and meals and accommodation to meeting attendees from across Scotland. The meetings were designed to provide a friendly forum where local volunteer coordinators from BTO and SOC could: get to know each other better; get to know BTO and SOC staff better; develop a shared vision for the BBMS project; be provided with training and support, to assist them in recruiting and supporting volunteers in their local areas; and share in the evaluation of BBMS and discussions about future directions.
- The BBMS project included a budget (staff time and direct costs for venue hire, modest lunches or minibus hire for fieldtrips) for **16 one-day training events** that were offered free to participants. Approximately half of the budget was aimed at training events requested by local volunteer coordinators, in response to perceived local volunteer training needs or their knowledge of groups of volunteers that they felt would benefit from training. The other half of the budget was aimed at training that was more staff-initiated, and was targeted at more novel groups of volunteers, including beginner surveyors and countryside users of two types: countryside managers (e.g. gamekeepers, ghillies, estate owners and managers) and recreational countryside users (particularly hillwalkers). Training events were planned and advertised with

each target audience in mind, and the daily programme was tailored as far as possible to the specific audience and their needs, skills and experiences.

- The success of training events was evaluated in several ways:
 - (i) 289 participants filled in an on-the-day questionnaire, asking them to provide feedback on the structure and running of the event and whether they intended to take up new bird recording;
 - (ii) 137 participants filled in a further six-month follow-up questionnaire, to assess whether they had been encouraged to get involved in new BTO or SOC surveying and if not, why not;
 - (iii) the BTO Membership Database was used to track 304 training participants to assess whether they had joined up to any new BTO surveys following training. The database was also used to assess how numbers of surveyors taking part in some of the main BTO surveys in Scotland changed during the years of the BBMS project; and
 - (iv) eight voluntary trainers (BTO and SOC local volunteer coordinators) involved in seven different training events completed a questionnaire giving their views on the running of the training days and how these could be improved in future.
- The BBMS project budget included the staff time and costs of printing and distribution for three issues of a newsletter specially designed to encourage new bird recording volunteers: *'Birds in View'*. The guiding principles for the newsletter were that it should: (a) be eye-catching; (b) be simple and jargon free for new volunteers but interesting for 'old hands' too; (c) use stories from volunteers to show how fun, enjoyable and easy bird recording can be; (d) explain why bird recording is so worthwhile; and (e) explain the range of personal benefits that bird recording brings. The first issue was introductory, the second issue had a focus on upland recording, and the third issue was designed as a source of reference to keep, as a one-stop-shop for finding information on bird recording opportunities in Scotland. Each issue was distributed in hard copy to more than 8,000 potential volunteers, as well as being made widely available electronically.
- The project budget also included the staff time, production and distribution costs for three promotional leaflets: (i) Bird Atlas 2007-11; (ii) BirdTrack, recording birds in the uplands; and (iii) an introductory 'Why Records Birds?' leaflet. These were designed carefully to appeal to a broad spectrum of potential volunteers, from complete beginners to experienced birdwatchers. We distributed 9000 hard copies of each of the Bird Atlas and Why Record Birds? leaflets, and 22,000 copies of the uplands leaflet, as well as making them widely available in electronic format.
- Other promotional activities related to the project included 18 talks promoting a range of different bird recording opportunities to a broad spectrum of potential volunteers, and promotional materials for press releases and postings on websites. Much of the wider promotional work was aimed at outdoor enthusiasts and land managers, with the aim of expanding bird recording potential in the remote upland areas of Scotland.

Evaluation and success of BBMS

- Both staff and volunteer coordinators agreed that the three *national meetings* provided an excellent model for building relationships and understanding, for sharing knowledge, skills and ideas, and for ensuring that BBMS was truly a partnership project.

They also proved a very cost-effective way of using staff time, in that staff representatives from many of the key surveys were able to attend and interact with a large number of volunteer coordinators during a single weekend. The meetings allowed all involved to get to know each other better, and fostered some new ways of working and new initiatives in addition to BBMS, including a much stronger and more productive working relationship between BTO and SOC.

- The *workshop sessions* at the final national meeting in February 2010 were very useful for developing a shared view on how to progress the initiatives undertaken during BBMS further in future. The involvement of external organisations that could form future partners in such initiatives, or that might benefit from knowledge of the activities and outcomes of BBMS, was also extremely useful and productive.
- The BBMS project delivered **19 one-day training events or survey 'taster days'**, attended by 389 potential volunteers. Nine of the events were developed as a result of the needs of regional volunteer coordinators, and 10 were aimed at more novel audiences, including two specifically for countryside managers, two aimed specifically at hillwalkers, and five marketed for beginner audiences (summarised in Table 2).
- Marketing of the training events was very successful, with many of the events attracting a larger number of participants than expected (for which we were able to recruit more volunteer trainers to assist) and a number of the events being over-subscribed. Of the 389 participants at training events, 82% lived in BTO regions where a need to enhance volunteer numbers is recognised, including many remote upland areas. Of participants that went on to take up new surveys after training, 64% came from these target regions.
- The evaluation processes showed that the majority (64%) of training participants assessed themselves as being able to identify most common bird species before training, with a further 15% classing themselves as 'experienced' and 20% as 'starting out'. The training days therefore attracted an audience that largely already had good bird identification skills that could be valuably honed to get them involved more actively in bird surveys. At least 50 training participants indicated that they carried out birdwatching during hillwalking activities and more than 20 could birdwatch as part of their job. Of the 304 training participants that could be traced in the BTO Membership Database, 42% were involved in at least one survey before the training event. The percentage of participants that had previous survey experience was higher amongst those that were BTO Members (72%) than amongst non-members (38%).
- Feedback on the training events from participants was extremely positive. Only 12 of 289 participants commented on elements of the days they did not like. Participants most valued the fieldwork elements of training days, and the chance to learn about the different surveys. They also enjoyed the bird identification components of the days that included that element.
- The 289 responses to the on-the-day feedback questionnaire showed that immediately after training days, participants indicated that they intended to get involved in around 250 new surveying activities, including 161 suggestions of taking up one of the core BTO surveys (the Bird Atlas being the most popular, probably reflecting the content of training days; see *Appendix 12*).
- Actual uptake to new surveys as shown by the BTO Membership Database was lower than pledged on the training days. Of 304 training day participants that could be tracked, 53 (17.5%) took up at least one new survey following training. The uptake rate amongst the 128 participants who had previous survey experience (25%) was more than double that of those with no previous survey experience (12%). Of the participants that took up a new survey following training,

uptake was higher amongst those already carrying out an entry-level survey (e.g. GBW; 33% uptake to a new survey), than those with intermediate survey experience (e.g. Bird Track; 24% uptake) or very experienced surveyors (e.g. BBS; 19% uptake).

- More than 20 participants signed up for BirdTrack (8.5%) and Bird Atlas (7.3%), with a further 3% signing up to WeBS and 2.6% to GBW. In addition, based on the six-month follow-up questionnaire, 7.9% of 139 training participants stated that they had increased the level of their existing survey work, and 2.2% said they had started bird recording for SOC.
- We consider that although very positive, these outcomes suggest that: (i) additional follow-up 'care' following training would increase the chances that participants actually sign up to surveys; and (ii) for those that have not been involved in a survey before, the step to take part may be more difficult to take. We consider that the latter implies that we must ensure that the various routes through which new surveyors meet BTO and SOC must be as simple to understand and welcoming as possible. Steps are already being taken to address this within the BTO marketing and volunteer engagement strategy
- Of 76 training participants who stated that they had taken up new survey work following training (six-month follow-up questionnaire), the three most frequently stated benefits of the training were: (i) improved confidence; (ii) improved understanding of survey techniques; and (iii) improved understanding of the value of survey work. For the 61 respondents who did not take up new surveying following training, the two frequently stated reasons were that: (i) they still feel their bird identification skills are not good enough; or (ii) they have insufficient time to get involved.
- For the 139 respondents to the six-month follow-up questionnaire, the most frequently stated suggestions for extra training support in future were: (i) more guidance on bird identification (by sound); (ii) the chance to go out and learn from an experienced bird recorder (i.e. mentoring); and (iii) more guidance on bird identification (by sight).
- We did not set up formal evaluation processes for the newsletters, leaflets or other promotional activities. We did receive very positive comments on all the promotional materials, and we considered that the 'survey selector' guide in the final issue of *'Birds in View'* (now adapted for inclusion on the BTO website) was an important step forward in making bird recording more accessible and less daunting for potential volunteers. The BirdTrack uplands leaflet has been particularly effective as a tool for making initial contact with a new volunteer audience of countryside users. In future similar initiatives, we will add more interactive content to newsletters, leaflets and promotional articles (e.g. quizzes, prize draws, tear-off slips to send in initial bird records) to ensure more interactive engagement with the audiences and access to contact details that can then be used for more proactive marketing of volunteering opportunities.
- Analysis of the BTO Membership Database showed that more than 2,000 new volunteers signed up to five core BTO surveys during the BBMS project (between 1 March 2008 and 31 March 2010), including >900 to the Bird Atlas, >750 to BirdTrack and >200 to GBW. The BBMS project no doubt played an important role in this positive survey uptake, alongside the continued hard efforts of all local volunteer coordinators and BTO survey organisers during the period of BBMS. Numbers of BBS volunteers in Scotland fell between 2007 and 2008, but we consider that the continued promotion of bird recording by the BBMS project helped to prevent further falls in BBS coverage during the busy Bird Atlas period.

Conclusions and future directions

- The BTO and SOC are delighted with the outcomes of this project, which frequently exceeded our expectations. The project has demonstrated the great value of BTO and SOC working in partnership, and the importance of involving other organisations whose members and supporters are a potential new audience of bird recording volunteers. The BBMS project has allowed us to gain further understanding of the needs and motivations of some of our potential volunteer groups, and future initiatives can now build on this knowledge to involve these new pools of volunteers and further encourage them to participate in bird monitoring projects in Scotland.
- Feedback from the training events highlighted the importance of understanding and recognising participants' needs, what motivates them and what they wish to gain by attending a training day. It also highlighted that it is just as important to continue to support and encourage existing volunteers as it is to target new volunteer groups.
- A number of clear areas for future development have been identified from the project:
 - (i) the need for a progressive 'pathway of volunteer care' to encourage new, less experienced volunteers into the system and support them in building confidence to move towards more systematic bird survey work, including the development of a mentoring scheme and support for trainers;
 - (ii) The need to recognise more explicitly the needs of 'entry-level' volunteers;
 - (iii) The need to enhance infrastructure (e.g. websites) to capture interest and welcome those new to BTO and SOC in a friendly rather than intimidating manner;
 - (iv) The need to enhance on-line recording systems to support, train and motivate volunteers;
 - (v) The need to continue to support volunteers who are already skilled birdwatchers in order to increase their confidence and motivation to increasingly take part in more systematic survey work, particularly by establishing a mentoring scheme;
 - (vi) The need to further consider how to enhance survey coverage in the upland and remoter parts of Scotland, by continuing to promote bird recording to new groups of potential volunteers but also by considering novel approaches to survey design; and
 - (vii) The need to increase partnership working with organisations that monitor other taxa, to share skills and knowledge, and provide tools for multi-taxa monitoring where appropriate.

Some of these future directions are discussed in more detail in this report.

- The BBMS project as a whole has shown what can be achieved in Scotland. The lessons learnt from the project can and will be shared and adapted for use as appropriate in other parts of the UK. In addition, many of the principles applied and lessons learnt are applicable to, or can be adapted for use with, taxa other than birds. BBMS has provided a firm foundation for future initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of volunteers in biological recording and monitoring in Scotland.

Bird Surveys and Recording Projects referred to in the text

BTO/SOC/BWI Bird Atlas 2007-11

Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds. A partnership project between BTO, SOC and BirdWatch Ireland.
www.birdatlas.net

British and Irish Ringing Scheme

Following bird movements, calculating their chances of survival and monitoring their populations. 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/ringing

BTO Garden BirdWatch

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

BTO/RSPB/BWI/SOC BirdTrack

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

Local Bird Recording in Scotland

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

BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey

The scheme that monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. A partnership between BTO, RSPB and JNCC, in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT). www.bto.org/webs

BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey

The primary scheme for monitoring the UK's common and widespread terrestrial species. A partnership between BTO, JNCC and RSPB. www.bto.org/bbs

BTO 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

Biodiversity in Glasgow (BIG) project

Surveyed birds and butterflies in Glasgow's green spaces. A partnership project between BTO Scotland, Butterfly Conservation Scotland and Glasgow City Council (funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, BTO and the Robertson Trust)¹.

Project Ptarmigan

Surveyed Ptarmigan and other mountain birds. A partnership project between BTO Scotland and the SOC (funded by Scottish Executive's Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme, The Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the AEB Trust)².

¹ Humphreys, E., Kirkland, P. and Chamberlain, D. (2009) *The Biodiversity in Glasgow Project*. Final Report to SNH.

² Calladine, J. & Wernham, C. (2009) Extensive monitoring of rock ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* in Scotland: a pilot to test the efficacy of using volunteer surveyors for monitoring arctic-alpine birds. *Avocetta* 33: 217-224. See also BTO Research Report No. 473 (November 2007).

Introduction

Background

The Importance of Volunteer Birdwatchers

In Scotland (and the UK as a whole) a majority of the bird monitoring that is carried out is undertaken by volunteer birdwatchers. Their efforts represent a huge input of manpower and, indeed, represent the only feasible means of doing this for the geographically broad, and regular, monitoring of the range of species and habitats that is achieved currently. Scotland has a low human population density compared with much of the rest of Britain (and much of Europe), and the population is concentrated in Central Region and along the east coast. Many areas are remote from human population centres and these represent real fieldwork challenges. (e.g. the outer islands, the northwest Highlands, the Borders). Most of the monitoring schemes running in Scotland have shown a general bias towards good coverage in the east and central areas of Scotland, and poorer coverage in the north, west and extreme south of the country (see Map 1)³.

For these reasons, the need for extra capacity building in Scotland was identified and the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project aimed to address this by enhancing the level of bird monitoring by volunteers and meeting the challenge of maintaining existing survey coverage during the major new Bird Atlas 2007-11 project.

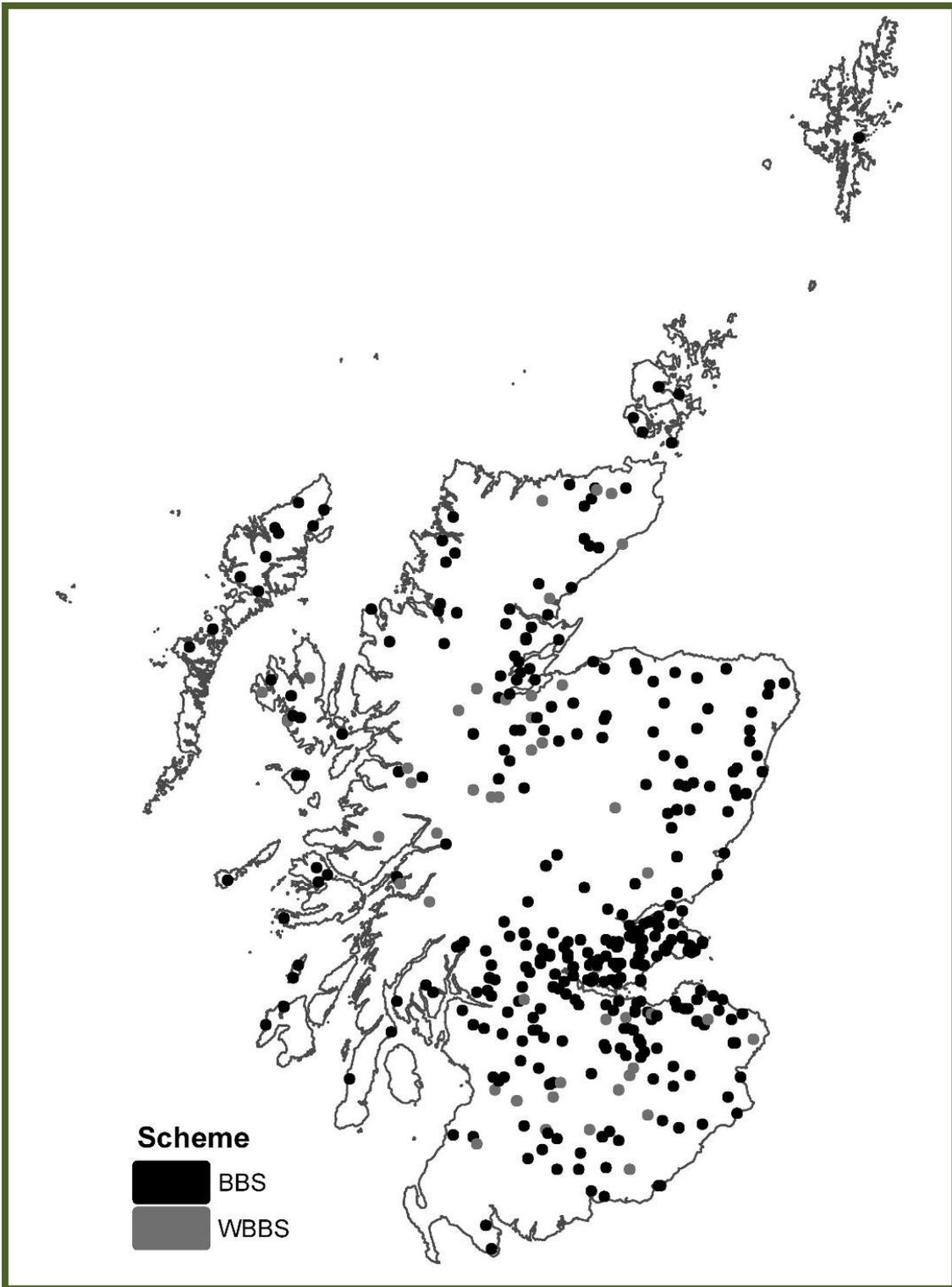


The Bird Atlas 2007-11 and its Implications for Volunteer Bird Recording

Bird atlases provide a periodic insight into the status of all of the bird species of an area. Their scope varies from small counties up to entire continents, but what they all have in common is a series of maps that depict patterns of distribution of every bird species present, whether it be breeding, wintering, or even year-round. For the casual birdwatcher they provide indications of what can be seen where. For the scientist they provide a means of understanding the processes shaping bird communities and the factors affecting bird distributions. And for the conservationist they provide indications of changes in distribution that might be indicative of wider issues. Some atlases also use more systematic survey techniques to record geographical variation in the abundance of bird species.

Bird Atlas 2007-11 is the BTO's biggest survey and is being run in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland (BWI) and the Scottish Ornithologist's Club (SOC). The great value of atlases is their complete coverage and such a mammoth effort can only be undertaken periodically. It had been 20 years since the last breeding atlas of Britain and Ireland (40 years since the first) and 25 years since the last winter atlas. For the first time, Bird Atlas 2007-11 combines both winter and breeding season fieldwork.

³ For more information see Cook *et al.* (*in press*) Why bird monitoring in Scotland needs more volunteers. In Proceedings of the SNH Changing Nature of Scotland Conference, Perth, October 2009.



Map 1. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS) squares surveyed in Scotland in 2009. Areas with low monitoring coverage by volunteers include parts of Argyll, the central Highlands, Ross-shire and Sutherland. Similar areas have low coverage by other bird monitoring schemes, for example, inland WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) sites.

The Atlas will neatly complement existing surveys. Existing schemes that monitor the population levels of Britain and Ireland's birds rely on volunteers visiting randomly selected squares on an annual basis. These are invaluable in their own right, producing population trends and warning 'alerts', but atlas projects complement them by providing comprehensive information, covering far more squares and more species than the sample schemes can achieve. Taken together, the complete range and range change maps of the atlases and the population trends of the monitoring schemes, provide powerful tools of the trade for scientists and conservationists.

Previous bird atlas projects and other survey and monitoring schemes have demonstrated how difficult it is to recruit enough volunteers in Scotland. Finding skilled volunteer bird recorders to cover all parts of Scotland and all species in both seasons, and within the time constraints (four years) of the Atlas project, was seen as a considerable challenge for BTO Scotland and the SOC.

