

BirdTracknews

The newsletter of Britain & Ireland's online bird recording system



LIST IT, DON'T LOSE IT 6



PATCH WATCHING PAYS OFF 15



ANNUAL SUMMARY OF RECORDS 8

ISSUE 1 • SUMMER 2012 ALSO INSIDE

- 02 FROM THE EDITOR
- 03 QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK
- 04 USING BIRDTRACK TO TARGET CONSERVATION FUNDING
- 05 MAKING THE MOST OF A MILLION RECORDS
- 07 WHAT'S IN A YEAR
- 12 BIRDS IN DEFENCE
- 13 DINOSAUR BECOMES CONVERT
- 14 BIRDTRACK AT THE BOTANICS
- 15 A CONSERVATION TRIUMPH
- 16 BACKCHAT

PLUS RESEARCH UPDATE, TOP BIRDTRACKERS IN 2011

Exciting new developments

BirdTrack has clear, important conservation science goals (see page 3). At the same time, it needs to capture the imagination of everyone involved in observing and recording birds across Britain and Ireland. We're constantly identifying and implementing improvements to the system, making it an exciting and dynamic project to be involved in as a birdwatcher.

Two of the latest developments are worth shouting from the rooftops: the BirdTrack app and the facility to record dragonflies! The BirdTrack app enables in-the-field record gathering via Android smartphones, a huge step towards streamlining the series of events from finding and identifying a bird to capturing the record for personal interest and to maximise its value for conservation science. The app is currently based around the casual record model, making it ideal for

logging your more unusual sightings, and anything you note whilst travelling. Future developments will see the app become available for iPhones, and the facility to enter complete lists.

The responses to the BirdTrack questionnaire indicated that many of you notice and identify dragonflies when you are birdwatching but that these sightings don't often become records. 2012 is the final year of the National Dragonfly Atlas, coordinated by the British Dragonfly Society, so it made perfect sense to enhance BirdTrack so that dragonfly records can be added, in time to contribute to this ambitious project.

Over the last two years, the BirdTrack team have also been working closely with the Scottish Bird Recording Network (SBRN – the 21 Local Recorders from across Scotland) and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (particularly their Scottish



FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome...

A warm welcome to the inaugural *BirdTrack News*! This newsletter gives feedback to BirdTrack users and other interested parties on the latest news and developments from Britain and Ireland's free online bird recording system. It also provides an opportunity for everyone involved in BirdTrack at the four partner organisations to celebrate the fantastic efforts of those of you who have added your sightings to BirdTrack. In 2011, more than 5,350 observers submitted records (up 4% on 2010) from 3,125 10-km squares (81% of the total number in Britain and Ireland) and we'd like to extend a huge thank you to you all!



Nick Moran Editor & BirdTrack Organiser



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Bird Records Coordinator, Clive McKay) to enhance and refine the wider functionality of BirdTrack. The key role of the Local Recorder network has been to provide a view from the coalface on what Local Recorders would like BirdTrack to do for them. The development time was jointly funded by Scottish Natural Heritage through a grant to SOC and the BirdTrack partnership, with the aim of making BirdTrack the number-one bird-recording system in Scotland. This meant addressing multiple requirements – the needs of observers entering their sightings, the needs of Local Recorders collating and processing the records for use in local bird reports, additional functionality

Got a query?

BirdTrack records underwent validation for the Bird Atlas 2007–11 to ensure that details such as grid references were correct. Without this manual checking process, bird records are much less valuable because they may contain mistakes, so BirdTrack now has its own validation system to allow County Recorders and Bird Report editors to

to upload and download records to and from other databases, and sharing records with the National Biodiversity Network to maximise their value to conservation.

In 2011, the annual gathering of the SBRN met at SOC headquarters (Waterston House, Aberlady) to review the final stages of the developments that the BTO IT team have built. Local Recorders from as far afield as Orkney and Dumfries & Galloway were very impressed with the new product and there was a strong feeling that BirdTrack really is going to make online bird recording as straightforward and as valuable as possible.

flag up potential errors.

Whilst it can be frustrating to find a queried record in your BirdTrack account, it will have been queried with the very best intention: to ensure that an accurate dataset is maintained. Validators are happy to discuss queries; their email address is available via the link in the yellow bar on your Data Home page.

BirdTrack NEWS

People and organisations responsible for the BirdTrack Newsletter.

BIRDTRACK CONTACT

Nick Moran BirdTrack Organiser
birdtrack@bto.org

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Caffrey Bird Atlas Coordinator,
BirdWatch Ireland

bcaffrey@birdwatchireland.ie

Anne Carrington-Cotton Data and
Admin Officer, BTO Scotland
anne.cotton@bto.org

Mandy Cook Development Coordinator,
BTO Scotland
mandy.cook@bto.org

Roger Dickey Chairman, Army
Ornithological Society

Mark Grantham BirdGuides
markyjee@gmail.com

Clive McKay Scottish Bird Records
Coordinator

Andy Musgrove Head of Monitoring,
BTO
andy.musgrove@bto.org

Roy Pearson BirdTrack user

Emma Teuten Bird Conservation
Targeting Project Coordinator, RSPB
emma.teuten@rspb.org.uk

Neil Trout BirdTrack user

Cover Photographs: Chris Gregory,
Chris Mills www.norfolkbirding.com.

Inside: Anne Carrington-Cotton,
Ian Clarke, Mandy Cook, Roger Dickey,
Chris Mills, Craig Nash, Jill Pakenham.

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

Editor Nick Moran

DTP Jane Waters

Printing Swallowtail Printing, Norwich

BirdTrack is an exciting project, through a partnership between the BTO, the RSPB, Birdwatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, that looks at migration movements and distributions of birds throughout Britain and Ireland. BirdTrack provides facilities for observers to store and manage their own personal records as well as using these to support species conservation at local, regional, national and international scales.



BTO
The Nunnery, Thetford,
Norfolk IP24 2PU
Tel: 01842 750050
www.bto.org



RSPB
The Lodge, Sandy,
Bedfordshire SG19 2DL
Tel: 01767 680551
www.rspb.org.uk



BirdWatch Ireland
Unit 20, Block D,
Bullford Business Campus,
Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow,
Ireland
Tel: 353 (0)1 2819878
www.birdwatchireland.ie



SOC
The Scottish Birdwatching
Resource Centre, Waterston
House, Aberlady, East
Lothian, EH32 0PY, Scotland
Tel: 01875 871 330
www.the-soc.org.uk

Information in this newsletter is compiled from a variety of sources and does not necessarily reflect the views of the BirdTrack partner organisations



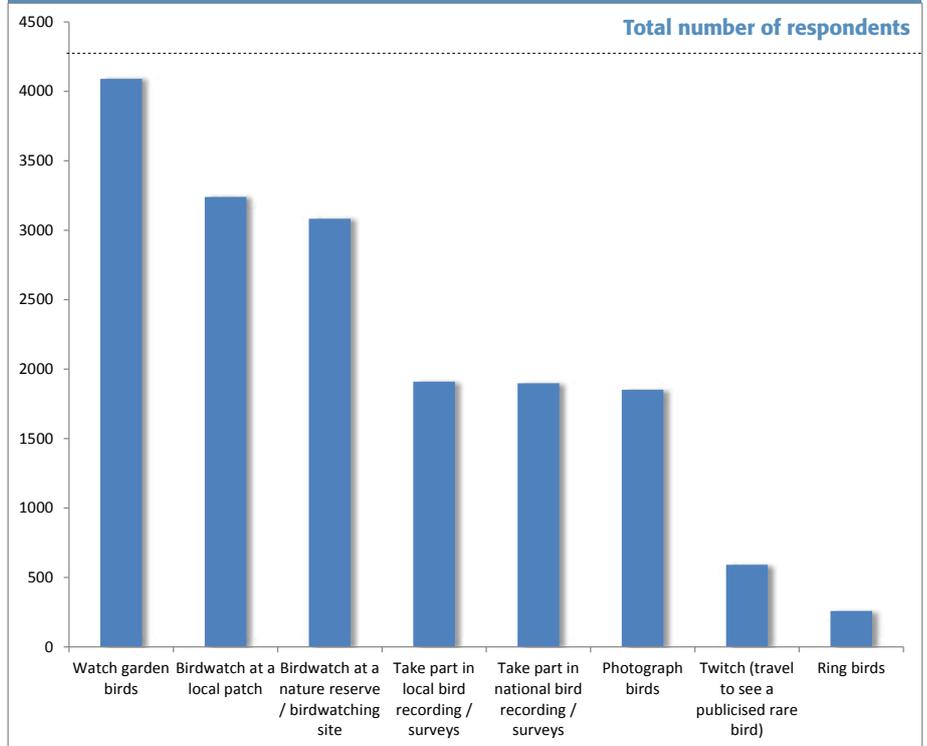
When you have finished with this magazine, pass it to a friend or recycle it.

QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

A staggering 4,240 people answered our BirdTrack and bird recording questionnaire last summer – many thanks to everyone who took the time to do this! Your responses were both fascinating and varied, and have been instrumental in extending and prioritising our ‘wish list’ for future developments. For example, many of you told us that you’d like to be able to record other taxonomic groups within BirdTrack and this is one idea we are already taking forward (see page 1).

One interesting finding was the proportion of respondents involved in different birdwatching activities. Nearly everyone who replied watches their garden birds, with local patch watching the second most popular activity. Only 14% ‘twitch’ rare birds that have been found by other people – or at least admit to it – whilst an encouraging 45% take part in local or national bird surveys. 260 respondents are ringers – about 10% of the total number of registered ringers.

The number of BirdTrack and bird recording questionnaire respondents engaged in different birdwatching-related activities



RESEARCH UPDATE

BirdTrack provides vital information for science!

BirdTrackers will know that keeping track of your own bird records is enjoyable and rewarding. However, when entering those records after a day in the field, it’s good to reflect that they also feed into an increasing amount of scientific research. For example, whilst BirdTrack Maps and Reports give a summary of migration timing, Mark Eddowes has taken this a step further and published a paper in *Ringing & Migration*. The paper describes how he analysed BirdTrack data to see how spring arrival dates between different migrant species are correlated with each other.

Timing of migration has been fascinating birdwatchers for many years of course. Back in the 1960s,

the BTO ran a survey known as the Inland Observation Points. This involved collecting complete daily lists of birds from 299 inland locations across Britain and in many ways was analogous to BirdTrack. Back then, however, the BTO had no computers and the quantity of data generated was too great to analyse! The IOP data cards were kept in the BTO’s archives and have recently been unearthed and computerised. Work is now underway to compare migration timing described by the IOP with the timing described by BirdTrack complete lists today – watch this space for further details...

BirdTrack records have also been used in recent months to contribute to status reviews of a number of species. Whilst the status of our most numerous species are well understood

from large-scale monitoring schemes such as the Breeding Bird Survey, Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and Bird Atlas 2007–11, and the rarest species are well-monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, there is certainly a ‘middle’ group of species where BirdTrack records can add a great deal of contextual information. A recent update of Waterbird Population Estimates published in *British Birds* was largely based on WeBS data, but BirdTrack records were extremely helpful for looking into scarcer species such as Ruff, Slavonian Grebe, Smew and Snow Goose. Indeed, a separate paper was published by the RSPB’s Simon Wotton which estimated the number of Bitterns wintering in the UK; again, BirdTrack records made a significant contribution to this review.

BirdTrack STAT...
2 hours
 the average duration of a birdwatching visit submitted to BirdTrack

Using BirdTrack to target conservation funding

The Bird Conservation Targeting Project used your BirdTrack records to help direct conservation resources for scarce and declining farmland and woodland birds towards important sites. Emma Teuten explains...

Emma Teuten Data Management Officer, RSPB

BirdTrack STAT...
2.7%
 The peak annual reporting rate for Corn Bunting, usually reached mid May

A successful way to improve the future for many scarce and declining species is to create or maintain suitable habitat. In a world with limited resources, we need to focus our conservation efforts in places that will benefit most from funding such as agri-environment schemes. To help target resources for bird conservation, the Bird Conservation Targeting Project (BCTP) was conceived.

The project began in England in 2004, with the aim of filling the knowledge gap left since the completion of the last breeding-bird Atlas in 1991. By 2008, the project had been extended to the whole of the UK. The BCTP produced annual breeding distribution maps for more than 40 species of farmland and woodland birds. The maps have been used to guide the provision of land management advice, and to allocate funding towards sites known to be important for birds. To date, hundreds of maps have been used to advise the spending of millions of pounds through agri-environment and woodland grant schemes. In England, the maps were used to locate three dedicated farm advisers in particular farmland bird hotspots, in order to deliver advice to farmers to benefit birds. In the East Midlands, woodland bird records have been used to give specific management and grant funding advice to landowners covering 10,000 ha of woodland

For the maps to be effective, they needed to show the most comprehensive, up-to-date information available. The success of the maps relied heavily on obtaining widespread, high quality bird records. These were collected from a wide range of sources,



The UK Corn Bunting population declined by 33% during 1995–2009*, and it is just the sort of species the BCTP aimed to help.

*BTO/INCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey data

CORN BUNTING BY JILL PAKENHAM

including national surveys, local bird clubs and BirdTrack.

BirdTrack was a valuable resource to the project, as it collects a vast quantity of records with a broad geographic distribution. BirdTrack records are especially useful for mapping more widespread species, such as Curlew and Lapwing, which are often under-recorded. This allowed us to fill in the gaps left by other surveys. Consequently, fewer farmers and landowners missed out on potential funding due to a lack of information about their local birds.

The BCTP put data contributed to BirdTrack to almost immediate use. Thanks to the efforts of many BirdTrack recorders, the BCTP was able to create comprehensive high quality targeting maps within a year of the submission of bird sightings. The data quickly fed through to the government agencies, to be used to guide conservation resources. The birds, therefore, have been directly benefiting from records contributed to BirdTrack.

The eagerly-awaited Bird Atlas 2007–11 will fulfil the role of BCTP over the next few years. In the longer term, it is envisaged that BirdTrack will play an even more central part in helping to target conservation resources at the species that most need help. To that end, BirdTrackers are encouraged to include as much information as possible about the birds they encounter, particularly details about the breeding status.

The BCTP was supported by a partnership between the BTO, the Centre for Data and Recording, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Forestry Commission England, Forestry Commission Wales, Forest Service, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the RSPB, and Scottish Natural Heritage. For more information, see www.rspb.org.uk/targeting.



Making the most of a million records

Rare-bird news might seem to have little relevance to conservation but as **Mark Grantham** reports, there is much to be gained by ensuring that such information is captured in BirdTrack...

Mark Grantham BirdGuides

BirdGuides (www.birdguides.com) has been providing a bird news service since November 2000, keeping birders up-to-date with news of scarce and rare birds in Britain and Ireland via the web, email, text and phone. Since early 2010, BirdGuides have been working much more closely with BTO, and one aspect of this exciting collaboration has been the importing of BirdGuides records into BirdTrack.

Sharing these records with BirdTrack makes them more accessible for analyses, and ensures that they can contribute to other projects such as Bird Atlas 2007–11 and the Bird Conservation Targeting Project. They also now feed into the more general bird recording network more readily, by being available to the British Birds Rarities Committee and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, all of which serves to maximise the value of BirdGuides records.

