

Birds in view 2009



Photo: Jill Packenham

Welcome to Birds in View

This newsletter is part of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, which aims to encourage volunteers of all skill and experience levels into bird recording. We hope that those of you who received the last newsletter have been inspired to get out and about to survey bird life in Scotland. For those of you new to *Birds in View*, we hope you will be equally inspired by this issue. It is through your activity and participation that we can understand, encourage an appreciation of and help conserve birds in Scotland.

In this issue you will read how a bird survey 'taster day' for land managers has inspired gamekeepers into action. They are out with their Roving Record forms, keen to contribute to the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 and are spying a host of bird life. You will gain an insight into why volunteering is so valuable through the example of the Biodiversity in Glasgow (BIG) project. Hebe Carus from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland looks at ways in which hillwalkers can help with bird recording and Carolyn Wilson, who has been a member of Garden BirdWatch for 15 years, extols the virtues of her favourite survey.

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The personal experiences told in *Birds in View* show us the significance of volunteering. It is this citizen science that the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project is supporting and it makes Des Thompson's 'view of the uplands' all the more enlightening. Volunteering adds value to your bird watching and recent bird identification courses held at Stirling University and Chatelherault Country Park have started some of those interested in birds on the road to recording. We hope that this edition of *Birds In View* will reflect the importance of volunteering and also show the fun you can get from bird recording. Enjoy!

See back cover for explanation of bird surveys referred to in the text

A view of the uplands

by Professor Des Thompson, Policy & Advice Manager in Scottish Natural Heritage, with special responsibility for the research programme

I spent the Whitsuntide weekend camping out in the far north west of Scotland, revisiting a glen I first went to in 1964. Back then, Desmond and Maimie Nethersole-Thompson had the average date of clutch completion for Greenshanks at 4th May, with the earliest hatching on the 2nd. Forty five years later, I had four broods freshly hatched, which meant the Greenshanks had completed their clutches between 28 and 30th April, hinting at earlier nesting now than then, though well within the range of previously recorded laying dates. One of the nest scrapes used this year had been used intermittently as far back as 1969, when the Nethersole-Thompsons found their 200th Greenshank nest, and still the same large tarns and flushes are being used during the first few days of brood rearing. Three days before that coveted 200th nest had been found, Derek Ratcliffe and I spied a small Golden Eagle chick in a huge eyrie above a loch; this year the nest was much deeper into the glen, under a pinnacle, much higher than is the norm for this part of the range. Ring Ouzels, Cuckoos and Merlin were present in the glen, as in the sixties (with at least two of the heathery crags used by Merlin in the 1960s still used) but a Sea Eagle had been seen in the glen weeks earlier, something quite inconceivable back in the 1960s and still rather exciting!

I could go on with these comparisons, which are simple snapshots of what we see in the uplands. I am struck, though, at how fortunate we are to be in the midst of the third Breeding Bird Atlas. I provided a few records for the '68-72 Atlas, and helped with the '88-91 Atlas. The '07-11 Atlas may turn out to be the most significant landmark in the history of ornithology in Britain. We may, for the first time, have evidence of sweeping changes across Britain and Ireland in the distribution and abundance of breeding birds, related to a host of factors including climate change, land use and species reintroduction programmes.

In the uplands, which cover around a third of Britain and Ireland's land mass, the existing evidence base is weak; we know very little about the determinants of range, timing of breeding and productivity of many of the breeding birds, even the commoner ones. When I look at recent distribution maps for the divers,

Common Scoter, Short-eared Owl, Whimbrel, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank (of course!), Rock Pipit, and even the Hooded Crow, I find some of the boundaries tantalising, but in just a couple of years we may have answers to questions regarding the bounds of some ranges, and changes in many.

So, when out in the field, we have a unique opportunity to develop our collective understanding of what is happening around us. We have a chance to make a real difference to the knowledge base on birds and the environment and, with each record submitted following what might be a tiring, rain sodden or gusty day, there is just the chance that we have contributed to a significant, emerging pattern. When I think back to my first visit to that glen in the North West, I recall being awestruck by great hulks of mountains and seemingly endless boggy and boulder strewn tracts. In some ways the character of the landscape has not changed over several decades; but the birds have – Osprey and Arctic Skua are now seen periodically, but the Lapwing has gone. Let's see if we can discover more about these and the many other changes, and use the hard won information to improve what we can in the environment.