Two types of survey work were required in the Bird Atlas project (each in both the breeding season and in winter): (i) timed visits to at least 8 specific tetrads (2 x 2 km squares) within each 10-km square of the OS National Grid, to measure abundance (relative numbers of birds); and (ii) 'roving records' from every 10-km square in Scotland, to build complete species distribution maps. Given the 1468 10-km squares in Scotland, and a requirement for at least eight tetrads to be covered in each 10-km square, almost 9000 tetrads must be covered, demanding a large number of volunteer birdwatchers.

One of the main aims of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project was to help meet the volunteer needs of the Atlas project, but it was also important that the BBMS project encouraged volunteers to take part in other national monitoring schemes (eg Breeding Bird Survey, the main scheme for monitoring widespread terrestrial species, the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) for monitoring wintering waterbirds, the Garden BirdWatch (GBW) specifically for monitoring birds in gardens, the BirdTrack project, for recording bird movements and distributions using birdwatchers' lists and the Local Recording network organised by SOC), so that monitoring continuity (and precision) was maintained, and a unique opportunity to calibrate annual monitoring results against the comprehensive coverage that would be achieved by the Atlas project for a range of species was not missed. In addition, data from many of these schemes is being fed directly into the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project to supplement the 'roving records' of birds submitted directly to the Atlas database.

Bird Monitoring by Volunteer Networks in Scotland

In Scotland, the Bird Atlas 2007-11 is being delivered using the unique partnerships that have been established between BTO and SOC staff and a very large number of volunteer birdwatchers: the latter found, motivated and coordinated through the 'regional networks' established by the two organisations. The BTO supports a team of 28 volunteer Regional Representatives (RRs) in Scotland, who are responsible for the local organisation of much of the BTO's survey work, for recruiting, retaining and supporting volunteer birdwatchers, and for ensuring the timely submission of data. Some have Assistant RRs to help them. The SOC supports 14 regional Branches, each with their own committees and other infrastructure to support their local members, and a team of 20 voluntary Local Recorders, responsible for the collation and reporting of bird records from their local area. The partnership of BTO and SOC thus represents an established and proven infrastructure for recruiting volunteers for the 2007-11 Atlas.

The local organisation for the 2007-11 Atlas has been undertaken by Atlas Regional Organisers (ROs), with most BTO RRs in Scotland having agreed to act as these ROs. The ROs have the local responsibility of recruiting and maintaining volunteers for the Atlas work, allocating survey areas, providing local support and advice on fieldwork and data recording, and ensuring that data are submitted in a timely manner either on paper forms or on-line. The ROs are in the best position to find volunteer birdwatchers with appropriate survey skills for the Atlas, as well as other bird survey projects, and to provide face-to-face support and feedback locally.

Volunteer Recruitment and Training

Prior to the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, both the BTO and the SOC had considerable experience in recruiting volunteer birdwatchers for survey work, and both organisations provided training courses for birdwatchers and had staff available with experience of delivering such training.

BTO projects are designed with varying survey complexity, to provide opportunities for birdwatchers with a range of birdwatching and/or bird survey experience to get involved: they aim to build confidence, bird identification and survey skills, and hence gradually get volunteers involved in a wider suite of monitoring projects. These have included: Garden BirdWatch (GBW) and some one-off surveys associated with GBW (for example of Great-spotted Woodpeckers and House Sparrows); BirdTrack (to encourage 'twitchers' and other regular birdwatchers to submit birdwatching records in a manner that can be analysed systematically); Project Ptarmigan (aimed at getting hillwalkers and other mountain-users to record upland birds) and the Biodiversity in Glasgow (BIG) Project (aimed at getting local residents out to survey birds and butterflies in Glasgow's green spaces; in partnership with Butterfly Conservation Scotland).

BTO Bird survey techniques courses, and training days specific to some schemes or projects (e.g. BBS, BIG), held in Scotland prior to BBMS were almost always full or over subscribed, indicating that there was an audience of potential volunteers in Scotland ready to be drawn into bird survey and monitoring projects if appropriate training could be provided to build their confidence. There were also waiting lists for the SOC introductory bird watching courses previously held.

In each of the past five years (before the BBMS project), the BTO ran a series of (fee paying) one-day workshops and weekend residential courses on a range of bird survey techniques, BBS-focussed training days, and bird identification (some in collaboration with the Field Studies Council). These attracted a mixture of volunteer birdwatchers (*ca* two-thirds of participants) and professional ornithologists (*ca* one-third). The SOC courses were highly complementary, focussing on introducing people to birdwatching and bird identification skills.

The training days offered by the BBMS project aimed to be different. The BBMS initiative recognised the audience currently tapped by BTO training courses was restricted and could be expanded into other areas. All the BBMS training events were offered free of charge, with the aim of attracting a wider audience of new volunteers. Different training events were also tailored for different audiences, with appropriate trainers, structure and materials for each one.



The three main types of training days offered by the project were:

- firstly, those addressing particular requests from local RRs and Bird Atlas ROs for training potential volunteers known to them locally. The content of these events was agreed between staff and the local network contacts and was dependent on local needs and skill levels of volunteers.
- Secondly, a number of events were tailored for, and marketed to, some novel audiences (the hillwalking and land managing communities).
- Thirdly, a number of events were marketed as an introduction to bird recording for beginners. These focussed on entry level recording schemes, such as BirdTrack, GBW and simple WeBS.

Ultimately, the aim of the training events was to move volunteers from entry level recording schemes through to systematic bird monitoring (the most valuable for conservation science): *'Systematic bird monitoring by volunteers provides powerful strands of knowledge for conservation and policy decisions in Scotland, and the information that underpins a number of the Scottish Government's Natural Heritage Trends'* (Cook *et al.*, in press).

The BBMS initiative also developed a system to evaluate the success of the training events, which included a questionnaire for feedback immediately after the event, and further follow up at least six months later to assess uptake to BTO recording schemes.

Purpose of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland Project

The overall aim of this project was to increase the capacity for volunteers to carry out bird survey and monitoring work throughout Scotland, for the Bird Atlas 2007-11 and the concurrent ongoing monitoring schemes, and for the future.

More specific aims were:

- To provide additional support and guidance to Atlas Regional Organisers, BTO Regional Representatives, and SOC Local Recorders to increase their confidence and enhance their ability and motivation.
- To recruit and retain volunteers.
- To provide specialist training directly both to volunteers and also volunteer organisers, so that the latter have the confidence to run their own training events locally.
- To carry out effective promotion of bird survey work nationally to potential new volunteers, using the Bird Atlas 2007-11 as a focus.
- To develop a training programme, training events and training materials that are appropriate for Scotland and the challenges specific to Scotland.

Components of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland Project

1. **National Meetings** - An important first step in capacity building, to give the ROs/RRs and SOC Local Recorders the training and a chance to discuss any concerns: to give them the confidence to find, support and retain volunteers for the Bird Atlas (whilst also recruiting for, and ensuring the continuity of, existing surveys), and to hold their own training events for local volunteers.
2. **Local Training Events for Volunteers** - It would have been prohibitively costly to pay expenses for all volunteers to travel to centralised locations for training, so: (i) regional representatives were encouraged and given appropriate training to allow them to give local training to volunteers if there is demand and they feel able; and (ii) staff and local BTO and SOC representatives liaised to provide free regional one-day training workshops for volunteers or field-based mentoring sessions in areas where representatives knew of volunteers who would benefit from training.
3. **'Birds in View' Newsletter** – An annual newsletter was produced and distributed as widely as possible to both existing and potential volunteers.
4. **Promotional Leaflets** – Three new promotional leaflets were produced, designed specifically to draw new volunteers into key Scottish bird recording schemes.
5. **Other Promotional Activities** – These included giving 6 talks per year to groups of potential volunteers, initially using the Bird Atlas as a focus to bring volunteers of all skill and experience levels to bird recording in Scotland, and producing articles for major Scottish magazines at key times of year, again initially using the Bird Atlas as a focus to promote participation in Scottish bird survey work.

Each of these components is considered individually and in more detail in the main body of the report.

1. National Meetings



Background:

The project funded three national meetings to be held at a central location. For each meeting, funding was granted to cover staff-time for organising the meetings and feeding back, as well as for accommodation, food and travel expenses for approximately 50 participants.

Timing:

The three meetings were timed carefully to fit with appropriate seasons prior to bird survey months, strategic points in the project, and also times when local representatives could manage to attend. Local representatives are very busy people, so the latter was a very important consideration.

Aims:

The aim of the national meetings was to provide a forum (at a centralised location) for representatives who would be taking the lead on recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers at a local level for the Bird Atlas (and other existing surveys) throughout the life of the project, and beyond.

Objectives:

More specifically, the objectives of the national meetings were:

- To explain Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland to the majority of representatives (see ‘audiences’ below) who would be helping staff members to deliver the project.
- To give representatives appropriate training (information, advice and support).
- To help give representatives the confidence to find, support and retain volunteers for the Bird Atlas (whilst also recruiting for, and ensuring the continuity of, existing surveys), and to hold their own training events for local volunteers if there is a local requirement.
- To ask representatives their views on training needs, local training events, etc.
- To allow ideas and concerns raised by individual representatives to be discussed and allow them to get to know each other better.
- To encourage close working relationships between local BTO and SOC bird recorders and branch representatives.
- To provide feedback on the success of the BBMS project and express gratitude to all the volunteer coordinators involved.
- To demonstrate how the information collected by volunteer bird recorders is used for conservation and land-management in Scotland.
- To discuss (with existing and potential new partners) how to build on the success of the project in the future, to increase not only the number of volunteers involved in bird recording but also share our experiences with those involved in other forms of biodiversity monitoring.

Audiences

The meetings were organised for Bird Atlas Regional Organisers, BTO Regional Representatives, SOC Local Recorders and SOC Branch representatives. The final meeting also included external invitees (partners) and volunteers involved in the project.

Materials and follow-up notes from the meetings were circulated to all invitees, including those that were unable to attend.

Approach:

Meeting 1:

February 2008 (Year 1) – was seen as the optimal time to hold the first national meeting, before the start of the busy breeding season.

The key aims of the meeting were to provide an opportunity to:

- Focus on breeding season surveys, ie Bird Atlas, Breeding Bird Survey, BirdTrack and local recording.
- Review the first winter of the Bird Atlas, other winter 2007/08 fieldwork and troubleshoot.
- Plan the BBMS programme and engage the volunteer network in the development of activities, ‘taster day’ events, promotional material and so on.
- Get early suggestions from the regional network about the project as a whole.

Appendix 1 shows the detailed programme for the meeting, which covered the following topics:

- An overview of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project.
- How SNH uses bird monitoring data collected by volunteers for conservation purposes in Scotland.
- A chance to share ideas on how to shape the project.
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 update.
- Plans for the Bird Atlas breeding season.
- An exploration of four key long-term volunteer bird recording schemes (BBS, local bird recording, BirdTrack and the Nest Record Scheme).
- The way forward: training priorities; use of promotional materials; and planning for future meetings.

Meeting 2:

August 2008 (Year 2) – The key aims of this meeting were to provide an opportunity to:

- Review the first summer of BBMS.
- Review the first full year of the Bird Atlas.
- Discuss plans for Year 2 of BBMS.

Appendix 2 shows the detailed programme for this meeting, which covered the following topics:

- How bird records are used to influence policy-makers.
- Tools for motivating volunteers.
- Atlas – maintaining the momentum.
- Bird recording in Scotland - an update.
- Boosting the volunteer pool through WeBS.
- IT helpdesk.
- Training days.
- Taking things forward: including use of promotional materials and planning for the 2009 final BBMS meeting.



Meeting 3:

February 2010 (Year 3) – The key aims of this meeting were to provide an opportunity to:

- Express gratitude to regional BTO and SOC volunteer co-ordinators for the work they had been doing over the three years of the BBMS project.
- Give an overview of the achievements of the BBMS project.

- Provide an opportunity for key users of the monitoring information that the volunteers collect to show them how the information has been used for conservation and land management in Scotland, to provide inspiration for them to continue the work that they do, and to thank them.
- Review the first two years of the Bird Atlas project, and discuss priorities for years 3 and 4.
- Review how other concurrent monitoring schemes were fairing alongside the Bird Atlas project, in terms of volunteer recruitment and retention.
- Invite representatives of a wider set of schemes to plan future approaches to volunteer recruitment and retention, and partnership working.
- Provide a stimulating forum at which to discuss with existing and potential new partners the success of the BBMS project and how that success can be built upon in the future, to increase not only the number of volunteers involved in bird recording but also share experiences with those involved in other forms of biodiversity monitoring.
- Discuss long-term retention of new volunteers.

Appendix 3 shows the detailed programme for the meeting. On the Saturday, the first half of the meeting covered the following topics:

- The importance of voluntary bird recording in Scotland to SNH and RSPB.
- Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland: achievements during the project and ideas of where to go next.
- Bird Atlas 2007-11: the story so far.
- Long-term monitoring of birds in Scotland: has BBMS worked?
- How well have other bird surveys, such as BBS, WeBS and BirdTrack, fared during Bird Atlas 2007-11 to date? Why does bird conservation in Scotland need lots of different sorts of recording and what plans are there to increase future coverage?

The second half of the meeting on Saturday consisted of workshops with an overall title of '*How do we build on what we've done?*' The workshops were introduced by presenting five categories of reasons for volunteering as follows:

- Skill development.
- Work experience/professional development.
- Personal experience.
- Social contact/interests.
- Contribute to community.

Following this, suggestions from three BTO/SOC volunteer co-ordinators were presented as to why volunteers sign up to bird recording, what puts them off and what could be done to encourage more volunteers to take part? (Please see *Appendix 4*). Key volunteers/training course participants were also asked to give their suggestions (Please see *Appendices 5 and 6*).

Participants were then divided into 5 groups (which were split to include in each group BTO staff members, SOC branch members, Regional Representatives, Organisers, and external invitees) to explore a range of issues related to how best to attract and train more volunteer bird surveyors in future, which were as follows:

WORKSHOP SESSION A – What do we need from our volunteers and what do they gain from us?

Task 1 - What makes bird recording volunteers tick?

Each group was asked to list five key skills a volunteer needs.

Task 2 - How can more volunteers be attracted to take up bird surveying?

Each group was asked to list three key phrases they would use in a job advert to attract volunteers.

WORKSHOP SESSION B – Pathways for working together to recruit more volunteers

Task 3 - What benefits can be gained from volunteers bird recording in Scotland?

Each group was asked to list, for up to three organisations represented in each group, the potential benefits gained by the organisation from volunteer bird recording in Scotland.

Task 4 – Power map

Each group was asked to produce a power map for up to three organisations and from this, list three priority relationships and associated actions that could assist voluntary bird recording in Scotland.

WORKSHOP SESSION C – Course content and after care

Task 5 – How can the successes of the BBMS project be built upon and how can more course attendees be persuaded to take up recording or move to more systematic recording?

Each group was asked to list up to ten improvements which could be made towards a better take-up rate by volunteers.

The outputs from the workshops can be seen in *Appendix 7*.

On Sunday, the meeting consisted of:

- Scottish Local Bird Recorders' Meeting.
- SOC/BirdTrack/SNH Integrated Bird Recording session.
- Scottish Regional Representatives' Meeting.
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 discussion and troubleshooting.

Evaluation Methods:

Notes were taken at each of the meetings, summarising proceedings, capturing ideas that were suggested, decisions made and action points.

Outcomes & Benefits:

The three national meetings successfully met the aims and objectives listed above.

Table 1 gives a breakdown of the different members of the volunteer network who attended the centralised meetings.

In general the meetings were very successful in attracting key volunteer co-ordinators. For example, more than three-quarters of all BTO Regional Representatives and three-quarters of Bird Atlas Organisers attended at least one central meeting, and almost a third of each group attended all three meetings. SOC volunteer co-ordinators engaged with the project less rapidly, perhaps because they could not see immediately how the project would benefit them. Even so, more than half of SOC Local Recorders attended at least one of the central meetings, and six of 14 SOC local branches. Some SOC branches are very small (e.g. Caithness) so it was not surprising that not all could send reps to the meetings, and those based on the outer islands sometimes also had greater difficulty in attending. WeBS Local Organisers were not invited to the first meeting but more than a third of them attended at least one meeting. They have a very specific volunteer remit compared to the other participant groups, and probably felt less need to get involved in BBMS.

The *Integrated Bird Recording in Scotland* project⁴, a new partnership project between SOC, BTO and SNH, was developed as a direct result of the closer working relationships fostered between BTO and SOC representatives at the BBMS national meetings. The project aims to mobilise bird records collected across Scotland by Local Bird Recorders and volunteer observers by enhancing the current BirdTrack system to better meet their recording needs. It will run for three years.

Feedback forms handed out to delegates with the conference packs and collected in at the end of each meeting would have provided a useful means of further evaluating the success of the

⁴ See <http://www.the-soc.org.uk/soc-recorders.htm>

meetings, and should be considered for similar projects in future.



Conclusions:

Holding centralised national meetings (with travel and subsistence expenses paid for) was agreed by the regional network as the best way of bringing together representatives, to discuss, decide upon and deliver the project successfully. This was evidenced by the high proportions of attendees from the main

volunteer co-ordinator groups, and the feedback we received from individuals that attended the meetings.

The meetings provided a valuable forum for building and strengthening relationships between BTO and SOC staff and volunteer co-ordinators, between the BTO and SOC networks, and between individual volunteer co-ordinators in the different regions. Some of these people had not even met each other before, despite working in similar geographical areas. These centralised meetings also proved to be an efficient use of staff time, and allowed all key survey and promotional staff to attend, meet and interact with volunteer co-ordinators.

The final meeting provided an ideal forum at which to discuss, with both existing and potential new partners, how we could build on the success of the project in the future, to increase not only the numbers of volunteers involved in bird recording, but also share experiences with those involved in other forms of biodiversity monitoring. The workshop sessions worked well in building consensus on ways of recruiting more volunteers, ways of interacting with key partners in future and so on.



Table 1 Numbers and types of participants (volunteer co-ordinators) attending the three central BBMS meetings. Note that individual attendees could represent more than one type of participant.

Type of attendee	Number in Scotland	Number (and %) attending....		
		At least 1 meeting	At least 2 meetings	All 3 meetings
BTO Regional Representative or Regional Development Officer	29	22 (76%)	18 (62%)	9 (31%)
Bird Atlas Regional Organiser or Assistant RO	34	26 (76%)	21 (62%)	11 (32%)
WeBS Local Organiser	37	13 (35%)	8 (22%)	3 (8%)*
SOC Local Bird Recorder	21	12 (57%)	6 (28.5%)	1 (5%)
SOC branch	14	6 (43%)	4 (29%)	1 (7%)

* Note that WeBS Local Organisers were not invited to attend the first BBMS meeting, and thus may not have felt as much ownership of BBMS as some of the other types of participant.



2. Taster Days

Background:

A major part of the project funding was allocated to the delivery of ‘taster day’ sessions, targeting both existing and potential new volunteers.

Timing:

Five ‘taster days’ were held in 2008, thirteen in 2009 and one in 2010 (Table 2). The days were timed to tie in with key dates in the ‘birding calendar’ and the needs of the regional representatives, eg providing Breeding Bird Survey training for experienced birdwatchers at the start of the breeding season, and providing training in the use of BirdTrack or the Wetland Bird Survey for beginners in the winter season.

Aims:

The main aim of the ‘taster days’ was to encourage a wider section of people to get involved in bird recording by delivering, with the help of BTO and SOC local volunteer co-ordinators, free training events.

An important aim was also to build confidence, develop bird identification and survey skills in existing volunteers, and gradually get them involved in a wider suite of more systematic (and hence valuable) monitoring projects.

Objectives:

Specific objectives for the ‘taster days’ included:

- To provide free, accessible and enjoyable training events.
- To target BTO regions where there was a recognised need for a greatly enhanced pool of volunteers (remote areas).
- To target specific groups of potential volunteers and tailor training to the needs of participants.
- To get as many people as possible involved in the core BTO organised surveys and SOC local recording.

