



The Birds of Berkshire

Atlas Revision Group

Berkshire Bird Atlas Newsletter No. 1 August 2005

Since the kickoff meeting at the end of 2004, the Steering Group has met three times. Here's a brief summary of our actions and decisions to date.

Actions we have taken:

1. Established links with other counties who are working on (or have recently worked on) bird atlases. Aims were to
 - a. Share knowledge (and effort where appropriate)
 - b. Get ideas for atlas content
 - c. Get ideas on printing strategy and costs
2. Established links with BTO National Atlas Working Group. There is a good likelihood that we will be able to use their tools/methods for data entry/retrieval; mapping and (possibly) population estimation
3. Established links with Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

Decisions we have made:

1. The primary aim of the new atlas shall be to record the changes in bird distribution since the last atlas and attempt to explain them
2. The secondary aims of the new atlas shall be to
 - a. Update the historical information
 - b. Provide information on trends in bird population
 - c. Make assessments of total county population figures for each species
 - d. Provide information on important county sites
3. The new atlas will cover both summer and winter distributions. Surveying will be carried out in both seasons from winter 2007 until summer 2010, hopefully using the same methods as the national (BTO) survey work which will be running simultaneously.
4. We will probably use the same publisher as previously. This may not be the cheapest option (printing done abroad can be significantly cheaper!) but we will have better control and flexibility using a local resource.
5. We are confident that even with a low cover price we can comfortably break even on the project. Printing costs are relatively low these days; sponsorship is not too difficult to obtain and the potential market has increased since the last atlas. We will therefore keep the price of the book low (target price £20) in order to maximise sales and the opportunity for all birders to own a copy.

Problems we have encountered or not yet resolved:

1. All electronic files of the last atlas have been lost! This will particularly impact the production of comparative distribution maps. We are still investigating methods for recreating these data.
2. We are not sure how easy it will be to get population estimates for each species. We are working with BTO to see if we can use the national atlas analysis at a regional level but it may not be accurate enough. If not, we would have to adopt a more intensive fieldwork method.
3. We would propose to use the BTO method for winter surveying but this has not yet been defined. Pilots for two different methods will be trialled this winter and next. We will participate in these in order to gain firsthand experience.