

## Local Distribution 1935-1946

### Title

Local Distribution of Birds 1935-1946

### Description and Summary of Results

In the early and mid 1930s several county and local birdwatching societies were running surveys of particular species each year to try to get an idea of their local distribution and numbers. The then recently formed BTO decided that it would be a good idea to try to co-ordinate these efforts, particularly for all the local surveys to attempt to survey the same species each year so as to get a wider picture of their distribution.

An experimental scheme was therefore started in 1935 with the focus on Pochard, Redstart and Great Spotted Woodpecker. In subsequent years the concentration was on a series of other species.

In addition to distribution and in some cases numbers it was hoped to get some information on preferred habitats. This was tried more explicitly for 1936 but as the results were very disappointing this request was dropped for 1937 although similar requests were revived again in later years usually with more specific questions being asked.

Overall the results were found to be very disjointed and the results between areas were almost always too disparate to be able to produce a comprehensive or useful report. It appears that the survey as such was quietly dropped after the early 1940s with no mention at all after the Annual report number 12 (June 1946).

However most local societies did publish the results from their local areas.

### Methods of Data Capture

Observers were asked to send in all observations of a series of particular species in each year. For 1935 the species were Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, and Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*; for 1936 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis flammaea*, and Little Owl *Athene noctua*; for 1937 Coot *Fulica atra*, Magpie *Pica pica*, and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*; for 1938 Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (also asking for a description of all non-reedbed sites), Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (also asking "does it breed?" with names of waters, for numbers in winter and for the proportion of the sexes), and Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (also asking for as accurate a habitat definition as possible for each); for 1939 (noting for all 3 whether there had been any increases or decreases in recent years and if so to suggest causes) Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* (also asking for any feeding observations), Stock Dove *Columba oenas* (also asking for feeding and flocking information), and Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (also asking for any migration details); for 1940 Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, Teal *Anas crecca* and Curlew *Numenius arquata*; for 1941 Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*.

**Purpose of Data Capture**

To try to co-ordinate some existing work on distribution of selected species but concentrating on the same species over wider areas than covered by individual local societies.

**Geographic Coverage**

UK and Ireland.

**Temporal Coverage**

1935-1941 although some information continued to come in after these years.

**Other Interested parties**

The survey was run by the BTO largely acting as a co-ordinator of several local and county societies.

**Organiser(s)**

W B Alexander

**Current Staff Contact**

archives@bto.org

**Publications**

No formal report was ever produced but the survey was mentioned in:  
*BTO Annual Report* numbers 1-7; and *BTO Bulletin* numbers 3, 7, 9 and 12.

**Available from NBN?**

No.

**Computer data -- location**

None.

**Computer data -- outline contents**

N/A.

**Computer data -- description of contents**

N/A.

**Information held in BTO Archives**

2 boxes containing data sheets and letters.

**Notes on Access and Use****Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**