

Notes on Methods for April-July fieldwork:

See also the National Atlas newsletter downloadable at <http://www.waterfordbirds.com/breedingbirdatlas.html>, and full survey methods at http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/taking_part/formsdownload.htm. Some aspects (*) are clarified or expanded below.

Main TTVs (to allocated tetrads):

- Two 1-hour visits to each allocated tetrad, between 1st April and 31st July, taking routes which cover all the main habitats in the tetrad (including built-up areas).
- Preferably one visit in April or May, one visit in June or July; but if necessary for remote (especially upland) tetrads, a single 2-hour visit in June or July (keeping data separate for each hour). If possible try finish by early July, as counts later in July can be very quiet (and complicated by the presence of well-fledged juvenile birds).
- Breeding season TTVs should preferably be done during the morning – *completed by (or at least started before) 1200 BST (but *possibly avoiding first hour after dawn, when high levels of bird activity/song may be confusing). [Winter TTVs just need to avoid the first & last hours of daylight.]
- Note all species seen or heard using the tetrad, and what level of breeding evidence (“H”, “S”, “ON” etc), but don’t spend extra time trying to confirm breeding.
- Also count all individuals (*other than juveniles fledged this year) seen or heard within the tetrad boundary – this helps assess relative abundance in different tetrads so try to be as thorough as possible within the time available. [In winter, all birds are counted, regardless of age.]
- Later in the breeding season, take care as far as possible not to count juvenile birds fledged this year, though for some species they may inadvertently be counted (less risk if second visit is before July).
- Once the basic hour’s coverage is completed, keep a note (in the tetrad “extra time” column) of any further species or higher levels of breeding evidence noted in whatever remaining time you spend, and *(for Waterford atlas purposes) keep a note of how much extra time you spend actively observing after your main TTV.
- For certain colonial species – Grey Heron, Little Egret, Sand Martin, Rook – record species presence & breeding status, and keep a note of any colonies encountered during your TTV (tick “colony present” on last page of TTV form); if possible attempt a count or estimate of occupied nests (having “stopped the clock” temporarily). Also *count individuals (other than fledged juveniles) away from the colonies (but not individuals at colonies).
- For seabird colonies, record species presence, breeding status, and tick the presence of a colony – *counts of nests are not needed in Waterford (where special surveys are planned). Again, *only count individuals away from colonies.
- Avoid counting during bad weather - *strong winds (greater than Beaufort force 4), or heavy or continuous rain.
- *If any major difficulties encountered – e.g. with identification of calling/singing birds – consider postponing your TTV to another day, or even another season, but do submit Roving Records for any species you’re confident of.
- If you’re unable to do a second (late-season) visit in some tetrads, you can finish-off coverage the following summer, though preferably both visits should be in the same season.

Roving Records (RRs)

- These can include records & breeding status of any species in any tetrad, within the period 1st April to 31st July, regardless of time of day or weather, also confirmed breeding in any other months (for early or late breeders).
- Counts are optional for RRs - there is no need to report numbers of individual birds (though these are welcome for scarcer species especially and can be entered online); counts of nests in colonies are likewise not needed, but *can be noted separately (please report to local organisers).
- If possible, make a special effort to record dusk / nocturnal species in habitats such as marshes (Water Rail, Snipe, Grasshopper Warbler), woodland (Long-eared Owl, Woodcock) or rough habitat / scrub / young forestry (Grasshopper Warbler, perhaps even Nightjar). Enter “NILNOCT” as species name if you don’t record any of these species during a special dusk or nocturnal visit to a tetrad, to help keep track of coverage.

***‘Supplementary’ timed visits**

- *If you have the opportunity to spend any amount of time actively recording within any tetrad, or your main tetrad on other dates – whether for 5 minutes, 50 minutes, or 1 hour+ – please record presence / breeding status of all species (counts optional).
- *Report these as Roving Records to National Atlas, but let the Local Organiser know how much time spent in each tetrad on each date – this will be used to assess overall coverage for the Waterford Atlas.