

# Bird Atlas 2007-11

Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds



## Timed Tetrad Visits - Instructions

Bird Atlas 2007-11 aims to produce maps of distribution and relative abundance for all bird species breeding and wintering in Britain and Ireland.

*Timed Tetrad Visits* are principally concerned with discovering the broad patterns of relative abundance by counting birds for fixed periods in a set of sample tetrads (2km x 2km squares). The aim, therefore, is to provide an indication of the number and diversity of birds seen in your tetrad(s) during either visits of one hour or two hours duration. The same methods apply for winter and the breeding season (with the exception of evidence of breeding).

Your Regional Organiser (RO) will be aiming to accumulate survey coverage of at least eight tetrads per 10-km square in winter and the breeding season – ideally the same eight tetrads. Please survey the tetrad(s) you have been allocated and if possible in both winter and the breeding season. You can survey several tetrads if you wish but must coordinate this through your RO. Remember, you can also submit records of birds seen at other times, or in other areas, on a *Roving Records* form (available from your RO, BTO HQ, or download from [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net)).

### BIRD ATLAS ONLINE

The Bird Atlas is a huge project and we anticipate millions of individual bird records. To help handle this quantity of information, and to see how your results compare with others, we strongly encourage you to submit your data online. Registration is simple and opens up a world of immediate results. Visit [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net)

### WHICH TETRAD TO VISIT?

Liaise with your RO to decide which tetrad(s) you are to survey. Tetrads are identified from the full 10-km grid reference (eg SP24) plus a single letter suffix (eg J). The grid to the right shows the system of labelling tetrads within a 10-km square. For more information on tetrads and grid references see [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net), ask your RO, or contact BTO HQ.

E	J	P	U	Z
D	I	N	T	Y
C	H	M	S	X
B	G	L	R	W
A	F	K	Q	V

### HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? Choose from one hour, two hours or longer.

You have a choice. Everyone must spend the first hour of their *Timed Tetrad Visit* counting the number of individuals of each species they encounter (by sight and sound). You can then choose to spend a second hour counting. If you opt for the second hour your totals for the first hour and second hour should be recorded **separately** on the form.

Also, we have provided space on the form so that, if you wish, you can stay longer than two hours to list additional species or to check for evidence of breeding. Whichever you choose, ensure that you separate out the birds encountered during the first, second and subsequent hours in your notebook and when you submit the results online or on the recording form provided.

### WHERE TO GO IN THE TETRAD?

Your visit should **cover the range of the habitats present in the tetrad**. We do not expect you to cover the whole tetrad in one hour or two hours, so choose a route that covers as many habitat types as possible. You may need to seek permission to visit some areas in order to cover key habitats in the tetrad. Look at an Ordnance Survey map or the Google Map on the [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net) website to plan your route.

### HOW MANY VISITS AND WHEN?

For the first time we are combining winter and breeding season fieldwork into one Atlas. If you have taken on a tetrad for winter you need to make two timed visits – one in early winter (1 November – 31 December) and one in late winter (1 January – 28 February). If you have taken on the tetrad for the breeding season you need to make two timed visits – one early (1 April – 31 May) and one late (1 June – 31 July). For tetrads in northern

Britain where spring may be later, visits in the second half of each period may be preferable. If possible, offer to survey the same tetrad in winter and the breeding season – it will give us interesting opportunities to make seasonal contrasts across Britain and Ireland. Once a tetrad has received a pair of *Timed Tetrad Visits* in the breeding season and/or winter, it need not receive any more timed visits in that season. It may still receive *Roving Records* effort, perhaps to pick up scarce and nocturnal species or to confirm breeding (see later).

### WHAT TIME OF DAY?

In all seasons try to avoid periods of especially inclement weather when bird activity may be suppressed and the survey efficiency is reduced. During winter, avoid the first and last hour of daylight when birds can be moving from and to roosts and give rise to duplication across squares. During the breeding season make visits during mornings when bird activity is higher. If your square contains coastal habitats try to survey them from mid to high tide when birds on mudflats and on the sea will be more concentrated and closer, thus easier to identify and count.

### WHAT TO DO IN THE FIELD

You have been provided with a *Timed Tetrad Visit* form for each tetrad you are surveying. This contains a full species list (tailored for winter or the breeding season) and is split for an early visit and a late visit. We recommend you record directly into a notebook in the field (see example below-right) and then transfer the totals to your form when you get home – or better still, enter them directly onto the Bird Atlas online system.

At the beginning of your visit note the time, or start a stopwatch. Walk around the tetrad, checking the main habitat types for birds. Keep a tally of the number of individuals you encounter (seen or heard) of each species. Continue until the first hour is completed. If you have opted to do a second hour, restart the clock and continue on your way around the tetrad, keeping a **separate** tally of the numbers encountered. Do not visit the same areas again, and try not to record the same individuals again. There is a third column (Extra) which you can use to list anything seen outside of the timed part of the visit – that might be to tick off a new species seen whilst walking back out of the square (eg the Great Tit: right), or if you decide to double back to check out an area in more detail and look for species you may have missed.