- To provide training to meet the needs of all skill and experience levels.
- To provide local training to best benefit the pool of potential volunteers identified by regional representatives in their areas.



Audiences

The ‘taster days’ comprised a combination of: (i) regional training events driven by local needs, identified by regional representatives; (ii) courses aimed at beginners; and (iii) targeted events aimed at specialised potential volunteer groups, eg hillwalkers, land owners and land managers (e.g. gamekeepers), in an attempt to promote monitoring coverage of remoter areas (see Table 2). The training events were offered across the whole of Scotland and were designed with varying survey complexity, to provide opportunities for volunteers with a range of birdwatching and/or bird survey skills and experience to get involved.

Events ranged from introducing basic bird identification skills to complete beginners, to courses to build confidence and encourage highly experienced birdwatchers to undertake

systematic surveys, like the line transects of the multi-species Breeding Bird Survey.

Approach:

Planning

The following needed to be considered when planning the ‘taster days’:

- Source and book suitable venues (with computer and internet access if necessary).
- Organise catering.
- Establish an efficient booking system.
- Establish the best way of reaching the target audience.
- Arrange advertising.
- Recruit volunteer help.
- Set up an efficient evaluation process.
- Plan the content of the day (including preparing presentations, contingency plans, site visits, outdoor field session routes and health and safety assessments).
- Confirm a programme.

The following materials were provided at the training days (information taken from the ‘*volunteer co-ordinators and helpers feedback questionnaire*’):

- Programme
- ID Sheets/Charts
- Survey literature
- BTO/SOC Membership forms
- Other BTO/SOC literature
- Contact information for regional representatives, local organisers, etc.
- Bird song CDs.

A typical training event involved:

- A classroom session on tips for identification and survey techniques.
- A brief explanation on ‘why record birds?’
- One or more field sessions to identify birds and demonstrate how to record them

for a particular survey (depending on the focus of the event)

- Tips on inputting records online (if applicable)
- An explanation on what to do next (providing course material, local contact details, etc as necessary).

Many of the events delivered bespoke training to very specific audiences, eg ‘bird recording for landowners and land managers’ at Blair Castle, Atholl Estates, Perthshire was an event developed in close partnership with the Scottish Countryside Alliance (SCA), Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA), Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA), British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and Atholl Estates and ‘bird recording in the uplands (an introduction for hillwalkers)’ in Glencoe, West Highlands was developed in close partnership with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS), the Munro Society and the National Trust for Scotland (NTS). Events like these required large time commitments in the planning stages to ensure they were delivered effectively by tailoring content to the specific target audience.



Promotion

The ‘taster days’ were promoted in the following ways:

- The Regional Representatives did a good job of promoting the courses themselves, eg through local SOC and RSPB groups.

- Local press releases.
- Articles in organisations' magazines, newsletters, e-bulletins, etc. eg John Muir Magazine, John Muir Award e-newsletter, MCoFS Magazine, SCA Magazine, SRPBA e-newsletter, SCRA magazine, SNH magazine, national newspapers, BTO News, Bird Table, bird club newsletters, Scottish Bird News, etc.
- Direct contact from partner organisations, eg SCA, SRPBA, SGA, BASC, MCoFS, Munro Society, etc.
- Emails sent to volunteers already involved in BTO surveys, BTO members & SOC members.
- Posters put up at venues.
- BTO Website.
- Bird Forums (Yahoo).

These promotional activities proved very successful, demonstrated by the number of people who booked onto the training events (Table 2; also see the 'Other Promotional Activities' Section 5). Training events in Aberdeenshire, Wigtownshire and the Borders were all over-subscribed in relation to the capacity of venues booked or number of trainers available.

Evaluation Methods:

The following evaluation methods were put in place to help monitor the success of the 'taster days'. Results from each evaluation method are stored in MS Excel spreadsheets and were analysed using the SAS 9.1 statistical package.

Booking system:

A rigorous booking system was used to record participants' details, which could then be used to answer questions such as 'how many people actually took up volunteer bird recording after attending a taster day?', by matching participants with those on the BTO Membership Database.

In a few cases records of participants were incomplete in the booking information, which made matching with the Membership Database problematic or impossible. Keeping an accurate

record of participants who attended, cancelled or did not turn up on the day was important and must be ensured in future events.

On-the-day feedback questionnaire:

Participants were asked to fill in an anonymous, open-ended questionnaire (please see *Appendix 8*) at the end of each event, which was then handed in before departure. The shortfalls of this method of evaluation were that:

- Not everyone who attended the events filled in a questionnaire afterwards. A total of 289 (74% of the 389) participants filled in a questionnaire.
- Some participants did not take/have the time to comprehensively fill in questionnaires.
- Questionnaires were not handed out at some events.
- The anonymity limited the amount of cross referencing with results from other methods that could be carried out.

Six month questionnaire:

A further fixed response feedback questionnaire (please see *Appendix 9*) was sent to participants about six months after attending the 'taster day' to establish how the day had influenced them and whether it had been successful in meeting its objectives. The shortfalls of this method of evaluation were that:

- Only 137 participants responded to the follow up questionnaire, despite personal phone calls to follow up responses.
- It was difficult to motivate participants to respond, particularly following a six-month period of non-contact for those participants who did not take up a survey after attending a 'taster day'.
- Contact details for some participants were no longer current.
- Contact details for some participants were not available.

BTO Membership Database analysis

Out of the 389 who attended the ‘taster days’ it was possible to track 304 participants who attended one training event (from 16 out of the 19 events) using the BTO’s Membership Database. This database provided information on:

- Which surveys participants were taking part in before attending a ‘taster day’.
- Which surveys participants signed up to following attending a ‘taster day’.
- Whether participants were BTO members.
- Where participants lived.
- Recruitment to existing surveys during the period of the BBMS project.

The main shortfall of this evaluation was the way that data had been entered onto the Membership Database, which was not always consistent across the range of BTO surveys. In particular, the date of entry onto the database was sometimes the date of registration for a new survey, and sometimes the date that the information was placed onto the database, which meant that matching database information with training dates needed careful checking.

Feedback questionnaire for volunteer co-ordinators and helpers

A feedback questionnaire (see *Appendix 10*), with both open-ended and fixed response questions, was sent to all volunteer co-ordinators and helpers involved in running the events. A total of 22 questionnaires were sent out and 8 completed questionnaires were returned, from both BTO and SOC volunteer co-ordinators who helped out at the following 7 events:

- Stirling University – *Bird ID and bird surveys for beginners*.
- Chatelherault Country Park, Lanarkshire – *Bird ID and bird surveys for beginners*.

- Harestanes Visitor Centre, Ancrum, Jedburgh – *Bird ID, Bird Atlas and other bird surveys*.
- Great Glen House, Inverness – *An introduction to Bird Atlas and other bird surveys*.
- Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire – *An introduction to the Wetland Bird Survey*.
- Battleby Centre, Perthshire – *Bird ID and winter surveys for beginners*.
- Loch of Skene, Dunecht Estate, Aberdeenshire – *Wetland bird recording for landowners and land managers*.

A shortfall of this method of evaluation was the limited number of responses received, although these did come from those trainers most involved in the BBMS project from the outset and therefore best qualified to provide critical comment.

Outcomes & Benefits:

All training events delivered as part of the project successfully met the aims and objectives



listed above.

Numbers of participants

A total of 16 ‘taster days’ were budgeted within the project and 19 were held across Scotland, which overall were attended by 389 potential new and existing volunteers (Table 2).

Table 2 Training days run under the BBMS project.

Venue/Region (*BTO target region)	Date	Number of Participants	No. of Staff/Vols	Title
Regional Representative Led – on demand, regionally led events developed with support from BTO/SOC staff				
Kinghorn, Fife	22/03/08	19	3	An introduction to the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
*Caerlaverock, Dumfries	27/09/08	24	3	An introduction to Bird Atlas, WeBS and other bird surveys
*Kilmartin, Argyll	11/10/08	12	2	An introduction to the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
*Monkton, Ayrshire	08/11/08	14	2	An introduction to the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
*Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire	14/03/09	15	3	Bird identification, the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
*Collieston, Aberdeenshire	22/03/09	23	3	An introduction to bird surveys
*Mugdock, East Dunbartonshire	18/04/09	13	2	Bird song
*Ancrum, Jedburgh, Roxburghshire	10/05/09	25	7	Bird identification, the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
*Angus Glens, Angus	16/05/09	19	3	Bird identification, the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
Beginners – developed by BTO/SOC staff with support from RRs and volunteer co-ordinators, aimed at those completely new to bird surveying in accessible areas of low coverage and/or high population				
Stirling University, Stirlingshire	28/03/09	36	5	Bird identification and bird surveys for beginners
*Chatelherault Country Park, Lanarkshire (spring)	26/04/09	26	5	Bird identification and bird surveys for beginners
*Chatelherault Country Park, Lanarkshire (autumn)	24/10/09	25	4	Bird identification and an introduction to winter surveys
Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	08/11/09	15	4	An introduction to the Wetland Bird Survey
*Battleby Centre, Perthshire	21/11/09	17	4	Bird identification and winter surveys for beginners
Specialist – developed by BTO/SOC staff in partnership with other organisations, targeting specialist interest groups with the aim of promoting coverage of remoter areas.				
*Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore, Inverness-shire	06/09/08	12	1	Bird identification and Bird Atlas for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland
*Blair Castle, Atholl Estates, Perthshire	04/03/09	21	5	Bird recording for landowners and land managers
*NTS Visitor Centre, Glencoe, West Highlands	09/05/09	19	3	Bird recording in the uplands (an introduction for hillwalkers)
*SNH Headquarters, Inverness	26/09/09	41	6	An introduction to the Bird Atlas and other bird surveys (for existing surveyors)
*Loch of Skene, Dunecht Estate, Aberdeenshire	03/03/10	13	5	An introduction to wetland bird recording for landowners and land managers

The maximum number of participants booked onto each of the training days was limited by the size of the venue and the number of staff/volunteer helpers available.

Ideally, the aim was to have one staff/volunteer helper available per 6 participants at each of the training days. A maximum of 6 participants per group for the fieldwork/outdoor element of the training was found, particularly, to be the best ratio for demonstrating hands on ID skills and survey techniques.

The majority of training days were run in BTO regions where a need to enhance the volunteer base had been established previously (Table 2). Many of these regions include remote, upland areas. These training days in target regions accounted for 319 of the 389 participants (82%).



Skill and activity levels of participants

Results from the on-the-day questionnaires showed that only 15% of the participants overall described themselves as 'experienced' (Table 3). When the results were split between course types, 20% of participants who attended the Rep-selected training days assessed themselves as experienced, compared to only 10% of those that attended the 'taster days' for new audiences. Of interest is that the percentage of those who replied that they could identify most common birds was the same (64%) for both groups, showing that a large

proportion of the people that attended the courses had an existing knowledge of birds at a level that would allow participation in some form of bird surveying.

The results by audience group show that 25% of participants who attended the 'taster days' aimed at beginners were 'starting out', compared to 14% of those that attended the Rep-selected training days. These results demonstrate some success in event promotion in encouraging the participants who did sign up to the 'taster days' to book on the ones most appropriate for their skill levels and experience. This helped to meet the objective to '*tailor training to the needs of participants*'.

Table 3 Self-assessed skill levels of participants on BBMS training days. (Source: On-the-day questionnaire)

Skill Level	% of group		
	Existing audience	New audience	All participants
Experienced	20	10	15
Can identify most common species	64	64	64
Starting Out	14	25	20
Not specified	2	1	1

Training day participants categorised their birding skills into different (more explicitly defined) categories on the six-month follow-up questionnaires (from 137 respondents):

Absolute beginner	1%
Garden or occasional	15%
Regular	31%
Average	40%
Experienced	7%
Expert	4%

These results again suggested that the training days did not attract many beginner birdwatchers and that the majority of participants already had skills that could be honed in survey participation.

The six-month follow-up questionnaires also asked participants about the amount of time they spent bird watching, and whether their bird watching was part of another hobby or job (Table 4).

Table 4 Birdwatching activity of BBMS training day participants.
(Source: six-month follow-up questionnaire)

Current Activity Level	Number of participants
Watch garden birds regularly	36
Go out birdwatching occasionally	33
Go out birdwatching at least once a month	50
Watch birds/wildlife as part of another outdoor hobby	65
Watch birds/wildlife as part of my job	23
Do not currently watch birds/wildlife	0

Outdoor hobbies specified included walking/hillwalking (50), volunteer warden (3), cycling (3), running (3), photography (2), kayaking (2), horseriding (1), gardening (1) and yachting (1). Jobs specified included ranger (9), ecologist (4), volunteer warden (2), county mammal recorder (1), journalist (1), RSPB member of staff (1), bird surveyor (1) and town planner (1). No questionnaire returns were received from participants on the courses specifically tailored for countryside managers.

These results illustrate the success of the training days in meeting the objective ‘to target specific groups of potential volunteers’, with the events attracting significant numbers of people who ‘watch birds/wildlife as part of another outdoor hobby’ and also those who ‘watch birds/wildlife as part of my job’.

Survey participation prior to training

The two feedback questionnaires and the BTO’s Membership Database were analysed to assess the level of participation in bird surveys by training day participants before training took place. The Membership Database showed that 42% of all course participants were involved in a BTO survey before attending a course (Table 5).

Table 5 The number of surveys that training day participants undertook before training (of 304 participants who could be tracked).
(Source: BTO Membership Database)

Number of surveys per person	Number of people	%
0	176	58
1	80	26
2	24	8
3	14	5
4	7	2
5	1	0.33
6	1	0.33
7	1	0.33



The surveys in which participants took part prior to training encompassed all those available to volunteers, from those requiring high levels of bird identification skills (Bird Atlas and Breeding Bird Survey) to surveys requiring more general bird identification skills, such as Garden Birdwatch (Table 6).

Table 6 Surveys that 137 training day participants were involved in prior to training.

(Source: Six-month follow-up questionnaire)

Survey	Number of Respondents*
Bird Atlas	35
Breeding Bird Survey	14
BirdTrack	20
Wetland Bird Survey	14
Garden BirdWatch	27
RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch	55
SOC recording	7
Species specific	10
Personal lists	53
Project Ptarmigan	2
Nest Box Challenge	1

*The same person could be signed up to more than one survey before attending a training day.

A significant number of participants were taking part in RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and also keeping personal lists. There is potential here to promote BirdTrack to those training participants who are not already signed up.

Existing members of the BTO were much more likely to be taking part in a BTO survey than course participants who were not members of the BTO (Table 7). However, significant numbers of course participants who were members of the BTO did not have previous

survey experience (28%), and significant numbers of course participants who took part in BTO surveys were not BTO members (38%). Both figures show that there were a number of people participating in the training days who had previous contact with the BTO through either membership or volunteering and who might be encouraged to increase their support for survey work.

Table 7 Previous survey experience of 304 training day participants prior to training, in relation to whether they were BTO members.

(Source: BTO Membership Database)

	No previous survey experience	Previous survey experience
Member of the BTO	28%	72%
Non-member of the BTO	62%	38%

‘Taster day’ programme/content

The on-the-day questionnaires were used to assess whether the structure and delivery of the training days successfully met the needs of participants.

What aspects of the training days did participants find most useful?

Participants’ responses rated the fieldwork/outdoor to be the most useful element of the training days, and this is something which needs to be taken into account when putting together programmes for future training (Table 8).

Table 8 Aspects of training days that 289 participants indicated they liked the most. Note that participants did not score these elements and could state more than one aspect.

(Source: On-the-day questionnaire)

Elements of training days ticked as useful	Number of Respondents
Fieldwork	79
Finding out about surveys	71
Bird ID (not included in all training days)	47
Everything	34
Learning about survey techniques	27
Talks	22
Website explanation	15
Meeting other surveyors	11
Contact with experts	9
Information given on BTO and SOC	7
Recording details	9

Other comments about useful aspects of the training days included:

- “Bird knowledge from presenter and course content”*
- “Details on how we can help with outcomes”*
- “Emphasis on stopping and listening”*
- “Encouragement”*
- “Establishing contacts in the local area”*
- “Latest results on species trends”*
- “Q & A session with BTO”*
- “Seeing how data are used”.*

What did participants not like about the ‘taster days’?

Participants were asked if there were any aspects of the ‘taster days’ they did not like (Table 9). Only 12 participants (out of 289) commented on elements of the ‘taster days’ they did not like. This suggests that the days were successful in meeting the objective ‘to

provide training to meet the needs of all skill and experience levels’.

Table 9 Aspects of training days that 289 participants did not like.

(Source: On-the-day questionnaire)

Elements of training days disliked	Number of Respondents
None	141
Survey Techniques	4
Field Visit	4
Rushed	3
Bird ID	1

How could the training days be improved?

Only a small number of participants provided suggestions for how the training days could be improved (Table 10).

Table 10 Suggestions for improving training days from 289 participants.

(Source: On-the-day questionnaire)

Suggestion for improvement	Number of Respondents
More bird ID	17
More fieldwork	10
More on surveys	5
Provide additional handouts/ID sheets	5
Better skill matching	4
More about bird song/calls	4
More about survey techniques	3
Hold event at different time of year	3
Do a trial survey on walk	2

More bird identification advice and fieldwork practice were the two most common suggestions. Not all training days included bird identification, with the ‘Beginners’ and

‘Specialist’ training days having more of a focus on this element. Bird identification is obviously an important aspect of training, both for experienced birdwatchers, to boost confidence, and beginners, to teach them new skills and also demonstrate how much they already know.

Other comments included:

- “Provide a fools guide to BirdTrack”
- “Provide information on the terrain for the walk beforehand”
- “Lack of pre-course information”
- “Don’t use so many acronyms”.

Survey Uptake

What did participants commit to?

The on-the-day questionnaires were used to ask participants about new surveys they might take up as a result of attending a training day, and these results were considered in relation to the birding skill level and degree of survey experience of the trainees (*Appendix 12*).

Bird Atlas (Roving Records or Timed Tetrad Visits not specified) was the most popular survey to sign up to for those who ‘can identify most common species’ and also for those who were already doing at least one survey. Garden BirdWatch was the most popular survey for those ‘starting out’ and also for those new to bird surveying. This suggests that participants largely understood the types of survey most suited to their experience. However, the results also necessarily reflect the focus of the ‘taster days’ to some extent. For example, Bird Atlas was the main scheme promoted at the majority of the RR led events, aimed at experienced bird surveyors. Not all survey schemes were promoted at all training events.



What did participants actually sign up to?

The BTO’s Membership Database was used to analyse exactly what bird surveys participants actually signed up to following attendance at a training day.

Table 11 Number of new surveys taken up by 304 course participants.

(Source: BTO Membership Database)

Number of new surveys per person	Number of people	%
0	251	82
1	39	13
2	9	3
3	3	1
4	2	1

Table 12 Number of people (from 304 participants) that took up new surveys after a BBMS training event, based on the number of surveys they had previously undertaken.

(Source: BTO Membership Database)

Number of surveys before training event	No new surveys	1 new survey	2+ new surveys
1 survey previously	58 (73%)	17 (21%)	5 (6%)
2+ surveys previously	38 (80%)	10 (21%)	0
No previous surveys	155 (88%)	12 (7%)	9 (5%)

Actual uptake to new surveys can be summarised as follows:

- 53 people (17.5%) took up a total of 74 new surveys.
- 42% of participants were already taking part in one or more survey before attending the ‘taster days’.
- Of the 176 participants who attended ‘taster days’ with no previous survey experience, 21 (12%) signed up to at least one new survey.
- Of the 128 participants who attended ‘taster days’ with some previous survey experience, 32 (25%) signed up to at least one new survey.

These results strongly suggest that participants with previous survey experience were more likely to sign up to further surveys.

The uptake to surveys showed substantial variation between the different training days (*Appendix 13*), which we consider was at least in part due to the variation in the previous survey experience of participants at the different events. In general, participants who attended the events aimed primarily at existing volunteers (RR led) were more likely to take up a further surveys post training than those aimed at new audiences. However, many other factors (such as the programmes for individual days, trainers involved) must also have been involved in influencing how many participants took on new surveys (and we did not have large enough samples of participants to look at all these possible influences in a quantitative way). It is also important to remember that training events for more experienced birdwatchers were aimed at increasing confidence, so that some participants may have taken on additional survey units rather than taking on new types of surveying.

