



Submitting annual data to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel – an overview

Extract records from your county database (BirdTrack or bespoke) by species and date:

Species – the list of species covered by the RBBP is here: <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm>. The species are divided into regular, occasional, colonising and potential breeders, and include rare non-native species.

Dates – generally, extract records for the main breeding season April-July inclusive. Note, however, that for some species it is worth selecting records from March and/or August as well. Early breeders or species that are on breeding territories early in the season include Goshawk, Willow Tit and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Few birds are still defending territories by August, but some species (e.g. late breeding waterfowl, Hobby) will still have dependent young so useful records of confirmed breeding can be obtained late in the summer.

Identify breeding records:

Breeding evidence – RBBP uses the ‘atlas’ standards for allocating breeding evidence codes so that records can be assigned to *confirmed* breeding (indicating that a pair has definitely laid eggs at a site), *probable* breeding (generally a pair present for at least a week, or evidence of a territory being held) or *possible* breeding (a single bird in breeding habitat or, as the species we are talking about are rare, a pair in breeding habitat but only for a short period). For some species (e.g. Quail, Cetti’s Warbler), the recording unit is the *singing male* and these can be recorded separately).

Which records should be included? – Only records of birds in potential breeding habitat are required. The role of the county recorder is vital here, as recorders uniquely have detailed knowledge of bird records in the area and understand which species do or may breed in the area and in which habitats or at what sites (although we must all be prepared for the unexpected). This means that migratory species which are passage birds in your area, or are still on wintering grounds in the spring, should be excluded. However some more elusive species like Water Rails, Long-eared and Short-eared Owls and Hawfinches, even if the record is just of one bird in breeding habitat, should be included. Note that for some species we have compiled more detailed guidelines and these are available at <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-recording.htm>. If in doubt, include the record, with a note if necessary.

Compile your records into the RBBP data submission spreadsheet:

Get the latest spreadsheet – Always download the latest spreadsheet from the RBBP website <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-data-entry-excel-form.xlsx> - this file is updated at least annually with the up to date species list and changes in response to suggestions from county recorders and others.

First 'start here' sheet – Fill in the year for which you are submitting records, the name of your recording area, and your name. There is space here for county estimates – we would appreciate it if you could supply an estimate for each of the 17 species here (only some of them will occur in your area). These are species where in many areas the records collected annually only reflect a proportion of the population in the county. Having this additional information helps the RBBP understand how many pairs are being missed when we compile our annual population totals. You might like to come back to this once you have filled in the main site-based records on the second sheet.

One line per species/site/year – using the records for your county/region collated earlier, type in the site details for every species, site by site, completing the number of pairs (by breeding evidence) and other details. We recognise that for some species you may not have this level of data, in which case please share what you have. Full, grid-referenced, site data are the best though as they are most valuable for conservation, to enable duplicate records to be identified (RBBP also receives records from other sources including returns from Schedule 1 licence holders, RSPB reserves and BTO Nest Record data).

Full instructions – are included on the third sheet within the excel file. In addition, each heading has a comment attached to offer more immediate help. Please give feedback if you feel a better explanation would be more helpful.

Submit your records to the RBBP secretary:

Send by email – to the secretary at secretary@rbbp.org.uk.

Include mention of RBBP in your bird reports – tell readers you contribute to this recording scheme in order to monitor rare breeding birds at the national level and to support their conservation.

Deadlines – to enable us to collate all the 1000s of records we receive each year, and to be able to publish the annual report on rare breeding birds (in *British Birds*) in good time to provide feedback to conservation and to all birders who have submitted their records, we ask that the completed spreadsheets are submitted by **30th November** each year. We recognise that this is difficult for some areas, although recorders should have all their information for the previous breeding season by this date. If you cannot meet the deadline, please inform the Secretary (by 30th November) so that plans for data handling and reporting can be made.

Publication – we aim to publish the annual report including records from **all** recording areas during the summer months two years after the year being reported on. To achieve this, the RBBP must receive county data in good time. Please note that any records received *after February* (for the season two years previous) may not be in time to be included in the report.

Late data:

Data for earlier years are always also welcome – The RBBP has maintained the definitive archive of all records of all rare breeding birds since 1973 and our intention is that this should be complete, so that the annual total of each species each year is as accurate as possible (for calculation of trends) and so that we have accurate site data for the benefit of conservation and so that it is available where required for ornithology, e.g. helping counties with avifaunas and retrieving lost data.

Submit late data on the same spreadsheet – just remember to change the year!

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