



## Reports on BTO surveys 2015

Steve Davies

BTO Regional Representative for Birmingham & West Midlands and Worcestershire.

stevedaviesbtorep@hotmail.co.uk

### BTO breeding House Martin survey 2015

During the breeding season of 2015 National Organiser for the BTO House Martin Survey Ian Woodward asked for volunteers to choose sites they would like to cover from a selection of randomly selected 1x1 km squares. Volunteers were tasked to visit all suitable habitats for breeding House Martins within their square(s) by initially making a recce visit followed up by an early season visit to record and the presence of the species and nesting activity. A late season recording visit was also to be made if possible. Although, where no suitable breeding habitat was found it was not necessary to make the second visit.

Where breeding colonies were found simple details were recorded such as numbers of completed and occupied nests, number of birds present, location on the building/structure and the elevation (north,south,east,west etc.).

### Results for Birmingham & West Midlands BTO Region

Clearly a popular species amongst midland birders, there was an impressive uptake of squares for this project, necessitating a second allocation of squares for the region.

Number of squares assigned to volunteers 40.

Most squares covered by a single observer 11(I owe you a pint on that one Keith!).

Squares receiving NO visits 7.

Squares receiving recce visit only 1.

Squares receiving recce and visit one 13.

Squares receiving recce and visits one and two 19.

Colonies found: two squares with colonies holding two and one colonies respectively.

### Results for Worcestershire BTO Region

Number of squares assigned to volunteers 40.

Most squares covered by a single volunteer 11.

Squares receiving NO visits 7.

Squares receiving recce visit only 1.

Squares receiving recce and visit one 12.

Squares receiving recce and visits one and two 20.

Colonies found: 10 squares with colonies holding the following counts; 5,1,2,3,5,8,2,5,11,24.

Overall, as can be seen from the above, the observer effort in each of my patches was very even. The more rural nature of Worcestershire is perhaps reflected in colonies being found in 25% of the squares. The count of 24 was in SP0546, 11 in SO9537 and eight in SO8548. However, it is as important to know where House Martins are *not* breeding as well as where they are abundant in order to more fully understand population trends. Many thanks to all who participated in this project despite many squares proving to be fruitless following searches, your valuable contribution will help towards achieving this aim.

### BTO breeding House Martin survey 2016

All fans of this enigmatic summer visitor will be able to get involved in further BTO work on this species in 2016, when we are being asked to monitor House Martin nests throughout the whole breeding cycle. Details to be recorded will include timing of construction and success or failure of each nesting attempt. Please keep an eye on the BTO website, or contact your local BTO RR Steve Davies for more

information.

### BTO heronries census 2015 - feedback

This survey is the longest running bird survey in the world and it has monitored heronries in the UK since 1929.

Every breeding season volunteers are asked to make visits to the site of a heronry and record the best estimate of the number of active nests for that season and try to give some idea of fledging success. The latter not being an easy task later on in the season as the foliage obscures the view of nests!

Feedback from the 2015 breeding season as follows.

### Birmingham & West Midlands (Regional Organiser-Steve Davies)

Number of active colonies: 10 plus more data to be returned.

Number of active nests: 6,10,15,23,34,12,9,63,2,1, giving a total of 174 plus more data to be returned.

Productivity: at the site holding 63 active nests a single nest was observed with four young and many with two and three. This would potentially equate to 156 chicks given an average of 2.5 young per nest! (C.Cook).

A number of historic sites were also surveyed but have not been recolonised.

### Worcestershire (Regional Organiser-Mervyn Needham).

Number of active colonies: 4.

Number of active nests: 30,5,4,2, giving a total of 41.

Productivity: no further data.

Reports seem to suggest a good breeding season for Grey Herons in these areas with a new colony containing a single nest being reported from within the Birmingham area this year. Heronries do come and go from historical sites and there is always the possibility of odd nests turning up in previously unknown locations. If you know of any please let us know so that monitoring can be carried out. Perhaps you would like to take the job on?

Please be cautious about approaching possible heronry sites as they are sensitive to disturbance. Best viewed from distance using binoculars.

### Breeding bird survey (BBS) and Waterways breeding bird survey (WBBS) 2015 - feedback.

First of all, many thanks to all those who have covered their BBS and WBBS in 2015.

I would very much have liked to use this opportunity of reporting back to you on the results of these two surveys. Unfortunately, there are still a number of paper forms awaiting input into the database and also a few submissions yet to arrive. Therefore, I feel that I would not be able to offer a true picture of participation or species lists from BBS squares and WBBS stretches at the present time.

Rest assured that once all of the information is in my possession I will give feedback to these important surveys.

### Wyre Forest woodland bird survey 2015.

This local survey was launched in 2015 as a collaboration between Natural England, Forestry Commission, Wyre Forest Study Group and myself as BTO Regional Representative for Worcestershire. Natural England wanted to get an idea of how forestry management affected woodland bird populations and diversity.

We are very grateful for the response to our appeal for volunteer fieldworkers by local birders in our first year of survey work. They have surveyed within Wyre Forest using point counts methodology and also engaged enthusiastically in single species surveys for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Nightjar (we hope to add Woodcock to the target species for 2016).

I will expand further on our survey results at a future date. As you will no doubt appreciate this is the first year of the survey so it is difficult to make any bold statements at the present time. However, I can say with much confidence, through the comments of fellow

volunteers, and from my own survey experience in Wyre this year, that Tree Pipits were in great abundance this year!

A far more detailed report from 2015 will be forthcoming.

Many thanks for all those who volunteered to help with this exciting project, we hope that you continue to be involved in 2016 and beyond.