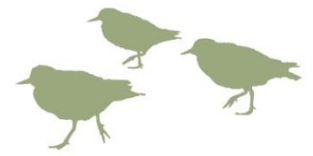


NEWS

Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey

INSTRUCTIONS



Please use the information on this sheet in conjunction with the instructions on the NEWS IV recording form.

When should the counts be made?

A *single* count of waterbirds (*i.e.* waders, wildfowl, divers, grebes, cormorants, shags, herons and egrets) on non-estuarine coasts should be made on any date between 1st December 2025 and 31st January 2026. However, ideally the counts should be made as close to mid-January as possible to coincide with the International Waterbird Census (18th January). **Counts should be made at any time within a 6 hour period commencing 3 hours before the advertised time of low water and finishing 3 hours after low water.** Ideally, adjoining sectors should be counted on the same day. If this is not possible, then counts on different dates are acceptable.

Supplementary counts

While only a single count during the low tide period is required for the primary objectives of the survey, we would welcome supplementary counts on other dates and at other stages of the tide cycle.

Where to count

Waterbirds should be recorded separately from the three habitats:

- (a) The **intertidal** shore between the high and low water marks (*essential*).
- (b) The **sea** adjacent to the coast, as far as you can see (unless particularly difficult).
- (c) The **inland** areas visible within 100m of the high water mark (unless particularly difficult).

Additionally we are asking you to record details of the strandline (**wrack**) on the high water mark and the birds using the strandline (**wrack**) (unless particularly difficult)

What to count

Recording waders on the intertidal habitat is the priority for this survey. Please ensure that you cover the entire intertidal habitat (including the strandline) and count all wader species within this area.

However, **whenever possible, in addition to waders** we would also encourage counters to record any other species of birds, including **wildfowl, seabirds, raptors** and **non-waterbirds**, and also **mammals** using each of the habitats within the sectors.

- We do realise that for some areas of coastline the sheer number and diversity of birds present; the weather conditions and the local geography will make the accurate recording of every species impracticable. **However, in these circumstances an approximate count would be better than no count.**
- There are spaces on the recording form to write in any additional species.
- Please tick the “present” box if a species was present, which you were unable to count. If you are using paper forms, please write “NC” (No Count) in the appropriate space. Please indicate which habitats were surveyed at the top of each species section. **This is very important** because it is the only way we will be able to distinguish Nil Returns (no birds present) from Not Surveyed (birds possibly present but not counted).
- Please record if any **dead/sick birds** were seen and record any details e.g. number and species of dead/sick birds, grid reference etc. and report to Defra for possible testing

Recording the strandline

In addition to recording habitat details, NEWS presents an opportunity to collect broad-scale data on the volume and use of strandline (wrack) deposits from across Britain and Ireland. Please make a quick assessment of the alongshore extent of each of the height/width classes – see images overleaf for additional guidance. Please also tick the “Any using strandline” box to indicate which species are using the wrack.

Sectors of coastline to be counted

The sectors to be counted will be supplied to the Regional Organiser and made available online as a prioritised list based on those covered in past surveys. It is therefore very important to stick to the coastal sector indicated on the map (*i.e.* please do not ‘lump’ sectors together). The sectors will be colour coded according to their level of importance for coverage, with the ‘priority’ sectors for coverage shown in red, and non-priority sectors shown in amber, and will include sectors known to have held both large and small numbers of waterbirds during the previous survey. Therefore, we would like Regional Organisers to ensure that at the very least, the ‘key’ sectors are covered, and to contact the BTO as soon as possible if this proves to be difficult or impossible. Counters are encouraged to request at least one ‘priority’ sector to count as Regional Organisers will be allocating these first.

