

## News

The newsletter for BTO members and volunteers  
in The Avon Region

March 2019

### Welcome

With the first of the summer migrants arriving, and the breeding season not far off, now is a good time to get in touch with you and let you know how you can get involved in BTO work in Avon.

### Can you help build our community?

In many areas, the RR is helped by a Regional Ambassador (RA), and along with the Regional Organisers for specific surveys, a small team is formed. If you are interested in helping out BTO in Avon, perhaps organising surveys, writing newsletters, running a Twitter account, then please contact Gordon Youdale ([gordon.youdale@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gordon.youdale@blueyonder.co.uk)) for further information.

### Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS)

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes of the UK's common breeding birds. Thank you to all of you that already survey a square. There are still a number of squares that are vacant – can you help?

#### B&NES

ST5160 - N shore of Blagdon ST5958 - White Cross, S of Bishop Sutton \*ST6159 - Farmland W of Clutton

ST6954 - E Radstock ST7057 - Peasedown St John \*ST7160 - Farmland N of Dunkerton \*

ST7257 - Wellow Road, E of Peasedown St John \*ST7264 - Twerton ST7368 - Nr Lansdown

ST7559 - Twinhoe, NE of Wellow \*ST7669 - SE Charmy Down

#### North Somerset

ST3960 - Moorland Farm, N of Banwell \*ST3962 - Rolstone, E of St George's \*ST4158 - N of Winscombe\*

ST4257 - Sidcot \*ST4659 - Upper Langford \*ST4668 - Chelvey (S of Nailsea) \*ST5564 - E of Winford

#### South Gloucestershire

ST5481 - Old Gas Works site ST5485 - Severn Beach ST5580 - Hallen \*ST5583 - Dyer's Common, S of Pilning \*ST5885 - Rhynes SW of Olveston \*ST5983 - W of Almondsbury \*ST6088 - Elberton

ST6186 - Woodhouse Down \*ST6389 - SW Thornbury ST7875 - Rushmead Farm, N of Marshfield

## Somerset (but in Avon BTO region)

ST3150 - N of Burnham-on-Sea\*ST3650 - Levels South of Rooksbridge ST3754 - Levels S of Loxton\*

ST3850 - Levels W of Chapel Allerton\*ST4456 - S of Shipham \*ST5050 - Westbury Beacon, Mendip\*

ST5454 - Lamb Bottom ST5650 - Tower Hill (E of Priddy (Mendip)) \*ST5851 - Mendip, W of Green Ore\*

ST6050 - SW of Emborough (W of Old Down)\*ST6054 - Farmland E of Litton ST6154 - NW of Ston Easton \*

- N of Gurney Slade ST6251 - Old Down (Mendip)ST6750 - N of Holcombe (E of Stratton on the Fosse)\*

ST6850 - LipyateST7050 - Wincanton Racecourse \*ST7452 - Hardington & surrounding farmland

ST7853 - W of Woolverton (nr Rode but W of A36)\*

\* Not previously surveyed

### Contact :

Dave Stoddard [dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk) Tel 0117 9246968

## BBS Training Day

**Sunday 31st March at 07.30** - meeting outside Westbury-on-Trym, Library, Bristol.

Important please contact Dave Stoddard (info above) beforehand if you would like to attend this course.

## Project Owl

In the autumn of 2018, there was a national Tawny Owl Point Survey (TOPS) organised by the BTO. This followed similar methodology to Tawny Owl surveys in 1989 and 2005. Nationally it is estimated that about 54% of the tetrads were occupied compared with 63% previously. Within AVON, 81 tetrads were allocated. Thank you to everyone that contributed to the Project Owl Appeal, and to the TOPS survey. Provisional results for the Tawny Owl Point Survey are available online: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/project-owl/tawny-owl-point-survey/provisional-results>

The second survey BTO organised was the Tawny Owl Calling Survey (TOCS). This involved listening regularly from a point chosen by the volunteer (usually your garden). In Britain, over 12,000 have signed up for the survey and over 8,000 have submitted records. It's just as important to make a submission even if you didn't hear a Tawny Owl! In Avon there are currently 270 individual people signed up covering 226 sites which 67 have owls present. There is still time to contribute to this survey so please visit the BTO website [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) to find out more details and sign up.

As part of Project Owl, BTO are keen to encourage birdwatchers to go out and listen for Long-eared Owls, one of our most poorly known breeding species. There are a few recent records of breeding in Avon – could there be a pair out there? Now is the perfect time to go out and listen.



## Farm Woodland Survey

This is a new survey for 2019 that will provide data on how birds have colonised woods, typically small, planted in farmland since 1988. More details are available on the BTO website [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org).

## Heronries Census

The BTO's Heronries Census has gathered nest counts annually since 1928 and in 2018 celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The aim is to count as many heronries as possible each year and to ensure that newly established sites are quickly discovered and brought into the programme of annual counts.

