

Survey News



The newsletter for BTO members and volunteers in Cheshire and Wirral

January 2021

Welcome

After what has been a very interrupted year for everyone involved in any sort of surveying, (apart perhaps from Garden BirdWatch) whether BBS, WBBS, WeBS, Bird Ringing, Herons, nest recording or just birdwatching generally, lets hope that 2021 shows some sort of eventual return to normality. A very warm welcome to all the new Garden BirdWatch volunteers who have joined the survey over the last few months.

For those that did manage to get out in late spring/early summer in 2020, many thanks for submitting and getting your data and sightings in.

This is a joint newsletter from both your BTO representatives with input from Phil Hampson for the Cheshire and Wirral region and we would like to particularly focus on BirdTrack.

Many of you submit your sightings into BirdTrack. However, from 1st January 2021 the County Society, Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society, CAWOS, will be using BirdTrack as the county database.

So, all CAWOS activities from producing an annual report, archiving the county's bird records, interfacing with Rare Breeding Bird Panel, Scarce Migrant reports via *British Birds*, environmental impact surveys, planning application support/defence, rare bird submissions and the myriad of data requests for research or information from a wide range of societies like Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Local Councils, as well as Landowners and individuals etc, will all now come from data in BirdTrack.



So, we want to encourage everyone to please use BirdTrack from maintaining your local patch sightings to what you see on your days out around the County.

Firstly, there is plenty of help available if this is new to you.

Phil Hampson, our WeBS coordinator for Cheshire North, is the new face behind submissions@kawos.org and makes the following comments;

To become a BirdTrack user, go onto the [bto.org](https://www.bto.org) website and using the *register to get started* link at the bottom of the home page <https://www.bto.org/birdtrack>. From this home page if you go to the *taking part*

page there are various links which will take you through the various options you have to enter your records and also what you can enter in the fields. You have three options:

- 1) Enter your records using the web-based entry page. You can use this option when you get home, entering your records from your notebook or memory!
- 2) If you have a smart phone you can install the BirdTrack app, there are android and apple versions, and then use it either during your field trip as you see the birds or later as per option 1.
- 3) You can create a spreadsheet of your records and then use the BirdTrack upload facility on their website.

Also have a look at the BirdTrack 'Getting started' playlist available on the BTO YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFFgJk1PU_BPJMrDbi6JFi3mJnywZxGmt

If you do not have access to the internet, or if you prefer, you can send your records as a spreadsheet to submissions@cauos.org.

We will check your spreadsheet and then upload into BirdTrack. You will not need to become a BirdTrack user. However, the spreadsheet has changed and also what you can enter in certain columns will be different so you will need get a copy of the new spreadsheet off the CAWOS website or to request a new blank spreadsheet and an explanation of the changes, again from submissions@cauos.org.

If you have any questions, don't worry, get in touch with Phil either by email (philhampson@cauos.org), or phone (01625 260059), and Phil will try and allay your worries!

The following are some more guidance:

Do please...

- For those who are not confident about setting themselves up to use BirdTrack directly, but can use spreadsheets, please submit records to the submissions email on the BTO spreadsheet.
- For those who cannot enter directly, or via a spreadsheet attached to an email, continue to send in paper records as before but now send them to Phil, at 2 Winsfield Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 6ES tel. 01625 260059
- Please use the site names used in the CAWOS Gazetteer (<http://www.caos.org/sitelist.htm>). If you need a new location setting up, please provide the site details, including the grid reference and suggested name and send to the submissions email id until such time as we set up a gazetteer email id to deal explicitly with those requests. That person will add the details to the Gazetteer, for everyone else to be able to use.
- Please include a grid reference (e.g., SJ4577 for Ince) for the location on the record line: BirdTrack requires one. There are various tools available to help find the correct Grid Reference, including <https://gridreferencefinder.com>.
- Where you have several counts in a month and want just to enter the monthly maxima, either enter the date of that maximum count, or enter the 1st of the month, and provide details in the Observation Comments field (much as you would have done with paper records in the past).
- Where there is uncertainty about a count (e.g., c100-200), enter the lowest number and put the details in the Observation Comments field.

