

BTO/NATURAL ENGLAND ENGLISH WINTER BIRD SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

Please note that these instructions are specific to EWBS and not BBS.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering for the English Winter Bird Survey (EWBS), a scheme to evaluate how food resources in winter affect birds in lowland farmland, organised in partnership with Natural England and Defra. The survey measures bird populations alongside habitat and food availability by conducting timed counts from 1-km squares up to four times from December to March. We hope you can take part this winter.

Please note this survey differs from BBS in the following ways.

- **Brown Hare need to be recorded in distance bands, as for birds.**
- **Habitat details need to be recorded on each visit.**

The survey is organised via a network of voluntary Regional Organisers (ROs). Your RO will assist you with which square to survey, and will be able to help with any queries. More detailed information can be found on the EWBS website: www.bto.org/ewbs.

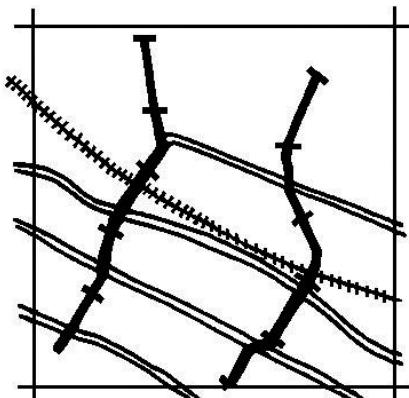
GETTING STARTED

Once your EWBS square has been allocated, all survey forms and instructions can be downloaded from the BTO website. The Field Recording Sheets and Habitat Recording Form are for taking notes in the field which are to be submitted via the BBS-Online recording system. The Count Summary and Mammal Summary forms, if sent, are to be used if you submit data on paper.

You can download a map of your survey route, showing two 1-km transects divided into ten 200-m sections (numbered 1 – 10). For existing Breeding Bird Survey volunteers using the same squares, please ensure you follow the same routes for your EWBS visits. If your square has not been surveyed before please refer to the guidance on establishing a new route overleaf and submit a route map to the BTO. If you need to change your route, please check with your RO first, then follow the same procedure as for a new route. Any changes made for EWBS will not change routes for the BBS.

You may need to ask permission to access private land on your square, and a standard letter requesting access can be obtained from the EWBS website.

All data from EWBS squares are valuable, even those that may appear poor for birds.



Please read the leaflet 'Health and Safety for Volunteer Fieldworkers', available to download from the BTO website.

WHEN TO VISIT

December	1 st - 31 st	First EWBS visit
January	1 st - 31 st	Second EWBS visit
February	1 st - 28 th	Third EWBS visit
March	1 st - 31 st	Fourth EWBS visit

Please make a maximum of four visits (one per month) to your EWBS square throughout the winter. However, if it is only possible to make two visits, these must be completed during January to March. It may be helpful to conduct an optional reconnaissance only visit in November to check the transect route (if a new site) or access. Visits should start at least one hour after sunrise and should be completed one hour before sunset.

WEATHER

Please do not survey in heavy rain, very poor visibility or strong wind. Record weather using the codes shown below. If the conditions change during your visit, select the single category that best represents the overall conditions.

Cloud cover	Rain	Wind	Visibility	Temp (Celsius)					
0 – 33%	- 1	None	- 1	Calm	- 1	Good	- 1	< 0 °C	- 1
33 – 66%	- 2	Drizzle	- 2	Light	- 2	Moderate	- 2	0 -10 °C	- 2
66 – 100%	- 3	Showers	- 3	Breezy	- 3	Poor	- 3	> 10 °C	- 3

RECORDING BIRDS (STANDARD METHOD)

Using the Field Recording Sheets, record all birds you see or hear as you walk along your route at a slow, methodical pace. You can pause to scan for birds, but should not stop for long periods. Try to keep to the same timings as previous visits, but as a rough guide, each 1-km transect should take around 45 minutes.

- Record birds in the appropriate 200-m transect section (1 – 10), as shown on your route map. Each transect section is a separate box on the Field Recording Sheet.
- Please use the standard two-letter BTO species codes, shown on the back of the Field Recording Sheets.
- Record all birds to the sides of your transect line, even if they are outside the square boundary. Don't record birds that are behind you as you start a transect, or beyond the end of the transect as you finish.
- Don't record the same bird twice, e.g. a Blackbird heard calling from several sections. If a bird is at the boundary of two transect sections, record it in one or the other, but not both.
- There is no need to record the activity or sex of the birds.
- Please record all free-flying birds, including feral and escaped species.
- Don't forget to note the date, and the start and finish times for each transect.
- Be aware of recording the same mobile flocks more than once along your transects (e.g. foraging group of finches). If unsure only record maximum counts.

