BTO
Looking out for birds

# International Research

**BTO's international research cuts across many of the organisation's research themes and has a broad remit, taking in classical ecological studies, as well as incorporating elements from the social and economic sciences. We operate in three broad areas – research into the ecology of long-distance migrant birds, technology transfer and capacity building, and researching links between biodiversity, the natural environment and livelihoods in developing countries.**

## Out of Africa

Since 2009, BTO has operated a field project 'Migrants in Africa (MiA)' in Ghana and Burkina Faso together with RSPB and two BirdLife partners, the Ghana Wildlife Society and Naturama. BTO research has shown that UK migrants wintering in the humid zones of West Africa are in rapid decline. The field project, spanning habitats from the arid Sahel in Burkina Faso to the humid rainforests in Ghana, is investigating the wintering and stop-over ecology of migrants and how changes in land use and climate are impacting upon their populations.

**Please contact to discuss how BTO can help you:**

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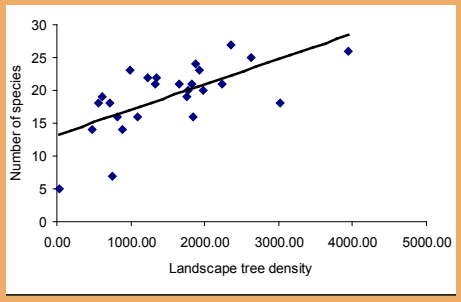
Photographs: Mark Hulme, Edmund Fellowes, Victoria Kovshar, Chris Orsman

*'The BTO's independent non-campaigning stance has led to impact assessment work and the provision of impartial advice to regulatory institutions'*

**Forest birds impacted by farming intensification and loss of trees**




**Helping design the Middle East Mangrove Centre, Oman**


## Biodiversity and livelihoods in the modernising farmed landscapes of Uganda

Across much of the developing world, biodiversity underpins the livelihoods of the rural poor. In a four year project, funded by the Darwin Initiative, BTO led an ecosystem service and livelihood project in the banana/coffee production area around Lake Victoria that showed that landscape management was critical for both farmers and biodiversity (see figure to the left). In landscapes that were heavily farmed there was too little fallow land for pollinators. Allowing one third of the land to remain fallow led to improved coffee production, led to increased yields of other crops and supported more diverse populations of bees, butterflies and birds. This study showed how landscapes can be optimally managed for farmer income and biodiversity.

## Capacity building, technology transfer & working with industry

BTO regularly provides advice or training in how to establish and run monitoring schemes outside the UK, whether they are new national bird monitoring projects or the setting up of bird ringing schemes. We also undertake specific, often multi-disciplinary, research projects and are currently working on projects in Africa, Continental Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and the USA.

The BTO's independent, non-campaigning, stance is seen as important by many organisations and we regularly undertake impact assessment work and provide impartial advice to regulatory institutions. Examples include reviewing a waterbird monitoring scheme in Kazakhstan, providing advice on Environmental Impact Assessment approaches to the offshore wind industry in the United States, setting up of a Mangrove Centre in Oman, advising on a canal development in Australia and the provision of advice to Unilever on how to improve the environmental sustainability of crops grown in developing countries. These types of project sit alongside our own research, such as the migrants and ecosystem service work in Africa.

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# Expertise Brochure

**The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is one of the world's leading scientific research organisations specialising in birds and habitats. We are based in Thetford, Norfolk, England, with offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.**

We undertake impartial research and analysis, relating to birds, other wildlife and habitats, to advance the understanding of natural systems. The BTO provides high quality, impartial and policy-relevant data and information, relied upon for informed decision making. We work in partnership with the academic and conservation science communities, with Government Departments and Agencies, and with the private and voluntary sectors. The BTO has a unique combination of professional scientists and volunteers, and undertakes modern statistically robust surveys with web-based on-line data entry and retrieval. We add value to data through high powered analysis and a strong modelling capability.

**Please contact to discuss how BTO can help you:**

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Photographs: Dawn Balmer, Sarah Eglington, John Harding, Cathy Ryden, 1-Vision

## BTO Strategy

The BTO has a vision of a world in which nature conservation and sustainable development are founded on evidence-based decision-making, and in which society understands, values and contributes to that process. We are in a time of unprecedented awareness and acknowledgement of environmental change, and the human response to that change must be informed by knowledge and understanding of species and habitats - the ecosystems that underpin our planet's life support. The BTO has a vital role to play in the provision of that knowledge, with citizen science being core to the delivery of the BTO strategy.

## BTO Science Themes

### Monitoring changing bird populations

Our ability to coordinate thousands of motivated and skilled volunteers, together with professional expertise, enable us to track many aspects of birds' lives. We provide facts, figures and indicators that Government and decision-makers use to inform policy, and which is the context for measuring change in our environment.

Black-tailed Godwit being colour-marked as part of an international migration project

### Population dynamics and modelling

We integrate records collected by volunteers from many aspects of birds' life-cycles, through nest recording, ringing, and survey monitoring. This integrated population modelling means we are well placed to investigate the effects of environmental change on bird populations.

### Ecosystems: from territories to landscapes

We are at the forefront of land-use issues in ornithology, with unique expertise of studying bird ecology in farmland, woodland, upland and urban habitats at multiple spatial scales. We employ traditional field approaches, innovative technology and state-of-the-art analytical techniques to investigate the consequences of land-use change.

### Migration and the ecology of migrant birds

Understanding the ecology of migration, as birds move between habitats and countries is important if we are to understand the effects of environmental changes at a global scale. Our underpinning knowledge comes from a century of bird ringing and nest recording, and we are now using modern transmitter technology to unravel the ecology of migrant birds.

### Climate change

Climate change impacts on biodiversity become apparent over long timescales, and the BTO's long-term datasets are ideally suited to understanding the underlying processes. We develop indicators and provide advice to Government, international and national bodies to inform policy.

Dr Phil Atkinson Head of International Research demonstrating research results to, the BTO's Patron, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT during a visit to BTO HQ

### Wetland and marine research

Inland, coastal and marine waters of the UK all hold internationally important bird populations. BTO is at the forefront of delivering information on waterbirds in response to the requirements of legislation, infrastructure development and policy development. We are actively investigating energy developments offshore.

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