



BIRD CAMPS 2026



NORTHERN IRELAND • ENGLAND • WALES •
SCOTLAND (IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SOC)



ABOUT BTO YOUTH

BTO Youth is the youth branch of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). BTO is a UK charity focusing on understanding birds and, in particular, how and why bird populations are changing. The core of the organisation focuses on the intersection of these three pillars: Birds, Science, People. Our Youth programme aims to engage young people with nature and science in a safe, inclusive and accessible way.



WHY JOIN CAMP?

Our Bird Camps are a great way to get started on your journey with birdwatching, or to develop your skills if you are already a budding ornithologist. You will meet a group of like-minded young people with an interest in nature, birds and science, and you will meet a range of staff and volunteers from the BTO and our partners. Our camp programme includes lots of different activities, focusing (of course!) on birds, but also on art, mindfulness, and answering scientific questions.



THE CAMPS

BTO runs Bird Camps in every country of the UK: one in Northern Ireland (10-12 April - County Derry / Londonderry), two in England (1-3 May - Lancashire) & (17-19 July - Dorset), and one in Wales (19-21 June - Pembrokeshire). In Scotland we are working in partnership with our friends at the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) for a fifth on Colonsay Island (22-25 May).

Camps run from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon - with the exception of Scotland (Friday to Monday) - and are all-inclusive. We also provide transport options, and can help with equipment if you don't have everything.

Each of the camps will follow a similar itinerary, although this will vary based on location and the weather. A more detailed itinerary will be shared with successful camp applicants closer to the time.

Friday: (Late afternoon) Arrival at camp, getting to know each other, health & safety, evening activity and introduction to bat identification or our nature-inspired arts activity.

Saturday: Day-trip to local nature reserve(s), learning about BTO surveys and bird identification, mindfulness, creative workshop, evening activity (e.g. campfire, looking for bats or stargazing).

Sunday: Morning activity (weather-permitting), learning to identify birds by song, final presentations & pledges.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for Scotland, please [visit the SOC website](#) and to access the form, which will be live very soon. For all other camps, follow the instructions on the [online application form](#)! If you need any help with your application, email us, or join one of our Q&A sessions. We'll ask you why you want to come to camp, what you hope to learn, and to tell us a bit about your favourite green space, plant or animal. **Note that you can't save progress on the form, so make sure you've got your answers ready.** If you are successful, you and a parent/guardian will have to attend a **mandatory zoom call** prior to camp.

We have three application deadlines to consider:

Northern Ireland and England (Lancashire) - **1st March**

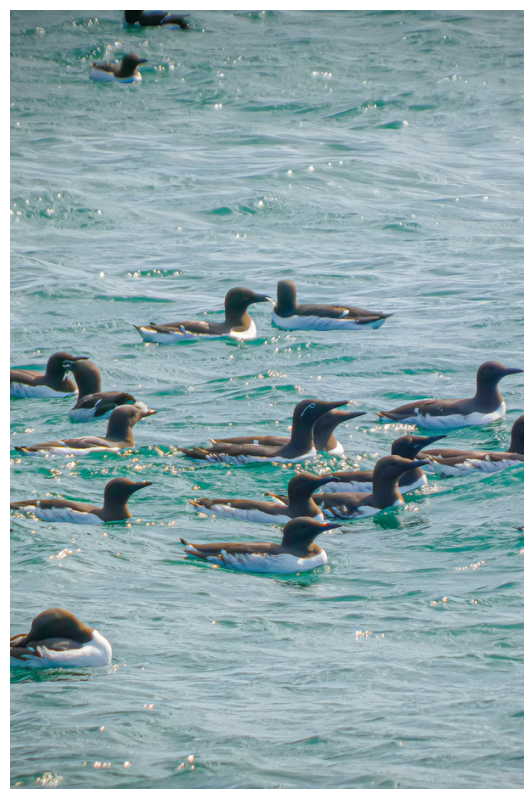
Scotland (Colonsay Island) - **29th March**

Wales and England (Dorset) - **10th May**

WHO CAN CAMP?