- Where you have a detailed breakdown of the count - e.g., 4 males, 3 females, 2 juveniles - you will need either to enter these as separate lines, or to enter one line for the total and put the details in the Observation Comments field.

DON'T

- Please do not set up and use locations such as 'Home', 'My garden' or 'My patch'. These are simply not specific enough places to submit records against.
- Please do not delay submitting your records.
- If you have submitted records directly to BirdTrack, please do not also send a file to the submissions email id.

Historical Records – A 'Lockdown' Project

Historical records are an extremely valuable and often difficult-to-access source of information from past decades. It's a sobering thought that year by year, an untold number of meticulously-collected and transcribed observations are lost to science as old notebooks are misplaced or destroyed, the value of their contents never to be realised.

BirdTrack warmly welcomes records from the past as well as the present. All you need to be able to enter 'old' records is a date, location (this can be accurately pinpointed using Maps) and species name.

Time to dust off those notebooks! By entering complete lists from last century, we can extend BirdTrack's monitoring of bird sightings way back from its current ten-year run. We can restore our reputation as a generation of bird recorders! And, since most notebooks will ultimately be destined for the recycling bin, we can ensure that our data will live on. There's an interesting article by retired BTO staff member and life-long birder, John Marchant, called 'Silver Listing' here: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack/taking-part/uploading-records> Have a read and make a start on your own records!

Records can be uploaded directly to BirdTrack using the upload sheet found on the BTO website.

BirdTrack is now a worldwide database so you can enter past records from birding trips anywhere in the world as well as all future sightings. The added benefit to the recorder is BirdTrack will manage your lists and allow analysis of all record by species, date or location. It also automatically keeps up to date with taxonomic changes so you don't have to keep trawling back through old records yourself!

If you are short of something to do in lockdown or would just like to ensure that your old records are put to good use and live on, then why not help contribute to this valuable resource.

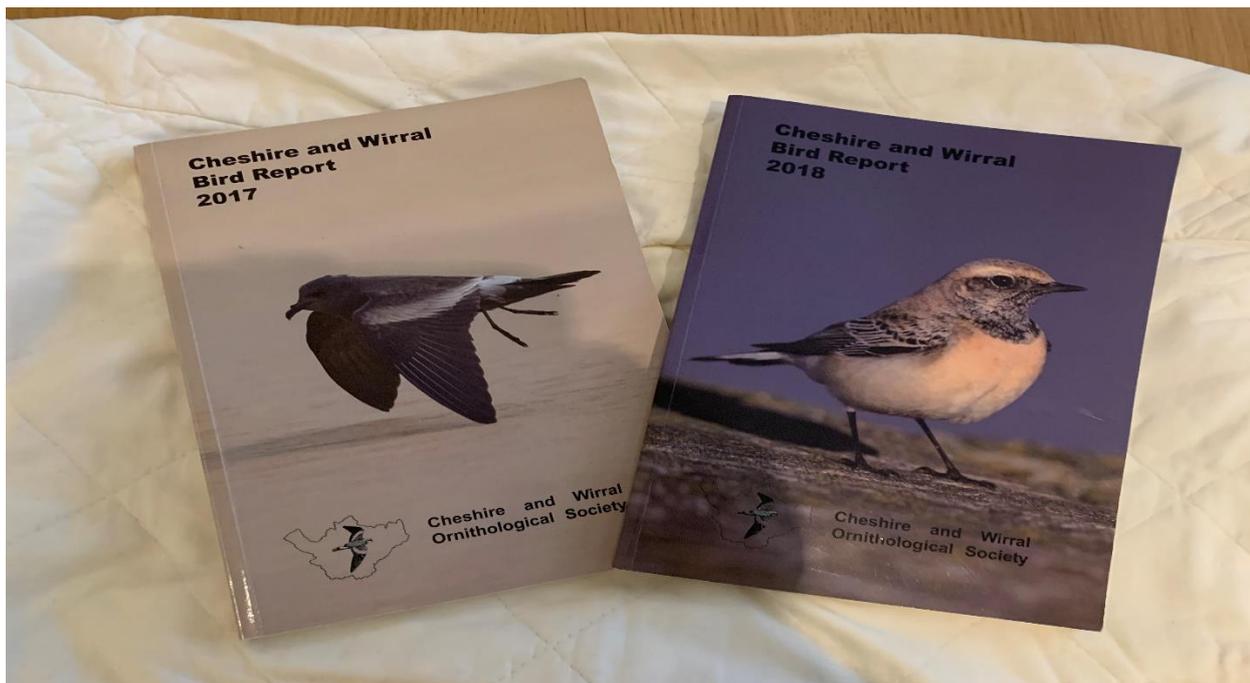
In addition, CAWOS needs you! If you are a BirdTrack user and can spare a couple of hours a week, we need volunteers to help enter data from paper submissions onto the spreadsheets to be uploaded.

