



WILD SPACE

How to monitor
NESTING BIRDS

Bird Habitats

Birds will breed in different areas of a habitat they are found.



Farmland

Farmland provides habitat among all the crops. Quail and Lapwing often create their nests among the crops themselves, whereas some other species may nest in the hedges,

Examples; Quail, Lapwing, Yellowhammer, Yellow Wagtails



Wetland

Water is not just vital for humans; water sources such as streams, rivers, saltmarshes or lakes hold numerous species whether they are ducks, geese, waders or even wagtails.

Examples; Mallard, Greylag, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Grey Heron



Woodland

One of the most common bird habitats we have, woodlands hold numerous species including small birds, owls, and woodpeckers. Some birds nest outside of the tree and most use existing holes.

Examples; Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Tawny Owl, Willow Tit



Upland

Heathland and Upland habitats look very pretty—but they also are very important to our birds. Short-eared Owls and Hen Harriers use them as hunting grounds, whereas Red Grouse, Wheatear and Ring Ouzel will find the perfect nesting location.

Examples; Red Grouse, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Wheatear

MONITORING NESTS



Nest Stage 1: material within the box



Eggs Covered: Birds will cover their eggs during intermittent laying to keep them protected



Eggs UnCovered: Birds will uncover their eggs ready to begin incubating.

Nest Stage 2—Material forming and now resembling a nest



Adult on Nest: this is the incubation stage and lasts a week or more depending on the species



Blind Young: young look helpless with eyes shut



Feathers in Pin: There are different stages of in-pin (Small, Medium and Large) depending on the length of the feather



Ready to fledge The young are fully-grown and ready to fledge the nest

To ensure that everyone records the same, we use a standard Species Code system developed by BTO