TG11 B	17/4/07	2hr counts. Chv. dty. colon.	
	0800 - 0900	0900 - 1015 (pause)	BC.
Blackbird	III IIII	III	A
Blue Tit	III III	—	S
Woodpecker	17-1-4		H
Phoebe	1	11	2 P
Skylark	1	4	P
Redwing		1	H
Chiffchaff		1	S
Great Tit			✓

**What to count:** only count individuals that are using the square. Ignore individuals flying over the square except, for example, hunting raptors and hirundines that are effectively ‘using’ the square. During the breeding season only count full-grown adult individuals. On the coast, count birds as far offshore as you are confident in identifying them, provided you think they are still in your tetrad. Anything offshore but not in the tetrad should be submitted as a *Roving Record* for the appropriate 10-km square. Count all introduced and feral species too.

**Colonial nesting species (inland or coastal):** (see TTV form for colonial species marked ★) if you encounter a colony (one or more nests) then please use the separate ‘Colony Table’ on the recording form. The minimum requirement is to tick that a colony is present. If it is possible to count the colony, please provide either an estimate of the number of Apparently Occupied Nests or the number of individuals in the colony. Shading on the Colony Table gives guidance on which method to use for specific species. Only rough estimates are required (see Tetrad Population Estimates overleaf). If you are unable to count the colony (too large, inaccessible etc) then by providing a tick to say a colony is present we can pursue other ways of achieving a colony count. If you encounter any of these species away from a colony, just count them as normal in the main part of the form.

**Stopping the clock:** if you encounter a flock of birds, a colony, or a particularly ‘busy’ area (eg a wood at dawn chorus) you can ‘pause the clock’ to do the counting. When counting large aggregations, or areas with high densities, we are looking for an approximate count so don’t worry too much about getting the exact number. Remember to resume the clock before moving on.

### RECORDING EVIDENCE OF BREEDING (‘BREED CODE’)

During your tetrad visit note any behaviour that could be indicative of breeding using the coding system provided. You will see many of these activities during every-day birdwatching. Do not spend excessive time trying to confirm

breeding – this will eat into your counting time too much – though you can pause the clock if you wish to try and confirm evidence of breeding. Evidence of breeding mainly applies to breeding season visits. However, some species do nest early (eg urban Blackbirds, Crossbills, Rooks) and you may encounter evidence of breeding on your late winter visit. Though the 'Breed Code' column is shaded out you can submit an evidence code. You only need to record the highest (Possible → Probable → Confirmed) level of breeding evidence you record, so if you see a pair of Blackbirds in suitable habitat (code **P**) and later a Blackbird carrying food for young (code **FF**) then you only need to record **FF** as this equates to Confirmed breeding rather than Probable breeding. So codes lower down the list should be used in preference to those higher up.

### LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET BACK HOME

If you make notes directly into your notebook we advise you to transfer your records onto the *Timed Tetrad Visit* form as soon as possible, or better still, submit the records online at [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net). If you submit your records on paper forms, please ensure you provide your full contact details (email especially helpful). Please provide dates of visits and remember to indicate whether they were one hour or two hour visits.

### TETRAD POPULATION ESTIMATES (optional)

How many were there really? Having walked around part of the tetrad, you might be able to make some rough extrapolations of how many birds might have been present in the whole tetrad. These estimates need only be approximate: estimates in the '1's need only be to the nearest 1, in the '10's to the nearest 10, in the '100's to the nearest 100, and so on. For some species this will be very easy – if you went to the only lake in the tetrad and saw 6 Tufted Ducks, your estimate will be 6. If you covered perhaps half the woodland in the square and recorded 33 Blue Tits, your estimate might be 70. Providing these Tetrad Estimates is entirely optional but would be extremely valuable.

## Examples of completed forms

**Bird Atlas 2007-11**  
Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds

Timed Tetrad Visit form - Breeding

Observer name: D. E. BALMER

Postal address: c/o BTO  
THE NUNNERY  
THETFORD  
NORFOLK IP24 2PU

Email address: dawn.balmer@bto.org

Enter the 10km and tetrad code  
T L 8 8 Q

R	J	F	U	E
D	I	N	T	Y
C	H	M	S	X
B	G	L	R	W
A	F	K	O	V

Please enter the date of your visit. You must count birds for at least the first hour of your visit, but if you continue counting for a second hour please indicate by circling 'Yes'. Otherwise circle 'No'.

