

Birds in view

2008



Photo: Tommy Holden

Welcome to *Birds in View*

How much pleasure do birds give us? There's nothing like a glimpse of a rare bird or even a close encounter of a common garden species to make us feel alive. Whether your every spare minute is taken up with bird surveys or you've never even considered taking part, we hope you'll be inspired by *Birds in View*.

We'll be giving you the lowdown on getting out and about recording birds in Scotland. Inside we'll be offering training opportunities, giving insights into how your records are being used and above all, showing how much fun volunteers are having. In particular you'll read about a volunteer who is

recording birds for a bird atlas project in the dramatic scenery of Skye; you'll find out how your records are helping us understand how Kestrels and Great Spotted Woodpeckers are doing; and you'll hear how a volunteer got on at a Bird Survey 'Taster' Day.

Scotland's birds should be receiving more attention thanks to funding from Scottish Natural Heritage, The Gillman Trusts, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. The Bird Atlas (see pages 5-6) will be the main focus of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, attracting volunteers of all skill and experience levels into a variety of bird recording projects. We hope that this will benefit a range of bird recording schemes and ultimately our understanding of birds in Scotland.

If you are already an active bird survey volunteer then we hope you'll get a warm rosy glow reading this newsletter! Thanks again for all your support. Perhaps you could encourage someone you know to get involved by passing on this newsletter.

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



Photo: Andrew Macaulay

Why Record Birds?

“Volunteers are in the driving seat of bird monitoring in the UK”. These were the words of the previous Breeding Bird Survey Organiser, Mike Raven, during a BBC radio interview. It’s quite a claim, but you could go even further. You could say that volunteers are influencing government policy. That they are helping to shape the nation’s conservation priorities and the way the countryside is managed.

Through the efforts of volunteers, the bird populations of the British Isles have been monitored more effectively and for longer than those of most other parts of the world. This has produced a uniquely rich and detailed body of scientific work and engaged thousands of people in ‘hands on’ research.

Highlighting Problems

It is now well known that a whole host of farmland birds have been in trouble for the last few decades. Yet without the work of volunteers, this quietening of the countryside may have gone unnoticed for a lot longer. See the box on “The Farmland Bird Story”. We are now seeing a similar, but more complex decline in our woodland birds.

Piecing the Puzzle Together

Meanwhile in our gardens volunteers told us that bird declines were not restricted to the countryside. Volunteers taking part in Garden BirdWatch were the first to notice that six million House Sparrows had disappeared from Britain since the 1960s. This sparked an appeal to look into the reasons for the decline.

Studying birds in Scotland has shown us that they sometimes show quite different patterns from birds in the rest of the UK. The latest results from the Breeding Bird Survey show that many birds are faring better in Scotland than they are south of the border. Cuckoo, Treecreeper, House Sparrow and House Martin are the most significant examples, the latter showing a staggering increase of 152% whilst House Martins in England have remained stable since 1994. There are clearly different factors acting on these populations.

By understanding the reason for these differences it may be that we can help House Martins in the rest of the UK.

Local Bird Recording

Bird records submitted by individuals and research projects are fed into the Local Recorders Network. With increasing cooperation between fieldworkers, local bird reports are becoming a primary source of bird information in Scotland.

The Local Recorders each hold a database of bird records: a valuable archive of local bird information with numerous uses. Firstly, these records are the main source of information for the published local bird reports. These reports are further distilled to produce the annual Scottish Bird Report.

The records are also used in planning and conservation issues and analysis of population trends. Great care is taken to ensure that the information provided on rare or sensitive species is managed securely, and special procedures are in place to ensure that information is only made available to those with a genuine need.

If you’d like to submit records to your local recorder go to www.the-soc.org.uk/soc-recorders or contact the Scottish Ornithologists’ Club. (See back cover.)

Targeting Action

Volunteers are also in the driving seat of resource allocation. Bird records are currently being used to produce maps of farmland and woodland birds of conservation concern so that European Union agri-environment schemes can focus resources where they will be most effective. The Bird Conservation Targeting project (a partnership between BTO, RSPB, government agencies and others) uses records from the online bird recording project BirdTrack, from local bird clubs and other sources. Any records now entered into BirdTrack in Scotland will now be used to produce maps of Scottish species of conservation concern. For more information see www.birdtrack.net.

