The abundance of resident woodcock (i.e. those that breed in the UK) is estimated using counts of displaying males in spring. The first GWCT/BTO Breeding Woodcock Survey, conducted in 2003, provided a snapshot of the species' status and its follow-up, conducted in 2013, provided a measure of population change. A subsample of site, that have been visited on a more regular basis, provide an estimate of annual variation. The exact sample of sites receiving these repeat visits varies from year to year, but our analysis accounts for these differences and provides an index of population change. Participation in the annual counts increased following the 2013 survey and we now monitor approximately 150 sites each year (Table 1).

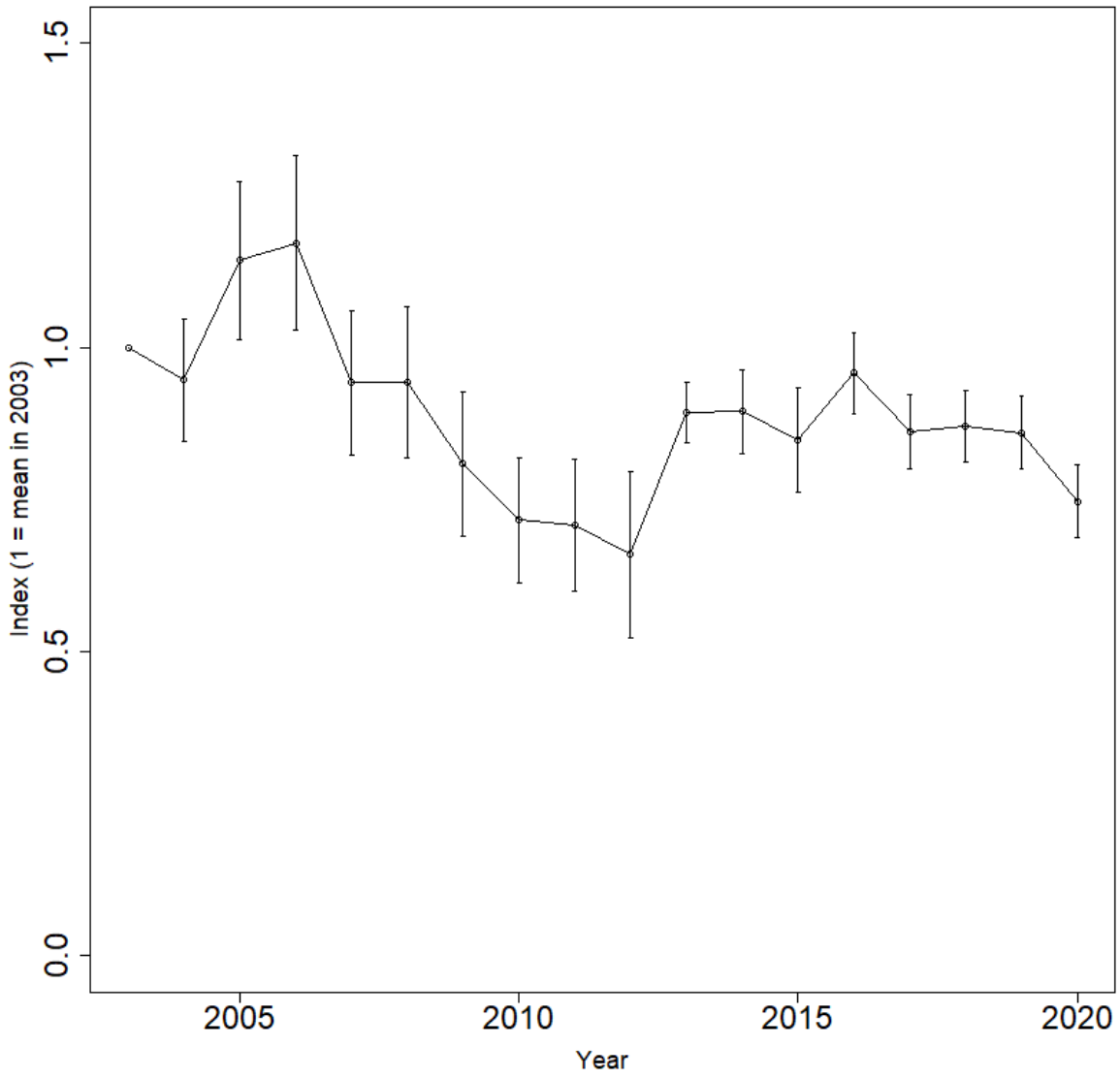

Fig. 1: *Annual change in the number of woodcock registrations since 2003. The number of registrations is given as an index relative to the first survey year (i.e. mean in 2003 = 1). Error bars show the 95% confidence intervals.*

Table 1. *The number of sites surveyed each year and the number used to estimate annual change in woodcock abundance. Not all submitted sites can be used for this analysis straightaway – a site must be visited in two separate years before it can contribute to annual trend analyses. If your site has been visited in just one year, repeating it in a subsequent year provides valuable data (visits do not need to be in consecutive years to be useful). The high totals in 2003 and 2013 reflect the fact that these years had largescale national surveys.*

	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
submitted	898	55	34	23	26	26	25	25	23	14
included	624	51	32	22	26	26	25	25	23	14

	2013	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
submitted	929	153	61	157	164	217	162	122
included	645	143	61	144	164	203	162	116

This year, we had expected a much lower sample size as the first half of the roding survey season coincided with April and May's national lockdown. We are pleased to report, however, that we received data from a healthy total of 122 sites. In this strange year, we are grateful to those who were able to make their usual visits this year but understand that, for many, personal circumstances or issues regarding land access made this impossible. We hope that surveys will proceed as normal in 2021.

It appears that most people recorded fewer than average Woodcock registrations in 2020. In fact, 2020 provides the fourth lowest number of registrations we have recorded; only 2010, 2011 and 2012 were lower. This follows a relatively stable period between 2014 and 2019 when the average number of Woodcock registrations remained similar to those recorded in the largescale national survey of 2013.

Since roding counts measure the abundance of *breeding* Woodcock in spring, their results reflect breeding success in the years preceding the survey. The extremely hot and dry summer of 2019 may have resulted in poor juvenile survival, if dry weather meant that the woodcock's soil-dwelling invertebrate prey were less readily available.

It is possible, however, that this year's lower counts actually reflect some characteristics of the sample. Lockdown meant that most surveyors were unable to survey during the first two weeks of May and the average date of the first survey visit (21st May) was a week later than the 2013-2019 average. It should also be noted that surveys could not be resumed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland or on Forestry Commission land. We hope 2021 proves to be a more typical survey year and will provide some more solid answers regarding this apparent downturn.

As always, we are grateful to the volunteers who took the time to collect and submit roding woodcock survey data. It is understandable that many of you were unable to this year, but your counts in 2021 will be as valuable as ever.

If you have any questions or updates, please contact the new Woodcock Survey organiser for BTO, David Norfolk, Email: **woodcock@bto.org**