A more detailed breakdown of 127 participants that attended one training event and who were already taking part in at least one survey before attending the training event was carried out.

The majority (45 participants) were already taking part in the Bird Atlas 2007-11 and of these, 12 (27%) took up one or more new surveys after attending a training event. This highlights the importance of encouraging and supporting these volunteers to take on further surveys as the Bird Atlas project reaches completion.

Table 13 Number of people (from 127 participants) that took up new surveys after a BBMS training event, based on their previous survey experience.
(Source: BTO Membership Database)

Experience level before training	Number of participants	% of participants who took up one or more new surveys
Very Experienced (eg BBS or WeBS)	21	19%
Experienced (eg Bird Atlas or BirdTrack)	88	24%
Less Experienced (eg GBW, BIG Project, Ptarmigan Project)	18	33%

‘Less experienced’ surveyors (those participating only in more entry-level surveying) were more likely to take up one or more new surveys after attending a training event (33%) than more experienced people already carrying out more systematic survey work (Table 13). The majority of participants were quite ‘experienced’ and of these 24% took up one or more new surveys.

Specific survey uptake

The key bird survey schemes volunteers can sign up to range from those suitable for complete beginners to systematic surveys suitable for more experienced birdwatchers (see *Appendix 14*).

Table 14 Uptake to key bird survey schemes of 304 BBMS training day participants who could be tracked.

(Source: BTO Membership Database)

Survey	Number of participants who signed up	% of participants who signed up
BirdTrack	26	8.5%
Bird Atlas	22	7.3%
WeBS	9	3.0%
GBW	8	2.6%
BBS	1	0.3%
NRS	1	0.3%

The uptake to specific surveys following training days (Table 14) reflected the focus of the ‘taster days’, the majority of which promoted BirdTrack (particularly at the Beginners’ events) and Bird Atlas. Bird Atlas involves two types of surveying: *Timed Tetrad Visits* and *Roving Records*. Timed Tetrad Visits

involve adopting a two-by-two kilometre square (tetrad), visiting it twice in winter and/or twice in summer over the survey period and recording all birds seen and heard. Roving Records involves simply recording whatever is seen, whenever, wherever (only the birds that can be identified need to be recorded). Unfortunately we were not able to differentiate between those who signed up to Timed Tetrad Visits (suitable for more experienced birdwatchers) and those who signed up to Roving Records (suitable for beginners).

We also obtained information on survey uptake after training events from the six-month follow-up questionnaire (Table 15), which in some cases did not reflect the actual uptake according to the definitive BTO database.

Table 15 Uptake to bird survey schemes of 139 BBMS training day participants.

(Source: Six-month follow-up questionnaire)

Survey	Number of participants who signed up	% of participants who signed up
BirdTrack	22	15.8%
Bird Atlas	33	23.7%
WeBS	8	5.8%
GBW	14	10.1%
BBS	10	7.2%
NRS	1	0.7%
SOC recording	3	2.2%
Increased existing survey work	11	7.9%
RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch	2	1.4%

It is possible that respondents to the six-month questionnaire were stating surveys to which they still intended to sign, or they were not being entirely honest about what bird surveys they had signed up to. It is also possible that participants were confused as to which surveys they were undertaking.

Results from the BTO Membership Database analysis demonstrated that the objective ‘to target BTO regions where there was a recognised need for a greatly enhanced pool of volunteers’ was met. Of 50 participants who took up a new survey, 32 (64%) live in BTO regions where there is a recognised need for a greatly enhanced pool of volunteers (Appendix 11).

Motivations for getting involved

How did training help persuade participants to take up a new survey?

For the six-month follow-up questionnaire, participants were asked to score in order of importance (with ‘1’ being the most important) reasons why the training days had persuaded them to take up a new survey (some participants put down reasons, but did not score them). We received responses from a total of 76 participants who said they had taken up a new survey after training (Table 16).

Overall, ‘Improved confidence to take part’ was stated as the main benefit of training, followed by ‘Improved understanding of survey techniques’.

Of the 76 respondents, four classed themselves as ‘absolute beginners/garden or occasional birdwatchers’ and stated ‘improving bird identification skills’ and ‘finding out why it was useful to take part’ as the most important reasons why they had taken up a new survey after training. The majority (60 respondents) classed themselves as ‘regular or average

birdwatchers’ and stated ‘improving confidence to take part’ and ‘improving understanding of survey techniques’ as the most important reasons why they had taken up a new survey after training. The remaining 11 respondents classed themselves as ‘experienced or expert birdwatchers’ and stated ‘improving confidence to take part’, ‘improving understanding of survey techniques’ and ‘finding out why it was useful to take part’ as the most important reasons why they had taken up a new survey after training.

Reasons for not taking up a new survey

Based on results from the on-the-day questionnaire (Table 17), participants who were already taking part in at least one survey before attending a training day and those new to bird surveying, stated lack of time as one of the main reasons for not taking up a new survey. Some participants also suggested that they felt they lacked the confidence or experience required to take part.

Table 17 Reasons for not taking up a new bird survey following training given by 289 BBMS training day participants.

(Source: On-the-day questionnaire)

Reason	Number of Respondents
No reason given	118
Time commitment	44
ID Skills	8
Lack of experience	8
Confidence	5
Site accessibility	4
Personal reasons	3
Transport	2
Cost	1

For the six-month follow-up questionnaire, participants were asked to score in order of importance (with ‘1’ being the most important)

reasons why they had not taken up a new survey after training (some participants put down reasons, but did not score them). We received responses from a total of 61 participants who had not taken up a new survey after a training event (Table 18).

A lack of confidence in bird identification skills, followed by a lack of time were the two main reasons stated. Other reasons included personal issues (including poor health and family commitments) (7), and limited access to the internet or lack of computer skills (3). Comments also included: “no local tetrads available”, “recording too slow when hillwalking” and “like to do own thing!”

Of the 61 respondents, 18 classed themselves as ‘absolute beginners/garden or occasional birdwatchers’ and 37 classed themselves as ‘regular or average birdwatchers’. Both these groups stated that ‘I still feel my bird identification skills are not good enough’ and ‘I do not have time to do more than I do already’ as the most important reasons why they had not taken up a new survey after training.

Only 4 participants classed themselves as ‘experienced or expert birdwatchers’ and lack of time was the only real reason why they had not taken up a new survey after training.

What extra training or support did participants say would be most useful?

The 137 respondents in the six-month follow-up survey were asked to score in order of importance (with ‘1’ being the most important) what extra training or support they felt would be most useful to help them get more involved in bird surveying (some participants put down reasons, but did not score them).

‘More guidance in bird identification (by sound)’ and ‘Chance to get out with an

experienced bird recorder and learn from them (mentoring)’ were stated as very useful ways to help participants get more involved in bird surveying, and more bird identification help (by sight) also scored highly (Table 19).

Of the 137 respondents, 22 classed themselves as ‘absolute beginners/garden or occasional birdwatchers’ and 97 classed themselves as ‘regular or average birdwatchers’. Both these groups stated ‘more guidance on bird identification by sound’, ‘mentoring’ and ‘more guidance on bird identification by sight’ as the most important ways to help them get more involved in bird surveying. A further 15 participants classed themselves as ‘experienced or expert birdwatchers’ and these participants stated ‘more guidance on bird identification by sound’ and ‘mentoring’ as the most important ways to help them get more involved in bird surveying.



**Table 16 How did BBMS training help persuade participants to take up a new survey?
(Source: Six-month follow-up questionnaire; 76 respondents)**

Scores	1	2	3	4	Yes *	Total
Reasons	Number of Respondents					
Improved bird id skills	4	5	2	1	16	28
Improved understanding of survey techniques	5	3	3	3	20	34
Improved confidence to take part	5	7	2	2	27	43
Found out about a new survey which was suitable/appealed to me	4	0	2	1	17	24
Found out why it was useful to take part/how contributions were valued	1	4	4	1	20	30

**Table 18 Reasons for not taking part in a new survey after training.
(Source: Six-month follow-up questionnaire; 61 respondents)**

Scores	1	2	3	4	5	6	Yes*	Total
Reasons	Number of Respondents							
Still feel bird ID skills are not good enough	9	6	2	1	0	0	14	32
Still feel understanding of survey techniques is not good enough	1	4	4	0	1	0	2	12
Still not confident to take part	0	3	4	1	0	1	2	11
Lack of time to take on anymore	4	3	1	2	0	0	20	30
Transport availability	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Do not see how my contributions are valuable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Do not know who to contact	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2

Table 19

**What extra training or support did BBMS participants say would be most useful?
(Source: Six-month follow-up questionnaire; 137 respondents)**

Scores	1	2	3	4	5	Yes *	Total
Reasons	Number of Respondents						
More guidance in bird identification (by sight)	11	10	14	2	0	21	58
More guidance in bird identification (by sound)	17	19	8	0	0	37	81
More guidance in bird survey techniques	2	2	3	5	1	7	20
More guidance in submitting bird records online	0	0	0	3	2	3	8
Chance to get out with an experienced bird recorder and learn from them (mentoring)	21	11	3	2	0	40	77
More acknowledgment of the volunteer effort put in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Some participants put down reasons, but did not score them.

Feedback from volunteer training co-ordinators and helpers

The results from the nine respondents who were involved in seven training days are summarised below.

Event content:

The volunteer co-ordinators were asked to comment on whether the right balance had been struck as regards the amount of time spent on each of the following main components of a typical training day programme:

- Explanation of survey methodologies
- Bird identification sessions
- Outdoor sessions
- Results submission demonstration

They were also asked to comment on whether the identification sessions were pitched at the right difficulty level appropriate to the audience.

The results showed that the volunteer co-ordinators were generally happy with the balance and timings of the event programme, although three felt there should have been more ID sessions and 3 three felt that more outdoor sessions would have been beneficial. All volunteers thought that advice on equipment (eg binoculars and bird ID books) would also have been a helpful addition to the programme.

Comments from volunteer co-ordinators included: *“Make the course as hands on as possible”*.

Venue:

All volunteer co-ordinators felt that the venues, catering and sites for outdoor sessions used for the training days were suitable.

Overall Assessment:

All co-ordinators felt that overall, the participants *did* find the ‘taster days’ worthwhile.

Suggestions on how to recruit more volunteers:

“I think ‘mentoring’ is the way to go, we need to push far harder at ensuring that we can convert the interest.”

“What we need are passionate individuals with the time and enthusiasm to really make a difference to conservation. We also need very enthusiastic people to encourage the new folk!”

“I reckon we have to have a series of these things that folk sign up for – a progressive ‘course’ if you like that advances the skill levels rather than have a one-off shot at it. We have tickled their interest but there must be a follow-up”.



“Plug away at trying to raise enthusiasm (by being enthusiastic oneself!) but ensure the volunteer is aware of what he/she is committing to”.

Mentoring:

All the co-ordinators thought that mentoring sessions (being taken out by an experienced surveyor) would encourage inexperienced individuals to take up their own surveys.

Five of the seven co-ordinators that responded said that they would be willing to organise and/or participate in mentoring keen beginners.

Other Comments:

“It would be interesting to put a toe in the water and set up a 10-session ‘course’ and see how many folk might be interested in taking something on. Some sort of ‘curriculum’ might be constructed, that included field survey, as well as ID and such things as digiscoping. It may even be progressive so that entry might be at several levels, the later ‘more-skilled’ levels taking in such things as NRS, ringing, wader/waterfowl/goose-counting”.

What has been learnt about training needs from the BBMS experiences?

We consider the following are the key lessons learnt about training from the BBMS project:

- There is a demand for mentoring.
- There is scope to train by actually doing a survey with volunteers, eg in a guided-walk format event⁵.
- There is a demand for progressive learning.
- There is a need for more ID training events (concentrating on sight and sound).

⁵ Note that BTO has run some successful such events for BBS and WeBS since the BBMS project finished.

- There is a need for immediate follow up support after a training event, to maintain participants’ interest in getting involved.
- There is a need for jargon busting.
- There is scope to assess participants’ experience levels in more detail before running a training event, to better match training to levels of prior experience (note that we did not carry out any formal validation of the levels of skill and experience that participants told us they had).
- There is a need for a clear explanation of any training event will involve (providing a programme for the day and clear expectations for participants pre-training).
- There is a large audience of people in Scotland who already have good birdwatching skills and do some bird recording already (e.g. they have their own personal bird lists, see Table 6), who should be encouraged into more systematic surveys.
- The needs of volunteer bird (and other taxa) surveyors are likely to be different from those of other types of conservation volunteers (e.g. they may not volunteer for the social contact, see Table 8).

Some of these lessons are further discussed in ‘Conclusions’ below.



Conclusions:

The attendance at the ‘taster days’ and the uptake of new surveys following attendance has been very positive, particularly considering the fact that for many people these training events were their first encounter with bird recording in Scotland. Future projects need to ensure that resources are available to build on this initial enthusiasm by following up participants and offering them additional support.

Promotion

Results from the on-the-day questionnaires showed that the ‘taster days’ were successfully promoted to volunteers already involved in BTO surveys, BTO members & SOC members through direct email. Working alongside partnership organisations to promote the training days aimed at specialist audiences (eg hillwalkers and landowners/land managers) also proved to be very successful.

We believe that attendance at taster days was enhanced considerably by the fact that they were offered at no cost to participants. However, a minority of participants seemed to attend for a day out, rather than with any serious intention of volunteering subsequently. With this in mind, we consider that making a small charge for such training events in future (to contribute to catering costs) might serve to deter those who do not have a genuine interest in voluntary bird recording.

Survey experience

Results from both the on-the-day questionnaires and the six-month follow-up questionnaires showed that the majority of people attending the training days classed themselves as ‘average/regular’ birdwatchers. They already have a strong interest in birds and therefore further ways of encouraging and supporting them to take up bird recording need to be considered and should pay dividends.

The on-the-day questionnaire results showed that the majority of participants attending the ‘beginners’ courses were in fact *not* beginner birdwatchers, but *were* beginner bird recorders. If a completely new generation of birdwatchers is wanted then perhaps training days totally devoted to developing basic birding skills should be considered to build confidence, followed up by training to introduce bird surveying.

The fact that a large proportion of participants (who filled in the six-month follow-up questionnaire) ‘watch birds/wildlife as part of another hobby’ reiterates the need to work with partner organisations to promote bird recording, particular those involved with ‘outdoor enthusiasts’ and those who work in the outdoors.

Using the BTO’s Membership Database to find out which surveys volunteers are taking part in pre training and which new surveys they signed up to post training will help target, in the future, particular surveys to specific survey groups. For example, of the 55 participants signed up to the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, 15 signed up to BirdTrack following training. This highlights further opportunity to specifically promote BirdTrack (a partnership project between BTO, RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland and SOC) to RSPB Big Garden Birdwatchers.



Survey take up

Although there were 276 commitments to signing up to a new survey immediately following training (on-the-day questionnaires), this was not reflected in the actual uptake (BTO's Membership Database analysis). This reiterates the importance of immediate follow up after training, eg direct email offering help, contact details, further sources of information, and so on.

Analysis of BTO's Progress database showed that participants who attended the taster days with previous survey experience were more likely to sign up to a new survey. In future it would be valuable to find out more about participants' birds skills and experience levels before they attended training days to help tailor the days accordingly and to decide on which surveys it would be most appropriate to focus training.

The importance of continued support for existing volunteers was highlighted by the BTO Membership Database analysis. The 'very experienced' volunteers are already contributing a lot, and there is greater scope to encourage the 'experienced' and 'less experienced' volunteers to take on more surveys, with the appropriate support in place. In particular, it will be essential to continue to inspire the volunteers currently taking part in the Bird Atlas, as the Atlas fieldwork reaches completion, so as to move them on to future survey work.



Feedback from volunteer training co-ordinators and helpers

Some of the key volunteer co-ordinators involved in the BBMS training provided some very valuable feedback. Their suggestions have helped shape 'Future Directions' (please see Section 8).

What did participants find most useful?

The on-the-day questionnaire results showed that the fieldwork sessions were seen as one of the most useful aspect of the 'taster days', highlighting the importance of practical, hands on, outdoor experiences when delivering training. This was reiterated by the responses to how the training days could be improved.

Reasons for taking up/not taking up a survey

The on-the-day questionnaire results showed that 'lack of available time' was the main reason for not taking up a new survey. Emphasising how simple some of the surveys are to take part in (eg using BirdTrack to record bird sightings whilst walking the dog, hillwalking or patrolling sites during a normal working day) may help counter this. 'Improving confidence to take part' was the main reasons why the training days had persuaded participants to take up a new survey (six-month follow-up questionnaire results). 'Building confidence' needs to be considered when planning a training event.



Also, participants with different birding skill levels had different reasons why the training days had persuaded them to take up a new survey and this is also something else to consider when planning a training event.

What extra training/support would be most useful?

The six-month follow-up questionnaire results showed that the most common suggestions for improving the training days (for all skill levels) were providing ‘more guidance on bird identification (by sound), ‘the chance to get out with an experienced bird recorder and learn from them’ and ‘more guidance on bird identification (by sight). This reiterates the importance of a strong ‘fieldwork’ element in training. Mentoring was the most frequently suggested improvement from participants, and the volunteer co-ordinators agreed that mentoring would be a valuable approach to encouraging more volunteers to take up

surveys following initial ‘taster’ training events.

Providing participants with a clear explanation of what the training events would involve will help to match the right people with the right training events.



3. Birds in View Newsletter

Background:

The project funded three annual newsletters to be distributed as widely as possible to both existing and potential volunteers.



Timing:

The first newsletter was printed and distributed in summer 2008, the second in summer 2009 and the final issue in April 2010.

Aims:

The main function of the newsletters was as a recruitment tool in themselves, by targeting new audiences and inspiring as wide a range of people as possible to take up volunteering in long-term bird recording and survey work.

The guiding principles for the newsletters were that they had to be:

- Eye-catching
- Uncluttered
- Simple enough and jargon-free for new volunteers yet also interesting for 'old hands'
- Issues 2 and 3 would be more interactive, with feedback and articles from volunteers involved in the project.

Objectives:

We achieved the aims by showing throughout the newsletters:

- how enjoyable it is to take part in bird surveying (by including stories from existing volunteers).
- how simple it can be (eg by advertising training workshops available for those who wanted to build confidence and presenting, in articles, different bird surveys and survey methods in an easy to understand, jargon free way).
- why taking part in bird surveying is worthwhile, i.e. how it makes a difference for bird conservation.
- what the benefits are of taking part (eg getting outdoors, getting to know you're your 'local patch', learning more about wildlife, improving skills, health and well being and so on).

Other objectives of the newsletters were:

- To highlight training opportunities
- To encourage Atlas volunteers in particular, and give updates on the project.
- To acknowledge and thank existing volunteers for their support.

Audiences

The target audiences included:

- Those who had never taken part in survey work before. Within this audience, two specific priority groups were identified:

- Landowners, land managers, gamekeepers, bailiffs, ghillies, etc., and
- Those with compatible outdoor hobbies, especially hillwalkers, but potentially climbers, fishermen, canoeists, kayakers, etc.



- Those who had done survey work in the past, and who might therefore be persuaded to sign up again.
- Those currently taking part in an entry-level type survey, such as Garden BirdWatch, BirdTrack, Project Ptarmigan or Biodiversity in Glasgow, who might be willing to take on further survey work (eg to take on a Timed Tetrads Visit or inputting Roving Records for the Bird Atlas 2007-11).
- Those who were already participating in other bird surveys, by making sure they were kept up to date with new projects, by promoting the value of the work of BTO and the SOC, and by making sure they know how much they are appreciated.

Approach:

Overview of content of newsletters:

- Introduction to the newsletter – what it is, target audience and why the newsletter has been produced.
- Why Record Birds? – explaining how volunteers' records are used by government agencies, conservation campaigners, policy makers, land managers, etc.
- Volunteer stories – showing a mixture of fun, simplicity of bird surveying and the benefits of taking part.
- Features on the Bird Atlas 2007-11 survey – giving background to and purpose of the project, showing how easy it is to take part, relevant notices, latest updates, most recent results, etc.
- Survey 'taster' days – showing upcoming training opportunities, what is involved, suitability and skill levels required and trainees' experiences.