Driving Conservation Priorities

Government agencies, conservation organisations and other bodies rely on information discovered through volunteer surveys to set conservation priorities. This means that conservation and management decisions are guided by sound scientific evidence. Each year, these records are fed into “The State of the UK’s Birds” report - a one-stop shop of important bird population changes. See www.bto.org/research/pop_trends/state_uk_birds.htm



The Limits

For all that we do know about our birds, there’s a lot more that we’d like to know. How do garden birds in western Scotland compare with those in the east? We don’t currently have enough Garden BirdWatchers to be able to produce this kind of information. We’re not currently able to produce Scottish trends for declining and vulnerable species such as Grey Partridge, Dipper, Spotted Flycatcher and Tree Pipit. Just a few more Breeding Bird Survey volunteers in key survey squares would enable us to do this.

Vacancies in the Driving Seat

Do you fancy jumping into the driving seat? Would you like to get out more, go to new places and learn more about birds? There are a variety of surveys in which you can get involved. Some, like the Breeding Bird Survey take fewer than 10 hours a year; others such as Garden BirdWatch require little more than making a weekly note of the birds (and optionally other wildlife) in your garden.

If you’d like to get involved, but feel you don’t have the skills or confidence, come along to one of our survey ‘taster’ workshops. Local training events for volunteers will be laid on in selected parts of the country for those who’re new to bird recording or would like to brush up on their skills. (See page 8).

Contact BTO Scotland for other ideas of ways to get involved. Contact details are on the back cover.

The Farmland Bird Story

Volunteers helping to record birds have had a dramatic impact on our understanding of the countryside. Between the first and second atlases of breeding birds in Britain and Ireland (essentially 1970 to 1990) it was clear that something was wrong with our farmland birds – many species had worrying contractions in their distributions. In the face of this and other startling evidence of widespread declines in farmland birds (gathered by “citizen scientists” – ordinary people like you and I) the government took decisive action. An ambitious Public Service Agreement aimed to reduce the decline in farmland birds by the year 2020. Progress is monitored every year, using the results of the Breeding Bird Survey to produce population trends for groups of birds, such as farmland and woodland species. The farmland bird indicator is also known as the “Skylark” or “Happiness” index: wise of the government to see how our happiness is linked to encounters with nature. As a result, funding became available to look more closely into the reasons for these declines. Through it we’ve learned that recent declines in Skylarks are most likely due to the change to autumn sowing of cereals which restricts the opportunities for late season nesting attempts. Yellowhammers are believed to be suffering from the lack of winter seed availability as a result of agricultural intensification. Funding has also been made available to encourage specific wildlife-friendly management on farms.

How will the story end for farmland birds? Bird survey volunteers like us, will give the answer to that in just a few years’ time. When Bird Atlas 2007-11 is complete, the new maps of farmland bird distribution will give us the definitive answer on how well we’ve been able to manage the countryside for these species. Will we have learned from previous experiences?



Photo: Jill Pakenham

Tales from the field:

A bad step on the "Misty Isle"

Bob McMillan (pictured right), BTO Regional Representative and Bird Atlas Organiser for Skye, does his bird recording for the Atlas in a dramatic setting...

In gaelic the island of Skye is known as Eilean a 'Cheo or the Misty Isle. This is a unique and harsh environment where all forms of wildlife struggle to survive in a landscape dominated by glaciation-scoured rock, and weathered by exposure to extreme conditions. In terms of birds it is home to a limited range of species, the highlight of which is a Special Protection Area for Golden Eagle. An interesting, but challenging area for 'atlasing'.