Several months were spent sorting, checking, cleaning and processing the BirdGuides archive records, which were then loaded into the BirdTrack

database by the BTO IT team. This was no mean feat, as we wanted to get the maximum value out of the records and make sure that they were as accurate and complete as possible. There were also a myriad of permutations of bizarre and unusual records, including birds that apparently changed identity more than once, such as the Norfolk *Sylvia* warbler in the example below.

Once all of the issues were resolved, we were in a position to load the records; in itself a scary proposition:

629,571 – the number of lines in the original file;

16,650 – the number of unique sites with records;

1,021,370 – the number of individual bird records to load;

284 – the average number of records per day (ranging from 1 to 911!);

These million-plus records are now accessible via BirdTrack, bringing

a wealth of records of scarce and rare birds, extralimital birds and extreme dates for migrants into the system. Additionally, by making the BirdGuides records accessible alongside records of commoner species submitted directly to BirdTrack, the summary lists and results available online now paint a more complete picture of the birds recorded at any location.

The process by which records were sorted and loaded means that we can now run this transfer of data as an automated nightly process. So at some unspecified, and undesirable, time of night, the BTO server calls up records from the BirdGuides server and automatically loads them, making them available the next day. In this way, the lists of birds at your local patch, as viewed via the Species by Location tool, will always be as current as possible.

BirdTrack has also become the route by which county bird recorders can access BirdGuides records, as they are now integrated into the standard BirdTrack county download. It makes so much sense to integrate bird recording as much as possible, so it's great to have made this big step forward!

For more information about how to receive rare bird news direct to your Inbox or phone visit the BirdGuides website: www.birdguides.com

17:33	12/10/09	Dartford Warbler	Norfolk	Winterton Dunes NNR	17:15
		Details...	still early evening (not Subalpine Warbler nor Sardinian Warbler as previously reported)		
X	15:18	12/10/09	Subalpine Warbler	Norfolk	Winterton Dunes NNR
			Details...	a probable in the South Dunes 1km south of the church; not Sardinian Warbler (later re-identified as a Dartford Warbler)	
X	15:08	12/10/09	Sardinian Warbler	Norfolk	Winterton Dunes NNR
			Details...	a possible in the South Dunes on the path 1km south of the church (later re-identified as a Dartford Warbler)	



List it, don't lose it!

'As long as I take a few minutes after my trip to enter the list into BirdTrack, it doesn't matter what state my notebooks get into.'

Anne Carrington-Cotton BTO Scotland Data and Admin Officer

There is an old philosophical debate about a tree falling in a forest: if no-one heard it fall, did it make a sound? There's a parallel here: if you see a bird but don't note it down and pass it on, does the record exist?

My field notebooks are sorry affairs: they have been stuffed in pockets, rained on, forgotten in car boots, and had muddy wellies dumped on top of them. Having been subjected to such sustained abuse, the contents are barely legible. The fact that they are plural also hints at a complete lack of organisation on my part. My memory is no longer what it used to be and if things are not written down as they happen, they frequently cease to exist. For this reason not only do I regularly have several notebooks in operation, but other pieces of paper scrawled with lists of two-letter codes litter my life. This situation is no good at all. Much of this information can (and does) disappear without trace, or is extremely difficult for me to find.

Most importantly, no-one else knows about it.

When I first came back to the UK after 30 years in Africa, BirdTrack was just starting up. As I was lucky enough to get a job with the BTO at that time, I decided to make use of it and I have been delighted with it ever since! As long as I take a few minutes after each trip to enter the list into BirdTrack, it doesn't matter what state my notebooks get into. I could have entered my records into a spreadsheet on my own computer but, as we know to our cost, technology can fail at times, causing data stored on hard drives to disappear. Entering my trip lists into BirdTrack not only ensures that they remain safe and accessible to me, but also makes the information available to local recorders and projects like Bird Atlas 2007–11.

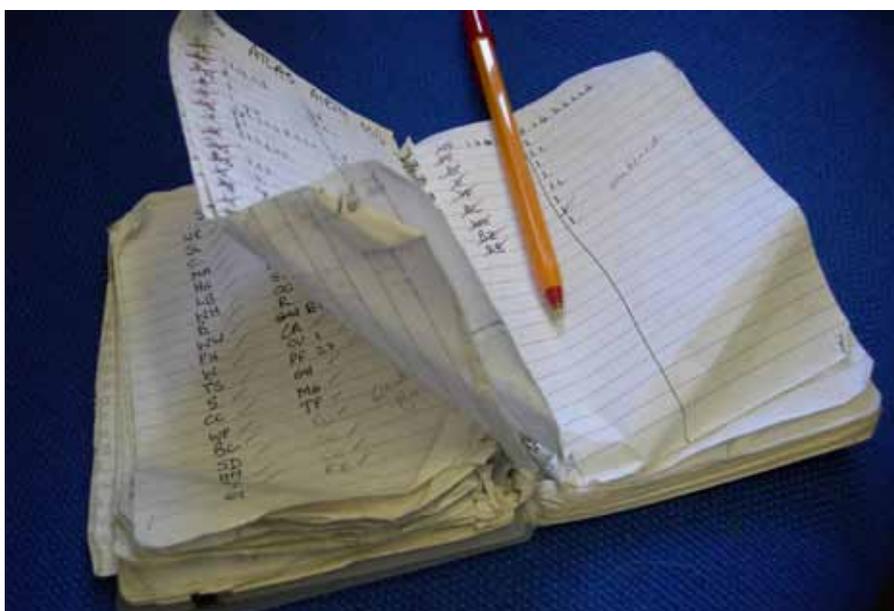
Through BirdTrack, I can look at my bird records whenever I want, in a variety of ways. I can download a map of locations where I have seen

a particular species. I can replicate a list of birds seen at a certain place, long after my notebook has vanished! BirdTrack also allows me to see the bigger picture. I seemed to encounter a lot of Grasshopper Warblers in 2011 – was that just me being in the right place at the right time or did others also find the same thing? A quick look at the Grasshopper Warbler reporting rate in the Maps and Reports section of the BirdTrack website shows that lots of other people noticed this too: the reporting rate is higher than in previous years. Furthermore, if I plan to visit an area I haven't been to before, I can download a list of birds recorded at that location to give me an idea of what to expect. Alternatively, in areas where no records have been submitted, I am given a huge incentive to add my own sightings after my visit.

The animated maps are one of my favourite tools. A look at the distribution of Swift records from April and May this year shows a tentative arrival in southern England in the first fortnight of April, followed by scattered arrivals slowly spreading north throughout the month until, bingo!, there's a flood of records in the first week of May.

So in summary, BirdTrack is a useful tool to discover up-to-date information on British and Irish birds, it's a secure way of holding your personal bird records and it is great fun to browse through on a wet Sunday afternoon. Most of all, it is providing a huge and growing dataset, and the larger the volume of data, the more reliable the results it can show.

Remember, if you are going to make a noise in the forest, make sure that someone is there to listen: put your records into BirdTrack!



What's in a year?

Throughout 2011 BTO staff at The Nunnery locked horns with RSPB counterparts at The Lodge in a bid to record the most species on the reserves surrounding the two headquarters. Competition instigator Nick Moran takes up the story...

BirdTrack STAT...
2,152
10-km squares in
which Blackbird was
recorded in 2011.

The BirdTrack Challenge 2011 began as a friendly competition between BTO and RSPB staff to record – in BirdTrack – the highest number of bird species around their respective headquarters. Both The Nunnery and The Lodge all-time bird lists stood at about 180 species so it promised to be close. And so it proved, with the teams BirdTracking new species at a remarkably similar rate. The year began with the likes of Bittern, Bewick's Swan and Hawfinch gracing the Nunnery Lakes, whilst The Lodge had quality rather than quantity: (Coue's) Arctic Redpoll and Waxwing. Whilst the onset of spring saw the RSPB team close the gap, it was October that proved decisive. Eight new species were logged in rapid succession at the Nunnery Lakes, with both Short-eared Owl and Little Gull being new records for the reserve, whilst staff at The Lodge had to 'settle' for Hen Harrier, Black Redstart and Ring Ouzel. Although the grey goose influx yielded White-fronted Geese for both teams in November, further additions were few and far between, leaving the final totals BTO 143, RSPB 140.