DISTANCE BANDS

Please record **birds** and **Brown Hare** in one of the following distance bands, according to where they are first noted:

1. Within 25 metres either side of the transect line.
2. Between 25 and 100 metres either side of the line.
3. More than 100 metres either side of the line, including birds outside the 1-km square boundary.
- F. Birds in flight only, at any distance. Record by marking the species code with an arrow, e.g. 

- Distances are measured at right angles to the transect line. A bird seen 200 metres ahead of you but within 25 metres of the transect line should be recorded in distance band 1, in the appropriate transect section.
- Skylarks in display flight (possible in the winter) and hovering Kestrels should be recorded in the relevant distance band.
- The approximate locations of distance band boundaries can be viewed on your online route map.

Section of a completed Field Recording Sheet (standard method)

100m		25m		25m		100m		100m		25m		25m		100m	
3	2	1	2	3				3	2	1	2	3			
PH					D.			FF x10 ↗		R.	RL			PH x2 ↗	
RO x8			Y.			ST		RE x6 ↗			SG x5 ↗			FP x2 ↗	C. ↗
S. x3		1	RB							BROWN HARE					

HABITAT RECORDING

Habitat recording is an **essential part of the EWBS**. Please record the habitat features in your square on **every visit** using the habitat recording sheet. This is particularly important for documenting the availability of stubbles and other bird food sources which are likely to be ploughed in later in the winter.

- Habitat is recorded separately for each of the ten transect sections, but unlike BBS, for as far as you can see on either side of the transect section (i.e. up to 500m).
- Please tick all habitat features that apply to your transect (e.g. Ploughed (bare earth in large clumps), seedmix/ Game strip - with maize, Game hoppers/feeders (active). Hedgerow without berries etc).
- Do not forget to record ground conditions for each transect (e.g frozen, snow).
- If your square or transect section does not contain any of these farmland features, please tick **Relevant Habitat Recorded**.

SUBMITTING YOUR HABITAT DATA

When entering data online you can choose from lists, enter the relevant habitat codes in each transect section.

MAMMAL RECORDING

Although the main aim of the EWBS is to record birds, Brown Hare (in distance bands) and habitats, it would be useful if you could also record sightings or signs of mammals on your EWBS square, as these are used to produce mammal population trends.

- While carrying out your bird surveys, please count all live mammals seen during your EWBS visits.
- Any estimate of the numbers of a particular species on your survey visits (no matter how rough), is more useful than recording 'too many to count', 'present', etc.
- Note down mammal records on your Field Recording Sheets alongside your bird records.
- There is no need to make special visits to count mammals, nor to record them in distance bands (apart from Brown Hare).
- The main species of interest are the easily-observable mammals listed below. There is no need to make a special effort to look for small mammals, bats, etc.

Did you look out for other mammals, in addition to Brown Hare? Recording mammals is optional. Please enter 'Y' if you looked out for mammals (even if you saw none), or enter 'N' if you did not participate in mammal recording (i.e. indicating that you may have seen mammals that you did not record).

Species codes. Please enter the following species codes on your Mammal Summary Sheet if submitting data on paper.

Brown Hare	01	Roe Deer	08	Stoat	16
Mountain/Irish Hare	02	Fallow Deer	09	Weasel	17
Rabbit	03	Muntjac	10	Mink	57
Red Squirrel	04	Hedgehog	11	Otter	58
Grey Squirrel	05	Mole	13	Domestic Cat	61
Fox	06	Brown Rat	14		
Red Deer	07	Badger	15	For other species, enter name but leave code blank	

SUBMITTING YOUR MAMMAL DATA

- Submit your counts via BBS online, or via the Mammal Summary Sheet if you submit your data on paper.
- When entering data online, if you state that you did not look for mammals you will not be able to input mammal records for that visit, and this cannot be edited at a later stage.
- The paper summary sheet covers all four visits.

RETURN OF DATA

Submitting data online. Please enter your data through BBS online, if possible, as this reduces errors and makes processing data more efficient. Data should be entered by 31st May 2019.

- You can access the BBS online system by going to www.bto.org/bbs and clicking 'login'.
- Please enter your records as soon as possible after completing each visit.
- You will be able to use your normal BTO user name and password, but your RO will first need to set you up with your square online. Existing BBS volunteers, covering their BBS squares for EWBS can allocate themselves a square at BBS Online before 5th November.
- You can enter and edit bird, habitat and mammal data and you can view all data submitted for your square.

- You can view, print and submit an electronic map of your transect route. This will not change any associated BBS routes for the square.
- You should enter your records directly from your Field Recording Sheets, and you do not have to summarise any counts – the system will add together counts automatically.
- Detection type is not required for this survey and has been disabled.

Submitting data on paper forms. If you are sending in data on paper, please complete the Count Summary Sheets (one for each visit) as soon as possible after each field visit, and return them to your Regional Organiser along with your Field Recording Sheets and Mammal and Habitat forms as soon as possible after your final visit.