Living in Elgol, it made sense to choose Atlas tetrads (two-by-two kilometre squares) which could be linked by logical transects taking into account topography and a reasonable risk assessment. Two such tetrads were accessible by the coastal path from Elgol to Camasunary, then on to Loch Coruisk via the notorious 'bad step' – probably the most spectacular coastal walk in the country. The adjacent tetrad includes the beautiful beach at Camasunary and the peak of Sgurr na Stri, a significant lump of rock. The plan on this brilliant May day was to do a transect through Glen Scaladal, on to the coastal path to Camasunary, then continue along the increasingly difficult path at the foot of Sgurr na Stri, out over the 'bad step' to Loch Coruisk and a journey home up Loch Scavaig via the Misty Isle boat.

My first record of note was the call of a scolding Greenshank, a species which continues to expand its range on the island. The only other waders recorded were several territorial Snipe and a single Golden Plover. An adult Golden Eagle was glimpsed briefly quartering the shoulder of Beinn Leacach.

Because of its position, the bay at Camasunary picks up migrant waders. On this visit there was a group of seven summer-plumage Dunlin, several display fighting with one pair mating. A solitary Shelduck probably had a mate on eggs and other wildfowl included Mallard, Eider and Red-breasted Merganser. Back on the coastal path, there was a Great Northern Diver on the sea, looking majestic in its full breeding plumage. As the coastal path became more demanding and the bare rock of Sgurr na Stri towered above me, so the numbers of birds petered out. I left the tetrad and headed for the 'bad step'.

It was into 'roving records' mode though there wasn't much 'roving'. The path becomes narrow and exposed and other than retracing your steps there is no escape. The Bad Step is an enormous rock which makes the journey in to Loch Coruisk along the shore of Loch Scavaig fairly hazardous



for ordinary walkers. During the 1960s the Army proposed to blow it up, much to the dismay of mountaineers who regarded it as the symbolic guardian of the inner secrets of Loch Coruisk. Common sense prevailed and the Bad Step remains, though its physical challenge is probably somewhat less than its reputation. Up and over, and along the shore there was a Stonechat family to welcome me. On the offshore islands Arctic Terns had only just returned whilst the Common Gull colony on the rocky islet in the loch was in full swing.

It had been a fantastic morning with majestic views and some good birds. The joys of atlasing on Skye - once described not as a place, but an intoxication!

See pages 5 to 6 for more about the Bird Atlas. For information about Skye, or if you'd like to contact Bob and do some bird recording there go to www.skye-birds.com. See www.birdatlas.net for contact details of Atlas Regional Organisers in other exciting and remote parts of Scotland.

Mapping the nation's birds:

Bird Atlas 2007-11

Part of any visit to the countryside involves birdlife. Whether it is a Skylark singing high above you in spring or a young Buzzard calling for food in late summer, all such sights and sounds add to that day out in the countryside.

Now there is an opportunity to officially record your bird sightings and in doing so, make a huge contribution to the overall understanding of our birdlife. It doesn't matter where you are in Britain or Ireland: in the countryside or the city, by a river or on a mountaintop, sightings from anywhere can be submitted.

Bird Atlas 2007-11 is a huge project that will map the distribution and relative abundance of birds in Britain and Ireland during both the breeding (April – July) and winter (November – February) seasons. It is going to be fascinating to see how bird populations have altered over the last 20 or so years since the last atlases were produced.

Are farmland birds such as Grey Partridge still disappearing? Are Nuthatches spreading further north due to climatic warming? By contributing to the 2007-11 Bird Atlas you can help answer these questions.

Keeping a list of the birds you have positively identified and submitting them to the atlas project, will not only add interest to your day out, it will also assist our knowledge of our birds. The results from Bird Atlas 2007-11 will be used by conservation organisations and government agencies to prioritise projects and campaigns over the coming years.

See www.birdatlas.net for more details.

