

Bird Atlas 2007 - 2011 Survey

An important date is coming our way: November 1st 2007. This date sees the start of the Bird Atlas 2007-2011, an ambitious and important project to map all of Ireland and Britain's birds, both in winter and during the breeding season. Funding has been secured to cover a full-time Atlas Coordinator and three fieldworkers from autumn 2007, ensuring a resource and back-up that was not available for previous atlases but we still need your help!

Surveys

Chough Survey

I-WeBS Survey

Garden Bird Survey (GBS)

Seabird 2000

Upland Birds Survey

Countryside Bird Survey (CBS)

Red Grouse Survey

Waterways Bird Survey

Background Information

Being over 20 years since the previous winter atlas, and over 15 years since the last breeding atlas, this is an ideal time for a stock-take, and you can play an important part in building up the picture of bird distributions. As information is collected over the course of the new project, there will, no doubt, be surprises and some all-too-familiar problems in store. Will farmland birds still be on a downward spiral, or will agri-environment measures have kickstarted an upturn in their fortunes? There will certainly be some "good news" stories, such as the spread of Little Egrets from the south and Buzzards from the north.

Fieldwork will span four winters and four breeding seasons, starting in November 2007, during which time we will cumulatively survey the whole of Ireland. To fulfill these objectives, two core methods will be used: a Roving Records survey, which will search for species, including scarcer species, in every 10km square, and Timed Tetrad Visits, which will comprise dedicated counts in a specified sample of tetrads (a tetrad being an area 2km square).

Further details about the methods are available on the Atlas website

www.birdatlas.net or by contacting BirdWatch Ireland. The Atlas coordinator, Brian Caffrey, will be giving a series of talks to BirdWatch Ireland members groups across the country in the coming weeks and months, followed by workshops from September onwards so keep an eye on the 'What's On Guide' at the back of Wings for further details. Why not come along to find out more and see how you can help put dots on the map and watch the stories unfold?

The Atlas will neatly complement existing surveys such as I-WeBS, CBS and the Garden Bird Survey. These surveys, which monitor the population levels of Ireland's birds, rely on volunteers visiting randomly selected squares and monitoring gardens

on an annual basis. These are invaluable in their own right, producing population trends and warning Oalerts, but atlas projects complement them by providing comprehensive information, covering far more squares and more species than the sample schemes can achieve.

Taken together, the complete range maps (and the range-change maps) of the atlases and the population trends identified by the monitoring schemes provide powerful tools of the trade for scientists and conservationists.

It is important to note that, during the period of the Bird Atlas, all bird data collected for the above surveys, and others, will feed into the Atlas project as Roving Records, so by continuing to do your CBS square, I-WeBS site or Garden Bird Survey you will already be contributing to the atlas.

For those of you with any energy left(!), get your wellies out again! Be one of the 50,000 birdwatchers across Ireland and Britain helping to produce the biggest and best Bird Atlas ever. Until then, use the Atlas website

www.birdatlas.net or contact the Atlas Coordinator to see how you can make Bird Atlas 2007-2011 a success, providing scientists and conservationists with the tools they need for the next 20 years of ornithology, not to mention an impressive book of which you can be proud.

Factfile

- Bird Atlas 2007-2011 is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) and BirdWatch Ireland.
- To take part in the Bird Atlas, visit the website www.birdatlas.net and follow links to 'Taking Part.' Allocation of fieldwork will be decided by the Atlas Coordinator, Brian Caffrey.
- Bird Atlas 2007-2011 will map the distribution and abundance of birds in Ireland and Britain during the breeding season and winter.
- Previous breeding-season atlases were carried out in 1968-72 and 1988-91. The only Winter Atlas was carried out in 1981-84.
- Fieldwork will comprise two elements: 'Timed Tetrad Visits' to specific tetrads (2km x 2km squares), and 'Roving Records,' which are supplementary records from any time during the atlas period.
- Fieldwork starts on November 1st 2007. Two visits to tetrads are required in the breeding season, and two visits in the autumn.
- Results produced by Bird Atlas 2007-2011 will form the basis of conservation priorities for coming decades.

Why not be part of the Bird Atlas, starting this autumn...

Timed Tetrad Visit: Count all the breeding and wintering birds in selected 2x2km square(s). A challenging task you can take on!

Roving Records: Note any breeding or wintering birds you find in any area you visit, i.e. anything from your list from a birdwatching trip to records of scarce species.

Other surveys: Your records from the Garden Bird Survey, CBS, I-WeBS or any survey will be added to the Atlas results.

Atlas Co-ordinator

Brian Caffrey is BirdWatch Ireland's Bird Atlas Coordinator. He will coordinate the survey from the BirdWatch Ireland Midlands Office in Banagher, Co Offaly.

Brian, from Kells, Co Meath, has a diploma in countryside conservation from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and a BSc in environmental management from the University of Gloucestershire. He joined the BirdWatch Ireland team in 2003, first working as a Corncrake fieldworker on the Shannon Callows and then taking on the Farmland Bird Project for the 2003-2004 winter season. He was Corncrake Project Officer for the next three years, until being appointed Atlas Coordinator.

Brian's work on declining farmland birds, especially the Corncrake, has given him an insight into the importance of monitoring bird populations. He has witnessed good news stories, too, such as the spread of Buzzard and Little Egret, including the latter's recent arrival on the Blackwater River near his native home.

He records bats and butterflies, too, and is a keen wildlife photographer. His interest in whales and dolphins also means you may find him tucked into a headland, anywhere from Galley Head to Malin Head, scanning the seas for fins.

He says: "I am especially looking forward to travelling around the country in the coming months and years, meeting BirdWatch Ireland members, carrying out fieldwork to help put dots on maps, and meeting the challenges that the Atlas will bring".

"The Bird Atlas will provide a fascinating insight into the status of Ireland's birds and will be a powerful tool for scientists and conservationists for many years to come."

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