

# Ornithological Sites Register Update

## Title

Ornithological Sites Register Update 1985-86  
(also known as Review of Site Changes)

## Description and Summary Results

The Ornithological Sites Register, whose fieldwork ran from 1973 to 1977, was one of most successful BTO projects and provided an important snapshot of where were the most important sites for birds throughout the UK.

All sites change both naturally and through management, with the latter depending primarily on the landowner and their main interests. These may or may not include a desire to benefit or maintain the bird populations and communities.

By 1986 there were few actual data on habitat loss and change on the sites which had been registered, or indeed on many other sites, and the consequent impact on their bird communities. Revisiting and recording on all the original 4000 sites was never going to be realistic so it was decided to resurvey a sample to try to determine what changes there had been and how much effect these had had on the birds present.

For the purpose of the review, it was decided to look at the more important sites, and the sample included all those ranked as of regional or greater value for nature conservation according to the classification developed following the original register (Fuller 1980, *Biological Conservation* 17: 229-239). It should be noted though that the information obtained is not necessarily either comprehensive or definitive as site accounts were obtained from a wide range of observers with varying knowledge of the sites. It is inevitable that some contained unintentional inaccuracies.

## Methods of Data Capture

A sample of 1255 registered sites, originally surveyed in 1970s, was selected for resurvey. This was done via a questionnaire to regional organisers and who contacted the original observers where this was possible. In the event about 85% of questionnaires were returned.

The questionnaire asked mainly about any changes which had occurred (to habitats or birds) and not for detailed information on bird communities as had been recorded previously. There was no time for major fieldwork for this new exercise so most questions were answered from local knowledge.

## Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the scale of habitat changes, and any consequent effects on the bird communities on those sites which had been registered in the 1970s as Sites of Ornithological Importance.

**Geographic Coverage**

A sample of sites originally registered as Sites of Ornithological Importance in the 1970s all across the UK.

**Temporal Coverage**

Any fieldwork was between autumn 1985 and summer 1986.

**Other Interested parties**

The project was organised and run by the BTO with funds provided by the Nature Conservancy Council and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

**Organiser(s)**

Barry Phillips

**Current Staff Contact**

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**Publications**

The project was noticed in *BTO News* number 141. A report was written for the sponsors in November 1986 but was not published.

The basis of the sample of sites resurveyed was those of at least regional importance based on the criteria given in:

Fuller, R.J. 1980. A method of assessing the ornithological interest of sites for conservation. *Biological Conservation* 17: 229-239.

**Available from NBN?**

No.

**Computer data -- location**

BTO Windows network central area.

**Computer data -- outline contents**

A copy of the report both as a whole and divided into regional files.

**Computer data -- description of contents**

Lists of sites resurveyed by region and with a short paragraph describing them.

**Information held in BTO Archives**

2 archive boxes and 1 Transfer Case contain all the forms returned. All have been scanned.

**Notes on Access and Use**

As some of the questionnaire returns contain information of a sensitive nature and some were submitted in confidence, there is no access to these data without a specific request to the BTO.

**Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**