Other taxa

You can also enter you records of mammals and dragonflies onto the web version of BirdTrack. In the spring, BirdTrack plans to add in the ability to record butterflies, orchids and amphibians and reptiles. These records will then be passed to the relevant local recorder for those taxa.



Fancy getting involved more with the Annual Report? CAWOS needs volunteers to act as compilers of various sections, and a systematic list editor to help create the report.



If you like the idea, full training can be given, just contact Hugh Pulsford on countyrec@cawos.com

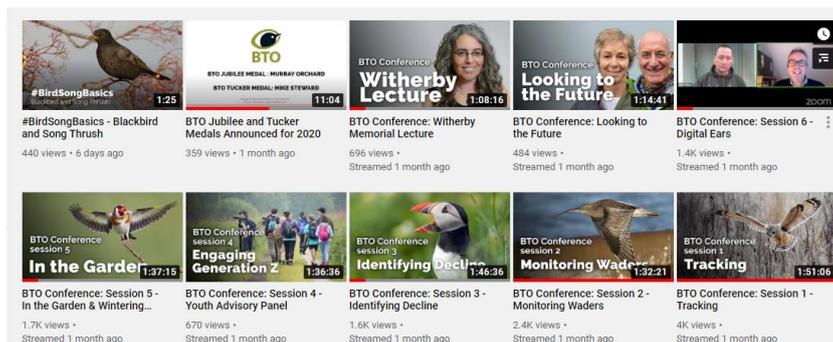
Also if you are a BTO member, perhaps you would also like to consider CAWOS Membership

Currently CAWOS membership stands at 305, a seemingly large number but we were only regularly getting about 30 people at our indoor meetings. Of course, we cannot hold indoor meetings within the current restrictions and are using ZOOM. This is a common approach across many Societies. The meetings are proving to be better attended as people are not having to go out on cold, wet winter evenings. You can sit at home in the warmth with a drink, or whatever kind (beer for me) and listen to the same talk, see the same slides and ask questions should they wish. Zoom has a number of facilities and you can set your own background so others cannot see where you are actually sat. You do not need to be Tech savvy to use Zoom, just a computer, tablet or smartphone and I send out a link to be used every month. Also, we have been getting attendees from the further reaches of the CAWOS area which is superb.

Given the number of BTO members and contributors to BirdTrack in the region we have a relatively small membership. Please do consider joining us, we NEED younger members who can eventually take over from the 'old school'. Additionally, we are in real need of help on the Council in a number of roles. As well as my WeBS responsibilities I am Membership Secretary for CAWOS so the contact details above can be used for any questions. Many thanks, Phil (Hampson)

BTO Annual Conference

The BTO Annual conference was held online this year and the talks were really excellent. All talks are freely available on the BTO's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/BTOvideo/videos>



Survey Vacancies

WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey)

The survey involves visiting a local wetland site once a month throughout the winter and counting the waterbirds there. We do encourage counts from all months of the year but the main period we ask our counters to concentrate on is September through to March. A WeBS site can be any wetland area, be it an estuary, lake or reservoir to a river, stream or even your local village duck pond. If you wish to count a completely new site, please contact your local Organiser to discuss.

If you would like to take part in the co-ordinated counts then the same contact details above can be used, Phil coordinates for Cheshire North, and Paul Miller coordinates for Cheshire South.

Or follow this link - <https://app.bto.org/websonline/sites/vacant/vacant-sites.jsp> and find a vacant location and follow the instructions. The WeBS system will direct your request to the Cheshire - North or South Local Organisers and we can allocate it to you.

