

# Waterford Breeding Bird Atlas 2006-2011

## FURTHER NOTES

See also the **Timed Tetrad Visit** and **Roving Recorder cards**, especially for categories of breeding evidence and the county map showing the 10-km squares in Waterford (and how to find a tetrad).

## COVERAGE BY ROVING RECORDERS

Please report any April-July records of any species, regardless of the level of breeding evidence, on a Roving Recorder form, apart from records collected during Timed Tetrad Visits (or supplementary timed visits to specific tetrads – see below). Make sure to record the date, breeding category, tetrad number and locality - e.g. X69D Brownstown Head (tip).

As well as reporting birds from wherever you happen to encounter birds, it would also be useful if observers could spend time covering any areas of the county that particularly interest them. Or why not take on a whole 10-km square each season, and set yourself the challenge of finding a wide range of species, with as much breeding proof as possible, in as many tetrads as possible?

## TIMED TETRAD VISITS (TTVs)- NUMBER OF TETRADS & VISITS

Ideally, we'd hope that observers who can commit to this part of the survey will take on 5 to 10 tetrads (2-km squares) during April-July 2007. If 2 tetrads are surveyed the same morning (one hour each, both starting before 12 noon), this would involve 3-5 mornings fieldwork during April or May, and 3-5 repeat mornings in June or July. It may sometimes be possible to fit 3 tetrads visits into a morning. Surveys involve noting all species that are 'using' a tetrad, noting the breeding evidence for each species, and counting selected (scarcer) species.

When making a second visit to a tetrad, or a single 2-hour visit, preferably do so in June rather than July. This is because bird activity, especially song, tends to be lower in July, especially later in the month. Nevertheless, further (supplementary) visits in July can produce proof of breeding especially for late-nesting species like Spotted Flycatcher. And we appreciate that "full" timed visits then may be necessary to complete coverage.

Where necessary, e.g. in remote areas, a single 2-hour visit after mid May (15 May) is acceptable, although it's not as effective a way of picking up species – plus if 2 or more visits are done a week or more apart, any birds singing on both visits can be upgraded from Possible breeding (Singing) to Probable breeding (Territory).

Any extra time you spend in your tetrad – e.g. walking back to your start-point at the end of an hour's survey – can be recorded separately on the Atlas Cards ("extra time" column) and may contribute new species or additional evidence of breeding.

If you let us know your potential availability, and any preferences for general area(s) to cover, we will allocate you tetrads from among those not surveyed yet. The allocation of tetrads will also take into account the need for some tetrads (at least 8 in each 10-km square) to be surveyed during the years of the National Atlas (2008-11). It will thus not always be possible to allocate an observer their 'home' tetrad in any given year. 'Roving' records or supplementary timed visits from those tetrads will nevertheless be very useful.

## SUPPLEMENTARY TIMED VISITS TO TETRADS

As well as any casual spring/summer records of any species from any tetrad (reported on Roving Recorder forms, see earlier), supplementary timed visits to any tetrads, regardless of their location are also welcomed.

Report these on a blank Timed Tetrad Visit card (or as “extra time” if done on same date in same tetrad as one of your main counts). But the priority should be to achieve at least 2 hours of morning coverage of the main tetrads allocated to you. Spare time (and energy!) in afternoons or evening could be used for supplementary timed visits to the same or different squares, as we hope that most tetrads will get at least 4 hours of coverage in total, over the 6 years 2006-11. So do please record the time spent in any tetrad, other than when simply driving through it (report birds seen or heard from a moving car on Roving Recorder form). If you live in or regularly visit specific tetrads more frequently, a single filled TTV card with a rough estimate of total time spent observing in a given season will suffice e.g. 10+ hours, 20+ hours.

#### **NOCTURNAL OR DUSK VISITS**

These are particularly useful, to look or listen for owls, Nightjar, Woodcock, also Snipe, Water Rail and Grasshopper Warbler. If you make a nocturnal or dusk visit and don't record any owls, Nightjar or Woodcock (the main species requiring such visits), please write “NONOCT” and date instead of a species name on the Casual Records Sheet, as this will help keep track of tetrads where nocturnal visits have been made.

#### **OTHER HINTS FOR FIELDWORKERS**

“*Using tetrad*”: For birds in flight, count any that are obviously foraging (e.g. Swallows or hovering Kestrel) or circling the area (e.g. raptors), but put an arrow [→] for any species simply flying straight over a tetrad, as if travelling a distance or on active migration, unless they clearly take off or land within the tetrad. Such records (direct overflight) may be mapped in the local atlas but less prominently - they may be useful extra indications of the presence of some scarcer species (e.g. Crossbill).

