By the end of November 2019, records had been submitted from 783 heronries sites in 2019. This is a decrease from the 1,311 sites visited during the 90th anniversary of the survey in 2018, when many BTO regions made a special effort to re-visit all their historical sites. However, it compares favourably with other recent years when we have received counts from around 700 to 800 sites annually. As we normally receive a number of late counts from secondary sources such as bird reports, we expect the final 2019 total to be higher than the 2017 total of 807 visits. Whilst late counts are welcome and are taken into account in future population estimates, we would encourage all observers to submit records directly to the Heronries Census to ensure that the annual population estimates are as complete as possible.

The highest nest count and the only three figure count received in 2019 came from a site in Cheshire, where 102 apparently occupied nests were counted. The next highest count of 90 nests was made in Somerset, and counts of more than fifty nests were received from a further five sites. The vast majority of colonies are much smaller, however, and 579 of the 783 sites visited (74%) were occupied by ten or fewer nests, including 137 sites (17%) where no active nests were found.

### GREY HERON RESULTS

The numbers of nests reported peaked at 1,316 in 2017, with the subsequent drop in 2018 probably caused by the “Beast from the East”. Nests were recorded at 12 sites in Wales, four sites in Northern Ireland and three sites on Jersey. We have not yet received any breeding records from Scotland, but the species breeds in Cumbria so the first confirmed Scottish record is expected soon! The biggest egret colony in 2019 was in Kent (138 nests) followed by sites in Cheshire (86 nests) and Lincolnshire (65 nests).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Estimated number of apparently occupied nests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>9,940 (9,546–10,435)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>5,936 (5,719–6,219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>868 (799–967)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2,829 (2,363–3,526)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>797 (694–951)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The population estimates are run separately for the UK and for the four constituent countries of the UK and hence the summed totals for the four countries do not sum up to the UK total. The calculated UK total is considered to be a more reliable estimate than the summed total.

Nesting was recorded at 111 sites in the UK (121 in 2018), with the total count of 1,103 apparently occupied nests being similar to the 2018 total of 1,107 nests suggesting stability or perhaps a slight increase, given that coverage was more comprehensive in 2018 and that the figures represent actual counts rather than estimates.
CORMORANT
Nest counts were received from 35 sites (including one each from Scotland, Wales and the Channel Islands), with active nests present at a further six sites which were not counted. The total count of 455 apparently occupied nests includes 139 at a site in Cheshire. Submissions of Cormorant nests to the Heronries Census have increased in recent years, but this is still likely to represent a relatively small proportion of the inland nesting Cormorant population, which was estimated to be at least 2,100 pairs in 2005. We would encourage observers to count and report nesting Cormorants to the Census, including sites which are not within a heronry, to ensure that the inland nesting Cormorant population can be monitored in the future.

SCARCE SPECIES
Historically, heronries in the UK have supported just a single species, the Grey Heron, but the recent colonisation of Little Egret is expected to be followed by additional species, and already there are sites in Norfolk and Somerset where several different species are breeding, reminiscent of mixed heronries in southern Europe. Cattle Egrets have been confirmed as breeding in several counties in recent years including Devon, Dorset, Essex, Hampshire, Cheshire & Wirral, and Northamptonshire. Scarce breeding species are monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), and all records submitted to the Heronries Census for these species will be kept confidential and will be forwarded to the panel. Submission of records of all scarce species is therefore encouraged and will help ensure that the Heronries Census can accurately monitor future population changes if (as expected) the populations of scarcer heron species continue to increase in future years and the reporting of breeding to the RBBP begins to drop off (as is already happening with Little Egret). In 2017, up to 12 pairs of Great White Egret, 29 pairs of Spoonbill and 15 pairs of Cattle Egret bred in the UK (RBBP figures).

HERONRIES ONLINE – DATA ENTRY TIPS
In 2019 we introduced some changes to the online data entry system following feedback from users, in order to make the data entry process run more smoothly. You will now be taken directly from the visit entry screen to the YBE (Year’s Best Estimate) data entry screen, which will be pre-populated with the highest nest count or estimate from your previous visits for each species. These estimates can be amended if required (e.g. if you believe that an earlier estimate was too high). Please remember that all counts and estimates you enter should relate to the number of apparently occupied nests rather than the number of individual birds, and that the ‘Present’ box should only be ticked if you are confident that one or more nests are present but the number of nests could not be counted. Breeding herons and Cormorants can travel long distances away from their colonies, and individual birds present at a site but which are believed to be foraging or prospecting rather than nesting should be ignored for the purposes of the Heronries Census. Further information can be found on the BTO website.
REVISITING HISTORICAL SITES – BE A ‘ZERO HERO’ OR ROVING RECORDER

During 2018 and 2019, we have been asking volunteers to visit historical sites so that we can ensure our online site list is accurate. As a result of your efforts we have been able to remove 440 sites from our active list after visits confirmed there was no sign of recent activity. Your visits also confirmed that some of the sites which had not been visited for more than ten years were still active. These visits are crucial to ensure that our population estimates are based on information that is as complete and up to date as possible.