Making a concerted effort to find and record birds at local sites provides the opportunity for some interesting comparisons using the new BirdTrack Explore My Records facility. For example, by the end of April 2011 I had logged 2,979 records (including 55 complete lists), comprising 114 species. A year – and a very wet April – later and my stats for 2012 are telling: 2,019 records (34 complete lists) of just 106 species. Comparisons at the species level are revealing too: last year I recorded five Wheatears in the first three weeks of April, compared to just



WHEATEAR BY CHRIS MILLS WWW.NORFOLKBIRDING.COM

▲ At least five Wheatears passed through the Nunnery Lakes reserve during 2011.

one in 2012, on 30 April. This pattern of later arrivals in 2012 is also borne out by the national reporting rate for Wheatear.

A second challenge – the Twenty Eleven All-taxa Listing (TEAL) Cup – was also dreamt up, with the intention of occupying us during the quiet birding months in the summer. It quickly snowballed into a year-long survey of two sites' flora and fauna, though! The TEAL Cup recording efforts resulted in huge advances being made towards compiling an inventory of the species inhabiting

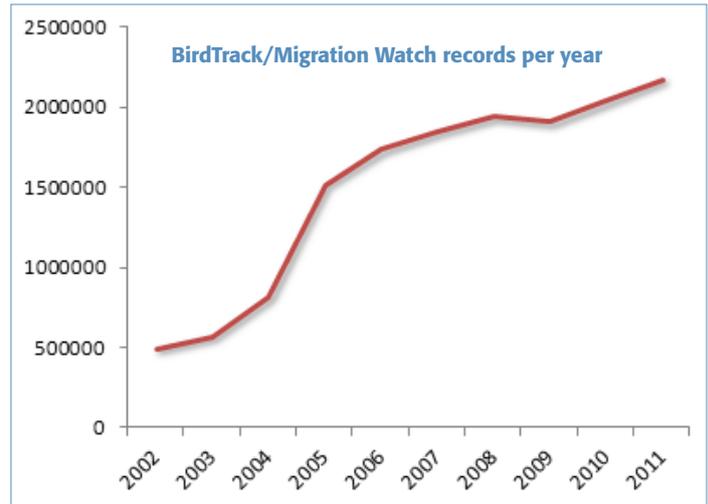
the Nunnery Lakes reserve, and The Lodge becoming the third most species-diverse RSPB reserve in the whole country (behind Minsmere and Abernethy)! The final score of the all-taxa element of the competition was a different story to the avian result, the RSPB claiming victory by an impressive 2,025 species to 1,738. Highlights were many and varied, and it was fantastic to see in-house enthusiasts, generously assisted by local experts, identifying and recording an astonishing array of plants and animals on the two reserves.

Annual summary of records

An incredible 2,179,452 records were added to BirdTrack from across Britain and Ireland for 2011!

Since the launch of Migration Watch, BirdTrack's predecessor, the number of records submitted to BirdTrack has been increasing year on year. This has meant more records of scarce species such as Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Hawfinch, making BirdTrack a valuable source of information on these and other poorly monitored species. More records also equates to wider geographic coverage, which in turn means that county recorders / bird clubs are being provided with more valuable data for projects such as local atlases.

The tables on the next three pages provide an overview of the number and geographic spread of records of the most regularly-recorded species in 2011.



- **Records:** number of individual records submitted, either as casual/roving records or as part of lists (includes BirdGuides records)
- **10-km sq:** number of 10-km squares in which the species was recorded in 2011 (3,125 visited in 2011, from a total of 3,879 across Britain and Ireland)
- **Rep %:** Proportion of complete lists in which the species was recorded
- **Max count:** Highest single count of individuals recorded on one date

Species	Records	10-km sq	Rep %	Max count
Mute Swan	25,583	1,259	28	358
Bewick's Swan	1,293	215	0	2,500
Whooper Swan	3,131	632	1	3,000
Bean Goose	1,457	275	0	212
Pink-footed Goose	4,025	594	3	63,356
White-fronted Goose	1,597	373	1	6,100
Greylag Goose	15,961	1,110	17	65,845
Snow Goose	240	81	0	35
Canada Goose	20,873	1,142	24	1,250
Barnacle Goose	2,172	411	2	8,000
Brent Goose	4,648	389	3	10,000
Egyptian Goose	2,831	237	3	132
Shelduck	12,407	799	13	2,000
Mandarin Duck	1,563	290	1	127
Wigeon	12,484	927	13	22,000
American Wigeon	482	40	0	2
Gadwall	12,111	669	14	387
Teal	17,058	1,076	19	4,000
Green-winged Teal	527	78	0	2
Mallard	41,722	1,878	48	1,014
Pintail	3,360	378	3	1,400
Garganey	2,326	297	0	10
Shoveler	10,071	608	11	300
Red-crested Pochard	1,070	148	1	67
Pochard	8,191	577	9	850
Ring-necked Duck	511	62	0	4
Ferruginous Duck	409	26	0	2
Tufted Duck	19,352	1,057	21	1,000
Scaup	1,924	340	0	4,000
Eider	2,944	410	2	4,600
Long-tailed Duck	1,308	226	0	1,030
Common Scoter	2,131	360	2	14,400

Species	Records	10-km sq	Rep %	Max count
Surf Scoter	370	41	0	5
Velvet Scoter	952	186	0	250
Goldeneye	5,277	667	5	1,100
Smew	2,423	237	0	23
Red-breasted Merganser	2,907	505	2	215
Goosander	4,976	809	4	285
Ruddy Duck	453	90	0	24
Red Grouse	863	218	1	200
Ptarmigan	73	42	0	20
Black Grouse	226	83	0	50
Capercaillie	23	8	0	3
Red-legged Partridge	5,050	728	6	400
Grey Partridge	2,301	448	2	70
Quail	1,160	406	0	22
Pheasant	24,346	1,649	29	500
Golden Pheasant	68	19	0	11
Lady Amherst's Pheasant	10	6	0	3
Red-throated Diver	2,122	381	1	5,642
Black-throated Diver	999	267	0	72
Great Northern Diver	2,333	431	1	170
White-billed Diver	85	25	0	5
Fulmar	2,351	367	2	3,800
Cory's Shearwater	152	58	0	1,200
Great Shearwater	199	44	0	2,003
Sooty Shearwater	978	186	0	8,000
Manx Shearwater	1,142	265	0	23,972
Balearic Shearwater	1,059	154	0	316
Storm Petrel	527	158	0	358
Leach's Petrel	334	86	0	83
Gannet	3,575	529	3	50,000
Cormorant	23,524	1453	27	1,025
Shag	2,889	498	2	650

