

# Tameness in Wild Birds

## Title

Tameness in Wild Birds 1934-1936

## Description and Summary of Results

From the founding of the BTO there was considerable interest in how tame various wild birds were or could become. This had been brought into focus by Viscount Grey of Falloden who famously was pictured with a Robin perched on his hat. So BTO attempted to find out more about which species, when and how widespread was the practice and what specific things birds did in close proximity to humans.

In all over 300 forms were returned covering 40 species although 23 of these were represented by only one form each. The most common species involved was the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* followed by Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos*. Actual activity recorded varied considerably with some observers writing quite detailed notes on the methods of taming and the behaviour observed.

## Methods of Data Capture

A questionnaire was sent to those who requested it. Throughout it was emphasised that it was only observations relating to truly wild birds acting in a free state that were wanted.

Observations of caged, escaped or released individuals were not wanted.

Observers were asked to provide all possible details for each case they reported.

Specifically they were asked if the bird(s): a) freely entered a room in an inhabited building; b) perched on head, shoulders or arms; c) took food from the hand; d) permitted close approach (and how close); e) nested at close quarters with humans; f) other evidence. Also questions about any change in behaviour with time of day, seasons or weather conditions, and whether or not it was one or several individual birds, one or more different people, or one person with different clothes; and any evidence of changes related to shooting or cessation of shooting, feeding the birds or providing nest boxes.

## Purpose of Data Capture

To find out more about the behaviour of wild birds when they were nesting or feeding in close proximity to humans.

## Geographic Coverage

All of Great Britain.

## Temporal Coverage

1934-1936.

**Other Interested parties**

The inquiry was organised and run by the BTO.

**Organiser(s)**

Tom Harrison and Horace G Alexander.

**Current Staff Contact**

archives@bto.org

**Publications**

The main report on the inquiry was promised but never produced. A preliminary report (written by E M Nicholson and dated 22 November 1936) is in the archives.

The inquiry was noticed in *BTO Annual report* numbers 1, 2 and 3; and in *BTO Bulletin* numbers 3 and 4.

**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**

1 box containing data and letters.

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