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GREATER MANCHESTER BIRD RECORDING GROUP

Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group Recorders' Update January 2020

Firstly, GMBRG would like to wish you a Happy New Year and thank you for the important contribution you have made during 2019 to our knowledge of Greater Manchester's birds. We greatly appreciate not only the time you spend in the field recording birds, but also the effort you put in to sharing your observations with us by whichever method you use. Your records not only help us to better understand the current abundance, distribution and status of the county's birds but also allow us to monitor changes which for some species are positive. Most importantly, your records are shared with other organisations to protect sites and their valuable habitats and ensure the conservation of the species that use them whether to breed, winter, or stop off on migration.

Database and 2019 Records

2019 has been an excellent year for bird recording in Greater Manchester with 35,500 plus records added to the GMBRG database consisting of 178 species from over 360 locations. These are provisional figures, with more records expected from local recorders, and exclude most of the county rarities, as well as BBS, Heronry Census and WeBS data which are still to be imported. However, one of the standard database queries adds up the total numbers for each species (not necessarily unique individuals of course, as the same birds may be counted on several dates, or by more than one observer), however, it does give an indication of relative abundance, as shown by the table below. So, for every House Martin recorded there were 1.65 Swallows, similarly for every Greenfinch there were 6.80 Goldfinches.

Code	Species	Scientific Name	Sum of records
167	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius	852
168	Ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula	311
318	Swift	Apus apus	10152
377	Sand Martin	Riparia riparia	8694
381	Swallow	Hirundo rustica	9329
382	House Martin	Delichon urbicum	5635
518	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	6347
519	Brambling	Fringilla montifringilla	606
521	Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	1006
522	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	6849

Code	Species	Scientific Name	Sum of records
523	Siskin	Carduelis spinus	935
524	Linnet	Linaria cannabina	19709
525	Twite	Linaria flavirostris	9

The database now holds 897k records with 328k having been added since 2011. So, we are looking forward to the day when we reach one million records!

Someone recently said that he hoped his records were being put to good use, so the rest of this update will explain how they are being used.

Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs)

You will almost certainly be aware that your records are shared with the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) to support the selection of Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) which are reviewed on a five yearly cycle using records from the previous five-year period. To quote the SBI Selection Guidelines: "It is well recognised that these second-tier sites (SBIs) contribute greatly to the maintenance of the biodiversity of an area, along with internationally designated sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) and national sites (SSSIs). During 2019 a total of 29,000 records have been used to review some of the county's most important sites including Elton Reservoir, Elton Goyt, Holcombe Moor, Ringley ETW and Pennington Flash. In addition, two new sites, Pickley Green Marsh, Wigan and Shaw Moss, Rochdale, well known to birders in their local areas, were selected in 2018 following surveys in 2017. The list of SBIs to be reviewed in 2020 will be drawn up in March. Please get in touch if you would like a copy for a particular borough.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP)

Many of you will have heard of the RBBP but perhaps won't know in detail what they do. To quote from their website <https://www.rbbp.org.uk/> "The Rare Breeding Birds Panel collects data on the rarer species of birds breeding in the United Kingdom. Its records (this should really say **your records**) allow the production of annual totals of breeding pairs for each species on its list. The aims of this activity are to monitor changes in the size and distribution of rare native bird populations and to report this information as part of the overall surveillance of Britain's birds." Every year, (usually in January) we carry out an analysis of the species covered by RBBP based on the records submitted to GMBRG, BirdTrack and the Greater Manchester Local Record Centre and submit this to the panel.

This allows us, to not only monitor the county populations of Schedule 1 and red-listed species, but also to see the relative importance of Greater Manchester's bird populations in a national context. For example, in 2017 we reported 75 pairs of Willow Tits for which records were submitted out of an estimated total county population of 120 pairs. The national population is estimated at 1081 pairs (to be confirmed by the 2019/20 RSPB survey – see below) which means GM holds 11% of the UK total! Quite amazing given

the small geographic area of our county. Our share of the Little Ringed Plover population is also important. Whilst we have not, yet, calculated a population estimate for GM, a minimum of 27 pairs bred in 2017 which equates to 13.8% of the reported pairs in the North of England. We ranked third out of eight counties in the north with only Lancashire and Yorkshire holding more. The 2016 RBBP report and all previous years back to 1973 can be downloaded from the RBBP website. The 2017 report can be purchased as a single issue from British Birds magazine <https://britishbirds.co.uk/article/rare-breeding-birds-in-the-uk-in-2017/>

[Greater Manchester Spatial Framework \(GMSF\)](#)

No sooner had we submitted the RBBP data, the next task was to deal with the second GMSF consultation in the space of two years! This took up a significant amount of time from early February through to the 18th March (the submission deadline), not only preparing GMBRG's response to what seemed at the time (and still does) like an overwhelming onslaught on some of the county's most important bird sites, but also providing advice and information to support others (you know who you are) who wanted to voice their objections to the proposed plans. The Lancashire Wildlife Trust and RSPB were also supplied with records to inform their responses to the consultation. Given the potential long-term damage to the county's birds, stretching into the future up to 2035, we took the decision to give this priority over all other matters and believe that many of you supported us in this. The full GMBRG response is attached for your information. The records you submit provided us with the evidence to assess the importance of these sites, referred to in the GMSF policy document as allocations! The Snipe records alone (see the attached file) were a real eye opener because they clearly showed that Elton Goyt SBI was the second most important site in GM in 2015 for both Common and Jack Snipe (only Little Woolden Moss LWT reserve held more that year) and in 2017 was the fourth most important GM site for Common Snipe. The GMSF consultation document can be downloaded from <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/greater-manchester-spatial-framework/gmsf-full-plan/>

[Ecological Data Searches](#)

Ecological consultants working on behalf of developers request data searches from GMEU to inform their survey plans and assess the potential impacts of the proposed developments. The searches are included with their ecological reports which are submitted with the planning application to the local authority. Most searches carried out by GMEU include bird records supplied by GMBRG. In 2019 data searches were completed for all GMSF allocations in Oldham, Rochdale and Trafford, in addition full species lists were supplied to the local authority planning departments in the other seven GM boroughs. HS2 were also supplied with a large amount of data from a 5km buffer zone along the proposed route which if constructed would pass through important areas including the Abram Flashes SSSI. An example data search map for the GMSF allocation New Carrington is included in the documents folder.

RSPB Willow Tit Survey

Many of you will have contributed to Bird Atlas 2007-11 and the RSPB have used these data to draw up a list of priority tetrads (2-km squares) for coverage during the two-year survey. Many thanks to those who took part last year. Given that Greater Manchester is one of the most important remaining areas in the entire country for Willow Tits and the speed with which they have been declining, we hope that more people will want to get involved in the final year of the survey during 2020. To view available tetrads, (or 1-km squares in the Carbon Landscape Programme area) and request one, visit the GMLRC website https://www.gmwildlife.org.uk/carbon_landscape/survey_squares/

2012 Greater Manchester County Report

We apologise for the long delay in publishing the report. Good progress has been made since October in editing the remaining sections which is an essential part of the process to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains. There are approximately 20 pages remaining to be edited and work will resume on this after the 2018 RBBP data has been submitted at the end of January.

So, we hope that after reading this newsletter, you will agree that your records are extremely valuable and are being put to very good use in protecting the county's sites and birds. If you are not currently submitting your records to GMBRG but would like to do so the options are listed on the Manchester Birding website <https://www.manchesterbirding.com/record-submission.html>

The Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group