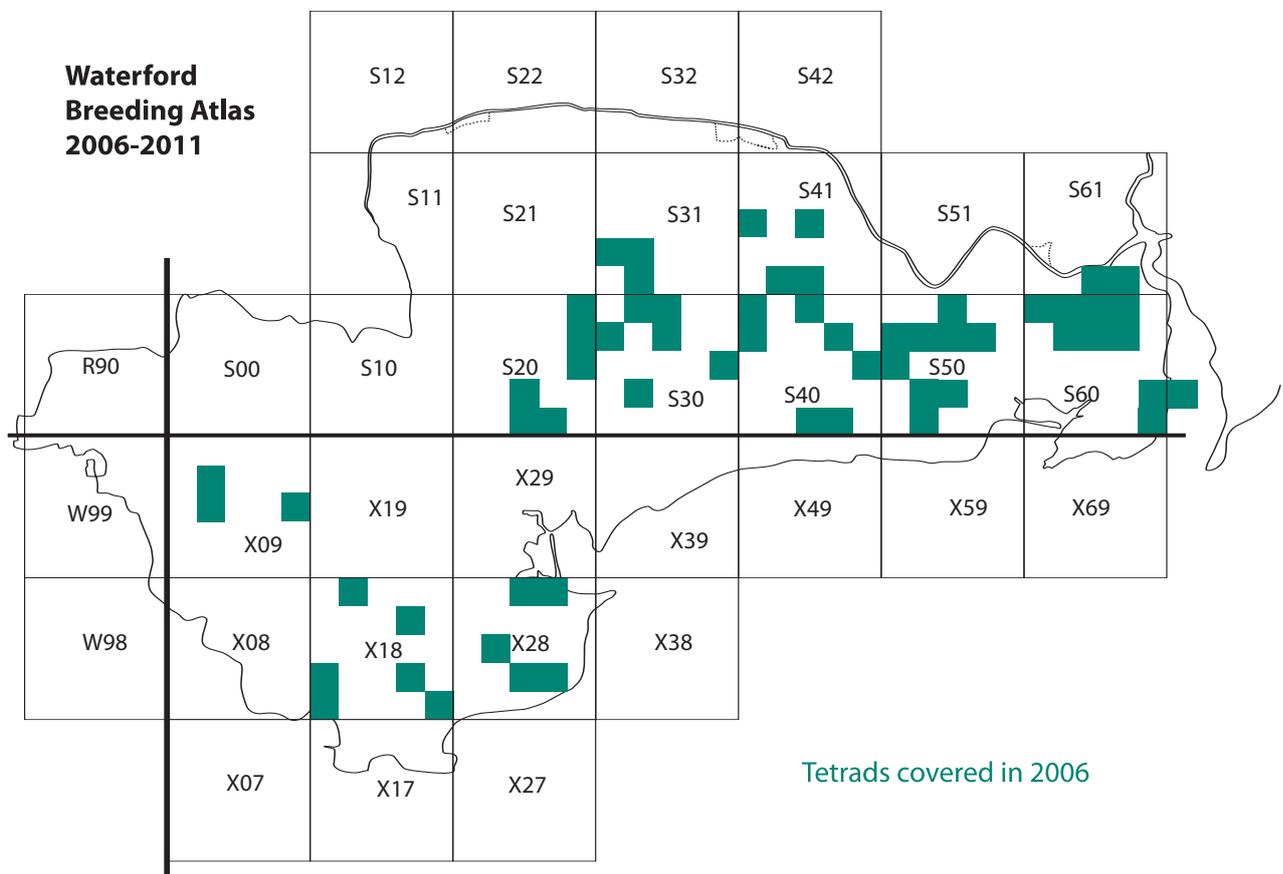


The Waterford Breeding Bird Atlas 2006-2011

What is it?

