

# BTO Winter Bird Survey

## 2025/26

British Trust for Ornithology  
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### Letter of Introduction

Dear Sir/Madam

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is coordinating a bird survey for the autumn and winter of 2025 and 2026. It will collect data on the UK's birds outside of the breeding season and has several aims, including:

- Updating a survey conducted in 2018/19, so enabling us to estimate the non-breeding population sizes and change of many resident and wintering species. [www.bto.org/ewbs](http://www.bto.org/ewbs)
- Better understand how they use farmland and agri-environment scheme (AES) options in winter.

The survey will cover many existing summer Breeding Bird Survey squares and routes, along with new sites this winter. Unlike many European countries, the UK does not carry out regular monitoring of birds in the winter; this survey will therefore go a long way to fill an important gap in our knowledge of bird numbers and distribution in the winter.

This survey requires the surveyor to make up to **four visits** to a 1-km square, between 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The survey will start no earlier than one hour after sunrise and be finished at least one hour before sunset. During each visit, the surveyor will walk the same two 1-km transect routes, which will typically follow trackways, paths or field boundaries. All observations of birds will be recorded along with details of farmland habitat (e.g. stubbles, cover crops, etc), if present. The surveyor will need access to paths and trackways to help cover the area.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and the guidance offered by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (2005), make reference to land access for surveys such as this as follows:

*“Access rights extend to individuals undertaking surveys of the natural or cultural heritage where these surveys have a recreational or educational purpose within the meaning of the legislation. A small survey done by a few individuals is unlikely to cause any problems or concerns, provided that people living or working nearby are not alarmed by your presence.”*

The access required for this survey is not intensive and we hope that, where applicable, prior liaison will ensure that any management or operational constraints can be accommodated. More information on this survey can be found at [www.bto.org/winbs](http://www.bto.org/winbs), but please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to know more.

Yours faithfully,



James Heywood

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