



Greater Manchester Breeding Birds Atlas 2008-11

Guidelines for Recording and Submitting Records

(3rd and final version - March 2011)

Introduction

Detailed instructions for Bird Atlas 2007-11 can be found on the BTO website. There are three PDF's which can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/taking-part/forms-download>

- Introduction and how to help
- Roving Records Form and Instructions
- Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs) instructions

Based on feedback from Atlas contributors after the completion of recording for the first winter and breeding seasons, we felt it would be useful to issue some additional guidance.

Roving Records

These are casual records which can be **submitted by anyone**, from **any tetrad** (2km square) and are of vital importance now that we are in the final breeding season of the atlas, as they allow species recorded as possible or probable breeders, during Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs), to hopefully be raised to confirmed breeding status. See the section on **10 Km Square Summaries** for the most efficient way of doing this. You can visit a tetrad as many times as you like to collect Roving Records and repeat visits throughout the breeding season give the best chance of confirming the highest number of species.

Records from those tetrads which do not contain any of the county's main bird watching sites are of particular importance, as these squares will inevitably receive far less coverage. A list of the priority tetrads for Roving Records is included with this newsletter. Equally important are records from your back garden or neighbourhood. If you have seen breeding evidence for a common species, please don't assume that someone else will have already submitted a record for the same tetrad.

Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs)

TTVs are designed primarily to map the relative abundance of species between tetrads and 10 km squares. If you have taken on one or more tetrads for Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs), the BTO only requires each tetrad to be surveyed twice in one winter season, and twice in one breeding season. Once you have completed the four visits and submitted the results, the tetrad is considered complete as far as TTVs are concerned. However, you and other observers can continue to visit the tetrad as often as possible and submit Roving Records with breeding codes, especially of confirmed breeding.



Breeding Codes

All records submitted during the breeding season need to have a breeding code attached to them, otherwise the record can not be used in the production of the distribution maps. Full details of the breeding codes can be found at: <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/taking-part/breeding-evidence>

As you will see, depending on the breeding code used for a record, the bird will be classified as either a non-breeder, possible breeder (e.g. **S** for singing male), a probable breeder (e.g. **B** for nest building or excavating nest hole), or a confirmed breeder (e.g. **FF** Adult carrying faecal sac or food for young). The national and county species distribution maps will plot the records received into one of the three breeding categories (non-breeders will not be mapped), using three different dot sizes. We are aiming to confirm breeding of as many species as possible in each of the 330 tetrads which make up Greater Manchester county. The categories of breeding evidence are available on a handy card which is ideal for taking out into the field. Copies can be obtained from your local Atlas organisers.

Apart from birds Flying over, Migrants and SUMmering non-breeders, all records submitted should relate to birds in potentially suitable nesting habitat. If you see something that is clearly not in suitable habitat, for example Swifts over moorland where there are no buildings for them to nest in, then please do not submit the record to the Atlas.

The codes are for the most part self-explanatory. One of the easiest ways to raise the breeding status of a species from possible to probable is by recording the locations of singing birds. Initially these are recorded as **S** (Singing) – possible breeder. However, if you hear for example a Song Thrush, singing at the same location on two dates at least a week apart, then you can record this as **T** (Territory) and the bird is then classified as a probable breeder. In addition, two or more birds of the same species, singing against one another, should also be recorded as **T**.

FL – recently fledged, this should only be used for young birds which are accompanied by and still dependent on adults (e.g. being fed by the adults).

Tetrads

The new Greater Manchester Breeding Bird Atlas will map the distribution of species at tetrad (2km square) resolution. It is therefore vitally important that you record the tetrad when out bird watching. For example, a record of a Wren carrying food for its young (FF) from the 10km square SJ69 can not be used, as it does not tell us which tetrad the bird was in. Large parts of SJ69 are in Cheshire so we can not be certain that the bird was even in Greater Manchester. However, if the record includes the full tetrad reference, e.g. SJ69E Lightshaw, then it can be plotted on the county distribution map for Wren. Large parts of other 10km squares are also in adjacent counties.

