

How to submit records of rare breeding birds using BirdTrack

Birdwatchers can contribute to the national recording of rare breeding birds by submitting their records on BirdTrack, which has been built with handy features to maximise the value of your field observations.

Counting the numbers of pairs of rare breeding bird species at named sites, and noting the breeding evidence seen for each species, allows county recorders and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel to include the records in their annual reports. Data collated by the RBBP is used by conservation organisations such as RSPB and BTO to assess the changing status of these species – for some species this is the only source of such data. The recently published *State of the UK's Birds* https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/sukb2016_tcm9-440078.pdf is a good example of how data held by RBBP can be used for conservation.

There are around 90 rare species which breed in the UK each year (see list at <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm>). If you find any of these in breeding habitat please use BirdTrack to record the site and the numbers of each species seen. It is important to indicate the number of breeding pairs and the highest level of breeding evidence. The fullest information can be entered using the BirdTrack website www.birdtrack.net where, under optional information, you can give counts of males vs females, the number of singing males or territories or nests. The Age/Sex tab is one of the most useful because this can be used to indicate the number of males/females and chicks. Under Activity you can enter brood sizes, very useful for wildfowl. If your defined birdwatching site is larger than a 1-km square, then please use the Pinpoint tab to record the exact location of the record. This type of information is especially useful to help separate duplicates and to help identify habitats and sites for conservation. If in doubt, make sure your observations are summarised in the comments, e.g. 3 pairs seen, 2 with broods of 2 and 5 young.

If you are entering your records in the field using the smartphone app, any additional information can be entered as free format comments, but please remember to indicate the highest breeding evidence as well.

For more information on the Rare Breeding Birds Panel see www.rbbp.org.uk. All through the spring we feature a different species each week, with tips for recording that species.

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