

WEST MIDLAND BIRD CLUB

WMBC 2017 Cannock Chase Bird Survey

This survey is devoted to the memory of Frank Gribble, MBE

Methodology and survey commitment

Birders will be allocated a specific sector(s) of the Chase and/or within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The majority of these sectors will either be under the ownership or stewardship of Staffordshire County Council (e.g. Oldacre Valley), the Forestry Commission (e.g. Parr's Warren), the National Trust (e.g. Satnall Hills, Shugborough) or other local authorities (Shoal Hill, Gentleshaw Common) and some private landowners.

Birders will be asked to report on the presence of target species within those sectors and their numbers. Other details required will be the date breeding activity was noted and habitat where found (use the BTO codes). Records may be submitted via a paper form or online via the Club website.

For most common species identified on the target list, only presence will be required and there will be no need to count those species (refer also to 'Survey Requirements – explanation' in the packs).

ALL OBSERVATIONS SHOULD BE MADE FROM MAIN PATHS OR TRACKS. This will mean that specific biosecurity measures will not be needed regarding the plant disease affecting bilberry on the Chase (*Phytophthora pseudosyringae*).

Records should be sent in on the day that you make your visit, please (do not delay!). This will allow for ongoing assessment.

Visits will be time-limited to achieve a balance of survey effort; each visit should take between 2 – 3 hours depending on the size of your sector and using tracks only to minimise the need for biosecurity (to prevent further spread of *Phytophthora* disease in bilberry). Where possible, try to use the same route across your sector for consistency. It would help if you could mark your route on a map so that the same walk can be repeated in future years.

Reported visits should be made from mid-February, although it is advised that a familiarisation visit and habitat survey should be done before that. The BTO recommends that habitat visits should be done as a specific visit for that purpose, but that may not always be possible. By February, species such as Woodlark and Raven will have commenced breeding activities. This may also be true for certain resident birds that are on the target list.

During March, April, May, June and July, participants should endeavour to visit their sector twice and two weeks apart, preferably in the first part of the morning and if at all possible, commencing within an hour of dawn. At least one other visit will be required through the night time. These visits preferably should not be done on Saturday or Sunday evenings and always with at least one other person. Specific arrangements have been made regarding Nightjar and Owl surveys. Further information is attached at the end of this guidance note.*

Please do not worry if you cannot make a visit either through illness, injury or through holiday or family commitments, but please let me know in advance as arrangements may be made to cover for you. You are not required to conduct surveys in poor or unsuitable weather.

If you have any queries, please contact me on (07709) 022604 or at deputy-chair@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Roger Broadbent,
Chase Survey Project Manager

*** Survey for Nightjar and other crepuscular birds**

Current advice is that survey for these species should be undertaken after dark or pre-dawn. At least 2 visits to your sector should be made between 23rd May and mid-July. These would count as one of the two monthly visits you would be making during May, June and July.

Ideally, these visits should be spaced two weeks apart and include all suitable habitats. Information required for the online or paper forms includes a grid reference for sightings particularly of churring Nightjar males, hooting owls and roding woodcocks, as well as for any other bird that is active at dawn or dusk (Grasshopper warbler and Woodlarks may sing at these times as well). An estimation of numbers of churring males should be made after the second visit.

For pre-dawn or dusk surveys, you will need to carry a torch and spare batteries and should inform someone of your planned whereabouts before setting off onto the Chase. For and survey near roadsides, high visibility arm bands are being sought. You should also ensure you wear plenty of warm clothing as the Chase can be very cold at dawn and dusk. More advice on health and safety will follow.

Please let me know if you are unable to participate in the pre-dawn and dusk surveys so that we can re-allocate this work.