Please remember that there are four 100km squares in GM, it is therefore important to check the 100km square prefix by using the enclosed GM tetrad map. Most of the northern half of the county falls within SD and the southern part within SJ. The boroughs where you need to be particularly careful are as follows:

Manchester, Salford & Wigan which fall into both SD and SJ
Oldham – SD & SE

Tameside – (the trickiest of all) – SD, SE, SJ & SK

Stockport – almost all in SJ with a small area on the eastern edge of the borough in SK

If you have not previously been involved in recording for a local or national Atlas and are unsure how to work out which tetrad a bird is in, the BTO website explains how to do this:

<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/taking-part/correct-grid-references>

There are a number of ways to work out in which tetrad a bird has been seen.

✦ By logging in to Bird Atlas online and clicking on the Add Roving Records icon. You will find a Google map of the UK at the top of the page. By repeatedly double-clicking on the map you can zoom into the area and read off the tetrad reference e.g. SJ89M

✦ The Greater Manchester tetrad allocation map can be accessed via this page:

<http://www.manchesterbirding.com/atlaspage.htm>

It shows the OS grid square numbers around the edges of the map and the name and reference of every tetrad in Greater Manchester. When submitting records please use the standard name for the tetrad as shown on the map. This will make the task of validating records more straightforward, enabling us to quickly check whether the tetrad name and reference match up.

✦ You can also obtain the grid reference of a location by using either the OS website:

<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/getamap/>

or

<http://wtp2.appspot.com/wheresthepath.htm>

With both of these websites the grid reference of the cursor location is displayed. The wheresthepath website displays both grid reference and latitude and longitude, so is ideal if you have a mobile phone equipped with Google Earth.

✦ A post code or latitude / longitude can be converted to a grid reference using the website www.nearby.org.uk

Once you have the grid reference of a location you can type this into the Tetrad Calculator on the BTO website at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/taking-part/atlas-tools> and the tetrad reference will be displayed e.g. SD910180 is in tetrad SD91E. You can also print off a map of the tetrad from the same page.

It is certainly worth investing in a GPS which makes it easy to find out the grid reference of a location. Basic models can be purchased for less than £100. Otherwise it is well worth familiarising yourself with the tetrad boundaries of the areas where you regularly birdwatch, through the use of landmarks.

10 km Square Breeding Summaries

The BTO has produced for each 10km square a PDF summary of the 2008-10 breeding season results. These consist of a tetrad by species matrix indicating the highest evidence of breeding recorded, for every species in each tetrad of the 10km square. You can request a copy from Steve Atkins for those 10km squares which you regularly visit. They are also available to download from the Atlas page on Manchester Birding:

<http://www.manchesterbirding.com/atlaspage.htm>

They are ideal for printing off and taking out into the field, enabling you to easily check the current highest breeding status recorded for any species in any tetrad. So if for example the current breeding status for Willow Warbler in tetrad SD60C Hindley is possible (Po) (i.e. Habitat or Singing), any records of probable or confirmed breeding for this species should be submitted.

Breeding records outside the core dates

The core recording period for the breeding season is 1st April to 31st July. However, if you see evidence of breeding activity earlier, or later, than this period, then please submit a Roving Record. This applies especially where the record raises the current breeding status from possible to probable, or probable to confirmed, or fills in a gap in a tetrad where there is no record.

BirdTrack Records

Records submitted via BirdTrack can be used for both the national and county Atlases, providing you have defined your sites to specify the area they cover, and most importantly added a breeding code. This can be done by clicking on the **Define My Sites** button on the BirdTrack data home page.