Species	Records	10-km sq	Rep %	Max count
Bittern	2,338	237	1	7
Little Bittern	29	4	0	1
Night-heron	172	33	0	2
Cattle Egret	452	60	0	6
Little Egret	11,367	738	11	328
Great White Egret	1,653	222	0	6
Grey Heron	24,469	1,648	27	57
Purple Heron	259	47	0	2
White Stork	157	82	0	2
Spoonbill	2,440	193	0	58
Little Grebe	11,602	945	12	100
Great Crested Grebe	13,402	773	15	1,286
Red-necked Grebe	897	157	0	20
Slavonian Grebe	2,106	287	1	84
Black-necked Grebe	1,521	195	0	80
Honey-buzzard	502	174	0	7
Black Kite	321	76	0	3
Red Kite	5,020	813	3	200
White-tailed Eagle	512	132	0	5
Marsh Harrier	5,459	441	5	70
Hen Harrier	3,678	627	1	19
Montagu's Harrier	253	91	0	5
Goshawk	307	170	0	6
Sparrowhawk	12921	1,491	12	8
Buzzard	25,152	1,983	24	43
Rough-legged Buzzard	1,019	167	0	5
Golden Eagle	269	120	0	7
Osprey	2,460	649	0	6
Kestrel	18,217	1,682	18	12
Red-footed Falcon	107	32	0	2
Merlin	1,626	542	1	5
Hobby	3,053	631	2	65
Peregrine	4,818	972	3	8
Water Rail	2,394	403	2	20
Spotted Crake	135	26	0	2
Corncrake	116	58	0	10
Moorhen	27,097	1,303	32	220
Coot	24,166	1,057	29	2,825
Crane	900	207	0	40
Great Bustard	16	10	0	2
Oystercatcher	16,306	1,333	17	6,000
Avocet	3,108	213	3	1,200
Stone-curlew	222	39	0	129
Little Ringed Plover	3,243	357	3	300
Ringed Plover	5,642	678	5	940
Kentish Plover	47	11	0	1
Dotterel	402	114	0	16
American Golden Plover	284	59	0	4
Golden Plover	4,179	731	4	7,500
Grey Plover	3,079	341	3	1,650
Lapwing	20,959	1,324	22	10,000
Knot	2,636	362	2	50,000
Sanderling	2,221	337	2	1,000
Little Stint	2,043	284	0	28
Temminck's Stint	400	79	0	9
White-rumped Sandpiper	310	57	0	2
Pectoral Sandpiper	1,134	161	0	8
Curlew Sandpiper	2,669	352	1	80
Purple Sandpiper	1,062	228	0	190
Dunlin	7,343	672	7	15,000

Species	Records	10-km sq	Rep %	Max count
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	556	95	0	28
Ruff	3,453	368	2	142
Jack Snipe	614	242	0	15
Snipe	5,746	867	6	199
Woodcock	1,298	586	1	25
Black-tailed Godwit	6,104	457	6	6,200
Bar-tailed Godwit	3,218	467	3	7,320
Whimbrel	2,715	559	2	212
Curlew	14,167	1,197	15	1,396
Common Sandpiper	4,063	764	3	30
Green Sandpiper	3,889	487	3	56
Spotted Redshank	2,823	295	1	77
Greenshank	4,554	550	3	80
Wood Sandpiper	2,144	309	0	21
Redshank	12,368	861	13	2,000
Turnstone	4,575	529	4	1,000
Red-necked Phalarope	229	40	0	5
Grey Phalarope	874	220	0	120
Pomarine Skua	1,464	292	0	365
Arctic Skua	1,619	353	1	184
Long-tailed Skua	416	139	0	600
Great Skua	1,443	335	1	288
Sabine's Gull	867	213	0	865
Kittiwake	1,862	354	1	10,000
Black-headed Gull	39,081	1,645	46	11,000
Little Gull	2,764	427	0	7,100
Mediterranean Gull	3,795	513	2	478
Common Gull	13,847	1,313	16	11,000
Ring-billed Gull	612	94	0	5
Lesser Black-backed Gull	19,070	1,392	22	7,000
Herring Gull	25,929	1,561	31	7,000
Yellow-legged Gull	2,159	325	1	50
Caspian Gull	847	147	0	6
Iceland Gull	1,546	280	0	8
Glaucous Gull	1,233	258	0	4
Great Black-backed Gull	11,376	1,094	13	800
Little Tern	929	170	1	300
Black Tern	2,223	377	0	120
White-winged Black Tern	170	19	0	1
Sandwich Tern	2,996	429	3	2000
Common Tern	5,462	585	5	10,000
Roseate Tern	443	97	0	900
Arctic Tern	1,902	466	1	10,000
Guillemot	1,661	358	1	20,000
Razorbill	1,371	299	1	2,000
Black Guillemot	849	238	1	138
Little Auk	392	124	0	221
Puffin	467	132	0	1,440
Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	13,329	1,111	16	615
Stock Dove	12,115	1,019	14	293
Woodpigeon	61,471	2,023	74	98,470
Collared Dove	25,326	1,552	30	160
Turtle Dove	1,080	296	1	22
Ring-necked Parakeet	2,856	131	3	7,008
Cuckoo	4,483	1,004	4	10
Barn Owl	2,527	647	1	8
Little Owl	1,685	433	1	6
Tawny Owl	3,379	886	2	12
Long-eared Owl	477	166	0	7
Short-eared Owl	3,116	563	1	50

Species	Records	10-km sq	Rep %	Max count
Nightjar	270	114	0	10
Swift	11,092	1,358	11	6,236
Alpine Swift	44	21	0	1
Kingfisher	4,646	717	4	22
Bee-eater	195	70	0	7
Hoopoe	336	125	0	2
Wryneck	706	165	0	19
Green Woodpecker	15,728	1,031	18	17
Gt Spotted Woodpecker	20,441	1,519	22	20
Lsr Spotted Woodpecker	471	190	0	5
Golden Oriole	158	46	0	3
Red-backed Shrike	274	59	0	2
Great Grey Shrike	1,822	279	0	3
Woodchat Shrike	369	43	0	5
Chough	715	110	0	60
Magpie	46,435	1,747	57	140
Jay	15,403	1,321	17	30
Jackdaw	36,218	1,895	44	5,000
Rook	19,237	1,647	23	10,000
Carrion Crow	53,874	1,861	66	350
Hooded Crow	2,954	539	3	55
Raven	6,818	1,236	6	100
Goldcrest	11,456	1,398	12	55
Firecrest	1,637	311	0	17
Blue Tit	55,437	2,028	66	190
Great Tit	47,516	1,959	57	130
Crested Tit	118	25	0	15
Coal Tit	18,473	1,636	21	100
Willow Tit	1,497	243	1	11
Marsh Tit	2,803	523	3	12
Bearded Tit	931	99	1	50
Short-toed Lark	129	20	0	3
Woodlark	667	118	0	22
Skylark	17,387	1,552	20	1,200
Shore Lark	575	49	0	23
Sand Martin	7,749	1,142	8	5,000
Swallow	25,095	2,063	26	12,334
House Martin	11,998	1,576	12	1,000
Red-rumped Swallow	128	50	0	3
Cetti's Warbler	3,884	235	4	30
Long-tailed Tit	24,906	1,583	29	80
Greenish Warbler	54	15	0	1
Pallas's Warbler	181	60	0	2
Yellow-browed Warbler	1,522	229	0	16
Radde's Warbler	21	5	0	1
Dusky Warbler	155	27	0	3
Wood Warbler	565	260	0	10
Chiffchaff	23,785	1,688	25	236
Willow Warbler	12,855	1,685	13	530
Blackcap	18,534	1,588	19	100
Garden Warbler	3,389	764	3	30
Barred Warbler	283	73	0	8
Lesser Whitethroat	2,718	583	3	12
Whitethroat	13,400	1,302	14	200
Dartford Warbler	367	71	0	8
Subalpine Warbler	98	22	0	2
Grasshopper Warbler	1,917	557	1	25
Savi's Warbler	58	8	0	1
Icterine Warbler	65	28	0	3
Melodious Warbler	110	23	0	1
Aquatic Warbler	21	6	0	2
Sedge Warbler	6,433	867	7	350