For instance, in Cheshire South, we have the following sites available for volunteers to survey:

- Norbury Meres, Cholmondeley
- Wistaston Brook, Crewe
- Wychwood Park Golf Course, Weston, Crewe



BBS (Breeding Bird Survey)

The Breeding Bird Survey is a national volunteer project aimed at keeping track of changes in the breeding populations of widespread bird species in the UK. The survey involves two early-morning spring visits to a local 1 km square, to count all the birds you see or hear while walking two 1 km lines across the square. Thank you to everyone who was able to make a visit in 2020; about half the squares in the UK were covered, and those were mostly late survey visits only. We are unsure at this stage whether it will be it will be

possible to make both early and late visits in 2021 but we will prepare of the forthcoming season in the usual way. Please check the Government Guidelines and the BTO website (<https://www.bto.org/community/news/202101-bto-and-covid-19>) at the time of the proposed survey as rules may have change, so please check before surveying. Existing allocations to squares/sites will be retained even if you choose not to survey in 2021. There are always vacant squares, so do get in touch if you are considering joining the survey team or look at the BTO website for a square near you (<https://app.bto.org/bbs/public/request-square.jsp>). It is a fun survey, only involving two visits and over time it is interesting comparing details of birds seen.

BBS Vacancies: Mid-Cheshire and the Wirral

Local Organiser – Paul Miller

The following 1 km squares are available for volunteers to survey:

- SJ6360 - Cholmondeston, near Church Minshull
- SJ6560 - Church Minshull
- SJ6562 - Ashbrook near Darnhall
- SJ6563 - Darnhall
- SJ6863 - Wimboldsley, near Middlewich
- SJ6871 – Rudheath, Northwich

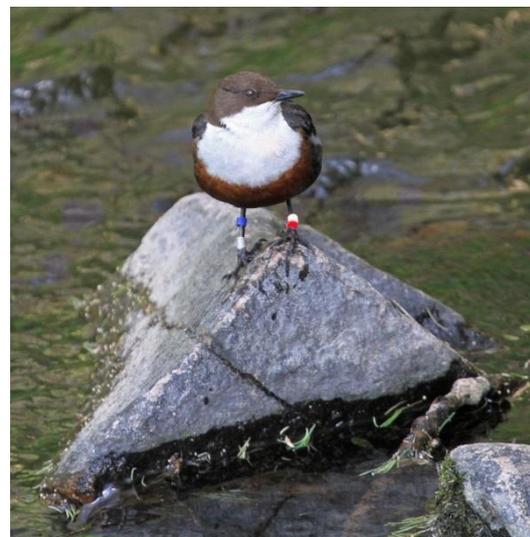


The following 1 km squares on the Wirral are available for volunteers to survey:

- SJ2389 - Moreton
- SJ2784 - Thingwall
- SJ2787 - Arrowe Hill
- SJ2890 - Bidston
- SJ3185 - Higher Bebington
- SJ3770 - Saughall
- SJ3776 - Great Sutton

WBBS (Waterways Breeding Bird Survey)

WBBS operates mainly on pre-selected sites, many of which are on the middle or upper sections of rivers, such as canals and lowland rivers and these are frequently perfectly level and with a good footpath! The survey may require as little as 4–5 hours' fieldwork per year. Just two counting visits are needed between April and June, one before and one after mid-May.



WBBS Vacancies: Mid-Cheshire

Local Organiser – Paul Miller: The following sites are available for volunteers to survey:
Manchester Ship Canal between Ince and Frodsham Marsh.

Annual survey of nesting Grey Herons, Little Egrets, Cormorants and scarcer herons

The BTO Heronries Census began in 1928 and now represents the longest running monitoring data set for any breeding bird in the world. BTO have enhanced the Heronries Census site on the website making it easier for volunteers to see where there are unrecorded sites and choose one to observe. Please have a look for vacant sites to monitor

(<https://app.bto.org/colonies/public/vacant-sites.jsp>).

Heronries are early nesters so will be active very shortly. If you know about a colony that is not shown, please click on its location on the map and

complete a form to let us know about it. Help from people with special access to private or remote heronries is especially welcome. Please visit the BTO website for the latest covid restrictions update

(<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/heronries-census>).



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Photographs: Thanks to D Balmer, L Cutting, S Round, S Steel and H Pulsford.

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