However the coverage of historical sites remains patchy and there are a large number of historical sites which have not been visited recently. We expect many of these sites to be empty but need this to be confirmed so would welcome adventurous volunteers who are willing to explore new places to see what they can find – some sites will still have nesting herons and even if not you may come across other wildlife of interest. Many of these sites are in sparsely populated areas such as the north and west of Scotland, hence we would particularly welcome observers who are touring whilst on holiday and will be able to check a small number of historical sites which are close to their route or holiday home.

Details of vacant sites can be viewed at https://app.bto.org/colonies/public/vacant-sites.jsp, where you can contact the Regional Organiser responsible for the survey in individual 10-km squares in your area, by clicking on the square of your choice. However, if you are going to be travelling more widely on holiday (or if you are willing to cover a wide area from your home), please contact the Heronries Census National Organiser directly if the vacant sites might be spread across two or more BTO regions (herons@bto.org).

NEW HERONRIES

If you come across a heronry and are not sure whether it is included in the Heronries Census, please count the number of apparently occupied nests and report it to your Regional Organiser or the National Organiser (herons@bto.org). This includes sites with a single Grey Heron nest and sites where Little Egrets or Cormorants are breeding on their own (although note that coastal Cormorant colonies are not currently included in the Census as they are covered by the Seabird Monitoring Programme). Similarly, if you observe herons, egrets or Cormorants carrying sticks or similar behaviour that may indicate the presence of a heronry, we would be very grateful if you could follow this up and attempt to locate and report the heronry.

SURVEY TIMETABLE AND TASKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEBRUARY</th>
<th>MARCH</th>
<th>APRIL</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>JULY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early visit for historical sites and heronries in deciduous woodland (i.e. before leaf growth)</td>
<td>Visit to count Grey Heron AON</td>
<td>Visit to count Little Egret AON. Late visit for Grey Heron if required.</td>
<td>Enter outstanding visit data in online system AND enter YBEs for the year (or send cards to RO)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REMEMBER TO INFORM YOUR REGIONAL ORGANISER (RO) OF ANY NEW HERONRIES SITE YOU FIND.
SPECIAL THANKS
We would like to thank all surveyors and Regional Organisers for their work on the 2019 Census. Space does not permit all observers to be acknowledged individually, but we would especially like to thank the ROs for their efforts.