Bird survey 'taster' day

Bird Recording for Landowners and Land Managers

by Mandy Cook, Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland



Bird Atlas Roving Records

In every 10-km square we would like to compile a comprehensive list of species found in the breeding season and, separately for winter. You can get a list of species already recorded in a 10-km square (or tetrad) on the Atlas website (www.birdatlas.net) - in Data Home click on 'Any Square Summaries'. The aim is to add species to the list for a 10-km square (or tetrad) in those counties undertaking local atlases and to record the breeding status. You can see our progress by looking at the species richness maps at <http://bkl.bto.org/atlas-results/allociman.html> or by looking at the regional results pages which give a lot more detail at the BTO region level http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/latest_results/regionalresultsnav.htm

Blair Castle, in Perthshire, proved to be the perfect setting, on a snowy day in March, for gamekeepers, stalkers, estate workers, landowners, land managers and land agents, from all corners of Scotland, to get together, share their fantastic knowledge about birds and learn how easy it is to register their sightings using BirdTrack and the Bird Atlas's roving records.

The taster day was developed in partnership with the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association and supported by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, the Scottish Countryside Alliance, the Scottish Gamekeeper's Association and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, and kicked off with a brief introduction to BTO in Scotland and an overview of BirdTrack and the Bird Atlas. Conscious of one participant's comment that 'sitting down is not my strong point!' (a view shared by many in the room!) we made a swift departure out into the beautiful Atholl Estate grounds to brush up on identification skills and record bird sightings.

Tim Baynes, Moodlands Director for the Scottish Countryside Alliance, certainly felt he benefited from the day...

"The 'taster' day was a great help for an amateur like myself. Once BTO had explained how the various bird monitoring schemes work, it became much easier to understand how I could contribute without necessarily needing to know every bird that I see or having to make a special trip. After the two outdoor sessions, I felt much more comfortable with identifying and recording most of the birds that we saw."

David Clark and Neil Robertson, gamekeepers from the Alladale and Deanich estates in Sutherland, also share their views of the day...

"We were initially a little apprehensive about attending the day and were not sure about who else would be there, but our fears

Birds in View 2009

8

- Birds in Focus – focussing on selected species and showing how volunteers’ records have shaped our understanding of how these birds are faring (eg the ‘Kestrel’ featured in Issue 1 showing how Breeding Bird Survey and Nest Record Scheme data are being used). This demonstrated the value of bird recording and added interest to the different surveys.
- Resources – highlighting tools available from the project (eg talks, training events, leaflets, etc).
- Credits – an overview of the project, the roles of BTO and SOC, contact information, funders’ credits and details of the surveys mentioned in the newsletter.

Issue 1:

The first issue introduced the project and ways in which volunteers (of all skill and experience levels) could get involved in bird recording in Scotland.

Content:

- Why Record Birds?
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – stories from the RO for Skye and the Scottish Atlas Organiser.
- Breeding Bird Survey – a volunteers’ story.
- Survey Taster Days – information about the days and a participants’ story.
- Birds in Focus.
- Tools and Resources.

Issue 2:

The second issue had an upland theme, with the aim of encouraging hillwalkers, land owners, gamekeepers and anyone else who spends time in the Scottish hills to get involved in upland bird recording.

Content:

- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – SNH Policy and Advice Manager talking about his experiences of upland bird recording.
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – the Ptarmigan story.

- The Biodiversity in Glasgow Project – a volunteer’s story.
- BirdTrack – a volunteer’s story.
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – Access and Conservation Officer for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland talking about the upland bird recording training event she attended.
- Garden BirdWatch – a volunteer’s story.
- Bird Survey Taster Day – bird recording for landowners and land managers.
- Birds in Focus.
- Tools and Resources.

Issue 3:

The final issue was produced as a “keeper”, written as a one-stop-shop for volunteer bird recorders, with all the core bird surveys detailed and guidelines about choosing the right bird survey to suit anyone’s skills, experience, available time, etc. The simple survey selector guide produced for this issue (*Appendix 14*) was an important step forward, and the idea has been adopted more generally subsequently across the BTO (eg on our website).

Issue 3 also had a partnership theme, showcasing the work of some other organisations (eg the Butterfly Conservation Trust Scotland and the John Muir Trust), with a view to fostering future partnership working to build on the success of the project beyond March 2010.

It was decided to make this newsletter a 20-page issue (as opposed to the previous 12-page issues).

Content:

- Introduction – Dame Barbara Young, BTO President.
- BirdTrack and the Bird Conservation Targeting Project.
- Breeding Bird Survey.

- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – RO & SOC Local Recorder, Borders.
- Garden BirdWatch – Volunteer GBW ‘Ambassador’ for the Lothians.
- Nest Record Scheme.
- Ringing.
- Choosing the Right Survey – please see *Appendix 14*.
- Scottish Local Recording Network.
- Schedule 1 Species and Countryside Access.
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – RR for Perthshire talking about surveying upland squares.
- Wetland Bird Survey.
- Making Butterflies and Moths Count – Director of Butterfly Conservation Scotland.
- Summing Up of BBMS.

Distribution:

A database was set up for the distribution of the newsletter, which included:

- All BTO members in Scotland.
- All SOC members in Scotland.
- Everyone in Scotland who had taken part in a bird survey (from the BTO Membership Database).
- All participants of Project Ptarmigan
- All participants of the Biodiversity in Glasgow (BIG) project.
- Everyone who had attended a training event as part of the BBMS project.
- All ranger services in Scotland.

In total, 8000 people received each of the three newsletters through the post. Additional newsletters were printed to hand out at public events, conferences, talks, training events, etc., and to send to anyone who requested copies.

As well as hard copies, a PDF version of the *Birds in View* newsletter was made available. This was available on both the BTO and SOC websites. Additionally, either a PDF or a link to the BTO Scotland website was added to the following organisations’ websites:

- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Mountaineering Council of Scotland
- The Munro Society
- The British Association for Shooting and Conservation
- The Scottish Gamekeepers’ Association
- The Scottish Rural Property and Business Association.



Birds in View
2009

Welcome to Birds in View

This newsletter is part of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, which aims to encourage volunteers of all skill and experience levels into bird recording. We hope that those of you who received the last newsletter have been inspired to get out and about to survey bird life in Scotland. For those of you new to *Birds in View*, we hope you will be equally inspired by this issue. It is through your activity and participation that we can understand, encourage an appreciation of and help conserve birds in Scotland.

In this issue you will read how a bird survey ‘taster day’ for land managers has inspired gamekeepers into action. They are out with their Roving Record forms, keen to contribute to the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 and are spring a host of bird life. You will gain an insight into why volunteering is so valuable through the example of the Biodiversity in Glasgow (BIG) project. Helle Carus from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland looks at ways in which hillwalkers can help with bird recording and Carolyn Wilson, who has been a member of Garden BirdWatch for 15 years, extols the virtues of her favourite survey.

The personal experiences told in *Birds in View* show us the significance of volunteering. It is this citizen science that the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project is supporting and it makes Des Thompson’s ‘view of the uplands’ all the more enlightening. Volunteering adds value to your bird watching and recent bird identification courses held at Stirling University and Chateaufort Country Park have started some of those interested in birds on the road to recording. We hope that this edition of *Birds in View* will reflect the importance of volunteering and also show the fun you can get from bird recording. Enjoy!

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The BIG Project - Biodiversity in Glasgow	4
Keeping Records for BirdTrack	5
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Garden BirdWatch	7
Atholl Estates Taster Day	8
Bird Survey Taster Days	9
Birds in Focus	10
Tools and Resources	11

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

Birds in View 2009

Evaluation Methods:

The format and emphasis for the newsletters was discussed and agreed in workshops at the BBMS National Meetings in February and August 2008.

No formal evaluation process was put in place to measure the success of the newsletters.

Outcomes & Benefits:

The three newsletters produced and distributed as part of the project all successfully met the aims and objectives listed above. Comments received included:

“I have belatedly managed to get round to reading Birds in View 2009. I was particularly interested in the information about upland and mountain species.” (Elsbeth Smith, Perthshire)

“An excellent publication. I really enjoyed reading it.” (Jane Kale, Edinburgh)

“I thought the newsletter was very interesting.” (Dr J A Gibson, Scottish Natural History Library)

“I think this Birds in View is beautifully produced - stunning photographs and interesting articles” (Jill Ford, Garden BirdWatcher).

“Dear Richard (Paul), I just wanted to write to say that I enjoyed your article in the recent Birds in View and this, plus other articles, has encouraged me to consider taking on a tetrad. I visit Perthshire on a regular basis, so would be happy to take on a tetrad in the vicinity” (Jonathan Pickup, Edinburgh).

Several people also signed up to training events as a direct result of reading *Birds in View*.



Bird Survey Opportunities in Scotland

Birds in View

2010

Photo: trial by John Hill

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 enthrall 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 2009-11 and the Wetland Bird Survey (WBS) 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 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

In this newsletter...

A view from Dame Barbara Young	2
Tracking birds for conservation	3
Monitoring the ups and downs...	4
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A passion for garden birds	6-7
Nest Record Scheme, the surprise survey	8
Ringling - You can help to complete the story	9
Choosing the right survey for you	10-11
Scottish Local Recording: your name in lights	12
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Wetland Bird Survey: size isn't everything	16-17
Making Butterflies & Moths Count	18
...and, so to the end!	19
Contact and survey details	20

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

Conclusions:

The *Birds in View* newsletters have shown how valuable a publication dedicated to birds and bird surveying in Scotland can be. A successful template has now been produced, which could be replicated or adapted by groups and organisations involved in the recording of other taxa to help engage similar audiences.

It may have been beneficial to have a more formal process in place to measure the success of the newsletters, for example a questionnaire inserted in the newsletters inviting feedback and perhaps a prize draw to encourage readers to respond. Including a quiz or competition may also more proactively encouraged interested readers to respond, sending in their contact details for future mailings in the process. Such a quiz could also have targeted a wider audience using the BTO and SOC websites.

4. Leaflets

Background:

The project funded three promotional leaflets, as follows:

- Bird Atlas 2007-11 – how to get involved
- BirdTrack – recording birds in the uplands
- Why Record Birds?

Timing:

The *Bird Atlas 2007-11* leaflet was printed in June 2008. This was the first leaflet to be produced because of the need to maximise its use during the four-year Atlas project. The *Why Record Birds?* and *Recording Birds in the Uplands* leaflets were printed in June 2009.

Aims:

The leaflets were designed specifically to introduce bird recording to new audiences, as well as to draw existings volunteers into key Scottish bird surveys.

Objectives:

- To encourage new volunteers to take up bird recording.
- To show how easy it is to get involved in bird surveying in Scotland.
- To provide specific, easy to follow information about the Bird Atlas 2007-11 and BirdTrack surveys in Scotland, including how to take part.
- To outline the importance of volunteer bird recording in Scotland.
- To show that bird recording is for everyone.
- To provide key website, telephone and email contact information.
- To target new groups of volunteers (eg hillwalkers).
- To increase bird recording in the uplands/remoter areas.

Audiences:

The leaflets were designed to appeal to broad spectrum of people, from complete beginners through to experienced birdwatchers.

What can I do to help?

- Record the birds you see. Any records, anywhere in Scotland, will make a big difference.
- Check out the websites:
www.bto.org/scotland/surveys
www.the-soc.org.uk/soc-recorders.htm

Which survey would be best for me?

There is a survey to suit everyone:

- Some ask you only to record the birds you know.
- Some ask you to record the birds you see day to day.
- Some are carried out in the spring, some in the summer, autumn or winter.
- Some you can do in your garden and some give you the opportunity to get out into the wider countryside.

Why Record Birds?

Tell us what birds you see and make a real difference for bird conservation

For further information contact:
The British Trust for Ornithology in Scotland
Tel: 01786 466560 or Email: scot.info@bto.org
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Tel: 01875 871330 or Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk

BUILDING BIRD MONITORING IN SCOTLAND

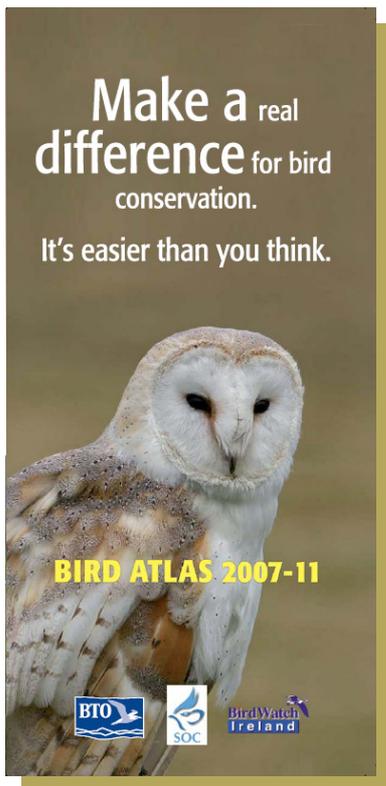
BTO **SOC** **SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE**

The Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project is generously funded by SNH, The Gillman Trusts, BTO and SOC.

Approach:

Bird Atlas 2007-11 (Upland) Leaflet:

It was decided to produce a specific promotional leaflet for the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project in Scotland. The leaflet aimed to show how both beginners (through submitting Roving Records) and more experienced birdwatchers (through signing up to a Timed Tetrad Visit) could get involved in this important national survey.



BirdTrack Leaflet:

This leaflet was targeted specifically at hillwalkers or anyone else who spends time in the Scottish hills, with the aim of increasing bird recording in the uplands by using the BirdTrack online recording scheme.

Why Record Birds?

This leaflet was designed specifically for anyone who was completely new to bird recording in Scotland. The aim of this leaflet was to explain very simply why bird recording in Scotland is so valuable and provide key web links and contact details for finding further

information about volunteering and bird surveys.

Distribution:

All three leaflets were handed out at public events, conferences, talks, training events, and so on, and were sent to anyone who requested copies. They were also made available as PDFs on the BTO Scotland website.

Bird Atlas 2007-11 Leaflet:

7000 leaflets were printed initially. 2000 of these were divided up between the BTO Regional Representatives, Atlas Local Organisers, SOC Local Recorders and other volunteer co-ordinators to be distributed within their regions. The other 5000 leaflets were included as an insert in the first issue of *Birds in View*, which was distributed in September 2008.

When the other two leaflets were distributed in July/August 2009, the Bird Atlas 2007-11 leaflet was also sent to the following:

- All Scottish Wildlife Trust Visitor Centres:
 - Loch of the Lowes, Dunkeld, Perthshire
 - Montrose Basin, Montrose, Angus
 - Falls of Clyde, New Lanark, South Lanarkshire.
- All National Trust for Scotland properties.
- All SNH properties and National Nature Reserves.
- Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Headquarters in Balloch: for distribution to other properties, including visitor centres at Balmaha and Luss.
- All Ranger Services in Scotland.

An additional 2000 leaflets were printed in September 2009.

Scotland's important uplands

Scotland's mountains, moors and bogs hold important populations of birds, such as waders, grouse and birds of prey.

Many factors, including grazing, disturbance, predation and climate change could be having an effect on these birds.

To help conserve upland birds we need to know their numbers and distributions.

Few birdwatchers venture into the hills, which means our knowledge of what's there can be poor. Your sightings, therefore, are particularly valuable.



Do your bit for conservation

- Simply note down any birds you see whilst taking part in your favourite outdoor pursuit.
- When you get home add your records to BirdTrack.
- BirdTrack is an online scheme to which you can enter and store all your bird records.
- It doesn't have to be a full species list. A few casual sightings are fine.
- All records are verified so we know the information collected is correct.
- BirdTrack is a valuable tool for mapping species distributions. Records are also used in other projects such as The Bird Atlas.



BirdTrack (Upland) Leaflet:

It was decided, with both the BirdTrack (uplands) leaflet and the Why Record Birds? leaflet, that it would be more beneficial to investigate new outlets for the leaflets, rather than inserting them into the *Birds in View* newsletter. We considered that this would make the information provided in the leaflets available to a wider audience, beyond those already on the BTO database (who received *Birds in View*).

An initial run of 22,000 BirdTrack leaflets in July 2009 were distributed as follows:

- All Scottish RSPB Reserves.
- 15,000 inserted into the Mountaineering Council of Scotland magazine 'Scottish Mountaineer'.
- All SWT Visitor Centres.
- All National Trust for Scotland properties.
- All SNH properties and National Nature Reserves.

- Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Visitor Centres.
- All Scottish BTO Regional Representatives and Local Organisers.
- All Ranger Services in Scotland.
- Nevis Range, Fort William.
- 300 inserted into the Munro Society newsletter.
- The Mountaineering Council for Scotland office in Perth.
- Glenmore Lodge National Outdoor Training Centre.
- Ratho International Climbing Arena, Edinburgh.
- Local Walking, Rambling and Mountaineering Clubs.

The following organisations also featured the leaflet on their websites:

- Mountaineering Council of Scotland
- The Munro Society.

The John Muir Trust published an article promoting the leaflet in its newsletter.

Following the initial distribution of the leaflet, requests for further supplies were received from:

- Bennachie Centre, Aberdeenshire
- Cairngorm Ranger Service
- Balmoral Estates, Aberdeenshire
- John Muir Trust

An additional 2000 leaflets were printed in September 2009.

Why Record Birds? Leaflet

The Why Record Birds? leaflet was distributed as follows:

- All Scottish Wildlife Trust Visitor Centres.
- All National Trust for Scotland properties.
- All SNH properties and National Nature Reserves.
- Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Visitor Centres.
- All Ranger Services in Scotland.

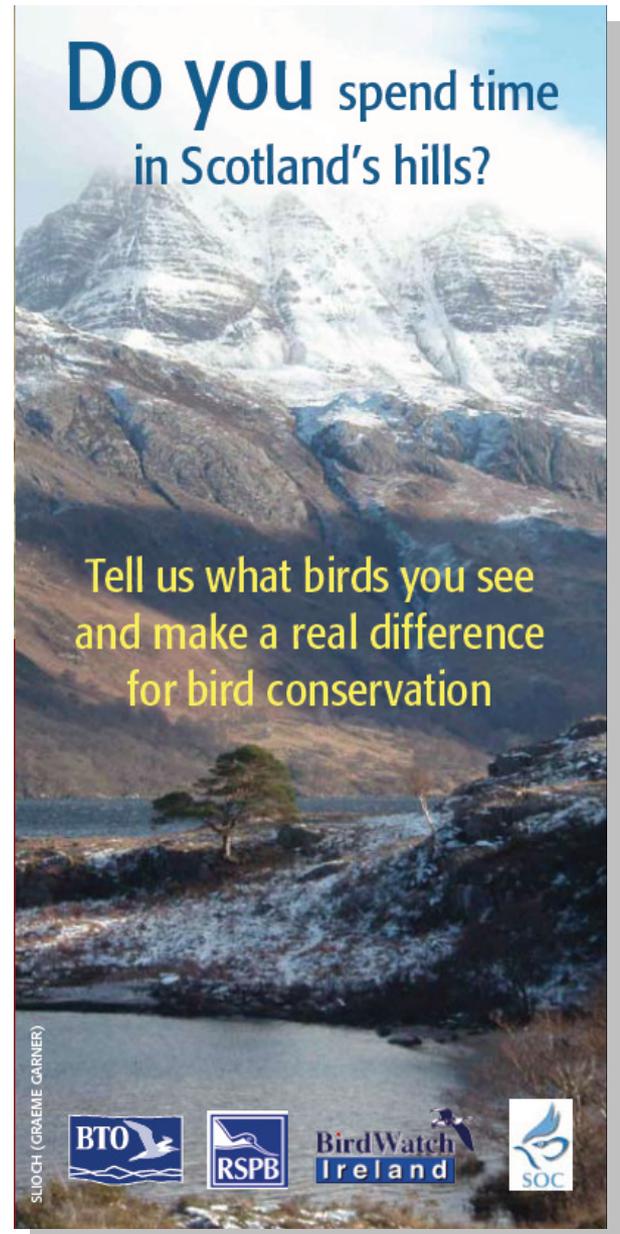
An additional 2000 leaflets were printed in September 2009.