BTO SPECIES CODES

AC	Arctic Skua	GA	Gadwall	LE	Long-eared Owl	SM	Sand Martin
AE	Arctic Tern	GX	Gannet	LT	Long-tailed Tit	SS	Sanderling
AV	Avocet	GW	Garden Warbler	MG	Maggpie	TE	Sandwich Tern
BO	Barn Owl	GY	Garganey	MA	Mallard	VI	Savi's Warbler
BY	Barnacle Goose	GC	Goldcrest	MN	Mandarin Duck	SQ	Scarlet Rosefinch
BA	Bar-tailed Godwit	EA	Golden Eagle	MX	Manx Shearwater	SP	Scaup
BR	Bearded Tit	OL	Golden Oriole	MR	Marsh Harrier	CY	Scottish Crossbill
BS	Berwick's Swan	GF	Golden Pheasant	MT	Marsh Tit	SW	Sedge Warbler
BI	Bittern	GP	Golden Plover	MW	Marsh Warbler	NS	Serin
BK	Black Grouse	GN	Goldeneye	MP	Meadow Pipit	SA	Shag
TY	Black Guillemot	GO	Goldfinch	MU	Mediterranean Gull	SU	Shelduck
BX	Black Redstart	GD	Goosander	ML	Merlin	SX	Shorelark
BJ	Black Tern	GI	Goshawk	M.	Mistle Thrush	SE	Short-eared Owl
B.	Blackbird	GH	Grasshopper Warbler	MO	Montagu's Harrier	SV	Shoveler
BC	Blackcap	GB	Great Black-backed Gull	MH	Moorhen	SK	Siskin
BH	Black-headed Gull	GG	Great Crested Grebe	MS	Mute Swan	S.	Skylark
BN	Black-necked Grebe	ND	Great Northern Diver	N.	Nightingale	SZ	Slavonian Grebe
BW	Black-tailed Godwit	NX	Great Skua	NJ	Nightjar	SN	Snipe
BV	Black-throated Diver	GS	Great Spotted Woodpecker	NH	Nuthatch	SB	Snow Bunting
BT	Blue Tit	GT	Great Tit	OP	Osprey	ST	Song Thrush
BU	Bluethroat	GE	Green Sandpiper	OC	Oystercatcher	SH	Sparrowhawk
BL	Brambling	G.	Green Woodpecker	PX	Peafowl/Peacock	AK	Spotted Crake
BG	Brent Goose	GR	Greenfinch	PE	Peregrine	SF	Spotted Flycatcher
BF	Bullfinch	GK	Greenshank	PH	Pheasant	DR	Spotted Redshank
BZ	Buzzard	H.	Grey Heron	PF	Pied Flycatcher	SG	Starling
CG	Canada Goose	P.	Grey Partridge	PW	Pied Wagtail	SD	Stock Dove
CP	Capercaillie	GV	Grey Plover	PG	Pink-footed Goose	SC	Stonechat
C.	Carriion Crow	GL	Grey Wagtail	PT	Pintail	TN	Stone-curlew
CW	Cetti's Warbler	GJ	Greylag Goose	PO	Pochard	TM	Storm Petrel
CH	Chaffinch	GU	Guillemot	PM	Ptarmigan	SL	Swallow
CC	Chiffchaff	FW	Guineafowl (Helmeted)	PU	Puffin	SI	Swift
CF	Chough	HF	Hawfinch	PS	Purple Sandpiper	TO	Tawny Owl
CL	Cirl Bunting	HH	Hen Harrier	Q.	Quail	T.	Teal
CT	Coal Tit	HG	Herring Gull	RN	Raven	TK	Temminck's Stint
CD	Collared Dove	HY	Hobby	RA	Razorbill	TP	Tree Pipit
CM	Common Gull	HZ	Honey Buzzard	RG	Red Grouse	TS	Tree Sparrow
CS	Common Sandpiper	HC	Hooded Crow	KT	Red Kite	TC	Treecreeper
CX	Common Scoter	HP	Hoopoe	ED	Red-backed Shrike	TU	Tufted Duck
CN	Common Tern	HM	House Martin	RM	Red-breasted Merganser	TT	Turnstone
CO	Coot	HS	House Sparrow	RQ	Red-crested Pochard	TD	Turtle Dove
CA	Cormorant	JD	Jackdaw	FV	Red-footed Falcon	TW	Twite
CB	Corn Bunting	J.	Jay	RL	Red-legged Partridge	WA	Water Rail
CE	Corncrake	K.	Kestrel	NK	Red-necked Phalarope	W.	Wheatear
CI	Crested Tit	KF	Kingfisher	LR	Redpoll (Lesser)	WM	Whimbrel
CR	Crossbill (Common)	KI	Kittiwake	RK	Redshank	WC	Whinchat
CK	Cuckoo	KN	Knot	RT	Redstart	WG	White-fronted Goose
CU	Curlew	LM	Lady Amherst's Pheasant	RH	Red-throated Diver	WH	Whitethroat
DW	Dartford Warbler	LA	Lapland Bunting	RE	Redwing	WS	Whooper Swan
DI	Dipper	L.	Lapwing	RB	Reed Bunting	WN	Wigeon
DO	Datterel	TL	Leach's Petrel	RW	Reed Warbler	WT	Willow Tit
DN	Dunlin	LB	Lesser Black-backed Gull	RZ	Ring Ouzel	WW	Willow Warbler
D.	Dunnack	LS	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	RP	Ringed Plover	OD	Wood Sandpiper
EG	Egyptian Goose	LW	Lesser Whitethroat	RI	Ring-necked Parakeet	WO	Wood Warbler
E.	Eider	LI	Linnet	R.	Robin	WK	Woodcock
FP	Feral Pigeon	ET	Little Egret	DV	Rock Dove (not feral)	WL	Woodlark
ZL	Feral/hybrid goose	LG	Little Grebe	RC	Rock Pipit	WP	Woodpigeon
ZF	Feral/hybrid mallard type	LU	Little Gull	RO	Rook	WR	Wren
FF	Fieldfare	LO	Little Owl	RS	Roseate Tern	WY	Wryneck
FC	Firecrest	LP	Little Ringed Plover	RY	Ruddy Duck	YW	Yellow Wagtail
F.	Fulmar	AF	Little Tern	RU	Ruff	Y.	Yellowhammer

Activity Codes

For monitoring breeding birds, there is a standardised way of monitoring behaviour and nesting attempts. This does not include the physical nest, but instead looks at the overall behaviours and nesting outcomes.