Species	Records	10-km sq	Rep %	Max count
Marsh Warbler	46	21	0	2
Reed Warbler	5,455	547	6	150
Waxwing	8,653	881	0	778
Nuthatch	10,562	1,000	11	20
Treecreeper	7,132	1,185	7	12
Wren	38,340	1,983	47	86
Starling	36,032	1,875	42	2,000,000
Rose-coloured Starling	288	52	0	2
Dipper	1,882	515	1	10
Ring Ouzel	1,453	406	0	60
Blackbird	59,854	2,152	71	300
Fieldfare	9,997	1,443	9	6,236
Song Thrush	22,287	1,714	26	600
Redwing	11,147	1,344	11	8,460
Mistle Thrush	12,044	1,471	13	90
Spotted Flycatcher	2,033	767	1	100
Robin	52,471	2,076	63	78
Nightingale	833	163	1	19
Bluethroat	155	25	0	2
Red-breasted Flycatcher	79	29	0	2
Pied Flycatcher	925	286	0	25
Black Redstart	2,329	432	0	40
Redstart	2,308	630	1	23
Whinchat	1,587	511	1	22
Stonechat	3,668	671	3	30
Wheatear	6,831	1,327	5	500
Duncock	38,566	1,852	47	98
House Sparrow	31,510	1,778	37	400
Tree Sparrow	4,805	590	5	800
Yellow Wagtail	3,473	535	3	180
Grey Wagtail	5,122	970	5	20
Pied/White Wagtail	24,384	1,915	27	1,027
Richard's Pipit	184	67	0	3
Tree Pipit	1,338	424	1	104
Meadow Pipit	14,836	1,582	16	20,000
Red-throated Pipit	50	15	0	2
Rock Pipit	2,734	549	2	53
Water Pipit	1,103	165	0	31
Chaffinch	51,078	2,139	61	6,752
Brambling	3,015	702	2	600
Greenfinch	30,370	1,679	36	400
Goldfinch	39,228	1,839	46	1,335
Siskin	9,347	1,230	9	675
Linnet	15,573	1,401	17	1,990
Twite	1,082	261	1	500
Lesser Redpoll	4,608	835	4	362
Common Redpoll	605	183	0	200
Arctic Redpoll	66	16	0	10
Common Crossbill	2,386	679	1	380
Scottish Crossbill	22	13	0	10
Common Rosefinch	342	58	0	15
Bullfinch	14,817	1,440	16	115
Hawfinch	731	159	0	40
Snow Bunting	2,326	430	0	265
Lapland Bunting	1,411	260	0	160
Yellowhammer	9,869	1,118	10	200
Curlew	218	21	0	68
Ortolan Bunting	53	20	0	3
Reed Bunting	15,315	1,230	17	190
Corn Bunting	1,538	257	1	500

In addition to the regularly-recorded species in the table on the preceding pages, records of 139 other distinct species or taxa were received during 2011. These included 75 British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) rarities, 44 escapes/species not yet deemed to have self-sustaining breeding populations, and 20 hybrids, aggregates or 'unidentifieds'.

The top ten BBRC rarities by number of observations (with total in brackets) were Glossy Ibis (556), Long-billed Dowitcher (442), Spotted Sandpiper (388), Semi-palmated Sandpiper (368), Bonaparte's Gull (354), Lesser Scaup (340), Pallid Harrier (333), Red-breasted Goose (320), Lesser Yellowlegs (319) and Desert Wheatear (218). The most heavily reported individual rarities were Oxfordshire's Rufous Turtle Dove (136), the Scillies' Northern Waterthrush (136) and Norfolk's Western Sandpiper (127).

The most widely recorded escapes were Black Swan (108 10-km squares), Ruddy Shelduck (76 10-km squares) and Bar-headed Goose (65 10-km squares). Although not always popular with birdwatchers, records of (free-flying) non-native birds help us monitor the growth and spread of populations of such species, so BirdTrack welcomes records of feral breeders like Ring-necked Parakeet, as well as sightings of species that may establish self-sustaining populations in future, like Black Swan and Bar-headed Goose.

Redpoll (Common/Lesser) was the most commonly-recorded species aggregate, presumably due to the challenge of separating 'our' Lesser Redpoll from its Scandinavian relative, the Common (or Mealy) Redpoll – often difficult given good views, and near-impossible with only poor or flight views. The most frequently recorded hybrid was hybrid goose, whilst the 'unidentified' charts were topped by unidentified auk; not surprising considering the difficulty of confidently identifying distant black and white dots as they whizz over the waves!

Top 100 submitters of BirdTrack complete lists in 2011

Andy Jackson 1242 • Ray Eades 1225 • Jeff Butcher 865
 • Mr J Maskell 711 • Tom Wells 666 • Audrey Turner 645
 • Graham Rowling 583 • Mr R Humphreys 536 • Mr S Fisher 490 • Tony Powell 463 • Mr A Cooper 451 • Brenda Gough 441 • Mr K Jarvis 435 • Ben Carpenter 427 • Rupert Pyrah 422 • Glynne Evans 420 • Clive Poole 419 • Andrew Bramhall 413 • Charles Farrell 406 • Mrs V Harrison 405
 • Neil Rawlings 379 • Kelly Taylor 365 • Mrs J Waine 363
 • Nigel Garside 361 • Mr D Roberts 352 • Chris Dale 335
 • Ron Firmin 332 • Mike Wildish 329 • Mr P Taylor 321 • Mrs Message 318 • Peter Kirk 317 • Simon Taylor 317 • Mr M Shaw 316 • Steve Davies 306 • Mary Holley 305 • John Hawtree 289 • David Cawdron 288 • Andy Harrison 286 • John Wilson 283 • Mr M Kirby 272 • Derek Payne 271 • Mrs J Ferguson 269 • Mrs I Stachnicki 265 • Lesley Gerber 264
 • Miss A Borlase 254 • Mr A Chambers 250 • Mr D Piper 245 • John Wint 242 • Mr G Walthew 237 • Mr Ward 230 • Nick Rossiter 222 • Colin Brooks 220 • Steve Goddard 213
 • David Mellor 212 • Geoffrey Burton 212 • Martin Coath 208 • Graham Clarkson 207 • Derek Julian 204 • Malcolm Fairley 200 • Sally Jennings 198 • Mark Rolfe 197 • Vince Beaney 193 • Robin Borwick 190 • Stuart Pedley 189 • Miss T Job 187 • Nick Moran 185 • Mr K Jones 183 • Pauline & Ernie Scarfe 179 • Simon Horner 178 • Pete Seaman 175 • Mr N Pomiankowski 171 • Jeremy Smallwood 170 • Mr R Ingleston 169 • Christopher Powell 167 • Nigel Kerwin 167
 • Mike Archer 166 • Mr P Buxton 166 • Michael Bird 163 • David Wall 161 • John Birkett 161 • Mr D Sutcliffe 160 • Mr I Chapman 160 • Gareth Rees 159 • Mark Evans 159 • Mr McBeath 159 • John Rivoire 158 • Sarah Brotherton 157 • Douglas Bowker 156 • Mr D Lake 155 • Steven Davies 154 • Mr J Housden 153 • Mr R Peck 153 • David Chambers 151 • Mr S Collins 150 • Ceri Jones 149 • Alan Kydd 148 • Paul Carter 147 • Sarah West 147 • Mr S Posen 145 • Dr S Milligan 144

BirdWatch Ireland sets challenging BirdTrack target in 2012

Brian Caffrey BirdWatch Ireland

The support and effort given to the Bird Atlas from birdwatchers in Ireland was truly outstanding; thank you! Now that the fieldwork period for the Bird Atlas has finished, you may have thought it was safe to hang up your boots, file away your notebook, pack away your binoculars and put your feet up. Well I have news for you! We've set a challenging new target for BirdTrack in 2012 and we need your help to achieve it. We aim to increase the number of Irish bird sightings entered to BirdTrack from 29,035 to 40,000.

If it's been a while since you logged on to BirdTrack, or if you are new to

it altogether, you're in for a treat. The website has developed into one of the best online bird recording systems in the world. Recent additions include facilities to explore your records and to add your sightings as Roving Records. In the last few months, all your Atlas records have been transferred into your BirdTrack account too, so log on and have a look for yourself!