The Ptarmigan story

by Mandy Cook, Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland

The monitoring of upland species, such as Ptarmigan, poses a serious challenge for volunteers in Scotland; but we are hoping that the results from the Bird Atlas 2007-2011, organised by the BTO in partnership with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and BirdWatch Ireland, will help us learn more about upland birds living in the remote, mountain habitats of Scotland.



The Ptarmigan is sensitive to changes in the environment and there is much talk about the impending doom for Scotland's mountain habitats, due to climate change. Surprisingly though, there is little field information to support or challenge the predictions. There is no doubt that changes in the uplands could affect birds and other wildlife: changes in grazing pressure from sheep and deer; climate change; changes in atmospheric pollutants; disturbance by humans, to name a few.

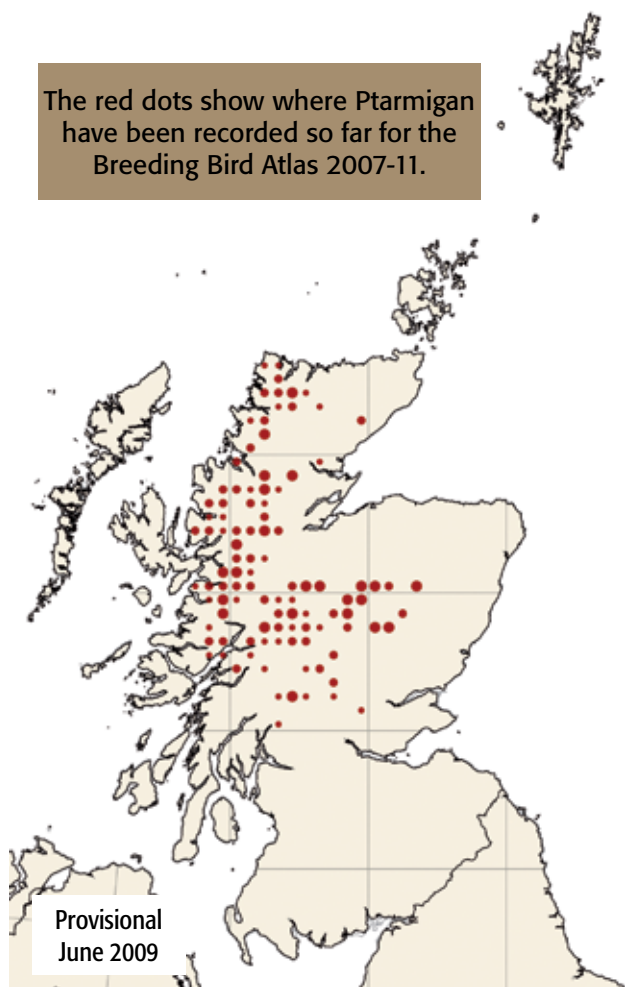
In April 2006, Project Ptarmigan was launched, run by BTO Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, with the aim of finding out how many volunteers would be willing to get involved in counting Ptarmigan in the remote habitats of the uplands. It was important to test whether the information collected by volunteers was suitable for rigorous scientific monitoring of Ptarmigan, or how the field methods could be altered if necessary to make this possible in future.

The information collected from the project showed that encounter rates varied between the different areas

of Scotland. Volunteers were most likely to encounter Ptarmigan in the Cairngorms and least likely on the edge of the Ptarmigan's range in Scotland, such as in the Trossachs, Argyll and Breadalbane. However, to make the results of voluntary recording more valuable we would need more people to record where they went but did NOT see Ptarmigan too.

The Bird Atlas 2007-11 will provide us with a better understanding of the current distribution of Ptarmigan in Scotland. Using this and the experience of Project Ptarmigan, it will be possible to develop a strategy for long-term monitoring of Ptarmigan and also other upland birds. Together we can all produce a clearer picture of the condition of specific mountain areas and help to unravel the effects of changing conditions on Scotland's mountains and their wildlife.

The red dots show where Ptarmigan have been recorded so far for the Breeding Bird Atlas 2007-11.