At the UK level, as at the end of January 2019, records had been submitted from over 1,250 sites visited in 2018. In recent years BTO have received counts from around 700 to 800 sites annually, so a big thank you to thank all those observers who have helped us to achieve such an impressive level of coverage. We expect the number of records to increase further as we receive additional counts from observers and other sources, such as those which have been submitted to local bird clubs.

BTO analysis shows that a slight decrease in Grey Heron numbers has occurred since 2017, with a provisional population estimate of 10,262 apparently occupied nests (AONs) in 2018, around 4% fewer than in the previous year. This was anticipated following the 'Beast from the East', which occurred in late February and early March. Although the weather was particularly severe at that time, the fact that it was also relatively short-lasting may have helped ensure that the dip was less pronounced than some of the historical decreases caused by more prolonged periods of wintry weather. You can download a summary of the 2018 season here: <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/heronries-census-summary-2018.pdf>

The main species covered is Grey Heron but Little Egret and Cormorant are also counted, as well as any rarer herons you might encounter.

One of the current aims of the National Organiser, Ian Woodward, is to remove old sites from the register where birds no longer breed. This is not always straight forward as birds can sometimes cease breeding at a particular locality, only to return again a few years later. However, there are some sites currently on the register that have received no data for many years now and are probably genuinely extinct. The following site **East Wood, Broom Hill, Brislington** comes under this category and are likely to be removed unless anyone is aware of breeding activity still occurring. If so, please let me know as soon as possible.

Finally, we are already into the 2019 season for these early nesting species. If anyone is aware of Grey Herons, Little Egrets or Cormorants breeding at a site, or would like to get involved with the Heronries Census, please let the Heronries Organiser know ;-

Eve Tigwell email at [eve.tigwell@zen.co.uk](mailto:eve.tigwell@zen.co.uk) Tel;- 01373451630



## **English Winter Bird Survey**

Thank you if you have been taking part in this survey which finishes in March. It has been based on existing BBS squares especially those within farmland. In Avon, have been surveyed for winter birds some by existing BBS surveyors but a few were covered by new surveyors. The data entry system is now up and running, so please submit your data as soon as possible.

## **Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)**

The BTO/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey is our key survey for monitoring non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The key counting period is the winter, but we strongly encourage counting all year round.

Our key wetlands are well covered in Avon for WeBS, so a big thank you to all the volunteers that currently help with the monthly counts. This is a really important survey, and provides valuable information about the waterbirds that use our wetlands throughout the year.

If you would like to help in this survey please go to the BTO website address below to view vacant sites within Avon

Butlers Close to Beese`s Tea Gardens at St.Annes / Broomhill,  
Bristol

Horton Pool , Nr Chipping Sodbury

Hunstrete Lake

Kennet and Avon Canal Dundas Aqueduct to Grosvenor  
Bridge, Bath

Monkswood Reservoir ,South of Cold Ashton off the A46

St George's Park Lake, Bristol

Victoria Park, Bath

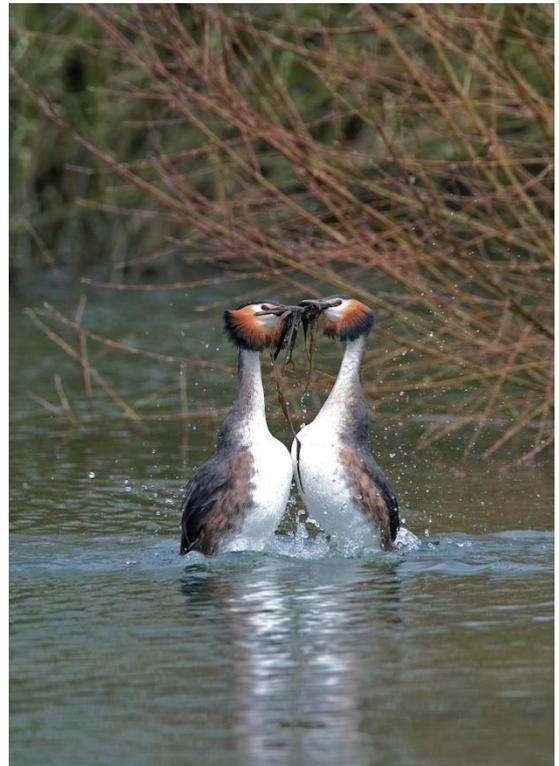
Wain's Hill - Charlcombe Bay, Severn Estuary

Battery Point - Redcliff Bay, Severn Estuary

Severn - Battery Point

Hills Flats, Severn Estuary

Berrow Flats, Severn Estuary



See [www.bto.org/webs-vacant-sites](http://www.bto.org/webs-vacant-sites) for more details.