Evaluation Methods:

The format and subjects for the leaflets were discussed and agreed in workshops at the BBMS National Meetings in February and August 2008.

No formal evaluation process was put in place to measure the success of the leaflets.

Outcomes & Benefits:



The three leaflets produced and distributed as part of the project all successfully met the aims and objectives listed above.

The outcomes and benefits of the three leaflets can be summarised as follows:

- They provided user-friendly information.
- Messages were spelt out clearly for volunteers to act upon.
- Key information could be seen by readers at first glance.

- All leaflets directed readers to sources of further information.
- They had an eye-catching design, for display in various venues, to attract new volunteers.
- They could be used flexibly, with individual leaflets playing a valuable role for direct mailing to existing and past volunteers, BTO and SOC members, enquirers and ‘taster day’ attendees, for use on countryside sites where outlets exist (eg visitor centres and to service enquiries, etc.).
- The ‘conservation’ message was substantiated by printing all leaflets on recycled paper.

Evaluation:

The BirdTrack (upland bird recording) leaflet, in particular, has been very well received and has proven to be an effective tool in making that initial contact with outdoor enthusiasts. Further copies of the leaflet will need to be printed to keep up with demand.

Conclusions:

The three leaflets were attractive, with strong messages about the Bird Atlas 2007-11 and BirdTrack surveys, as well as the importance of bird recording in Scotland. They offered a flexible means of informing a wide range of new and existing volunteers about different bird survey opportunities in Scotland.

It may have been beneficial to have a formal way of tracking the success of the leaflets or of eliciting a response (eg by attaching a tear off tick sheet to the BirdTrack leaflet, showing the key upland bird species likely to be seen whilst out hillwalking, which could be filled in and sent back to BTO with observer contact details). Contact details and information from those who picked up/read the leaflets could also have been obtained by including a quiz or prize draw.

Future outlets for the leaflets, particularly the upland leaflet include: mountain and walking festivals; youth hostels; outdoor centres; tourist information centres; ski centres; binocular retailers; outdoor shops; and Forestry Commission visitor centres.

Bird Records:

- Can help to determine how climate change is affecting wildlife in Scotland.
- Can show which species of birds are in decline, why they are in decline and what can be done to reverse this.

We Need More People
to Record Birds in Scotland

Why?
Birds respond very quickly to variation in habitat quality and other environmental changes
and so...

- Can help identify which areas of Scotland need protecting for wildlife.
- Can help policy makers by providing objective and unbiased survey results.
- Can influence how land management practices can be improved to further enhance the biodiversity of Scotland.

5. Other Promotional Activities

Background:

As well as the *'Birds in View'* newsletters and the three promotional leaflets, the project was also allocated time for the following promotional activities:

- Talks
- Writing articles for magazines and newsletters.
- Press releases
- Promotion of 'Taster Day' events
- Websites

Timing:

All promotional activities were timed to tie in with key dates in the 'birding calendar' (eg writing articles, sending out press releases and giving talks just before the start of the Bird Atlas 2007-11 winter and breeding seasons).

Aims:

The main aim of the other promotional activities, as with the newsletter and leaflets, was to inform new audiences and educate as wide a range of people as possible about volunteer bird recording and ways to get involved in bird surveying in Scotland.

Objectives:

We achieved the above by demonstrating through talks, press and promotional activities:

- how much fun it is to take part in bird surveying.
- how simple it can be.
- why taking part in bird surveying is worthwhile, i.e. how it makes a difference for bird conservation.
- what the benefits are of taking part (eg getting outdoors, getting to your 'local patch', learning more about wildlife, improving skills, health and well being, and so on).

Other objectives included:

- tailoring promotional activities to specific audiences (eg landowners, land managers or hillwalkers).
- making use of as many media sources as possible, both on and off line (eg websites, e-newsletters and bulletins, etc).

Audiences:

Bird recording by potential new audiences was encouraged through targeted promotional activities, such as advertising the 'taster days' in other organisations' newsletters. Activities (particularly talks) were also aimed at the existing 'birding community' (eg local bird clubs) to encourage experienced birdwatchers to take part in some of the more systematic recording schemes, such as the Breeding Bird Survey and Bird Atlas (Timed Tetrad Visits).

Approach:

Talks

A total of 18 talks were given over the three years of the project, which included talks to the following groups, organisations and events, and covered topics such as Garden BirdWatch, Breeding Bird Survey, Nest Record Scheme, Bird Atlas 2007-11 and BirdTrack:

- SOC Highland branch
- SOC Fife branch
- Assynt Field Club
- Friends of the Earth
- Isle of Seil Natural History Group
- Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference
- Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Recorders Conference
- SOC Tayside branch
- SOC Lothian branch
- SOC Central branch
- Moorland Forum
- SWT Stirling branch
- Tayside Recorders Forum

- Colinsburgh Environmental Group
- RSPB local groups in various locations.

The availability of speakers to give talks about the project was advertised in the *'Birds in View'* newsletter, at the national meetings and on the BTO and SOC websites. Direct mailing also targeted all SOC and RSPB local branches. The majority of the talks came about as a direct result of these promotional activities. Talks were also offered to target audiences (eg hillwalking clubs).

Press

The following are examples of the press articles published:

- *'Please help us map Scotland's birds!'* – Scottish Countryside Alliance Newsletter Autumn 2008.
- *'Golden Plover'* – Scottish Countryside Alliance Newsletter Summer 2009.
- *'Volunteer to get out more'* – The Nature of Scotland Spring 2009 (Scottish Natural Heritage).
- *'Developing the bird recording "habit"'* – Scottish Bird News June 2008 (Scottish Ornithologists Club).
- *'Enjoy birds more'* – The Bulletin for the National Trust for Scotland April 2008.

'Taster Day' Promotions

The 'taster days' were also promoted to potential new audiences by targeting groups and organisations such as:

- Scottish Countryside Alliance
- Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
- Scottish Gamekeepers Association
- John Muir Trust
- Mountaineering Council of Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Scottish Countryside Ranger Association

- Tayside Biodiversity Partnership.

Promotions included articles in newsletters and e-bulletins, as well as articles in magazines and flyers.

The BTO Scotland and SOC websites had dedicated pages showing details of the 'taster days', how to book, and so on.

The table in *Appendix 15* shows how participants heard about the 'taster day' events (taken from the on-the-day questionnaire results). The majority of participants heard *'from a friend or colleague'* or from *'direct email from BTO Scotland'*.



Evaluation Methods:

The numbers of people attending the 'taster days' was one measure of success of the promotional activities (please see the 'Taster Days' Section 2 of this report). The overall number of people who have taken up bird recording since the start of the BBMS project is also a measure of the success of the

promotional activities undertaken (see Section 6 of this report).

Outcomes & Benefits:

The promotional activities met the aims and objectives listed above. The outcomes and benefits relating to promotional activities are numerous and include the following:

- Providing links on all promotional materials published has led to increased traffic to our websites.
- Our name has been put in the minds of our target audiences and anyone else who has read our press releases or attended our talks. The more people that see or hear BTO or SOC being mentioned, the more likely they will remember it for future projects, training, and so on.
- They have been an inexpensive way of getting broad publicity for the project.
- They have helped to get our organisations more credibility. Potential volunteers will see us as experts in our field and will hopefully check out our websites, or contact us for further information if they want to find out more about volunteer bird recording in the future.
- The stories written and talks given had lots of interesting details – which has let potential volunteers get very familiar with the bird recording we are promoting.

Evaluation:

The ‘taster day’ promotions contributed to all 19 events being very well attended, with 389 potential new volunteers in total taking part.

Conclusions:

The promotional activities proved to be a powerful publicity tool for building bird survey awareness in Scotland.

It would have been useful to have a process in place to record formally, when people booked on a ‘taster day’, where they had heard about the course. This would have provided additional information on the effectiveness and value of the different promotional activities.

Although promotions were specifically aimed at targeted audiences, such as outdoor enthusiasts and land managers, future projects may benefit from engaging with a broader audience through, for example, more articles and press releases written for local press (particularly for the promotion of ‘taster days’ aimed at beginners). This could target a completely new audience of potential volunteers with no previous knowledge or experience of bird surveying.

The on-the-day feedback questionnaires for the ‘taster days’ showed that only one participant had heard about them through a newspaper article.

The poster is for a 'Bird Recording Taster Day' organized by SRPBA. It features a dark green header with white text: 'SRPBA Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland Bird Recording Taster Day for Landowners and Land Managers'. Below this, it states the date and time: 'Wednesday 4th March 2009 at Atholl Estates, Perthshire, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm'. The main body of the poster is white with a green border. It includes the SRPBA logo, a photo of a bird in a field, and several logos of supporting organizations: Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust Scotland, Scottish Countryside Alliance, and BASC. A quote from BTO is included, along with a thank you note to Atholl Estates.

**SRPBA Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland
Bird Recording Taster Day
for Landowners and Land Managers**

Wednesday 4th March 2009 at Atholl Estates,
Perthshire, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Supported By:

Game & Wildlife
CONSERVATION TRUST
Scotland

**SCOTTISH
COUNTRYSIDE
ALLIANCE**
Love the countryside

BASC

ATHOLL ESTATES

With grateful
thanks to Atholl
Estates for
providing the venue

This practical, free taster day, developed as a partnership initiative between SRPBA and BTO Scotland (as part of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project), is designed to help land owners and land managers, including farmers, game keepers, ghillies and estate workers, get involved in collecting information on Scottish birds that can be used to make a real difference for conservation and land management purposes.

"The information collected by BTO volunteer surveyors is vital for understanding what is happening to upland bird populations, some of which seem to be declining quite fast. BTO is the UK research authority on birds, with an excellent reputation for scientific integrity. We strongly recommend that our members should get involved and play their part, particularly those who are regularly working on the same area of ground and can collect useful data in the course of a normal day's work. It is easier than it might sound and not necessary to be a bird expert. Land managers know most of the birds found on their land already and can play a big part in collecting that data together so that future management policy can be properly informed." SRPBA, GWCT, SCA, SGA and BASC.

6. Survey Participation 2008 to 2010

An analysis of the BTO's Membership Database was carried out to find out how successful the BBMS project has been overall in helping to: (i) recruit new volunteers; and (ii) retain existing surveyors to the following key surveys, which were all actively promoted as part of the project:

- The Bird Atlas 2007-11
- Garden BirdWatch
- Breeding Bird Survey
- BirdTrack
- Wetland Bird Survey.

A total of 2806 records were found of volunteers taking up new surveys in Scotland between the start of the BBMS project in February 2008 and the project drawing to a close at the end of March 2010. Note that volunteers may have signed up to more than one new survey and the results below show uptake to each survey, not total numbers of volunteers. Of these records, **2294** were flagged as volunteers who have signed up to a new survey during the BBMS period and who are **actively** taking part in that survey (Table 20).

These results demonstrate how phenomenally successful the BBMS project has been in recruiting new volunteers to take up bird surveying in Scotland. In particular, these results show how successful the project has been in achieving one of its main aims, *'to carry out effective promotion of bird survey work nationally to potential new volunteers, using the Bird Atlas 2007-11 as a focus.'*

BBMS cannot take all the credit, though, as other initiatives were also being run during the same period, and our volunteer networks were also working harder than ever to ensure that key surveys were supported during the Bird Atlas period.

Table 20 Uptake of volunteers to five key bird recording projects in Scotland during the period of the BBMS project.

Key Surveys	Number of new volunteers signed up between 1 March 2008 and 31 March 2010
Bird Atlas 2007-11	935
Garden BirdWatch	234
Breeding Bird Survey	46
BirdTrack	754
Wetland Bird Survey	77

For the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), part of the increase in volunteer numbers on the database, in March 2010, occurred because all Local Organisers were asked to update their records at that time. The survey organisers have also been working hard on promoting the scheme and there are some fantastic Local Organisers in Scotland who are very pro-active in recruiting counters. The activities undertaken as part of the BBMS project have contributed to, and offered support to, this overall success.

Whilst 46 new volunteers signed up to the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) during the period of the BBMS project, the overall number of volunteers who surveyed Breeding Bird Survey squares during this time actually decreased:

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of BBS volunteers</u>	<u>No. of BBS squares covered</u>
2007	331	413
2008	255	330
2009	254	328

We consider that BBMS helped to prevent a larger decrease in BBS surveyors during the Bird Atlas period. It is anticipated that these numbers will increase again once the Bird Atlas survey work has been completed in 2011.

7. Summing Up

- The national BBMS meetings were very well attended and provide a productive forum for representatives who were taking the lead (on behalf of BTO and SOC) in recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers at a local level. It would be beneficial for Scotland if similar meetings could be held to provide continued support and training for these exceptionally valuable volunteer representatives who give so much of their time and effort to supporting and promoting the work of BTO and SOC.
- The final national meeting provided valuable feedback (involving both existing and potential new partners) on how the success of the project could be built upon in the future, to increase not only the numbers of volunteers involved in bird recording, but also share experiences with those involved in other forms of biodiversity monitoring.
- The project has demonstrated the success and great further potential of partnership working with other organisations whose members and supporters are a potential new audience of bird surveyors.
- The project as a whole has provided a model which can be used and adapted for other taxa.
- The success of the 'Birds in View' newsletter, the promotional leaflets and other promotional activities has demonstrated the importance of effective communication. It is imperative that volunteers are kept up to date with new projects, that the value of the work of BTO and SOC is promoted and that volunteers know how much they are appreciated.
- The need to have in place an effective way of evaluating the success of the promotional materials has been highlighted for future such initiatives.
- The 'taster days' proved to be very popular and were an enjoyable and cost-effective way of both introducing a new audience to bird recording in Scotland and encouraging existing volunteers to take up new surveys. The final outcomes (actual survey uptake) demonstrated that the enthusiasm apparent at the 'taster days' needs to be followed up and acted upon.
- The feedback from the 'taster days' highlighted the importance of pre-planning, matching participants' birding skills and experience levels with the right training days, promoting surveys that are right for the audience. Also highlighted was the importance of understanding and knowing participants' needs, what motivates them and what they want to get out of attending a training day.
- The 'taster days' highlighted that it is just as important to continue to support and encourage existing volunteers as it is to target new pools of volunteers. Overall, 17.5% of participants on BBMS training events went on to take up one or more new surveys following the training. However, there was a marked difference in uptake between volunteers already doing at least one survey before training (i.e. with existing knowledge of the BTO) and those completely new to surveying: those with prior survey experience were twice as likely to take on another survey following training. These results suggest that: (i) face-to-face training is likely to have greater

benefits for more experienced volunteers; and (ii) less experienced volunteers may not benefit so much from one-off training events unless a 'plan of aftercare' is in place to build on the single training day and give them further confidence to get involved.

- The evaluation methods put in place for the 'taster days' proved to be an efficient way of helping to measure the success of the project and the database of contacts compiled as a result will be very useful for promoting future projects and proactively offering follow-up support and training opportunities.
- The project as a whole has demonstrated what can be done in Scotland and the lessons learnt from the project can be utilised in other regions and areas in the UK.

8. Future Directions

We consider that a number of clear areas for future development have become apparent as a result of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project and related discussions, and, in particular, from the evaluation of the training provision and feedback. The following key areas for development are highlighted, and actions are already underway to take some of them forward:

- The need for a ‘progressive pathway of volunteer care’ to encourage potential new volunteers into the system (via ‘entry-level’ recording opportunities like BirdTrack and GBW) and support them to move towards bird recording of the most valuable, systematic type as they build their skills and confidence.
- The need to recognise more explicitly the needs of ‘entry-level’ volunteers and the specific level of support that may be required to progress them through to more systematic bird recording. The project has identified, from the training feedback questionnaires and the final national meeting, a strong desire for the provision of one-to-one or small group ‘mentoring’ from experienced birdwatchers/surveyors to build confidence in less experienced volunteers to carry out BTO/SOC surveys.
- The need to design new future surveys carefully and wherever possible include an element of more entry-level recording.
- The need to enhance current infrastructure (e.g. the BTO and SOC websites) to capture the interest and give confidence to new potential surveyors in a welcoming rather than frightening manner. The BTO has recently re-branded and reorganised its website with this in mind: initiatives have included revamping the home page (with a clearer layout and improved navigation); making the Surveys home page more user friendly to make it more attractive and less intimidating for potential new volunteers; and adding video content in several areas. A personalised webpage “*My BTO*” has been added to provide a more personalised service to existing volunteers, which in future will function to deliver an individualized progression pathway and training for those volunteers that desire it. Systems have also been improved so that volunteers can be ‘tracked’ efficiently from their first contact with the BTO through to survey participation, allowing staff to engage more effectively along the way to provide ongoing support and encouragement. Further developments will be rolled out in 2011/2012.
- The need to further enhance on-line recording and support/feedback tools to maximise their attractiveness and utility for volunteers. The SOC/BTO/SNH Integrated Bird Recording in Scotland project, which developed out of discussions at BBMS meetings, is making specific developments to BirdTrack to make it more attractive to the local bird recording network in Scotland. These developments should have wider use once they are implemented. There is also much potential to development on-line routes via which volunteers can share experiences, ask for support and potentially find mentors (BTO already has on-line fora for e.g. Regional Representatives, bird ringers and nest recorders and the approach could be rolled out further).
- The need to provide a wider range of on-line training materials, including ‘survey skill-checkers’ to help volunteers to feel more confident about participating.

- The need to recognise the needs of the existing volunteer audience and that not everything can be delivered remotely (i.e. online). We consider that an annual volunteer magazine (like *Birds In View*) will be valuable to provide feedback, hints and tips to volunteers, help to cross-promote different surveys and types of recording and explain and encourage progression from entry-level through to more complex, systematic survey types.
- The need to continue to consider how to enhanced survey coverage in under-covered habitats (e.g. uplands and rivers) and geographical areas of Scotland. The continued promotion of bird recording to new groups of potential volunteers (e.g. the various groups of countryside users) in ways that are accessible to them, and working with partner organisations to access appropriate volunteer groups, should be an important part of this but is likely to require novel and specially tailored approaches to encourage new groups of volunteers to come on board.
- The need to increase partnership working with organisations that monitor taxa other than birds, to facilitate efficient skills and knowledge sharing, and provide appropriate tools for multi-taxa monitoring where possible.

Some of these areas for future development are considered in a little more detail below.

Mentoring Scheme

The BBMS project explored the best ways to engage people in bird recording and identified face-to-face contact and hands-on experiences as highly valuable. The initiation of a bird recording mentoring scheme in Scotland would probably be the single most effective future action for converting more birdwatchers and ‘entry-level’ surveyors into volunteers carrying out the most valuable sorts of systematic bird survey work (e.g. BBS, WeBS) on which Scotland’s evidence-base needs depend (e.g. production of rigorous Natural Heritage Trend information for important habitats and species; data collection and monitoring to underpin nature conservation site designation ; evidence base to underpin biodiversity policy decisions with respect to climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecosystem services approaches, land-use strategy, etc).

We know that many of our BTO and SOC regional representatives already carry out informal mentoring of local volunteers⁶. We do not consider that such a mentoring scheme would be expensive to implement. However, it would require some dedicated and funded staff time to make contact with suitable mentors and provide them with ongoing support, encouragement and feedback. Not all existing local volunteer coordinators have a desire to be involved in one-to-one or small group mentoring, although we know that some would be more than willing if offered a little support. Others would be unable to devote the extra time required (because they already do so much for BTO/SOC) or would rather not do this sort of work because they prefer to do their birdwatching and survey work alone (and we, of course, respect these views). However, we also know, through recent market research, that many ‘supporters’ are attracted to BTO because of their scientific/educational/learning backgrounds, which means there is likely to be a currently untapped source of expertise within the current

⁶ See also Biodiversity Solutions (2010) *Involving People in Biological Recording*. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 382. (<http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=1650>), which also demonstrated mentoring taking place already in Scotland.

membership/supporter base who could be encouraged to get involved in mentoring. We hope, funding permitting, to build quickly on the lessons learnt from BBMS to design and run a trial mentoring scheme in target (remote) area(s) of Scotland, which could then be amended as appropriate and rolled out in other target areas, as a long-term commitment. There is also a need to explore the additional support that could be provided to the existing Regional Networks of BTO and SOC to assist them with delivering more survey training (e.g. ‘train the trainer’ type events and initiatives).