Visit www.birdatlas.net for more details and start recording!

Volunteering for the BIG project

Biodiversity in Glasgow



Scott Shanks and Jo Davis, BIG volunteers, tell us about their experiences in Yorkhill Park and Knowetap Street, Glasgow...

Glasgow proved to be an interesting place for volunteers to survey birds and butterflies during 2007 and 2008. The Biodiversity in Glasgow (BIG) project offered the opportunity for participants to survey the green spaces in Glasgow and over 100 people took up the challenge. Surveyors were allocated Glasgow City Council owned sites, such as public parks or cemeteries, and several even chose to survey their own sites such as their allotments.

The BIG project was a chance for both experienced and novice surveyors to take part. For those who were new to surveying, training was offered in identification and survey methods for both birds and butterflies. It was a valuable opportunity for Scott Shanks who took on the task of surveying Yorkhill Park. His survey area was just a few minutes from his front door and he enjoyed getting to know the site whilst he felt his bird and butterfly skills vastly improved. He saw 22 species of birds and 5 species of butterflies in 2007. Scott recalls “how pleased I was to see Goldcrests, Bullfinches and a Willow Warbler on my first visit”. Getting a day with suitable conditions for a butterfly transect “during rainy 2007” proved difficult, but in the end Scott managed to see Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Small White, Green-Veined White and Meadow Brown butterflies; a great reflection of just how much biodiversity there is on our doorstep.

Scott remarked “I’ve really enjoyed taking part in the project and it’s encouraged me to get involved in other conservation projects, including volunteering with the BTCV and SWT, and joining the committee of the local branch of Butterfly Conservation.”

Jo Davis was a more experienced surveyor and took his knowledge to a patch in Glasgow that was slightly unusual for someone interested in birds and butterflies. Aside from the litter and booze bottles and the Easy Jet flights overhead and a nearby railway line, there was little to impress our explorer in early April. But come spring, and Knowetap Street was transformed into a haven for wildlife. As well as finding Willow Warblers and Greenfinches he also saw Red Foxes and Roe Deer in this Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. He also came across Painted Lady butterflies which made him reflect upon their journey from North Africa to Glasgow. Jo felt they had found an appropriate home, in a place that a few months earlier had seemed little more than a “desolate and damp display of scrub land of leafless trees, weeds, a few struggling clumps of daffodils and some very boggy ground.”

Volunteering can take us to places that we would not usually go to and discover new things. In this case, behind the façade of an uninspiring urban landscape there are greenspaces teeming with wildlife. Surveyors in the BIG project discovered this again and again. Many have now gone on to try other bird surveys like Bird Atlas 2007-2011 and Garden BirdWatch.

The BIG project brought both beginners and the more experienced together to find out why it is important to survey wildlife. The answers partly lie in the reasons for volunteering – getting involved in the local community and discovering new places in your neighbourhood as well as deepening your knowledge and enjoyment of biodiversity.

The BIG project was run by BTO Scotland in collaboration with Butterfly Conservation and was funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and the Robertson Trust.

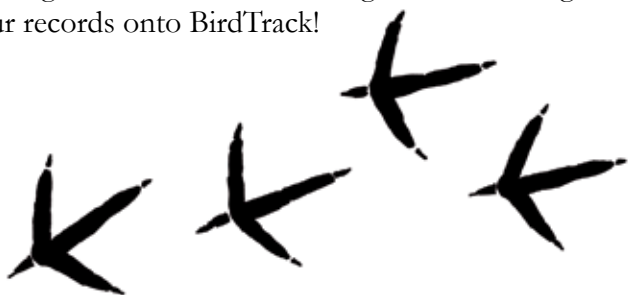
The migration and movement of birds

Keeping records for BirdTrack

Anne Cotton, from Kincardine, tells us about her personal experiences of using BirdTrack...