Photo: Edward Charles Photography



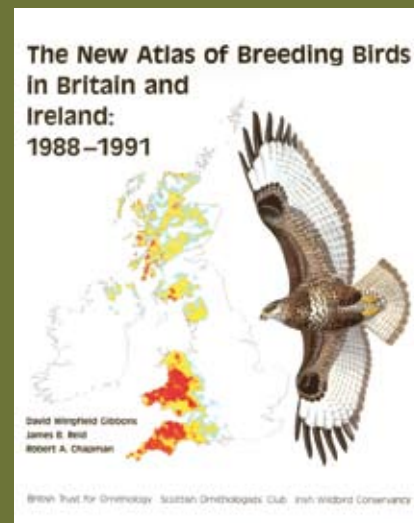
The Corn Bunting is one farmland bird which showed drastic range contractions in the two decades between the first and second breeding atlases.

Each dot on the map shows where there was a change in Corn Buntings between the two breeding atlases. A black dot shows where they were lost and orange dots show where there were gains.

What will Bird Atlas 2007-11 show?



What is a bird atlas?



Bird atlases are important tools for understanding our bird populations. A series of maps based on the Ordnance Survey grid system, showing bird distribution, which can be local, national or even international in scale. The first ever bird Atlas was of the breeding birds of the West Midlands from 1966-1968. It was entirely the work of volunteers, independent of any national organisation or charity.

Despite many saying it could not be done, the first ever national breeding atlas was published not long after, covering the breeding seasons from 1968 to 1972. The idea has been copied around the world ever since.

The British Trust for Ornithology, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and BirdWatch Ireland (formerly Ireland Wildbird Conservancy) have worked in partnership to produce another two atlases since then. The second was groundbreaking in that it was of wintering birds (from 1981 to 1984). The most recent (pictured above) showed many dramatic changes in the distribution of our birds.

The current Bird Atlas 2007-11 is a vital opportunity to cover all species and all parts of the country in both winter and breeding season. It will reach places that other surveys don't. As well as showing bird distribution, Bird Atlas will also show relative abundance and indicate evidence of breeding.

The sceptics out there still claim that it can't be done. Certainly there are some very remote and unpopulated parts of the country that will be a real challenge to cover. See over about getting involved to help prove the sceptics wrong!

A year of changing birdlife



Bob Swann (left), Scottish Atlas Organiser, tells us about his discoveries one year into this exciting project...

As Scottish Organiser for the Bird Atlas, I have had the pleasure of recording birds in the remoter areas of Ross-shire and Sutherland. This has given me an insight to some of the changes in bird distribution being captured by the current atlas project.

The map of Stonechat distribution in the original 1981-84 winter atlas, shows them very thinly distributed throughout inland areas of Scotland. Most were found along the coasts, particularly in the west. This situation has now changed markedly. During my fieldwork I was finding ones and twos scattered up and down virtually every strath and glen, often present at fairly high altitudes. This pattern was mirrored by other Atlas volunteers throughout Scotland. Presumably milder winters are now allowing Stonechats to winter closer to their upland breeding grounds.

On my survey visits I tended to have a wee peek into every abandoned croft house or old barn I passed. To my astonishment, in virtually every one, even in quite remote areas, I found large black pellets and lots of fresh owl droppings and on most occasions disturbed the roosting Barn Owl that had deposited them. During the previous winter atlas this species was very scarce north of the Central Belt. They now appear to have spread right up to the far north of Sutherland, again no doubt benefiting from milder winters and conservation campaigns.

I revisited most of these areas during the April to July breeding season and can confirm that both Stonechat and Barn Owl are now equally widespread during the breeding season. Other species are also spreading, most notably Nuthatch which appear to be widespread throughout many parts of southern Scotland, according to current records. Unfortunately this happy situation does not apply to all species. I have struggled to find some typical upland birds such as Twite and Ring Ouzel. Breeding Redshank appear to have almost totally disappeared from wetland areas throughout many parts of Scotland. Black-headed Gulls, once widespread breeders on small lochs and marshes, have completely vanished as breeders from huge areas of the country. Kestrels are now no longer our commonest raptor. Summer visitors such as Wood Warbler and Whinchat are now quite difficult to find in areas where they were common during the 88-91 breeding atlas. These are worrying trends.

With your help as more survey work is done, covering more squares, over the next three years of the project we will get a better idea of the full extent of these changes and in future will be able to concentrate research on the species that appear to be in most trouble.