The start and end points are for guidance only. The grid references for the start and end points are plotted at the precise location indicated by counters for the original Winter Shorebird Count in 1985 or as modified for NEWS in 1997/98, NEWS II in 2006/07 and NEWS III in 2015/16. The associated grid references are given to six figures (i.e. nearest 100 metres). The original count stretches were designated by field-workers who took part in the 1985 Winter Shorebird Count. They were asked to base the limits of their count sectors on identifiable features such as changes in substrate (e.g. where rock meets sand), rock outcrops, road-heads etc on features such as a marina or a bay. Especially in the cases of shorter count-stretches, the grid references indicated may seem to be incorrectly positioned because of the precision of the grid references being used. ***If there is a clear feature within about 100 metres of the indicated point it is likely that this is the true limit of the count-stretch and so should be used accordingly.***

Making the counts

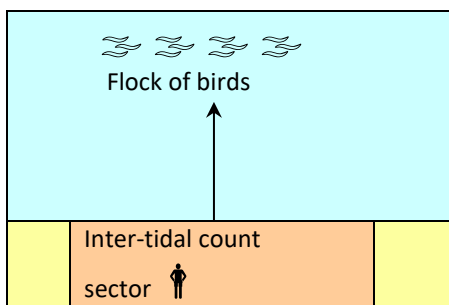
Intertidal: Wherever possible, where there is a wide shore, please try to walk well down the intertidal area as many birds tend to feed at the water's edge, and might be difficult to count from higher up. Ideally, the counts should be carried out in good weather conditions, commencing on a falling tide. **Please ensure that you have read our guidance for volunteers before commencing with any counts** (<https://www.bto.org/get-involved/volunteer/resources/guidance-for-volunteer-fieldworkers>).

To avoid missing or counting birds twice, **only count those birds that you walk past.** Any birds disturbed from the beach ahead of the counter that subsequently fly past (and therefore behind the observer), or inland/out to sea, or beyond the end of the sector **should** be recorded. Any birds that fly past you from behind, and subsequently land in the sector ahead of the observer should be ignored as they will probably already have been recorded. The exception to this would be if the species involved had not been previously recorded, thus ruling out the possibility of double recording. Any birds observed merely flying along/over the sector without actually landing in it **should not** be recorded.

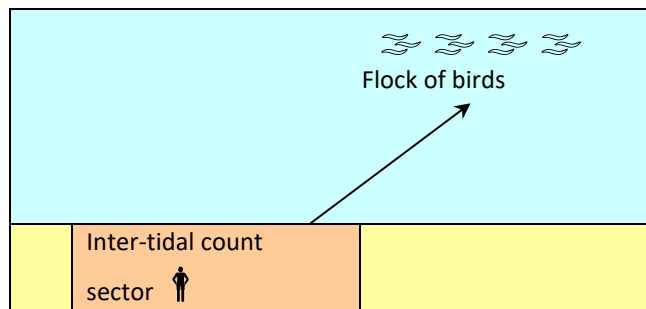
To prevent flushing the birds in front of you out of the count sector, try to walk around flocks of birds. This is likely to be a major problem, as birds will tend to move ahead of the counter and often build up at a break in the substrate type e.g. at the point where rocks becomes sand. If there is a large concentration of several species, it is likely to be difficult to get an accurate count once they are airborne. Try and see if there is an apparent movement of birds ahead of you and try to minimise this by walking higher up the beach if you think that it will lessen the disturbance.

Offshore: Only those birds actually offshore from a sector should be included within the counts of that sector (see example a below). **Please do not include birds when they are not directly opposite the count sector** (see example b below). You may record birds as far offshore as you feel confident in being able to identify them.

a)



b)



Offshore birds flying past should not be recorded unless they were originally on the sea within the sector, or they land offshore from the sector being counted.

Inland: Please only record birds that are within 100 m of the high-water mark.

Birds flying inland of the high-water mark should not be counted, unless they have taken off from the sector currently being counted or have landed in it.

If it is not possible to see inland from the beach because of cliffs, then no counts can be made, so please mark the inland habitat as **not surveyed**.

****Seabirds (e.g. Fulmar, Shag, Kittiwake etc) using a cliff face or breeding ledges should be recorded as Intertidal rather than being on the land****

General: It will probably be easiest to count birds on the sea and inland at regular intervals along the count sector.

Any flocks of birds in the intertidal area, inland or offshore that overlap two sectors need to be counted carefully. Only record that portion of the flock that occurs within the relevant sector.

Recording the strandline