Field notebooks – what happens to them? Found months (years?) later in the pockets of an old raincoat, under the seat of the car or in an old carry-all, their rain-spotted, half-ripped, undated information has gone forever. Having discovered BirdTrack, the state of my notebooks has not changed much but the data they contained has moved onwards and upwards to greater things – from the local recorder up to the Bird Atlas project. My data is also still accessible to me in various forms from Excel spreadsheets to species maps, year lists, locality lists and I can download any sighting I have entered. Where have I seen Black-tailed Godwit? Or what is my species list for my local patch? Uploading lists from my notebooks whilst my memory is still fresh sets that data in stone and it's now there, not just for my use but it's adding to the bigger picture. The more people that use BirdTrack, the more detailed that picture is going to be – let's work for High Definition – get your records onto BirdTrack!



Sign up to BirdTrack

Keeping a record of the birds we see is one of the most useful aspects of our birdwatching. Although you may not think your own personal records are very significant, when you combine them with records from other birdwatchers in the same area they provide a valuable historical record. Over time, records can be compared and will give between-year changes in the patterns of occurrence of common species, as well as details of breeding, distribution and movements. Recording birds regularly from the same site can contribute to a greater understanding of its ornithological value and may provide important information for site safeguard and to evaluate the effects of site management. This gives real conservation value to your bird watching.

By submitting your records to BirdTrack (a simple online bird recording scheme developed through an exciting partnership between BTO, RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland and SOC) throughout the year you will not only be storing your records in a secure place but also increasing their conservation value, as they are pooled with records from other observers across Britain and Ireland to create the wider picture of the migrations, movements and distributions of birds. With your permission, your records can also be forwarded to local bird recorders so that they contribute to ornithology and conservation at a local level.

If you are a hillwalker and have seen Ptarmigan, we would really like to know. If you are a garden birdwatcher and have seen a Nuthatch, please tell us! Using BirdTrack to record sightings of species like these is very valuable. Building up an annual picture of bird distributions in Britain and Ireland provides an excellent source of information for national Atlas projects.

www.birdtrack.net

A tale from the mountains



Photo: Glenshee by Mandy Cook



Hebe Carus, Access and Conservation Officer for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, recounts the story of a day spent bird recording in the hills...

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) set up a one day course for mountaineers with BTO Scotland in autumn 2008. The group contained a varied mix of long-established birders and mountaineers who have always wondered what those things they kept seeing flying around were. We were all excited to be benefiting from the expertise of one of the BTO Scotland training officers.

Unfortunately, the vagaries of the Scottish weather threw everything at us it could muster – wind, rain and low cloud. At least it didn't snow, but it did mean four Meadow Pipits were the ticks for the day, and even they whizzed past on the wind so quickly some missed them.

Everyone went away from their experience determined to put into practice what was learned in the indoor session that went before the weather battering, and to send in roving reports for Bird Atlas.

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland is the representative body for mountaineers (hillwalkers, climbers and ski-mountaineers) in Scotland. Conservation of, and an interest in, the environment is a theme regularly raised by members as of great importance. That is why we have an Access and Conservation Officer. The landscape and biodiversity of the mountains are often equal motivators with the physical challenge. Getting involved in recording, or even just getting to know about the birds we see, can enhance our experiences when up in the hills. Taking on an Atlas tetrad (a two-by-two kilometre square) may be difficult in remote areas, but by recording your bird sightings you will be contributing significantly to the conservation of species, such as the Ptarmigan, in the long term. I would encourage mountaineers to get involved with the Bird Atlas 2007-11.

If you wish to find out more about the MCofS take a look at the website (www.mcofs.org.uk) or contact me at hebe@mcofs.org.uk.

There's no place like home

Taking part in Garden BirdWatch

Carolyn Wilson from Drumnadrochit, by Loch Ness, tells us about her passion for garden birds...

Although I have always enjoyed birdwatching, I only enlisted for Garden BirdWatch (GBW) about 15 years ago, when I moved to a house with a wooded garden. Until then, I had wrongly assumed that my garden's visitors were not interesting enough for it to merit inclusion in the project. My experience since then has shown me that, regardless of the size or nature of your garden, it is surprising how much you can learn about the birds that visit it, simply by watching and recording on a regular basis.

For example, before GBW, I would have told you that Blue Tits were always in my garden, in the same quantities week in, week out. In fact, (and my records tell me this, irrefutably) they are far more numerous between November and March. And the flocks of hungry Chaffinches that descend upon my feeders with such regularity may well have become a little 'ordinary', but their very familiarity means that, when the occasional brambling sneaks in amongst them, for me it stands out like a Parakeet!