## **Garden BirdWatch (GBW)**

Garden Birdwatch monitors the changing fortunes of birds and other garden wildlife through its network of 'citizen scientists'. Observations collected by BTO Garden Birdwatchers are analysed by BTO researchers and published in leading journals. BTO Garden Birdwatchers have charted the decline of the House Sparrow, the rise of the Woodpigeon, have discovered that urban birds get up later than their rural counterparts and have alerted conservationists to the impact of an emerging disease in Greenfinches.

Explore the Garden BirdWatch results and look at the long-term pattern of garden use by species. Some fascinating trends!at <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/results> or speak to Avon`s Garden Birdwatch Ambassador ;- Jane Cumming (Email: kittiwake@yahoo.co.uk ).

## **JNCC Urban Gull Survey**

In 2019 there will be a national census of urban nesting Gulls. This is part of Seabird Count, the national census, which has been running since 2015 but only fully funded and nationally coordinated since 2018. The census has been developed by the Seabird Monitoring Panel (SMP) and is coordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), managed by national organiser Daisy Burnell. Full details can be found at [Seabird Count](#).



## **Woodcock Survey**

The last national Woodcock survey in 2013 showed a marked decline in the number of sites occupied by Woodcock, so the BTO is trying to get annual coverage of a number of key sites. The survey involves spending 75 minutes at a pre-determined spot around sunset on two or three occasions and counting the woodcock seen or heard. National results and further information can be seen at <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/woodcock-survey/results>

## **Training courses**

There are a wide range of BTO courses around the country in 2019, ranging in length from a day to three days. Locally we have courses in April and May at WWT Slimbridge and GWT Magor Marsh, Caldicot See <https://www.bto.org/news-events/training/training-programme> for full details

## **Useful online resources**

There are some fantastic resources on the BTO website that are worth a look.

**BirdTrack:** Visit 'BirdTrack NEW' and take a look at 'Explore data' and use the 'Reporting rate' to produce interesting graphs. Try out then new data entry too! It's very easy [www.birdtrack.net](http://www.birdtrack.net) Your data feeds through to Eurobirdportal too (<https://www.eurobirdportal.org/ebp/en/>)

**BirdTrends:** A one-stop shop for information on population and demographic trends for our common breeding birds. Includes results from BBS, WBBS, Constant Effort Sites, nest recording [www.bto.org/birdtrends](http://www.bto.org/birdtrends)

**Online ringing and nest recording report:** Summary information by species and county <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>

**Wetland Bird Survey Report Online:** Summary information by site and species for all species monitored through WeBS <https://app.bto.org/webs-reporting/>

**Breeding Bird Survey:** English region trends and country trends for common breeding species

**Mapstore:** All the maps from *Bird Atlas 2007–11*, and previous breeding and winter atlases. [www.bto.org/mapstore](http://www.bto.org/mapstore)

**Garden BirdWatch:** Explore the Garden BirdWatch results and look at the long-term pattern of garden use by species. Some fascinating trends! <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/results>

## **Make your records count**

At this time of year, when you are out birdwatching, look for signs of breeding evidence and remember to enter a breeding code when you submit your records to BirdTrack, or to the county recorder. It could be a bird singing, carrying food, or recently fledged young that you see. This provides extra valuable information for the bird club, and for some species, also feeds through to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (<http://www.rbbp.org.uk/>).

## **Bristol Festival of Nature**

**Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 June, 10:00am-6:00pm, Bristol Harbourside,**

Get in touch with your wild side as Festival of Nature takes over Bristol's Harbourside for the UK's largest celebration of the natural world!

Explore the nature in your backyard and go wild at Bristol Festival of Nature with free interactive exhibitions, music, workshops, talks and much more!

The BTO will be attending this year's event and if you would be willing to help out over the weekend please let me know ( Gordon Youdale ) even if you can help out for the odd hour it would be much appreciated.

## **Bristol Ornithological Club**

Bristol Ornithological Club (BOC) provides the opportunity to pursue your hobby and find enjoyment in birds with like-minded people through assistance in the field and at indoor meetings.

For further details visit [www.bristolornithology.co.uk](http://www.bristolornithology.co.uk)

### **Contact details:**

**Regional Representative:** Gordon Youdale E-mail: [gordon.youdale@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gordon.youdale@blueyonder.co.uk) Tel: 01454881690

**Regional Ambassador:** Dave Stoddard E-mail: [dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk) Tel: 0117 9246968

**WeBS:** Inland sites: Rupert Higgins E-mail: [rupert@wessexeco.co.uk](mailto:rupert@wessexeco.co.uk), Severn Estuary: Harvey Rose Email: [H.E.Rose@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:H.E.Rose@bristol.ac.uk)

**GBW Ambassadors:** Jane Cumming E-mail: [kittiwake@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kittiwake@yahoo.co.uk)

**Web:** [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

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**Photographers:** Liz Cutting, John Harding, Edmund Fellowes, Chris Knights