NON-BREEDING

F	FLY OVER
M	SPECIES OBSERVED BUT MAY BE MIGRATING
U	SPECIES OBSERVED BUT MAY BE A SUMMERING NON-BREEDER

POSSIBLE BREEDING

H	SPECIES OBSERVED IN BREEDING SEASON AT SUITING HABITAT
S	SINGING MALE PRESENT AT SUITABLE BREEDING LOCATION

PROBABLE BREEDING

P	PAIR OBSERVED IN SUITABLE NESTING HABITAT IN BREEDING SEASON
T	PERMANENT TERRITORY ESTABLISHED.
D	COURTSHIP AND DISPLAY WITNESSED
N	VISITING PROBABLE NEST SITE
A	AGITATED BEHAVIOUR OR ANXIETY CALLS FROM ADULTS
I	BROOD PATCH ON ADULT EXAMINED IN THE HAND (RINGING)
B	NEST BUILDING OR EXCAVATING NEST-HOLE

CONFIRMED BREEDING (see nest monitoring guidelines)

DD	DISTRACTION – DISPLAY WITNESS
UN	USED NEST OR EGGSHELL FOUND
FL	RECENTLY FLEDGED YOUNG WITNESSED NEARBY OR FROM HOLE
ON	ADULTING ENTERING/LEAVING OCCUPIED NEST
FF	ADULT CARRYING FAECAL SAC OR FOOD FOR YOUNG
NE	NEST CONTAINING EGGS
NY	NEST WITH YOUNG SEEN OR HEARD

MONITORING BREEDING BIRDS SAFELY



WORKING AT HEIGHT:

Ensure you follow guidelines relating to climbing ladders or trees. Have a partner with you and maintain all safety regulations.

3 Points on ladder. Don't stand on top 2 rungs. Place on flat surface.

PPE:

Some birds are known to attack if you approach a nest, ensure you have some safety equipment on particularly around nesting holes to protect your eyes.

Hard-hats may be required if working with species with sharp-talons.



LOCATION:

Always let atleast one person know where you are going. Sometimes we have an accident and require assistance, it's easier to send someone your location.

SAFETY FOR BIRDS:

When working around birds, care must be taken to ensure they are also protected:

- Quiet around nest to avoid any startling or abandoning of nest.
- Don't stay too long—a maximum of 2 minutes is all you need to peek inside, count and move off.
- Licenses are required! Some species have further protection, check with your governing body first before looking for any nests. In the UK we have Schedule 1 requirements for these.
- Most birds nest between March—September and it is an offence to disturb or damage nesting birds.



Make your own Nest Box!



Use the diagram opposite to cut out your nest box. We're making a box for Blue Tits, Great Tits and Sparrows.



Start to put together your nest box. We use screws to make sure it stays together for a long time.
Start with the back and install the sides first, this will make it easier.



Drill the hole out of the front. 2.8cm is the size we use which means it works for a variety of species.

Once complete, install your nest box in a suitable location outside. You can put it on a tree, fence or on a wall. About 2m off the ground is best in a north-east direction.

Record what you've discovered

DATE	SPECIES	NEST	ACTIVITY
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WHERE TO REPORT



LOCAL RECORDING CENTRES & ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

Once you have found and monitored some nests or nesting behaviour, you can submit all this data to your local County Recorders, local records centre or even your Ornithological trust. UK we have the BTO, USA has Cornell Lab.



SUBMIT TO US

We are happy to collect any data you have from your various activities and submit these to your local areas and recording centres.