Carolyn enjoying her garden

I have learned which foods particular birds prefer, and where they like it to be placed. I know that although the Wrens and Dunnocks may be less visible, they are probably not far away, and if I put seed and scraps under the hawthorn hedge, they will usually emerge to investigate. Conversely, I found that as my plot of land was gradually turned from a sandy-soiled field into something resembling a garden, so the Sand Martins, unfortunately, lost interest in it.



Greenfinches by Carolyn Wilson

These snippets of information may not be of great interest to ornithology's academics but, together with all the other things I am learning, they have made a much more knowledgeable birdwatcher of me.

Earlier, I mentioned Parakeets. A pair of these once appeared briefly in my first GBW garden in Lancashire; one of those wonderful "what on earth is that doing there?" garden birdwatcher moments. Three variously sized Tawny Owl chicks lined up on a branch, like a row of fluffy Russian dolls, was another. More recently, here in the Highlands, seeing a Water Rail skulk along the ditch by my garden fence-line was thrilling. Ultimately, though, those faithful, common regulars are the birds that make GBW so fulfilling, and allow anybody to become a true expert on at least one subject: that of their own garden.

**If you would like to take part in
Garden BirdWatch go to
www.bto.org/gbw,
email gbw@bto.org or
tel: 01842 750050.**

Bird survey 'taster' day

Bird Recording for Landowners and Land Managers

by Mandy Cook, Development Co-ordinator, BTO Scotland



Photo: Wheatear by Jill Pakenham

Bird Atlas Roving Records

In every 10-km square we would like to compile a comprehensive list of species found in the breeding season and, separately for winter. You can get a list of species already recorded in a 10-km square (or tetrad) on the Atlas website (www.birdatlas.net) - in Data Home click on 'Any Square Summaries'. The aim is to add species to the list for a 10-km square (or tetrad in those counties undertaking local atlases) and to record the breeding status. You can see our progress by looking at the species richness maps at <http://blx1.bto.org/atlas-results/allociman.html> or by looking at the regional results pages which give a lot more detail at the BTO region level http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/latest_results/regionalresultsnav.htm

Blair Castle, in Perthshire, proved to be the perfect setting, on a snowy day in March, for gamekeepers, stalkers, estate workers, landowners, land managers and land agents, from all corners of Scotland, to get together, share their fantastic knowledge about birds and learn how easy it is to register their sightings using BirdTrack and the Bird Atlas's roving records.

The taster day was developed in partnership with the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association and supported by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, the Scottish Countryside Alliance, the Scottish Gamekeeper's Association and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, and kicked off with a brief introduction to BTO in Scotland and an overview of BirdTrack and the Bird Atlas. Conscious of one participant's comment that 'sitting down is not my strong point!' (a view shared by many in the room!) we made a swift departure out into the beautiful Atholl Estate grounds to brush up on identification skills and record bird sightings.

Tim Baynes, Moorlands Director for the Scottish Countryside Alliance, certainly felt he benefited from the day...

"The 'taster' day was a great help for an amateur like myself. Once BTO had explained how the various bird monitoring schemes work, it became much easier to understand how I could contribute without necessarily needing to know every bird that I see or having to make a special trip. After the two outdoor sessions, I felt much more comfortable with identifying and recording most of the birds that we saw."

David Clark and Neil Robertson, gamekeepers from the Alladale and Deanich estates in Sutherland, also share their views of the day...

"We were initially a little apprehensive about attending the day and were not sure about who else would be there, but our fears



were soon alleviated when we walked into a room full of gamekeepers! It is refreshing to meet people who realise the good that keepers do and feel that we can help and have the balls to ask us for our assistance! By carrying out vital scientific work and field studies the BTO will give us, as the public, a better understanding of how our actions are impacting upon our native bird life and more importantly what we can do to turn it around. I only hope that we as people and Alladale as a group can do more to help in the future. Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about the organisation and thanks for having us at a thoroughly enjoyable, informative and interesting meeting. We look forward to the next one!"

Mandy Cook, Development Co-ordinator with the BTO in Scotland recently caught up with Kevin Grant, gamekeeper from Atholl Estates, to ask how he and his colleagues, who all attended the taster day, were getting on with recording their bird sightings...