The Breeding Bird Atlas is an attempt to map, at the level of 2-km x 2-km tetrads, the occurrence and status of breeding and summering birds throughout County Waterford. Pilot fieldwork in 2006 confirmed the practicality of the methods used, and over 10% of the c.500 tetrads in the county received basic coverage (see map below), mainly by two observers. The plan now is to roll out the survey on a bigger scale and involve as many volunteers as we can in 2007. A total of six breeding seasons (April-July 2006-2011) will be needed for full coverage, to be followed, we hope, by publication of detailed maps both online and in print form. This should provide the most thorough documentation to date of Waterford's breeding avifauna, as a baseline for assessment of future changes and to allow documentation of important breeding habitats in the county.

Map showing tetrads with at least 2 hours of timed fieldwork completed in April-July 2006



How does it fit in with other bird surveys?

A National Atlas of breeding birds throughout Ireland and Britain is due to start in April 2008, and an Atlas of wintering birds begins in November 2007. These are being organized by BirdWatch Ireland (BWI) in Ireland, in collaboration with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) in Britain. They are the follow-up to two previous national breeding atlases, which took place during 1968-72 and 1988-91 and a winter atlas during 1981-84. The previous national atlases involved substantial fieldwork in Waterford, but not on the scale planned for 2006-11.

Fieldwork for the Waterford Atlas will of course contribute to the National Atlas during 2008-11, and the methods are fully compatible with the wider survey. Coverage in Waterford will be more intensive and has started two years earlier than elsewhere in Ireland, because (unlike most counties) we're attempting complete coverage. But the National survey should provide extra incentive for fieldworkers in Waterford to carry on for the next five years, with the aim of seeing results in print both at local and national scales.

Waterford coverage of wintering birds will not be as intensive, but a good contribution to national coverage is planned.

How can I help?

For breeding season coverage, we are looking for volunteers, of varying levels of experience or enthusiasm, who can contribute bird records from around the county and help ensure all gaps in coverage are filled and nothing much is missed! There are two main types of surveying involved, one or other (or both!) of which may suit your particular level of experience or confidence. Both will involve the use of Ordnance Survey maps to record accurate locations (and further guidance will be provided on this).

The first aspect of the Atlas will potentially be of interest to a larger number of volunteers. This involves **Roving Recorders**, i.e. anyone who can send in records of any species, with information on their breeding status if available, from any part of the county during April-July of the years 2008-11. A copy of the Roving Recorders card we'll be using this year is enclosed, and this will also be available on the website www.waterfordbirds.com.

The second, more intensive part of the Atlas involves **Timed Tetrad Visits** (TTVs), i.e. at least 2 hours of timed morning surveys to each of the tetrads (2-km x 2-km squares) that make up the land-area of Waterford. Fuller details are given later, but essentially each TTV involves surveying (on foot, or on bicycle with frequent stops) the tetrads, with the help of maps, to record all the bird species seen or heard within an hour – then repeating the survey later in the summer. Detailed counts of adult birds will also be needed for scarcer species in 2007, and for all species for the National Atlas i.e. 2008 onwards. Many species are best detected by sound, i.e. recognizing the song and the range of calls of a given species. Thus not all local birdwatchers may feel they have the necessary skills - but they can be learned by practice or listening to bird tapes or CDs. So, over the next five summers, we'd hope that some Roving Recorders will also take on Timed Tetrad Visits as their skill and confidence grows.

Of course, everyone who makes Timed Tetrad Visits can also contribute as a Roving Recorder, as inevitably Kestrels etc will be seen from the car window etc.

It is also hoped to record other types of wildlife seen in the tetrads (mammals, butterflies and dragonflies mainly) to provide a more comprehensive account of wildlife in the county over the period of the Survey.

For winter coverage, there's still plenty of time before November, but we'll be looking for volunteers then too... And if you've taken on responsibility for some Timed Tetrads in summer, you'll have the chance to do follow-up winter surveys in the same tetrads.

and above all, enjoy the Atlas and the habitats of the County