HERONRIES CENSUS REGIONAL ORGANISERS IN 2019

**ENGLAND**

- Avon: Eve Tigwell
- Bedfordshire: Peter Almond (now Roger Hicks)
- Berkshire: VACANT (now Sean Murphy)
- Birmingham & West Midlands: Steve Davies
- Buckinghamshire: Phil Tizzard
- Cambridgeshire: Rob Pople (now VACANT)
- Cheshire (Mid, North-East, South): Brian Martin
- Cleveland: Michael Leakey
- Cornwall: Simon Taylor
- Cumbria: VACANT (now Colin Gay)
- Derbyshire (North, South): Dave Bodworth
- Devon: Stella Beavan
- Dorset: Greg Lambe
- Durham: David Sowerbutts
- Essex (North-East): Rod Bleach (now Steve Hallam)
- Essex (North-West): Graham Smith
- Essex (South-West): VACANT
- Essex (South-East): Michael Smart
- Hampshire: Brian Sharkey
- Herefordshire: Chris Robinson
- Hertfordshire: Murray Orchard
- Huntingdon & Peterborough: Derek Langslow
- Isle of Wight: Jim Baldwin
- Isles of Scilly: Will Wagstaff
- Kent: Brian Watmough
- Lancashire (East, West): Tony Cooper
- Lancashire (North-West): Jean Roberts
- Lancashire (South): Stephen Dunstan
- Leicestershire & Rutland: Dave Wright
- Lincolnshire (East, North, South, West): Barrie Wilkinson
- London (North): VACANT
- London (South): Richard Arnold
- Manchester: Nick Hilton
- Merseyside: VACANT
- Norfolk (North-East): Chris Hudson
- Norfolk (North-West): Bob Osborne (now VACANT)
- Norfolk (South-East): Rachel Warren
- Norfolk (South-West): VACANT
- Northamptonshire: Vince Matthews
- Northumberland: Bob Bullock
- Nottinghamshire: Tom Cadwallender
- Oxfordshire (North): Lynda Milner
- Oxfordshire (South): Frances Buckel
- Shropshire: John Melling
- Somerset: Jonathan Groom
- Staffordshire (North, South, West): Eve Tigwell
- Suffolk: Scott Petrek
- Surrey: Nick Hilton
- Sussex: VACANT
- The Wirral: Penny Williams
- Warwickshire: Helen Crabtree
- Wiltshire (North): Brian Martin
- Wiltshire (South): Annette Jarrett-Knock
- Worcestershire: Bill Quantrill
- Yorkshire (Bradford): Claire Jones
- Yorkshire (Central): Mervyn Needham
- Yorkshire (East, Hull): Mike Denton
- Yorkshire (Leeds & Wakefield): Mike Brown
- Yorkshire (North-East): VACANT (now Brian Walker)
- Yorkshire (North-West): Rachael Dixey
- Yorkshire (Ripon): Graham Oliver (now Nick Gibbons)
- Yorkshire (South-East): Alex Gould
- Yorkshire (South-West): Mike Gibson
- Yorkshire (York): Aidan Gill (now VACANT)
- Isle of Man: Pat Cullen
- Jersey: Tony Pointin
- Channel Islands: Chris Mourant
- Isle of Man: Pat Cullen

**SCOTLAND**

- Aberdeenshire: Moray Soutar
- Angus: VACANT
- Argyll (Mull, Coll, Tiree & Morven): Ewan Miles
- Argyll (mainland & Gigha) & Bute: Nigel Scriven
- Arran: James Cables
- Ayrshire: VACANT (now Dave McGarvie)
- Benbukesa & The Uists: Yvonne Benting
- Borders: Dave McFarvie (now Malcolm Ross)
- Caithness: Donald Omand
- Central: Neil Bieby
- Dumfries: Andy Riches
- Inverness (East & Speyside, West): Norman Elkins
- Inverness, Strathspey & Badenoch: Hugh Insole
- Kincardine & Deeside: David Wood
- Lanark, Renfrew & Dumbarton: Graham Cooper (now Claire Marsden)
- Lewis & Harris: Gordon Brady
- Lothian: Chris Reynolds (now VACANT)
- Moray & Nairn: Alan Heavisides (now Stephen Metcalfe)
- Orkney: Melvin Morrison
- Perthshire: Colin Corse
- Rhum, Eigg, Canna & Muck: Mike Bell
- Ross-shire: Bob Swann
- Shetland: Simon Cohen
- Skye: Dave Ollie
- Sutherland: Stephen Bentall
- Wigton: VACANT

**WALES**

- Anglesey: Ian Hawkins
- Brecknock: Andrew King
- Caermarfon: Rhion Pritchard
- Cardigan: Moira Convery (now Naomi Davis)
- Carmarthen: Dan ROSE (now Paul Aubrey)
- Clwyd (East): Anne Brenchley
- Clwyd (West): Mel Al Owen
- Glamorgan (Mid, South): Wayne Morris
- Glamorgan (West): Lyndon Jeffrey
- Gwent: Richard Clarke
- Merioneth: Dave Anning
- Montgomery: Jane Kellsal
- Pembroke: Annie & Bob Haycock
- Radnorshire: Carlton Parry

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

- All regions: Ian Enlander

- **CHANNEL ISLANDS**
  - Channel Islands (excl. Jersey):
  - Jersey: Chris Mourant
  - Isle of Man: Pat Cullen

We would be grateful for help organising the Heronries Census in regions currently without a Regional Organiser (marked VACANT). If you live in one of these regions and would be interested in taking on the role, please let us know.

Many thanks are due to the ROs listed who stepped down during 2019 some of whom had been the ROs for many years, and we would also like to thank David Rogers (Devon) and Peter Hearn (Cumbria) who both stepped down in 2018 after many years as Heronries Census Organisers.

Finally, we would like to thank all the landowners who kindly allow volunteers access to their land to carry out Heronries Census visits.