Whether it's a species list from your local birdwatching patch, a casual sighting while out and about or even somewhere to store your garden list, BirdTrack is the place to put your records. You can set up your local patch as a new site and take ownership

of entering your sightings, then watch your records appear as dots on the Irish map and contribute to the all-Ireland reporting rates.

BirdTrack also provides a fantastic opportunity for BirdWatch Ireland Branches to store and manage their branch records, providing additional records to county bird recorders and for regional bird reports. An increase in the number of records entered to BirdTrack in Ireland will also help to provide additional data on scarce and hard to find species, often missed by our national monitoring schemes such as the Countryside Bird Survey.

So why not give it a go: register today, join the growing band of Irish birdwatchers enjoying BirdTrack, and help us reach 40,000 records in 2012!

Birds in defence – BirdTrack in close support

‘Through BirdTrack, the MOD Bird Survey is now run throughout the year, collecting data on all birds within our military training areas’, writes **Roger Dickey** of the Army Ornithological Society.

Lt Col Roger Dickey AOS Chairman

As a major Government Department, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) owns a very large, varied and complex estate, with most of the UK’s indigenous habitat types, and exceptional biodiversity. Ownership by the Ministry, and the nature of military training, has meant that much of the estate has escaped intensive farming, agrochemical sprays and urban development and as a result many MOD sites have attracted both national and international nature conservation designations.

It is mandatory to establish a Conservation Group wherever there are nationally protected sites on MOD lands (*ie* Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)). Increasingly, Conservation Groups are being established at other MOD establishments to assist in managing land of local conservation value, and to inform the development and implementation of Integrated Rural Management Plans under the MOD Environmental Management System. Conservation Groups are usually chaired by the Commanding Officer or Head of Establishment, and consist of representatives from Defence Estates, the relevant statutory bodies, and other experts in wildlife, geology and archaeology, most of whom are volunteers. There is an ‘army’ of over 2500 volunteers (mostly civilians) that take part in MOD Conservation projects in the UK and on the land our military uses overseas. All this to conduct relevant surveys of establishments and training areas and to advise the authorities on sympathetic land management.

The general monitoring of birds



ROGER DICKEY

▲ Andrew Bray and John Hughes monitoring Quail on Salisbury Plain.

on the Defence Estate was, until recently, conducted through a count of species by numbers and distribution, area by area over the period of a set week in Spring. Despite the best of intentions, methodology was muddled in its requirement, labour intensive in its collation and questionable in its application. Over a period of several years, the Army Ornithological Society, in concert with Defence Estates looked at survey simplification based initially on the Breeding Bird Survey, then Bird Atlas methodology, and finally on BirdTrack.

Through BirdTrack, the MOD Bird Survey is now run throughout the year, collecting bird data on

breeding species within our military training areas and, as importantly, on over-wintering visitors that use feeding grounds particularly on coastal ranges. Through a contract between BTO and Defence Estates, bird data previously held for MOD use are now also available for regional and national benefit. The ability of BTO to answer specific questions from Defence Estates on distribution and densities in areas such as Salisbury Plain and the Stanford Training Areas has already been proven. With records from MOD sites going into BirdTrack, many exciting new opportunities are now available for using these data.

Dinosaur becomes convert

Self-confessed technophobe **Neil Trout** demonstrates why you don't have to be a computer wizard to be able to benefit from adding historic records to BirdTrack.

Neil Trout BirdTrack user

Back in spring 2005 I decided to experiment with BirdTrack. Before then my bird records were written up in a series of diaries and, for a small number of regularly visited sites, in handwritten logs similar to those used at the Bird Observatories in bygone years. It occurred to me that there was an enormous amount of information sat around gathering dust, that might be of interest or use to other individuals or organisations.

From the time of commencement of the fieldwork for the Winter Atlas (1981–84) I found that note-taking was much faster and easier using a micro cassette recorder (now superseded by voice recorders), particularly when all bird contacts are required. The time saved in the field, coupled with the increased alertness made possible, easily outweighs the small amount of time later spent compiling the species

totals. Furthermore, I discovered that I enjoyed my birding more when all contacts were logged.

Despite my underlying fear and distrust of modern technology, I entered the details of the regularly visited sites and included all lists back to 1 January 2005. All new visits were then entered directly onto BirdTrack. The simplicity of the system amazed me and I soon decided that all pertinent site visits back to 1973 should be added to the system. However, this was clearly going to be a time consuming occupation and would have to await my retirement in 2009. To date, all site entries have been completed except for the busiest, but a wet and windy winter should also see these records online too.

I am still discovering new benefits of using the BirdTrack system but some are immediately obvious. County Recorders can now access

all my information and I no longer have to sit at my desk and compile long lists of species from various sites during the year that may be of relevance to Bird Reports. Battered logs and diaries can be safely filed away before they fall to bits. Local and national rarities are flagged and submissions are now made on line. The site visit details (including weather and tide times where relevant) are now readily accessible and comparisons between visits or sites, annual totals of species and highest counts involve just a few clicks of the mouse. Hopefully we will soon see our regular site walks delineated on maps, and perhaps the availability of monthly means and percentiles.

I now relax in the knowledge that even if I am too uninformed or lazy to make use of the material collected it is now saved for posterity and, in years to come, others may find it useful.



BirdTrack at the Botanics

The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme which focuses on wild places. **Mandy Cook** describes a training day to introduce Award providers to birdwatching and BirdTrack.

Mandy Cook Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland

BirdTrack STAT...
74%
of complete lists
in 2011 featured
Woodpigeon, the
highest of any
species.

The Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, on a glorious spring day, was the perfect setting for John Muir Award providers (including teachers and youth workers) to get together with BTO Scotland staff for a fun and enjoyable day learning how to link birdwatching with taking part in the John Muir Award. Participants gained top tips and practical ideas for finding birds, as well as hands-on experience of bird identification, whilst adding value to their activities by logging their sightings in BirdTrack.

The 'Birding for Beginners' training day was organised in partnership with the John Muir Trust. The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme, open to all, which focuses on wild places. It encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration. The Award is particularly popular with the youth sector, schools and colleges, outdoor centres and adult volunteer groups.

Toby Clark, Award Scotland Manager, attended on the day and helped BTO Scotland staff explain how BirdTrack can not only be utilised by Award participants, who need to meet four challenges (discover a wild place, explore its wildness, conserve – take personal responsibility and share experiences), to gain the Award, but also how records from each 'wild place' can contribute nationally.

The Royal Botanic Garden is world-renowned for its horticultural excellence and, with the beautifully landscaped grounds providing such a tranquil haven just one mile from Edinburgh city centre, it was understandably popular on such



MANDY COOK

a beautiful day. Our training day participants (armed with a downloaded species list for the site produced by using the BirdTrack 'Species by Location' facility) were thrilled to spot 23 species, out of a total of 56 species registered at the Botanics.

The value of using songs and /

or calls to locate and identify birds quickly became apparent. Participants agreed that developing these vital skills was the key to detecting and recording a higher proportion of the species present at a site on their BirdTrack complete lists – an admirable goal for the future!



