

## Local Lists

### Title

Local Lists 1939-1945

### Description and Summary of Results

By 1939 it was realised that many observers were recording both what species they were seeing and how many on a regular basis, and often on what has become known as a “local patch”. The Local Lists survey was an attempt to collect such information more centrally with the overall aim of obtaining some objective information on numbers and distribution of species. In effect it was the first attempt at a project similar to the Inland Observation Point scheme of the early 1960s and what is now Bird Track. However from the outset it had problems, not least because the launch (August 1939) coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War.

All BTO members were sent one form free but subsequent ones cost 1½d (old pennies) each, later increased to 2d. Observers were asked to fill in a form for an area they were familiar with but it was also stated that forms were welcome from holiday birdwatching and from members of the armed forces and others “in outlandish places”.

In the event by July 1943, only 247 lists (England 175, Wales 26, Scotland 35, Ireland 11) had been received despite many appeals. The *BTO Annual Report 10* (issued October 1944) notes that “a considerable number of new lists” had been sent in after this. However the only subsequent mention of the project is in *BTO Bulletin 23* (February 1947) simply noting that the costs of forms had increased to 2½d. The project seems to have quietly folded. Certainly no formal report was ever produced.

One letter received from an observer in Northern Ireland contained notes of some bird species but all the place names had been carefully cut out of the letter by the censors presumably as it was thought to be a security risk – it was during the Second World War.

### Methods of Data Capture

Observers were asked to send in a form containing counts of the birds at sites of their own choosing and which they knew well. It was hoped that every BTO member would fill in at least one form. The idea was that the form would summarise the bird fauna of the area concerned, and that therefore if enough were received an idea of the distribution of each species would be obtained.

It was also hoped that observers would fill in a form for anywhere else they might do some birdwatching, such as when they were on holiday.

### Purpose of Data Capture

An attempt to collate information on numbers and distribution of each species of bird over the British Isles.

**Geographic Coverage**

All of Great Britain and Ireland.

**Temporal Coverage**

1939-1945, with occasional forms being received into the early 1950s.

**Other Interested parties**

The survey was organised and run by the BTO.

**Organiser(s)**

W B Alexander as Director of the Edward Grey Institute at the time.

**Current Staff Contact**

archives@bto.org

**Publications**

No formal report was ever produced although the survey was noticed in *BTO Annual Report* numbers 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10; and in *BTO Bulletin* numbers 11, 13, 18, 20 and 23.

**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**

4 boxes of forms and 1 of correspondence.

**Notes on Access and Use**

**Other information**

**Notes on Survey Design**

**Specific Issues for Analysis**