"Since attending the taster day we are all certainly paying a lot more attention to the birds we see during our normal working day, many of which we had previously taken for granted. We all have our Atlas Roving Records Forms in our Landrovers and are keeping a note of our sightings. The birds we are seeing are certainly providing a enjoyable topic of discussion when we meet up! I work on the Dalnamein Beat of the Atholl Estates and have seen, so far, Black Grouse, Golden Plover, Curlew, Lapwing, Red Grouse, Peregrine, Hen Harrier, Common Gull, Carrion Crow, Raven, Golden Eagle, Kestrel, Snow Bunting, Wheatear, Skylark, Buzzard and Dipper."

Survey taster days are free if you'd like to become a volunteer. Places are limited, so book early. Contact Robin Anderson (email robin.anderson@bto.org or phone 01786 466 560) to book a place. Lunch will be provided. Outdoor clothing and strong boots will be required as each course will have a session outdoors (weather permitting). Bring binoculars if you have them.

Bird Survey Taster Days Still to Come...



Location	Date	Topics
Great Glen House, Inverness	Saturday 26th September 2009	Introduction to Bird Atlas and other bird surveys
Chatelherault Country Park, Lanarkshire	Saturday 24th October 2009	Bird identification and an introduction to winter surveys
Gartmorn Dam Country Park, Clackmannanshire	Sunday 8th November 2009	Bird identification and an introduction to the Wetland Bird Survey
Battleby Centre, Battleby, Perthshire	Saturday 21st November 2009	Bird identification and winter surveys for beginners
Loch of Skene, Dunecht Estate, Aberdeenshire	Wednesday 3rd March 2010	Wetland bird recording for landowners and land managers

Birds in Focus

What can be found out from your bird records? Volunteer observers take part in many different bird surveys and here we highlight some of their findings:

Coal Tit by Amy Lewis

The Coal Tit is a conifer woodland species that has benefited in recent years from the increase in and management of forest areas. The species range has expanded to take advantage of this preferred breeding habitat and they are heavily reliant during the winter months on the seeds of Sitka Spruce and other cone-bearing trees.

An interesting trend has emerged from Garden BirdWatch data showing the fluctuating use Coal Tits make of gardens. Coal Tits are attracted to feeding stations during the winter, to make use of the energy-rich foods provided when natural resources are scarce. They then reduce the amount of visits they make to gardens during the breeding season as they forage for insects (a protein source essential for healthy chick growth).

During the winter we see a resurgence of Coal Tit activity in the garden, but the extent of this use differs dramatically between years. The lowest Coal Tit winter reporting rates in gardens coincide with bumper seed crop years. This highlights the importance of over-winter feeding in gardens during years of low natural food abundance, as birds such as Coal Tits adjust their feeding behaviour to cope with changing conditions. Gardens provide an essential back-up food stock in winters when forest habitats are unable to support them.



Photo: Jill Pakenham

Whinchat and Stonechat

by Mandy Cook

Results from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) show that numbers of breeding Stonechats in Scotland have



increased by 254% (ie more than tripled) since 1994 (when the BBS survey started), which is one of the biggest increases shown by any species. Stonechats spend the winter here, and warmer weather could be one of the factors allowing Stonechats to expand their range so successfully across

Scotland. The results, so far, from the Breeding Bird Atlas 2007-11 also show that Stonechats are well and truly on the up.

Conversely, BBS information for Scotland suggests a decline of 29% in numbers of breeding Whinchats since 1994. The provisional second year Breeding Bird Atlas results also provide further evidence that there has been a serious decline in Whinchats, not just in Scotland but across the whole of the area covered by the Atlas.



So what's the problem? Are Stonechats occupying the entire Whinchat habitat? Or is it a problem of being a migrant (Whinchats spend the winter in Africa), in the same way as other summer migrants are struggling? We still need to get a clearer picture of the extent of the decline. More recording in the uplands is needed to help us accurately determine the change in range and numbers of this beautiful, summer visitor.

BBS is an invaluable resource for conservation science throughout the UK. We do need more BBS volunteers in Scotland, so if you are interested (and can identify birds by sight and sound) please visit the website at: www.bto.org/bbs/index.htm

Tools and Resources

Here are some of the tools and resources available to you from the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland Project, to help promote volunteer bird recording...