	Early Visit (Apr-May)	Late Visit (Jun-Jul)
Date of timed visit	22/04/2008	29/06/2008
Did you count for 2 hrs.	Yes/No (circle one)	Yes/No (circle one)

Species	Early visit				Late visit				Tetrad Popn Estimate
	1st hour count	2nd hour count	Extra (+)	Breed Code	1st hour count	2nd hour count	Extra (+)	Breed Code	
Osprey									
Goshawk	OK	1							1
Barn Owl	BD								
Little Owl	LO								
Towhee Owl	TO								
Long-eared Owl	LE								
Short-eared Owl	SE								
Nightjar	NJ								
Swift	SI				8				
Kingfisher	KF	1	1	H	1			T	3
Wheatear	WY								
Green Woodpecker	GL		1	H					2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	GS				1			S	3
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	LS								
Woodcock	WL								
Skylark	L	3	2	P	2			ON	4
Sand Martin *	SM	8		M					
Swallow	SL	6	4	M	3				
House Martin	HM		8	M	6			UN	5
Tree Pigeon	TP								
Meadow Pigeon	MP	1	1	S	1				
Rock Pigeon	RC								
Yellow Wagtail	YW								
Grey Wagtail	GL						✓	H	
Field Wagtail	FW	2	1	P	5			FL	2
Spotted Thrush	ST								
Willow Warbler	WW	9	6	P	7			FL	50
Dunlin	D	4	3	P	6				20
Rubble Thrush	R	6	6	P	4			FL	40
Nightingale	N	1		H					
Black Redstart	BR								

Note: Sand Martin is a colonial nesting species (marked ★). Sand Martins do not nest in TL88Q. If you have Sand Martins breeding, go to the Colony Table.

You can submit your records online at [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net), post to your Regional Organiser or to the relevant country address below:

- England, Wales, Channel Islands & Isle of Man:** Bird Atlas, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.
- Scotland:** Bird Atlas, SOC, Waterston House, Aberlady, East Lothian EH32 0PY.
- Ireland:** Bird Atlas, BirdWatch Ireland, Midlands Office, Crank House, Banagher, Co. Offaly.

## BREEDING EVIDENCE

For the Bird Atlas we follow the standard set of criteria used across Europe for all atlases. Where possible please apply the codes below for any sightings you make. Taken with all other observers, we will map the highest evidence (Possible → Probable → Confirmed). On your visits please record the highest level of breeding evidence you see against each species. If you have access to the web, visit [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net) to see which species have been 'confirmed' in your area and then help plug the gaps.

**All codes for Possible, Probable and Confirmed breeding must relate to individuals in potentially suitable nesting habitat.**

### NON-BREEDER

**M** Migrant  
**U** SUMmerring

### POSSIBLE BREEDER

**H** Observed in suitable nesting Habitat  
**S** Singing male

### PROBABLE BREEDER

**P** Pair in suitable nesting habitat  
**T** Permanent Territory (many individuals on 1 day or 1 individual over 1+ wk)  
**D** Courtship and Display  
**N** Visiting probable Nest site  
**A** Agitated behaviour  
**I** Brood patch of Incubating bird  
**B** Nest Building or excavating

### CONFIRMED BREEDER

**DD** Distraction Display  
**UN** Used Nest or eggshells found from this season  
**FL** Recently Fledged young or downy young  
**ON** Adults entering or leaving nest-site indicating Occupied Nest  
**FF** Adults carrying Faecal sac or Food for young  
**NE** Nest containing Eggs  
**NY** Nest with Young seen or heard

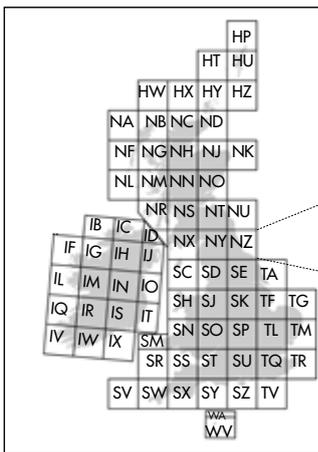
## What are tetrads and how do I find them?

All mapping for the Atlas uses the British and Irish Ordnance Survey national grids and grid references identify individual squares. There are two scales at which you can supply records – at the 10-kilometre scale and at the tetrad scale. A 10-km square is 10km by 10km and contains 25 tetrads, each 2km by 2km. The figures below show how to give a valid 10-km or tetrad reference:

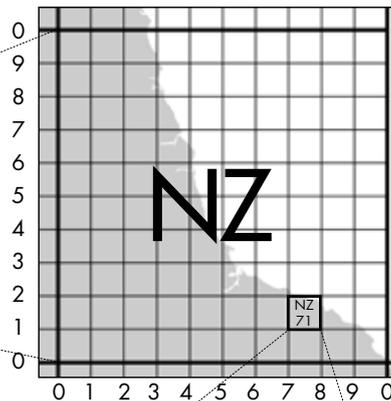
1. Find the two-letter prefix, e.g. NZ
2. Find the 10-km square, e.g. NZ71 – this is a valid 10-km square reference
3. Find the tetrad suffix letter, e.g. P
4. The map shows the tetrad NZ71P – this is a valid tetrad reference

For further information see [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net) or see the key on the OS map.

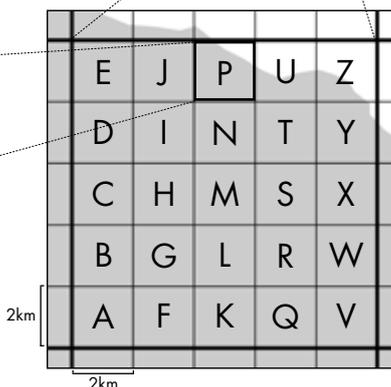
Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey map data by permission of Ordnance Survey, © Crown copyright.