Bird Identification (ID) Courses

Many BBMS training day participants requested the provision of additional bird identification (by both sight and sound) training to support them in taking up voluntary bird recording in future. This was high on the wish list of all course participants, with more experienced birders requesting the aural bird ID training. The BTO currently runs a number of *bird identification courses* each year, for which participants pay to attend and which are well attended. It would be useful to explore ways of running more of these courses and whether, if demand is high, if modest surpluses could be made and used to fund other sorts of training. We consider that many of the participants on BBMS training days had highly adequate bird identification skills for a range of survey work but they simply lacked the confidence in their own skills (perhaps because they perceived existing BTO/SOC volunteer surveyors as ‘experts’ with more experience than themselves). Thus some of those that requested future additional bird identification training may not really need it, rather they may need slightly different support to give them the confidence to start surveying. A mentoring scheme (above) could form part of this support. BTO Scotland has also been running training days based on birdwatching walks with training in a particular survey (e.g. BBS, WeBS, BirdTrack), and these have been successful in giving participants the confidence to sign up. There are also a range of online initiatives that might help to support and build confidence in potential surveyors (below).

On-line Training and Other Support Tools

Whilst there is no substitute for being taught bird identification and surveying in the field (as demonstrated by the results of the on-the-day questionnaires), there is much potential for this field training to form part of a more structured training package that also involved online materials (and/or CDs/DVDs for off-line use). Face-to-face ID courses could then be seen as complementary to other forms of ID training that could be offered remotely to a larger number of volunteers.

The idea of providing more structured training programmes could be developed through web-based training, face-to-face (perhaps in collaboration with higher education organisations) or, preferably, a mixture of the two. We are currently exploring a range of options, ways of packaging them together into a more structured learning programme for volunteers, and ways of funding development of such initiatives. Ideally, we would like to reach a situation where any volunteer that wishes can sign up to a training ‘programme’ and go through a series of training modules (whether on-line or face-to-face), providing a means of keeping potential new volunteers engaged with BTO/SOC, and offering them the chance to build their confidence ready to take on bird recording and systematic surveys.

Initiatives to increase survey coverage of the Scottish Uplands and Remote Regions

Whilst access to a range of structured online training materials will be very positive in terms of future attempts to get volunteers engaged and out surveying in the remoter parts of Scotland, we should not pretend that enhancing survey coverage in these areas will be easy. We still consider that very specific initiatives will be required to generate a step change in numbers of volunteers surveying in these areas.

There is the potential to improve the monitoring of mountain birds in Scotland by building on the successes of both the BBMS project in engaging with hillwalkers, and Project Ptarmigan 2006, which

was an initiative that principally aimed to encourage hill-walkers and other people who visit the higher hills in Scotland to record birds. The arctic-alpine habitats of Britain are acknowledged as a conservation priority through their inclusion in the UK Habitat Action Plan and their distinctive bird communities are often cited within policy statements as being under threat principally from changes in climate and also atmospheric deposition, grazing and recreational disturbance. However, there is little empirical support for such suppositions and importantly, with very few localised and specific exceptions (e.g. Ptarmigan in the Cairngorms and national Dotterel surveys), few robust baselines against which any future changes can be measured. The mountains of Scotland support a geographically insular outpost of arctic-alpine habitats which are also fragmented and marginal in terms of both their altitude and latitude. Therefore it can be expected that they will be susceptible to changes in climate, weather patterns and other factors. Surveillance of their bird communities will provide a measure of the condition of Scotland's high mountain habitats, lead to being able to monitor the influence of any changes upon them and give opportunities to engage new cohorts of interest groups in citizen-science based environmental monitoring. BTO Scotland is currently exploring funding possibilities for a monitoring mountain birds initiative, which would adopt a multi-strata approach for fieldwork and the collection of data: volunteers would be encouraged to participate at levels to suit their personal interests, ability and availability. Training materials would be provided to enable and encourage participants to develop their skills, which could take the form of booklets/leaflets, on-line materials and potentially training courses to aid the identification and recording of target species. Target species would include all species that are encountered in sufficient numbers in arctic-alpine habitats in Scotland. This will include species that are considered as arctic-alpine specialists (e.g. Ptarmigan and Dotterel) and other more widely distributed species (e.g. Golden Plover, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Red Grouse, Ring Ouzel, Raven and Wheatear). Changes in abundance of arctic-alpine specialists and non-specialists alike will be indicative of environmental changes.

We consider that if we are to deliver improved monitoring of Scotland's uplands and remote areas in future, we must continue to engage in accessible and beneficial ways with countryside users that work and spend their leisure time active in these areas, as well as with the traditional birdwatching community. We must tailor initiatives to suit the needs and motivations of each audience to encourage their involvement. We will also continue to work with individual survey organisers to explore novel survey designs that might help to engage more of the Scottish public in scientifically robust monitoring.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1:

BBMS National Meeting Programme for Saturday 16th February 2008

0930-1000	Arrival and coffee/tea 4U5		
1000-1015	Welcome and plan for the day – Chris Wernham & Chris Waltho Room 3A142		
1015-1030	Overview of BBMS	Jacqui Kaye	Room 3A142
1030-1100	SNH and volunteer bird monitoring Room 3A142 <i>How SNH uses bird monitoring data collected by volunteers for conservation in Scotland.</i>	Rhys Bullman	
1100-1200	Building Bird Monitoring - Session 1 Room 3A142 <i>Your chance to share ideas to shape the project</i>	Jacqui Kaye	
1200 – 1400	Buffet Lunch and further discussion 4U5		
1400-1430	<i>Report back to group</i>		
1430-1530	Atlas Session 1 - Update Room 3A142 <i>Update on issues raised at August meeting</i> <i>Overview of coverage so far</i> <i>Demo of website showing some of the new features</i> <i>Early findings from Atlas fieldwork</i> <i>Plans for validation</i>	Bob Swann	
1530-1600	Coffee 4U5		
1600-1700	Atlas Session 2 – Breeding 08 Room 3A142 <i>Plans for breeding season - publicity & promotion</i> <i>Recruitment of fieldworkers</i> <i>Upload of data from clubs</i> <i>Tetrad Population Estimates</i> <i>Plans for professional fieldworkers and expeditions</i>		Bob Swann & Rob Fuller
1700-1730	Open Questions from Day 1		
1930	Meeting Dinner – Stirling Management Centre (on campus)		

BBMS National Meeting Programme for Sunday 17th February 2008

- 0930-1000** **Arrival and coffee/tea**
4U5
- 1000-1015** **Welcome and plan for the day – Jacqui Kaye**
Room 3A142
- 1015-1215** **Building Bird Monitoring Session 2 – Existing Schemes**
Exploring four key long-term volunteer schemes, we will discuss in turn:
- ❖ The scheme aims and uses
 - ❖ Volunteer needs and skills
 - ❖ Appropriate training that could be offered
 - ❖ How the scheme will bring volunteers into long term BTO/SOC survey work.
- 1015-1100 Breeding Bird Survey – Kate Risely
1100-1130 Bird Recording in Scotland - Clive McKay, SOC
1130-1200 BirdTrack – Mark Grantham
1200-1230 Nest Record Scheme – Dave Leech
- 1230-1300** **The way forward**
Summary including training priorities, use of promotional materials, planning for future meetings
- 1300-1400** **Buffet Lunch**
4U5

BTO & SOC Staff

Anne Cotton	Secretary (BTO Scotland) – meeting organiser & minutes
Bob Swann	Scottish Atlas Organiser (BTO)
Carl Barimore	Nest Records (BTO)
Chris Waltho	President (SOC)
Chris Wernham	Senior Research Ecologist and Head (BTO Scotland)
Clive McKay	Scottish Bird Records Co-ordinator (SOC)
Graeme Garner	Field Ornithologist (BTO)
Jacqui Kaye	Development Coordinator (BTO Scotland)
Kate Risely	BBS Organiser (BTO)
Mark Grantham	Population Biologist (BTO)
Rob Fuller	Habitats Research Director (BTO)
Robin Anderson	Development Assistant (BTO Scotland) – minutes

Appendix 2:

BBMS National Meeting Programme for Saturday 23rd August 2008

0930-1000	Arrival and coffee/tea 4U5	
1000-1015	Welcome and plan for the day – Chris Wernham & Chris Waltho Room 3A142	
1015-1045	How your data is used to influence policy-makers Room 3A142	Simon Foster <i>The values and uses of indicators and gaps in surveying from an SNH perspective</i>
1045-1115	Tools for Motivating Volunteers Room 3A142	Jacqui Kaye <i>Feedback and update on progress; newsletter, leaflets and training courses. Discussion on distribution of materials and promotion of training courses</i>
1115 – 1145	Coffee/tea 4U5	
1145-1245	Atlas – Maintaining the momentum Room 3A142	Bob Swann <i>Recent updates</i> <i>Overview of breeding season and first year's coverage</i> <i>Validation procedures</i> <i>Forward planning for next winter and breeding season</i>
1245-1430	Buffet Lunch and further discussion 4U5	
1430-1530	Bird Recording in Scotland - an update	Mark Grantham & Clive McKay <i>Developments in data capture, online recording and conservation uses of information</i>
1530 - 1630	Boosting the Volunteer Pool through WeBS	Mark Collier <i>Discussion on how WeBS will bring volunteers into long term bird survey work, covering volunteer needs, skills and training</i>
1630-1700	Coffee/tea	
1700-1800	Your chance to raise further issues (Please let us know in advance of any other issues you would like us to address so that we can be adequately prepared to give a meaningful response)	
1930	Workshop Dinner – Stirling Management Centre (on campus)	

Appendix 3:

BBMS National Meeting Programme for Saturday 6th February 2010

A Celebration of Volunteer Bird Recording in Scotland ... and where do we go next?

0930-1000	Arrival and coffee/tea	X Corridor
1000-1010	Welcome and plan for the day – David Jardine (Chair for morning session)	
1010-1035	The Importance of voluntary bird recording in Scotland to SNH	Andy Douse
1035-1100	The Importance of voluntary bird recording in Scotland to RSPB <i>Find how your bird records are vital for conservation in Scotland</i>	Jerry Wilson
1100 – 1130	Coffee/tea	X Corridor
1130-1200	Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland 2008-2010 <i>Find out about all the fantastic things we have collectively achieved during this innovative project and some introductory ideas of where to go next.</i>	Chris Wernham
1200-1230	Bird Atlas 2007-11: the story so far... <i>Bob will give us a flavour of changes to Scottish bird populations shown so far, how well Scotland has been covered and which areas still need to be tackled to achieve full coverage by 2011.</i>	Bob Swann
1230-1300	Long-term monitoring of birds in Scotland: has BBMS worked? <i>How well have other bird surveys, such as BBS, WeBS and BirdTrack fared during Bird Atlas 2007-11 to date? Why do we need lots of different sorts of recording and what plans there are to increase future coverage?</i>	Andy Musgrove
1300-1430	Buffet Lunch	x Corridor
How do we build on what we've done? Andy Clements (Chair for afternoon session)		
1430-1500	What makes bird recording volunteers tick? <i>Short introduction to the afternoon session from a small number of passionate volunteers about their involvement in bird recording and what motivates them to get out of bed in the morning and get involved...</i>	Chris Wernham Norman Elkins Patric Baird Mandy Cook
1500 - 1630	Building on our successes and 'growing' more volunteers (workshop) <i>How can we motivate more people to get involved in volunteer bird recording? An opportunity to get together with external guests from a range of other organisations to talk about training, profile raising and working together to expand the volunteer base of all sorts of bird recorders for the future.</i>	
1630-1700	Coffee/tea	
1700-1800	Reports back from the workshop groups - Summary of the day and thanks.	

BBMS National Meeting Programme for Sunday 7th February 2010

A Celebration of Volunteer Bird Recording in Scotland and where do we go next?

0930-1000	Arrival (and coffee/tea)	Room 4U5
1000-1015	Welcome and plan for the day	
1015-1145	Room 3A142	
	A) Scottish Local Bird Recorders' Meeting SOC/BirdTrack/SNH Integrated Bird Recording <i>Hear the latest news on this project and an opportunity to discuss ideas with the staff involved.</i>	Clive McKay & Andy Musgrove
OR	Room 4U5	
	B) Scottish Regional Reps' Meeting	Chris Wernham (Chair)
	BTO Strategy 2009-2010 Membership and Volunteering Regional Network Committee Scottish Regional Network, Fundraising and Events	Andy Clements & Ieuan Evans Bob Harris Mandy Cook
1145-1215	Coffee/tea	Room 4U5
1215-1300	Room 4U5	
	A) Bird Atlas 2007-11 <i>A chance to discuss in more detail the current state of play, how to fill gaps in coverage and any concerns ahead of fieldwork for the last two breeding seasons and the final winter.</i>	Bob Swann
OR	Room 3A142	
	B) Scottish Local Bird Recorders' Meeting (cont'd) SOC/BirdTrack/SNH Integrated Bird Recording <i>Data validation, gazetteers and analytical outputs</i>	Clive McKay & Nick Moran
1300	BBMS Closing remarks Buffet Lunch	Chris Wernham Room 4U5
AFTERNOON SESSION - Scottish Local Recorders network conference – Room 3A142		
1400	The New Scottish Bird Report	Ray Murray
1430	The Bird Conservation Targeting Project	Clive McKay
1500	RBBP update	David Jardine (on behalf of Mark Holling)
1515	SBRC update & summing up	tbc
1530	Tea/coffee/departure	Room 4U5

Appendix 4: Suggestions from 3 BTO/SOC Volunteer Co-ordinators

A Reasons for taking part in surveys:

- Discipline of structured birdwatching rather than just self-satisfaction.
- Improvement of one's own skills.
- Visiting and comparing new sites.
- Involvement in larger scheme of things.
- Learning about trends and the wider picture.
- Concern for environmental issues.
- Enjoyment and curiosity.

B Reasons for not taking part in surveys:

- Need for commitment.
- Need to record in a formal manner.
- Birdwatching time too valuable to waste by visiting unknown/unfamiliar sites.
- Perception that surveys concentrate on mundane species in uninteresting places.
- Unhappy with validation of one's own records by third parties.
- Need to ask for access permission (sometimes)
- The abomination of form-filling.
- Methodology too complicated.
- Lack of experience and confidence.

C Ways to persuade volunteers to participate:

- Stress the importance of survey data in the conservation of both habitat and birds.
- Feedback given as rapidly as possible to put observations in context (eg BirdTrack).
- Regular publication of survey results, perhaps on blogs.
- Buddy system to match novices with experienced birders.
- Training days/courses.
- Stress the ease of online recording.
- Emphasise that skill levels improve, especially with ongoing surveys (BBS, WeBS)
- Target bird clubs/societies.
- Raising profile on relevant TV programmes.

Appendix 5: Suggestions from a Volunteer

A Reasons why you would/do take part in bird surveys:

- Interest in birds.
- Acceptance of need to collect data for research.
- To increase ones own knowledge and experience.
- Encouragement to get out and visit new locations.
- Interaction with like minded people.

B Things that would put you off wanting to take part in bird surveys:

- Work/family commitments.
- Lack of clear instructions for conducting surveys.
- Difficulty in submitting survey work (such as lack of computer ability).
- Expense.
- Physical restrictions.
- Although a person has an interest in birds they may just hate surveys.

C Ways in which you think more volunteers could be encouraged to take up bird recording:

- Involve whole family.
- Encourage interest at a young age.
- Provide local short courses/field trips.
- Use of media, particularly local.
- Emphasise social aspects.

Appendix 6: Summary of Suggestions from 3 Other Volunteers

A Reasons why you would/do take part in bird surveys:

- Conservation, Enjoyment, Purpose, Improve skills/knowledge, Explore new areas, Hope of seeing something spectacular!

B Things that would put you off wanting to take part in bird surveys:

- Time, Confidence, Restrictions (time, site & date), Having to use internet, Interferes with rarity hunting, Tetrads don't match local patches in a convenient way, Having to take samples of droppings or dead birds, Does it matter if there are 7 Blackbirds here or only 3?!

C Ways in which you think more volunteers could be encouraged to take up bird recording:

- Mentoring, Incentives (eg free membership), Adverts, articles & talks, Partnership working, Appeal to conservation conscience, Direct approach to local bird groups, RSPB & SOC branches, Making recognition easier, Organising field days, Emphasise that existing recording efforts can easily be made more purposeful.

Appendix 7: Feedback from workshop sessions on attracting volunteers in future

TASK 1 LIST 5 KEY SKILLS A VOLUNTEER NEEDS

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
1	Appropriate Id SKILLS	Enthusiasm/passion/wanting to learn	Bird ID	ID skills for relevant survey	Awareness of/enjoyment of birds
2	Interest	Experience/recognition skills	Navigational skills	Fitness for relevant survey	Observational skills (to appropriate ID skills with training)
3	Willingness to develop skills	Commitment/persistence	Recording skills	Field skills for relevant survey (use of bins; appropriate clothing; fieldcraft)	Motivation (interest driven)
4	Ability to keep records and be prepared to submit them	Self-reliance/fitness/mobility	Enthusiasm	Map reading/navigation	Commitment to recording data
5	Spatial awareness! (ability to navigate in the field)	Writing and recording and prepared to do so	Commitment to deliver	Organisational skills (punctual submission of data etc)	Map reading/navigation

TASK 2 LIST 3 KEY PHRASES YOU WOULD USE IN A JOB ADVERT TO ATTRACT VOLUNTEERS

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
1	Your contribution counts for conservation	Puts something back to help conservation	Adding purpose to your birding	Enjoyment of birds through surveying	Spread your wings – do a survey
2	Develop skills at your own pace	Challenging but enjoyable and rewarding	Get out more	Visit exciting new places – see exciting new birds	Make your outdoor activities count for conservation
3	Get the most of being outdoors whatever the weather	Improve your knowledge and skills	Expand your mind/lifelong learning/CV fodder	See your observations as part of a bigger national picture	Add some science to your Saturdays

TASK 3 For up to 3 organisations represented in each group, list the potential benefits gained by the organisation from volunteers bird recording in Scotland

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
ORGANISATION 1	JNCC: data feeding to statutory advice; large sample/long-term trends; citizen science; health & well-being; monitoring	SNH: data (many uses); engagement & understanding; enhancing the profile of SNH	Site detail to allow better planning (SNH/FC); better understanding of populations/trends (SNH/FC); other taxa recorders (BC); decreased carbon footprint (all); increased knowledge base of how to conduct surveys (all)	BTO: increased survey coverage; maintain scientific capability; future health of organisation	SNH: meet gov objectives; examples of how folk from all backgrounds can participate in volunteering; encourage green behaviour
ORGANISATION 2		GWCT: Data to feed to management questions; awareness raising		SOC: data for reports; other publications; encourage membership	Local Recorders: info/status of birds in the region;
ORGANISATION 3		The Munro Society: time series data on mountain quality; encourage engagement		Government: cost-efficiency; quality of life indicators	BTO/SOC: recruitment; prestige

TASK 4 Produce a Power Map for up to 3 organisations: list 3 priority relationships and associated actions that could assist voluntary bird recording in Scotland

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
PRIORITY ACTIONS	<p>1 Mentoring Scheme</p> <p>2 Training programme</p> <p>3 Encouraging existing birders to submit records (make it easy and build confidence)</p>	<p>1 SNH: Encourage own staff to collect more data in structured manner</p> <p>2 Work with NGO partners to mobilise vols</p> <p>3 Increase understanding within SG of data collection and interpretation</p>		<p>1 Media: targeting press releases (regionally and nationally)</p> <p>2 Media: relationships with key press contacts</p> <p>3 Outdoor orgs: liaison to inspire their members</p>	<p>1 SOC: widely used tools for bird recorders that are uniform across Scotland</p> <p>2 Local Recorders: maintain personal link between Recorder and observers</p> <p>3 SNH: enhance the need for indicators in public policy</p>
PRIORITY RELATIONSHIPS	<p>1 Membership organisations priority between org and members: encourage more to survey</p> <p>2 Students</p> <p>3 Wider scientific community</p> <p>4 Community Groups</p>	<p>1 Own colleagues</p> <p>2 NGOs</p> <p>3 SG</p>	<p>1 FC/Rangers/Moth recorders Moth recorders: BTO to provide technical ability and publicity</p> <p>2 FC wildlife rangers: BTO speak to CEOs about bird recording as part of work plans</p> <p>3 Single-species surveys and gaps in Atlas to promote surveys of particular species</p>	<p>1 BTO & RRs</p> <p>2 RRs & vols</p> <p>3 BTO & media</p> <p>4 BTO & other outdoor orgs/clubs</p>	

TASK 5 List up to 10 improvements to promotional of volunteering that could result in better survey take-up rates

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
1	Formal/informal mentoring process to add confidence	Online training materials-self-assessment confidence building (ID/fieldcraft/survey methods)	Survey mentor system - online	Contact details for follow up	Online tutorials for data entry
2	Encourage folk in same area on same course to meet up	Contact with local groups/RRs/Recorders for follow-up support	Offering survey sites on the day of training	Self-development – where to go to learn certain birds	Partnership course with local bird club (with membership incentives)
3	Follow up training course timetable	Follow-up ‘asks’ – contact regularly after training	Technology to capture younger generation’s imagination	Specific after care contact for survey(s) they indicated interest in	Online community like www.ispot.org
4	Cooperative structured course across organisations	Follow up drop-outs! Find out why	Make time commitment clear (in a positive way)	Younger folk – via unis, sixth forms	Better understanding of course objectives ahead of course
5	BT as entry point for training but clear output from BT needed	Appropriate survey feedback to encourage retention	Hands on surveys (ringing/nest recording) good for enthusing		Longer-term monitoring of take-up by course participants
6	Training in data entry	Botanists to submit bird obs	www.ispot.org for ID help		
7	Range of learning methods (hard copy/online)	Threat of validation – ensure approaches are appropriate	Train key players in the birding media		
8	Pre-course matching of abilities to survey		Rewards for effort		
9	Reinforcement of confidence at every level				

Appendix 8: On-the-Day Questionnaire

Venue:

Date:.....