The data entry page can be configured to allow easy input of breeding codes. This will ensure that your records can be used for both the national and GM County Atlases. On the BirdTrack Data home page click on **My Details and Settings** at the top right of the page and then select from the options listed against **Preferred species list page layout Change to 1 column layout**. The breeding status box is then shown next to the species name on the same row. If you hover your cursor over the **Breeding** Information icon the list of breeding codes appears.

Records from sites which extend over more than one 10km square can not be used in the national Atlas and records from those that extend over more than one tetrad can not be used in the GM Atlas. If you do have key records from such sites please consider the option of submitting the records at tetrad level via the Atlas website.

County Report

To ensure the county report continues to meet the high standard set in recent years we would kindly request that you also submit your site records, directly to the County Bird Recorder, Judith Smith. The preferred format is on the Excel recording form which can be downloaded from Manchester Birding:

<http://www.manchesterbirding.com/recordingcountybirds.htm>

There are a number of reasons why it is important to submit records both to the Bird Atlas and the Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group. Records for the county report should use site names rather than tetrad references. These sites are stored in the county database against a central grid reference. However, many of the sites extend over more than one tetrad, so it may not be possible to use some site records for the Atlas. For example in 2008 we received a record from Heald Green of House Martins nesting on a street which runs through two tetrads. The central grid reference for Heald Green is SJ845863 in tetrad SJ88N. However the birds were actually nesting in the adjacent tetrad SJ88M. So we effectively need two records, one for the Atlas which will plot the bird or nest in the correct tetrad, and one for the county report which will tell us the name of the site.

Ideally, when you are out bird watching, it is a good idea to make a note of both the site and the tetrad, so that records can be used for both national and county Atlases and the County Bird Report.

Atlas Website – Upload Roving Records

There is now a facility on the Atlas website to upload Roving Records from an Excel file. We would kindly request that you do **not** upload records which have been entered onto the GM Bird Recording Group's Excel recording form. Many of the sites on the form extend over more than one tetrad. The central grid reference for the site may well be in a different tetrad to that in which you were recording and result in the record being plotted in the wrong tetrad. If you have already submitted records to the Atlas on the GM form, would you please email a copy to Steve Atkins, so the records concerned may be identified. The simplest way to submit Roving Records records is by entering them online through the **Add Roving Records** facility on the Bird Atlas Data Home page

<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas>

Alternatively paper forms are available from Steve Suttill.

If you have any queries regarding the Bird Atlas, please contact one of the local Atlas organisers:

Steve Suttill,
Tel:01457 836360
Email: suttill.parkinson@virgin.net

Judith Smith,
Tel:01942 712615
Email: ajudithsmith@gmail.com

Steve Atkins,
Tel:01706 645097
Email: steveatkins@tiscali.co.uk

Categories of Breeding Evidence

Select a code that best describes what you have seen. Categories further down the list infer a higher level of evidence of breeding. Except M and U, all must relate to individuals in potentially suitable nesting habitat. Only use F on Roving Records forms and not Timed Tetrad Visits forms.

Non-breeder

- F - Flying over
- M - Migrant
- U - Summering non-breeder

Possible breeder

- H - Observed in suitable nesting Habitat
- S - Singing Male

Probable breeder

- P - Pair in suitable nesting habitat

T - Permanent Territory (defended over at least 1 week)

D - Courtship and Display

N - Visiting probable Nest site

A - Agitated behaviour

I - Brood patch of Incubating bird (from bird in hand)

B - Nest Building or excavating nest-hole

Confirmed breeder

DD - Distraction-Display or injury feigning

UN - Used Nest or eggshells found from this season

FL - Recently Eledged young or downy young

ON - Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating Occupied Nest

FF - Adult carrying Faecal sac or Food for young

NE - Nest containing Eggs

NY - Nest with Young seen or heard

The 2007-11 Britain and Ireland Bird Atlas will:

- Map bird distributions in the breeding season and winter
- Map patterns of relative abundance
- Assess changes since previous Atlases

Support the Atlas, in the field or financially

Visit www.birdatlas.net or call 01842 750050