Bird Atlas 2007-11 is a massive undertaking, covering every 10 kilometre square in Britain and the whole of Ireland. An estimated 30,000 birdwatchers will be needed to make the project a success.

From 1st November, make a note of every species you see when you are out in the countryside and use your Ordnance Survey map to record which 10-km square you are in. Every record counts and the data can easily be submitted online by visiting **www.birdatlas.net**, logging in and clicking on submit Roving Records (where a Google map will also help you locate your 10-km square) or more traditionally on a paper Roving Records form which can be obtained from The Atlas Co-ordinator, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU. Or contact Bob Swann in Scotland at scotatlas@bto.org or 07919 378876.

N.B. Volunteering for the atlas should come with a health warning: atlasing can be addictive!

More tales from the field:

The wilder side of Breeding Bird Survey



Photo: Ben Darvill



Photo: Helen Darvill

Breeding Bird Survey Volunteer and Director of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Ben Darvill, does his BBS square on the wild side...

I fumbled with the tent zip and poked my head outside. It was 5:15am (I'm *not* a morning person!), but it was already light, and my bleary eyes slowly brought

the surroundings into focus. There was a chill in the air, but the sky was clear and the flanks of Stùc a Chroin were tinged red by the promise of sunrise – it was going to be a beautiful morning.

Some months previously, when the BTO had first suggested the Breeding Bird Survey, I'd been quick to ask for a remote survey site. I'd read that mountain habitats were under-recorded, and I was keen to do my bit to help. So there I was, warm inside my sleeping bag, camped amongst the heather beside a gurgling burn in the middle of nowhere. A Wren sang from the crags behind me, and industrious bumblebees were already buzzing around the tent – it was time to get up.

Of course I could have just walked in from the nearest road that morning, but as I washed my face in the sparkling stream I was pleased with my decision. There's something very special about wild camping – a magical feeling of earthy solitude. I had the whole valley to myself, save for the Red Deer grazing high on the slopes of Ben Vorlich, their breath fire-lit by the rising sun.

With the tent packed up and unobtrusively stowed, I set about the survey itself – a gentle stroll through heathland and alongside the stream. Meadow Pipits seemed to be doing well, and performed their charming parachute display flight all around me. A pair of Grey Wagtails, and a Dipper graced the stream, which was alive with myriad insect life, small spotty trout and an energetic stripey dragonfly. Back on the heathland, and the transect finished with a real splash of colour, first from a vibrant Blaeberry Bumblebee (one of many species that are threatened by habitat loss), and finally from a pristine male Wheatear singing his resplendent heart out from atop a lichenous boulder.

It was a glorious morning that will live long in my memory. Everything is so fresh at that time of year, plumage colours, vegetation, scents and song – a real treat for the senses. The Breeding Bird Survey just helps you slow right down and take it all in. The forms are so easy to use that you have the freedom to enjoy a pleasant walk, but with the added bonus of knowing that you've contributed useful data to an important survey. I just can't wait for next year, to see how things have changed...

For more details about the Breeding Bird Survey go to www.bto.org/bbs or contact the BTO Scotland office. If you can identify most common birds by sight and sound (CD supplied to all new BBS volunteers) then you can take part. Only six hours of fieldwork a year is required... more if you want to camp overnight!

For more information about Bumblebee Conservation Trust go to www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk.

Get a taste for surveys and get out there



Photo: Mark Collier

Would you like to get out more, go to new places and learn more about birds? Recording birds is an ideal way to do this, yet many people feel they lack the skills to take part. You can get involved at different levels and training is available.

Thanks to the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, more training opportunities are on the horizon. We are offering a range of free local training courses around Scotland.

Whether you'd like to brush up on your skills or have never taken part, a 'Survey Taster Day' will give you more confidence. A variety of courses are on offer, covering different surveys or bird identification. There are even special days for gardeners and hillwalkers as well as landowners and staff. Please see the box below for details of what's available near you. Most courses combine time outdoors with classroom sessions. Once you have a hang of the basics there's the chance to go outside and put your new-found skills to the test, with the help of a friendly expert.