Our camps are open to young people, resident in the UK, who are:

- At the time of camp, in secondary school or college and **under 18 years old (11-17). Scotland is 12-16.**
- Enthusiastic about nature (but you do **not** have to be an expert!)



WHERE ARE THE CAMPS?



10-12 April

NORTHERN IRELAND

Magherafelt

in partnership with



22-25 May

SCOTLAND*

Colonsay Island



01-03 May

ENGLAND

Borwick



19-21 June

WALES

Stackpole



17-19 July

ENGLAND

Swanage

*to apply for Scotland, [visit the SOC website](#).



COST + EQUIPMENT

All Bird Camps are completely **free** of charge. We do this because it is important to us to make our camps accessible to any young person. However, if you are financially able to support us in running our camps, we always welcome donations.

You will receive a full packing list before going on camp, but a key piece of equipment for Bird Camp is binoculars. If you don't have a pair, let us know in your application so we can lend you some, or you can apply for our [Equipment Donation Scheme](#). If you apply, let us know which Bird Camp you're attending.

GETTING TO CAMP

Our camps take place near nature reserves and green spaces, and may not be accessible by public transport. To help you get there, we'll be organising pick-ups from different cities near the camp, but you can also be dropped off directly at camp if you prefer, just let us know in your application form.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation at all camps will be shared indoor dormitories. Staff are fully DBS-checked (Disclosure Scotland and AccessNI-checked in Scotland and Northern Ireland, respectively) and trained in safeguarding. They will always be on site overnight and available to the campers.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding participants is of paramount importance to us. All of our staff and volunteers have completed safeguarding training and will be DBS/Disclosure Scotland/Access NI checked and cleared. A Designated Safeguarding Lead will be present at each camp. BTO's Safeguarding Policy can be found [on our website](#), including [BTO's Safeguarding Children Policy](#). You can also email our team for a copy of either at youth@bto.org. We will provide a full risk assessment before the start of camp, including a Safeguarding Children risk assessment.

ACCESSIBILITY

We are committed to making all Bird Camps as accessible as possible. Our ambition is to support all aspiring young birders and nature enthusiasts to participate in our camps if they wish to. If you have any accessibility requirements or concerns you would like to discuss, please email us at youth@bto.org.

INCLUSIVITY

We want our camps to be a safe space for all participants, and so we ask everyone to abide by our Code of Conduct which will be shared in advance. **You do not need to be an experienced "birder"** or have spent lots of time in nature to apply; we will create a balanced group of experienced and newer naturalists and birdwatchers. We especially welcome applications from young people from underrepresented groups.





PREVIOUS CAMPERS

To give you an idea of what to expect, some of our previous campers have said:

"It was the most amazing experience and one I will treasure forever! It has inspired me to express my passion more openly and talk to others and gave me loads of new knowledge to take forward! Thank you so much!!"

Anonymous, 15, Bird Camp England

"I really enjoyed the camp and the birding activities were really fun and interesting. All the staff were very friendly and approachable and made us all feel welcome regardless of ability - I will definitely be signing up again next year!"

Anonymous, 15, Bird Camp Wales

"The youth volunteers' knowledge was incredible. By the end of camp I was already a much better birder."

Tom, 13, Bird Camp England

"It was genuinely some of the best fun I've had in a long time and also finally getting to talk to people who share the same interest as me."

Anonymous, 16, Bird Camp Northern Ireland

"There is no judgment if you're still new to the birding world or if you're really experienced, you can still learn something new! I would say to anyone thinking of going to bird camp just to go for it!"

Mia, 14, Bird Camp Northern Ireland

"A buzz of excitement is continuous over the whole weekend, whether it be in the moment of seeing the birds themselves, the group discussions and games on the bus in between locations, the chatter at dinner, or the speculations in the tent about what may birds may be seen on the next day!"

Adam, 15, Bird Camp England

Images by: Alicia Hayden, Chris Marais, Emma Thornton, Jo Goodfellow, Pearse, Rachael Griffiths, Rosie Johnson, Samuel Levy, Theo.

All bird ringing (Imaged) is carried out under BTO license. Handling supported and completed by: Pembrokeeshire Ringing Group.