Leaflets

There are now three leaflets available, promoting bird recording in Scotland as part of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project:

The first leaflet explains how easy it is to take part in the Bird Atlas 2007-11. The second is a leaflet aimed at hillwalkers or anyone else who spends time in the hills. It explains how to use the BirdTrack system, an ideal survey for recording upland birds. The third leaflet 'Why Record Birds?' provides an introduction to bird recording in Scotland as well as useful information and contacts for anyone new to bird recording.



If you would like copies of any of these leaflets, or know of a suitable place where they could be distributed, please get in touch with BTO Scotland (contact details overleaf). To download copies of the leaflet please go to www.bto.org/scotland and follow the links.



Events, Fairs and Talks

Staff are available to give talks to any potential volunteers interested in learning more about bird recording. Staff are also happy to attend any local events or fairs where they can get the opportunity to promote voluntary bird recording. Please get in touch to find out whether someone might be available to come to give a talk, or attend a local event or fair. It may also be possible to organise tailored training courses for groups or organisations. **Contact BTO Scotland on 01786 466 560, email scot.info@bto.org or go to www.bto.org/scotland for further information.**

Stop Press!

BTO Scotland are always looking for ways to promote the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project to as wide an audience as possible. If you have any good news (or bad news) stories about birds you've seen, birds which have been notable by their absence, or birds doing peculiar things, we would love to hear from you. We will do our best to turn your stories into press releases. Could you tell us about your experiences of bird recording and help inspire others to get involved? Perhaps you could tell everyone your story in the next edition of 'Birds in View'?

If you would like extra copies of 'Birds in View' please get in touch.

BUILDING BIRD MONITORING IN SCOTLAND

Birds in View is funded by the "Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland" project, which aims to engage more volunteers in bird recording and survey work in Scotland. The project is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, The Gillman Trusts, BTO Scotland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.



The British Trust for Ornithology has existed since 1933 as an independent, scientific research trust, investigating the populations, movements and ecology of wild birds in the British Isles. Our speciality is the design and implementation of volunteer wild bird surveys. Our partnership between a large number of volunteers and a small scientific staff has proved to be a powerful, productive and cost-effective way of monitoring wild birds. The trust exists independently of both the conservation campaigns and the government agencies responsible for environmental protection. This means that the data we gather and the survey results we publish are objective and unbiased. A wide range of government bodies, conservation agencies, commercial bodies and private individuals rely on the BTO for information and advice.

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The Scottish Ornithologists' Club plays a central role in Scottish birdwatching, bringing together amateur birdwatchers, keen birders and research ornithologists with the aims of documenting, studying and, not least, enjoying Scotland's varied birdlife. The SOC is Scotland's national bird club with 2,500 members and 14 branches around the country.

SOC, Waterston House, Aberlady Bay, East Lothian, EH32 0PY

Tel: 01875 871 330 Fax: 01875 871 035

Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk www.the-soc.org.uk



The Gillman Trusts

Details of bird surveys and bird recording projects referred to in the text

BTO/SOC/BWI Bird Atlas 2007-11 - mapping Britain and Ireland's birds. A joint project between BTO, SOC and BirdWatch Ireland. www.birdatlas.net

Garden BirdWatch - the largest year-round study of garden birds in the world. Run by BTO. www.bto.org/gbw

BirdTrack - the online bird recording scheme. A partnership project between BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland and SOC. www.birdtrack.net

Local Bird Recording - gathers bird records through the Local Recorders Network. Run by SOC. www.the-soc.org.uk/soc-recorders

BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey - the scheme which monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. A partnership between BTO, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, RSPB and JNCC. www.bto.org/webs

BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey - the primary scheme for monitoring the UK's common and widespread species. A partnership between BTO, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and RSPB. www.bto.org/bbs

Photos on page 4: Bullfinches by John Harding, Small White by Richard Sutcliffe, Nest Box at Yorkhill by Scott Shanks and Small Tortoiseshell by Tom Prescott. Photos on page 10: Stonechat by Jill Pakenham and Whinchat by George H Higginbotham.