“*Display*”: In general, take this to mean a male displaying to a female, with both birds visible. However, aerial displays of (single) Sparrowhawk, Hen Harrier, drumming Snipe or roding Woodcock can also be taken to mean Display (Probable breeding). Aerial-singing passerines such as Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Whitethroat should not be counted as Display, however.

Make sure to check persistently calling adults for food in bill. Adults carrying food are often the most obvious proof of breeding for the smaller species.

Learn to distinguish true “*anxiety*” calls (Probable breeding) from typical calls. However, it is often a matter of degree rather than of real differences in call – thus pay attention to the persistence of calling and to the bird's general behaviour.

However, *on Timed visits don't spend extra time trying to confirm breeding* – concentrate on building up your species list and on counting species that need counting.

#### **ALSO, WHEN DOING TIMED VISITS:**

If surveying two or more *adjacent tetrads*, keep a note of the time you enter and leave each tetrad and make sure you survey for a full 1 hour in each of the tetrads, even if each tetrad is not completed before the next one is started.

Keep an eye on your *species list* as you go along, and check again at the end of your timed survey; add in any species that you've seen or heard but (genuinely!) forgotten to note. Please don't simply assume a species is present if you haven't seen or heard it.

At the end of a timed 1-hour visit, keep a note of any *extra time* spent in the tetrad, any extra species encountered, and any extra breeding evidence noted for species you've already encountered, and add these to

the column 3 of the TTV Card (in the field or transcribe from notebook later).

When returning to your start-point (e.g. parking place) at the end of a timed visit, if possible return by a *different route*, to maximize chances of picking up extra species. However, even retracing the same route can produce extra species or breeding evidence, though it's better to re-walk the route quickly and move on to a new tetrad for a further timed visit if time allows.

*Preplanning* timed visits to a tetrad is invaluable. Once you've been allocated tetrads to cover, we'll provide a *map* of the relevant 10-km square or larger area, with target tetrads marked. Aim to visit all possible *habitats* in the tetrad. It should be possible to cover 2 or 3 *adjacent tetrads* for 1-hour visits in a morning so preplanning a route ensures that all habitats in all the tetrads are covered in the time available. A bicycle is also very useful for moving within squares and commuting between them, but it is important to either walk through the important parts of the tetrad or stop and listen at frequent intervals.

A *GPS receiver* is an invaluable piece of equipment. If you have one, use it to stay within a tetrad, which is especially important in upland areas where defined features are few.

If you do have to stray beyond your tetrad into one that you're not planning to survey – e.g. in order to get indirect access to another part of your main tetrad - stop the clock but keep a note of the 'outside' species & their status (for a Roving Recorder form).

#### **OTHER SPECIES**

It is also hoped to record other wildlife seen in the tetrads (especially mammals, lizards, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies) to help contribute to wider documentation of wildlife in the county.

#### **MAPS**

Co Waterford is covered by the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000-scale Discovery series, numbers 74, 75, 76, 81 and 82. For observers doing Timed Tetrad Visits, we'll provide annotated maps indicating the tetrads allocated to each observer. For general coverage observers should refer to Discovery maps.

#### **SONGS AND CALLS**

If you have access to the Internet using broadband, a useful site for getting to know songs and calls is:

<http://www.rspb.org/birds/>

which on the top left of the page provides A to Z access to details of individual bird species; especially useful are the audio/video links. Remember many of the smaller species may be heard before they are seen so it is important to know the songs & calls of the individual species, especially before attempting the more intensive Timed visits. Useful commercial recordings of birdsong are also available, e.g. "British Bird Sounds on CD" from BirdWatch Ireland:

<http://shop.birdwatchireland.ie/birdwatchireland/>

#### **USEFUL WEBSITES**

For further information on the Waterford Breeding Bird Atlas, keep an eye on [www.waterfordbirds.com](http://www.waterfordbirds.com). We hope to post preliminary coverage and species maps here as the survey progresses.

For further information on the previous and soon-to-come British & Irish Atlases, which Waterford fieldwork will contribute to, see:

<http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/index.htm>;

but remember that national coverage doesn't start until November 2007 (winter) and April 2008 (breeding).