Please take a few moments to give us your feedback, so that we can continue to develop our courses.

1. How did you hear about today's course?

.....

2. How would you best describe your birding skills? (please circle)

Starting out/ Know most common species/ Experienced

3. Which bird surveys have you taken part in before?

Breeding Bird Survey ("BBS", BTO/ JNCC/ RSPB)

Bird Atlas 2007-2011 (BTO/ SOC/ BWI)

Bird Track Online (BTO/ RSPB/ BWI)

Garden Birdwatch ("GBW", paper or online)

Wetland Bird Survey ("WeBS", BTO/ WWT/ JNCC/ RSPB)

SOC Local Recording (sending birds to your Local Bird Recorder)

Other (please specify).....

4. What did you find the most useful part(s) of today's course?

.....

5. Were there parts of the course you did not like? Why not?

.....

6. How could the course be improved?

.....

7. As a result of this course, do you think you will now take part in more bird surveys? Which ones?

Breeding Bird Survey ("BBS", BTO/ JNCC/ RSPB)

Bird Atlas 2007-2011 (BTO/ SOC/ BWI)

Bird Track Online (BTO/ RSPB/ BWI)

Garden Birdwatch ("GBW", paper or online)

Wetland Bird Survey ("WeBS", BTO/ WWT/ JNCC/ RSPB)

SOC Local Recording (sending birds to your Local Bird Recorder)

Other (please specify).....

8. Are there any reasons why you would not want to take part in BTO surveys?

.....

Thank you for your feedback

Appendix 9: Six Month Follow Up Questionnaire

BUILDING BIRD MONITORING IN SCOTLAND

BIRD SURVEY TASTER DAYS

Feed-back questionnaire for participants

We would find it extremely valuable to know whether you feel the course that you attended was useful, and whether it has persuaded you to get further involved with recording birds. The questions below should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will be of great help to us in planning future training opportunities for bird survey volunteers.

Training Course Date: Saturday 14 March

Training Course Location: SNH Newton Stewart

Training Course Content: WeBS, BBS, Bird Atlas and Nest Record Scheme

Name of participant:

1. Which, if any, of the following types of bird recording did you take part in BEFORE ATTENDING the course above (highlight all that apply)?

- Breeding Bird Survey ('BBS', BTO/JNCC/RSPB)
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 (BTO/SOC/BWI)
- BirdTrack online (BTO/RSPB/BWI)
- Garden BirdWatch ('GBW', BTO project where you record each week)
- RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (once a year)
- Wetland Bird Survey ('WeBS', BTO/WWT/JNCC/RSPB)
- SOC local recording (sending records to your Local Bird Recorder)
- Recording your own personalised bird records/lists
- Species Specific Surveys (e.g. winter plovers, winter gulls)
- Other (please specify)

2. Which, if any, of the following types of bird recording have you started taking part SINCE ATTENDING the course above (please highlight all that apply)?

- Breeding Bird Survey ('BBS', BTO/JNCC/RSPB)
- Bird Atlas 2007-11 (BTO/SOC/BWI)
- BirdTrack online (BTO/RSPB/BWI)
- Garden BirdWatch ('GBW', paper or online)
- Wetland Bird Survey ('WeBS', BTO/WWT/JNCC/RSPB)
- SOC local recording (sending records to your Local Bird Recorder)
- Increased existing survey work (e.g. more squares)
- Other (please specify)
- None (please go straight to question 4)*

3. If you have taken up some recording or agreed to do more since attending the course, how did the course help to persuade you to do this (please number all that apply, with the most important numbered one etc)?

- Improved my bird identification skills
- Improved my understanding of survey techniques
- Improved my confidence to take part
- Found out about a new survey that was suitable/appealed to me
- Found out why it was useful to take part/how my contribution would be valued
- None of these (please give your reason for starting recording):

.....

4. If you have NOT taken up any recording since attending the course, what is the reason (please number all that apply, with the most important numbered one etc)?

- I still feel my bird identification skills are not good enough
- I still feel my understanding of survey techniques is not good enough
- I still do not feel confident to take part
- I do not have time to do more than I do already
- I do not have transport available to get to survey areas
- I do not see how my contribution would be of value
- I do not know who to contact
- None of these (please give your main reason for not getting involved):

.....

5. Is there some extra training/support you feel would be useful, which would enable you to get more involved in bird recording work (please number all that apply, with the most important numbered one etc)?

- More guidance in bird identification (by sight)
- More guidance in bird identification (by sound)
- More guidance in bird survey techniques (please specify any particular survey of interest if known):

.....

More guidance in submitting bird records online (please specify any particular survey of interest if known):

Chance to go out with an experienced bird recorder and learn from them

More acknowledgement of the effort I put in (please specify what would help):

.....

Other (please specify)

6. What do you feel is your current birdwatching skill level (highlight one that applies)?

“Absolute beginner”: I cannot tell the difference between a Robin and a Blackbird.

“Garden or occasional birdwatcher”: I can tell a Blue Tit from a Great Tit but not a Rook from a Carrion Crow; I do not go birdwatching regularly.

“Regular birdwatcher”: I generally birdwatch at least once a month; I can identify many widespread Scottish birds by sight but not many by sound; I find it hard to identify some more difficult species e.g. to distinguish a Cormorant from a Shag or a Meadow Pipit from a Skylark.

“Average birdwatcher”: I generally birdwatch at least once a month; I can identify most widespread Scottish birds by sight, including the species above, but not all by sound; I might struggle on some difficult species e.g. separating a Meadow Pipit from a Tree Pipit or a Common Tern from an Arctic Tern, and most rarities.

- “Experienced birdwatcher”**: I generally birdwatch at least once a month; I can identify most common Scottish birds by sight and sound (including those above) and identify some rarer species.
- “Expert”**: I generally birdwatch at least once a month; I can identify almost all species that I am likely to encounter in Scotland by both sight and sound.

7. Please indicate your current level of activity (please highlight any that apply):

- I only watch garden birds regularly.
- I go out birdwatching occasionally
- I go out birdwatching at least once a month
- I watch birds/wildlife as part of another outdoor hobby (please specify)
- I watch birds/wildlife when out as part of my job (please specify)
- I do not currently watch birds/wildlife at all

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions: we greatly appreciate your help!

**BUILDING BIRD MONITORING
IN SCOTLAND**



BTO, SOC, SNH, The Gillman Trusts

Appendix 10: Volunteer Co-ordinators Questionnaire

BUILDING BIRD MONITORING IN SCOTLAND

BIRD SURVEY TASTER DAYS

Feedback Questionnaire for Volunteer Co-ordinators & Helpers

TASTER DAYS

1. Please could you tell me which taster day you were involved with? (I would be grateful if you could fill in a separate form for each taster day you attended).

2008

- Kinghorn, Fife
- WWT Caerlaverock, Dumfries
- Living Stones Hall, Kilmartin, Argyll
- Monkton Community Hall, Ayrshire

2009

- Newton Stewart
- Forvie Centre, Collieston, Aberdeenshire
- Stirling University
- Mugdock Country Park
- Chatelherault Country Park (April 2009)
- Harestanes Visitor Centre, Ancrum, Jedburgh
- Angus Glens Ranger Base, Angus
- SNH Headquarters, Great Glen House, Inverness
- Chatelherault Country Park (Oct 2009)
- Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire
- Battleby Centre, Perthshire

2010

- Loch of Skene, Dunecht Estate, Aberdeenshire

COURSE MATERIALS

2. What course materials were provided on the day?

- Programme
- Printed copies of presentations
- ID Sheets/Charts
- Survey literature
- BTO/SOC Membership forms
- Other BTO/SOC literature
- Bird Song CDs
- Contact information for Regional Reps, Local Organisers, etc.
- Other (please specify)

2. Do you think the course materials provided were adequate?

Yes No (GO TO QU. 3)

3. What other course materials do you think could have been provided?

- Programme
- Printed copies of presentations
- ID Sheets/Charts
- Survey literature
- BTO/SOC Membership forms
- Other BTO/SOC literature
- Bird Song CDs
- Contact information for Regional Reps, Local Organisers, etc.
- Other (please specify)

STRUCTURE OF DAY

4. Please provide your ratings for the following components of the taster days:

Explanation of survey methodologies:	More	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same amount	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less	<input type="checkbox"/>
I.D sessions:	More	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same amount	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of ID sessions:	Too basic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Too advanced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Out-door sessions:	More	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same amount	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less	<input type="checkbox"/>
Results submission demonstration:	More	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same amount	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less	<input type="checkbox"/>

Would advice on equipment (e.g. binoculars and bird id books) be helpful?

Yes No

If you have any further comments on the structure of the course please make them below:

.....

.....

VENUE/SITES

5. Was the venue suitable for the course? Yes No

Were the catering and other facilities suitable? Yes No

Were the sites for the outdoor sessions suitable? Yes No

If you have any further comments on the course venue/sites please make them below:

.....

.....

FEEDBACK

6. Overall, do you think participants found the taster day worthwhile? Yes No
 Do you think the feedback forms were useful? Yes No
 Would you add/change anything on the feedback forms? Yes No

If you have any further comments on the feedback please make them below:

.....

7. Do you think the taster days were more appropriate for:

- People new to bird surveying Existing bird surveyors Both

Further comments:

.....

8. Do you have any suggestions (not already mentioned) as to how we can convert intention into actual commitment?

.....

MENTORING

A significant proportion of attendees cited lack of knowledge or confidence in their abilities as reasons for not surveying.

9. Do you think that mentoring sessions (being taken out by an experienced surveyor) would encourage inexperienced individuals to take up their own surveys?

- Yes No

10. Would you be willing to organise / participate in mentoring keen beginners?

- Yes No

11. If you are unable to participate, do you know of anyone in your patch who may be willing to take part in a mentoring scheme?

- Yes No

Details:

MARKETING/ADVERTISING

12. Do you know of any marketing/advertising opportunities that could be used to promote future events?

Yes No

Comments:

.....
.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your comments are not only important for our evaluation of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, they will also help us decide the best way forward for recruiting bird surveyors in the future.

With Best Wishes

Mandy

Mandy Cook
Development Co-ordinator
BTO Scotland

March 2010

Appendix 11: The breakdown of take up of new surveys per region.

Region	Number of participants who took up one or more new survey(s)
Aberdeen	5
Angus	2
Argyll	1
Ayrshire	3
Borders	2
Central	5
Dumfries-shire	7
Fife	9
Inverness	4
Kincardineshire	1
Kirkcudbrightshire	1
Lanarkshire	1
Lothians	4
Moray	0
Perthshire	3
Ross-shire	1
Wigtownshire	1

 **BTO regions where there is a recognised need for a greatly enhanced pool of volunteers.**

Appendix 12: The number of participants who indicated they would sign up to particular surveys following BBMS training events , according to their birding skill levels. (Source: On-the-day questionnaire; 289 respondents)

12a) According to birding skill level of participants

	Survey*								
	Bird Atlas	BBS	BirdTrack	GBW	WeBS	Other	None	Will probably do a survey	Yes – not specified
Birding Skills									
Experienced	2	1	3	1	4	11	3	0	16
Can identify most common species	30	12	22	25	23	21	4	6	33
Starting out	7	1	5	12	9	4	4	2	10
Not specified	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Total	41	14	30	39	37	36	12	8	59

12b) According to level of survey experience of participants

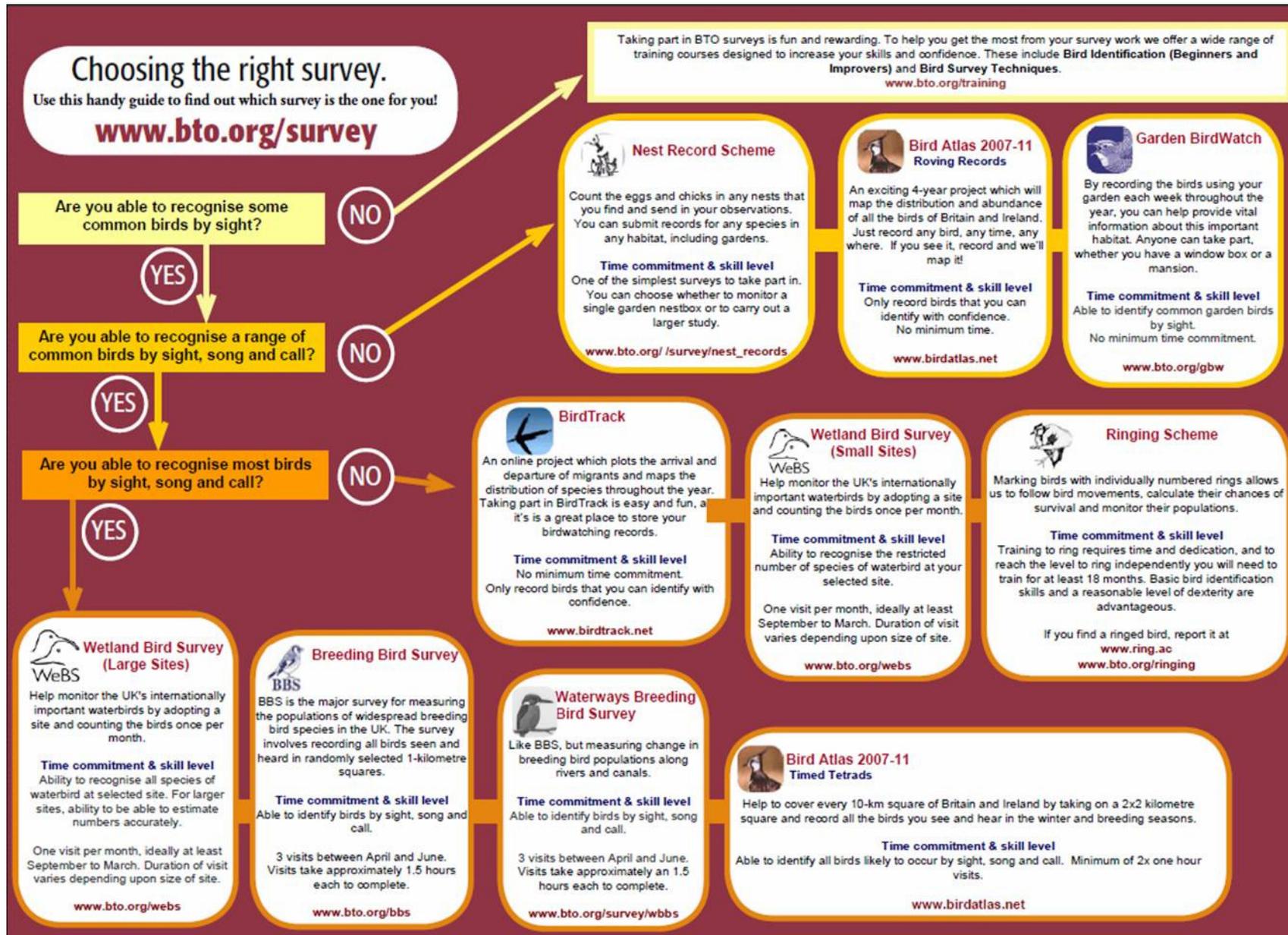
	Survey*								
	Bird Atlas	BBS	BirdTrack	GBW	WeBS	Other	None	Will probably do a survey	Yes – not specified
Survey Experience Levels									
New to bird surveying	9	4	12	26	6	8	7	3	24
Already doing at least one survey	32	10	18	13	31	28	5	5	35
Total	41	14	30	39	37	36	12	8	59

* Note that respondents could select more than one survey.

Appendix 13: The take up of new surveys per ‘taster day’ according to the previous survey experience of participants. (Source: BTO Membership Database; 303 participants)

Event	Date	Number of participants with previous survey experience	Number of participants with no previous survey experience	Number of participants who took up one or more new survey(s)
Regional Representative led				
Kinghorn, Fife	22/03/08	12 (80%)	3	7 (47%)
Caerlaverock, Dumfries	27/09/08	19 (83%)	4	8 (35%)
Monkton, Ayrshire	08/11/08	8 (62%)	5	2 (15%)
Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire	14/03/09	7 (50%)	7	1 (7%)
Collieston, Aberdeenshire	22/03/09	10 (56%)	8	5 (28%)
Mugdock, East Dunbartonshire	18/04/09	1 (13%)	7	2 (25%)
Ancrum, Jedburgh, Roxburghshire	10/05/09	10 (45%)	12	5 (23%)
Angus Glens, Angus	16/05/09	4 (29%)	10	0
Beginners				
Stirling University, Stirlingshire	28/03/09	10 (33%)	20	2 (7%)
Chatelherault Country Park, Lanarkshire (Spring)	26/04/09	2 (8%)	22	0
Chatelherault Country Park, Lanarkshire (Autumn)	24/10/09	5 (24%)	16	2 (10%)
Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	08/11/09	2 (18%)	9	4 (36%)
Battleby Centre, Perthshire	21/11/09	10 (59%)	7	4 (26%)
Specialist				
Atholl Estate - Landowners & Land Managers	04/03/09	1 (8%)	11	1 (8%)
Glencoe – Hillwalkers	09/05/09	3 (14%)	19	5 (23%)
Inverness – existing bird surveyors	26/09/09	23 (59%)	16	5 (13%)

Appendix 14: Choosing the right survey – *Birds in View 2010*



**Appendix 15: The ways in which participants heard about the BBMS training days.
(Source: On-the-day questionnaires)**

How participants heard about the training days	% of Participants
From a friend or colleague	13.8
Direct email from BTO Scotland	13.4
From SOC	9.4
Direct mailing from BTO	8.3
BTO website	7.7
Other organisations' newsletters/magazines	6.3
Employer	4.9
BTO News	3.3
From the internet (site not specified)	3.3
Other source (not specified)	3.1
RSPB	2.4
Local council	2.4
From BTO	2.1
BTO Garden BirdWatch 'Birdtable' magazine	1.8
BTO staff	1.1
Existing BTO volunteer	0.7
Newspaper article	0.3
No source given	13.8