- Print the species name and two-letter species codes in the appropriate boxes.
- Transfer the number of individual birds recorded in each 200-m transect section (1 – 10), in each distance band, for each species. You will need to add up the counts of the same species, distance band and transect section.
- You may find it helpful to cross out or highlight records on the Field Recording Sheet as you transfer the information to the Count Summary Sheet. This helps to avoid duplicating or missing records.
- Remember to transfer all visit information (date, times etc.) from your Field Recording Sheets.
- Birds can be listed in any order on the Count Summary Sheets.
- Please only enter counts in the boxes on the Count Summary Sheets. Please do not enter additional information, such as '+', 'many', male/female, etc.
- If there is no count, please just leave the box empty. Please do not enter zeros or dashes.
- Please make every effort to write clearly and legibly, particularly the two-letter codes.

Section of a completed Count Summary Sheet (not required if submitting data online)

Species code and name	Distance Category	Number of birds recorded on each transect section									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<u>S.</u> <u>SKYLARK</u>	1				1						
	2	2									1
	3					3					
	F								1		

Please submit your records as soon as possible after your final visit. Your completed forms, or online submission, will be acknowledged once received at the BTO HQ.

If you are providing name, address and other personal details, BTO will store and use your personal details in line with our published Privacy Policy. You can specify your preferences surrounding the way we contact you at any time. For further details, see www.bto.org, or email info@bto.org, or phone 01842 750050.

If you have any queries about the EWBS, please contact your Regional Organiser or the EWBS National Organiser at BTO (The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, Tel: 01842 750050, Fax: 01842 750030, Email: winterbirds@bto.org), or visit our website: www.bto.org/ewbs.

Finally, thanks again for volunteering for the EWBS, and we hope that you enjoy taking part in the survey!

Acknowledgement.

The EWBS is largely based on the field methods of the Breeding Bird Survey, and their online data entry system. The Breeding Bird Survey is run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and is jointly funded by BTO, The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (on behalf of the statutory nature conservation agencies: Natural Resources Wales, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Northern Ireland, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Thank you.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ESTABLISHING A ROUTE ON A NEW SQUARE

If your square has been surveyed before, you can download the route taken by the previous observer (also available via BBS-Online), showing the two 1-km transects which are divided into ten 200-m transect sections (1 – 10).

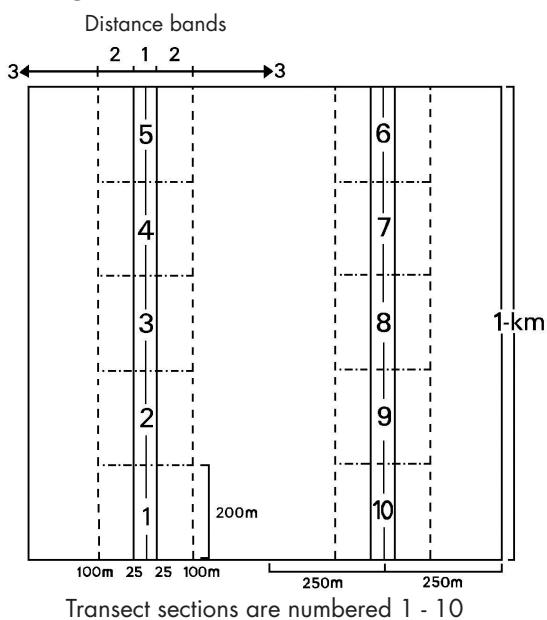
If your RO informs you that the square has not been surveyed before, you will need to establish a transect route. The route should ideally consist of two parallel lines, running roughly north-south or east-west, each 1 km long. Transects should be roughly 500 m apart and 250 m in from the edge of the square. Each transect should be divided into five equal sections 200 m in length, making a total of ten, numbered 1 – 10. It is important to note where each transect section starts and ends.

Please map your route using the online system.

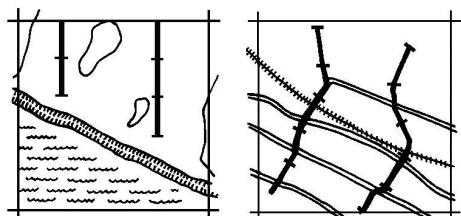
When planning a route, please note that:

- Each transect should be 1 km long. Only transects that are completely straight, and perpendicular to the square boundary, should touch the square boundary at both ends.
- Minor intrusions into adjacent squares are acceptable.
- At no point should the two transects be closer together than 200-m.
- If access is restricted, it is acceptable to cover fewer than ten transect sections (i.e. the route can be shortened). However, if fewer than four transect sections can be covered, please report the square to your RO as uncoverable.

Diagram of 'ideal' EWBS route



Transect sections are numbered 1 - 10



In practice, your transect lines are likely to deviate from the 'ideal'. Examples of acceptable transect routes are shown above.