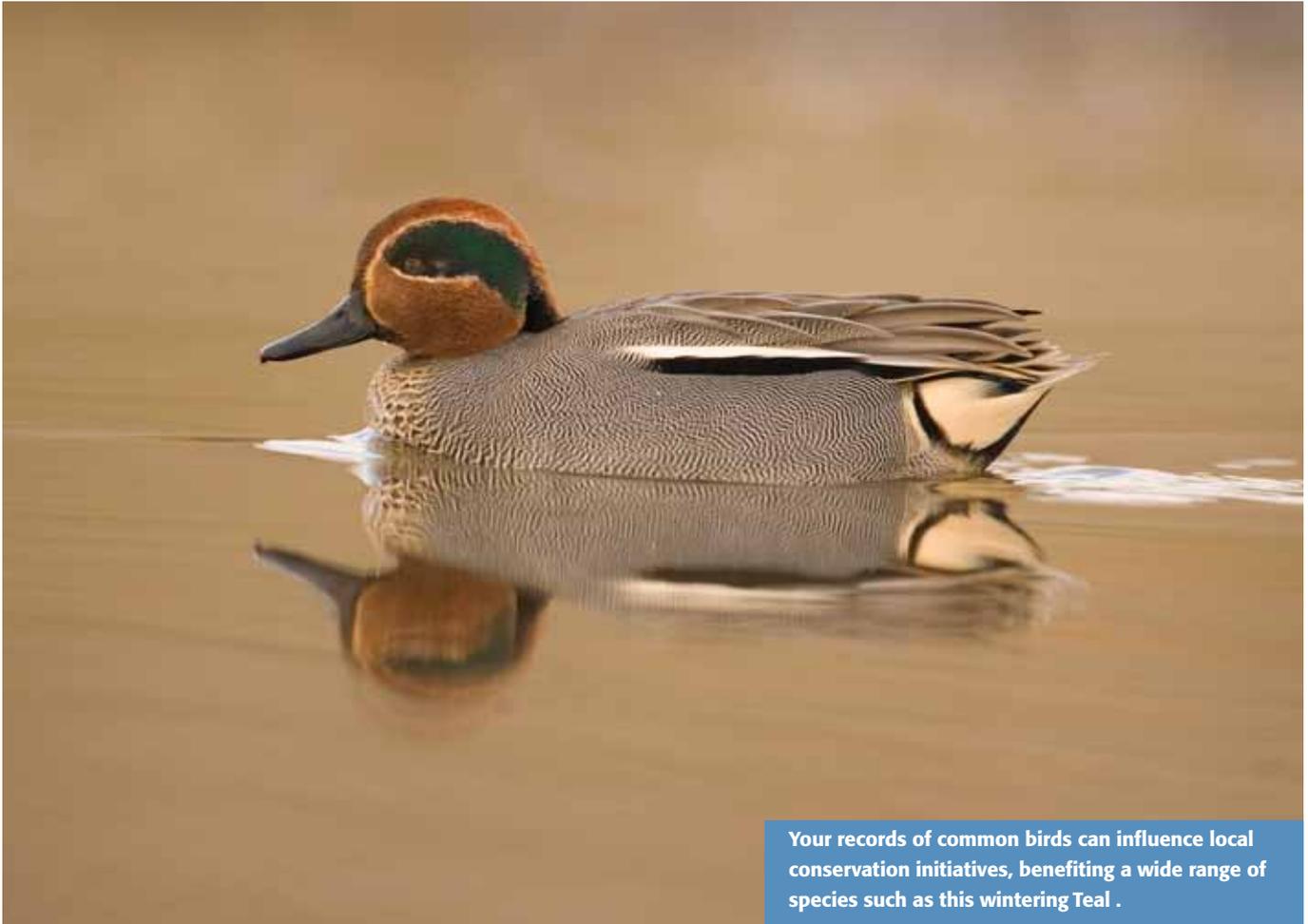
MANDY COOK

▲ Urban oases like the Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens can be great places to birdwatch.

A conservation triumph

It is easy to assume that your day to day birdwatching at a local site can't make a difference but as **Roy Pearson** found out, that couldn't be further from the truth...

Roy Pearson BirdTrack user



Your records of common birds can influence local conservation initiatives, benefiting a wide range of species such as this wintering Teal .

The immense conservation value of BirdTrack and of the BTO Ringing Scheme was illustrated over a year ago, when I received a phone call from an official of one of the government's agricultural agencies. George Danby, the farmer at my principal BirdTrack/ringing site at Wrangle Brickpits in Lincolnshire, had applied for a grant to convert twenty-seven acres of arable to wet grassland. This was the latest of this wildlife-friendly farmer's initiatives that have included the planting of a small mixed

woodland, the establishment of grassy margins around arable fields and the digging of a large mere for irrigation and a smaller one designed to dry to muddy 'scrapes' in summer – though this is rainfall dependent. The official told me that George had given him copies of my annual ringing reports dating back to 1973 and asked for details of BirdTrack counts that I had done recently. These were supplied and the grant awarded. Work on digging out the watercourses began in December 2009, with seeding

following in the spring of 2010.

Birds soon moved into the new area, including Skylark and Meadow Pipit and later Snipe and Jack Snipe; all these species were subsequently ringed during 2010. BirdTrack counts began to suddenly include good numbers of Teal and, amazingly, up to 30 Corn Buntings feeding on the surrounding stubble fields, whilst Jack Snipe records peaked at three. By the following summer, with the Bird Atlas in mind, I needed to update the breeding evidence for the tetrad for several species!

BACKCHAT

A warm welcome...



...to **Stuart Newson**, who has recently joined the BirdTrack team. Stuart is a BTO Senior Research Ecologist and has worked on many of the BTO's datasets. He is now looking at what the BirdTrack / Migration Watch dataset can tell us about changes in migration timing – watch this space!

Get connected

If you are registered for BirdTrack, you should automatically receive our monthly e-newsletter (unless you have opted out), with stories about recent bird movements across Britain and Ireland, and all the news on the latest BirdTrack tools that are available for you to use.

If you are not receiving these e-newsletters, please check that they are not being spam-filtered by your email provider, and that the email address we have for you is up to date. To check the latter, log in to your BirdTrack account via the login button at www.birdtrack.net then click the link to 'My Details & Settings' (top right). Here you'll see the email we have for you, and a box where you can update it if necessary. The service provider charges BirdTrack per email address to which the e-newsletter is sent, so please help us get the best value for money by ensuring that your details are correct!

@BirdTrack on Twitter

BirdTrack has recently entered the world of social media by opening a Twitter account. If you tweet, you can follow us @BirdTrack and if you're tweeting about birds, BirdTracking or migration, please use the hash-tag #birdtrack

SNAP SHOT



The dragons are coming!

The 2011 BirdTrack questionnaire revealed that many of you look at and identify more just than birds. We've been working with the British Dragonfly Society to include dragonfly recording in BirdTrack. Thanks to keen BirdTracker **Chris Mills** for this fantastic shot of a Norfolk Hawker; now you'll be able to BirdTrack your next one!

Can you help?

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed articles and photographs for this newsletter. We'd love to hear your thoughts and suggestions on this first edition, and it won't be long before we're looking for content for the 2013 edition. If you have anything to offer, please contact birdtrack@bto.org

The BirdTrack team & key contacts

BirdTrack operation and development is guided by the BirdTrack Steering Group and the BirdTrack Working Group.

The **Steering Group** meets twice a year and consists of representatives from each organisation in the BirdTrack Partnership (BTO, RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club). It is primarily concerned with strategic matters such as the direction of future development, profile-raising, securing and allocating funding, and identifying research opportunities.

The **Working Group** comprises representatives from the British and Irish

bird recording communities (including county bird recorders, local bird club data managers and BirdTrack users) and BTO staff directly involved with developing and delivering BirdTrack. The Working Group was originally set up to guide the initial development of the system, to ensure that it met the needs of all the stakeholders in bird recording. After a five year gap, the Working Group reconvened in 2011 and will continue to do so at regular intervals, so that all parties involved in bird recording can regularly communicate their views.

BirdTrack is *your* system – if you have comments or suggestions you would like either the Steering Group or Working Group to consider, please email them to the BirdTrack Organiser at birdtrack@bto.org

The people involved in BirdTrack matters on a day-to-day basis are informally introduced in the 'Fieldguide to the BirdTrack Team' at <http://www.bto.org/birdtrack/team.htm>