Survey Taster Days are free if you'd like to become a volunteer. Most start around 10am and finish around 4pm, but times vary. Places are strictly limited and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. Contact Robin Anderson (email robin.anderson@bto.org or phone 01786 466 560) to book a place.

Lunch will be provided. Outdoor clothing and strong boots will be required as each course will have a session outdoors (weather permitting). Bring binoculars if you have them.

Survey taster days near you

| Location | Date | Topics |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Caerlaverock WWT Reserve, Dumfries | Saturday 27th September | Wetland Bird Survey, Breeding Bird Survey, Bird Atlas and Nest Record Scheme |
| Ayrshire | End September/early October | Bird Atlas and Breeding Bird Survey |
| Living Stones Hall, Kilmartin, Argyll | Saturday 11th October | Bird Atlas and Breeding Bird Survey |
| Highland Region | February/March 2009 | Bird recording for hillwalkers |
| Atholl Estates, Perthshire | February/March 2009 | Bird recording for landowners and staff |
| SNH, Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire | Saturday 14th March 2009 | Bird Atlas, Breeding Bird Survey, Wetland Bird Survey and Nest Record Scheme |
| Stirling University, Central Scotland | Saturday 28th March | Breeding Bird Survey, Bird Atlas, Bird ID and Bird Song |
| Mugdock Country Park, Lanarkshire | Saturday 25th April, early morning | Bird Song |
| Angus Glen Ranger Base, Angus | Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th April | Bird ID, Bird Atlas, Wetland Breeding Bird Survey and Bird Ringing |
| Sands Ranger Base, Caithness | Spring 2009 | Bird ID and Bird Song |
| Aberdeen or Kincardine | Spring 2009 | Bird Atlas (possibly some Breeding Bird Survey) |
| Stirling University | Spring 2009 | Nest Record Scheme |
| Harestanes Visitor Centre, Borders | Mid-late May 2009 | Bird Atlas, Breeding Bird Survey |

My bird survey 'taster' day

Howard Wix (pictured second left) took part in the first 'Bird Survey Taster Day' in the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project. He tells how it was...

After struggling to juggle my work commitments I was pleased to be squeezed in on the first "Fife Training Day". At 6' 4" and 16st this is no mean feat.

Upon arrival I met several familiar faces from the Fife Bird Club, SOC Fife Branch and was made very welcome by the trainers, Norman Elkins the local BTO Regional Representative, Bob Swann the Scottish Atlas Organiser and Graeme Garner from BTO Scotland.

It's only been in the last few years that I've become a keen birder. I was looking forward to an interesting and rewarding day eager to develop my practical fieldwork skills. Prior to attending the course my surveying was limited to one year of the Breeding Bird Survey and three winter Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs) for the Bird Atlas 2007-11.

Starting with an introduction and overview of the Bird Atlas the day was quickly underway with fieldwork guidelines and answering questions. Evidently the group had differing skill levels in both fieldwork and computer literacy, so it was reassuring to feel as though I was not out of my depth.

Both fieldwork sessions were particularly useful, helping me to focus on defining habitats and relating that to the birds likely to be present. Being outside on a fine day following

the TTV route we had planned was great fun. With lively discussions covering a variety of topics I think everyone learnt something. The sense of enjoyment was certainly very apparent with Bob having a good "pish" on a couple of occasions! No, he didn't need to take a leak - he was mimicking bird sounds to draw them in!

An excellent lunch was followed by an interactive discussion and reporting of results on website. This I felt demonstrated the ease with which records can be submitted on line, with the ability to print off a map of the exact TTV required an extremely valuable tool.

Other bird surveys were also discussed including BBS, Bird Track and the Nest Record Scheme. That there is always a lot of hard work being carried out by BTO staff and volunteers was very clear and a valuable contribution can certainly be made by us all.

I thought I knew my patch pretty well as I had spent three years recording all sightings and covered a lot of ground. However, since starting survey work on Bird Atlas 2007-11, I have discovered some fantastic birds in hither to overlooked places. Including Green Sandpiper, Teal and Merlin only minutes from my door with an Osprey recently added. With several local TTVs completed I'm now looking forward to surveying entirely new areas next winter and hope they reveal their secrets to me as the seasons unfold.



