



Greater Manchester Breeding Birds Atlas 2008-11 Guidelines for Recording and Submitting Records

This is an updated version of the guidelines issued last spring.
Please take a few minutes to read them and refresh your memory.

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:

http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/taking_part/

- Introduction and how to help - [how_to_help.pdf](#)
- Roving Records Form and Instructions - [roving-records-form.pdf](#)
- Timed Tetrad Visits (TTV's) instructions - [ttv_instructions-lres.pdf](#)

Roving Records

These are casual records which can be submitted by anyone, from any tetrad (2km square). Roving Records are increasingly important now that we are at the half-way stage of the atlas, as they allow species recorded as possible or probable breeders, during Timed Tetrad Visits (TTV's), to hopefully be raised to confirmed breeding status. See the section on **10 Km Square Summaries** for the most efficient way of doing this. Records from those tetrads which do not contain any of the county's main birdwatching sites are of particular importance, as these squares will inevitably receive far less coverage. 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 (TTV's)

If you have taken on one or more tetrads for Timed Tetrad Visits (TTV's), the BTO only requires each tetrad to be surveyed twice in one winter season, and twice in one breeding season. It does not matter whether you do the breeding season visits before the winter visits or the other way round. However, except in exceptional circumstances, the winter visits should be carried out in the same winter e.g. November 2009 – February 2010 and the breeding season visits in the same breeding season e.g. April – July 2010. Once you have completed the four visits and submitted the results, the tetrad is considered complete as far as TTV's are concerned. However, you and other observers can continue to submit Roving Records from the tetrad.

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/birdatlas/taking_part/bevidence.htm

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 birdwatching. 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, 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 following boroughs fall into the 100km squares SD & SJ – Manchester, Salford, and Wigan. Oldham – SD & SE, Tameside – (the trickiest of all) – SD, SE, SJ & SK and 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/birdatlas/taking_part/gridrefs.htm

There are a number of ways to work out the tetrad in which 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. Elton Resr SD70Z

👉 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://wheresthepath.googlepages.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 (either 4 or 6 figure) of a location, you can type this into the Tetrad Calculator on the BTO website at http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/taking_part/atlastools.htm and the tetrad reference will be displayed e.g. SD760120 is in tetrad SD71R. 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 2008-09 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 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. Breeding codes can be added via the Additional Comment window next to each species on the online form. 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 continue to submit your records, ideally on the Excel recording form, directly to the County Bird Recorder, Judith Smith. 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 birdwatching, 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/birdatlas/>

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

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