Birds in Focus

What happens to our hard-earned records? Taking findings from a variety of bird surveys carried out by volunteers, we highlight a few insights below.

Kestrel

Kestrels have had a bit of a roller-coaster ride of late. They recovered well from severe organo-chlorine pesticides impacts in the 1980s, and became a common sight hovering over our motorway verges. However, records sent in from Breeding Bird Survey and Nest Record Scheme volunteers show that the Kestrel's troubles may not yet be over. According to the BBS, the Kestrel has declined by 56% in Scotland since 1994. Results from the Nest Record Scheme indicate that there are hard times to come with Kestrels now tending to have broods of only three or four, where they've previously had broods of five or even six.



Photo: Jill Pakenham

A formerly common sight: a hovering Kestrel

Great Spotted Woodpecker

The number of Great Spotted Woodpeckers has doubled since 1994. The Bird Atlas is already showing a northwards expansion in their range.

Traditionally birds of broad-leaved woodland, Great Spotted Woodpeckers have made good use of food provided in gardens. A special one-off survey, in conjunction with Radio 4's "Shared Earth" series was launched in summer 2006 to investigate this further.

A very interesting pattern emerged showing how young woodpeckers use garden feeding stations. During the early part of the summer young birds tend to be accompanied by one of their parents, but as the season progresses, the youngsters are more likely to arrive unaccompanied. It appears that, as the young become more independent they are left to return on their own.

The results of the survey confirmed that provision of food, especially peanuts, is a good way of attracting these exotic looking birds.



Photo: Jill Pakenham

An adult male woodpecker (right) accompanies a juvenile (left) to a garden peanut feeder

Can you help us increase volunteers?

In case you hadn't noticed, the aim of this newsletter is to encourage you to get out and about recording birds in Scotland! This is all part of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project. The following tools are also available to increase bird monitoring. Please contact us if you'd like any support in promoting bird recording.

Leaflets

In this newsletter you should find a leaflet which explains just how simple it is to take part in Bird Atlas 2007-11. We are appealing to anyone who's out and about to let us know what birds they're seeing: farmers, fishermen, hillwalkers, estate staff, even someone visiting their local park or walking the dog.

If you're already taking part - thank you so much for your help! Please consider passing the leaflet on to someone you know who may be interested. If you would like to display leaflets somewhere that potential Atlas volunteers may see them, then please let BTO Scotland know how many you would like (details on the back cover).

The production of these leaflets has been funded by the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project. See back cover for details. Look out for more leaflets about taking part in bird recording in Scotland.



Speakers



Speakers are available to come and give talks about how fun, rewarding and worthwhile bird recording can be. We're happy to give talks to any group who may have potential bird survey volunteers in the audience. So if you're a member of a gardening club, hillwalking group, local bird or wildlife club, or any other group, please get in touch with BTO Scotland, to check if a speaker might be available to come and chat to your group.



Articles

We can also offer articles and images about any aspect of recording birds for your club newsletters. Perhaps you'd like an article about how to take part in the Bird Atlas, or encouraging your readers to come along to a training course. We can provide accompanying images to illustrate these articles. Please do get in touch if we can help in any of these ways.

BUILDING BIRD MONITORING IN SCOTLAND

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



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

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

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

Tel: 01875 871 330 Fax: 01875 871 035
Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk www.the-soc.org.uk



The Gillman Trusts

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

Breeding Bird Survey - the primary scheme for monitoring the UK's common and widespread species. A partnership between British Trust for Ornithology, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB).

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

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

Garden BirdWatch - the largest year-round study of garden birds in the world. Run by BTO.

Local Bird Recording - gathers bird records through the Local Recorders Network. Run by SOC.

Nest Record Scheme - gathers vital information on the productivity of the UK's birds. Run by BTO.

Wetland Bird Survey - the scheme which monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. A partnership between BTO, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, RSPB and JNCC.