## Lothian SOC - East Lothian Winter Atlas 2020/21

When the Lothian & Borders branches of the SOC led a tetrad atlas of SE Scotland over the years 2007-13, many new volunteers came forward to take part, enjoying the chance to explore new parts of the area and find out what birds were there. We found that the winter season fieldwork was particularly popular, despite the shorter days and colder weather! So, the Lothian SOC Discussion Group (part of the branch which organises and coordinates local surveys, among other things) decided to run a one-season winter atlas, just of East Lothian. And after a summer with reduced opportunities for constructive fieldwork, or for most even normal birdwatching, we hope many of you will be keen to join in, especially if you enjoyed taking part in the last atlas around ten years ago now.

In summary, volunteers will visit one or more tetrads (an area of 2 km x 2 km) once in November or December and once in January or February. At each visit, all birds found in either a one hour or two-hour period should be noted and counted. These visits are known as 'Timed Tetrad Visits' or TTVs. Additional species, or higher counts of species already recorded, found after the TTV or at another time, can also be recorded and indeed such additional recording in the tetrad is encouraged – these are known as Roving Records. Accordingly, volunteers should be familiar with the commoner species to be found locally in the winter; knowledge of calls is also important to help locate birds. For example, if you are familiar with the churring of a Wren, you can immediately count that as 'Wren – 1' and move on, you don't need to look for and see the bird.

To assist those unfamiliar with atlas methodology we aim to hold some 'mentoring' sessions to help plan fieldwork and record birds using this methodology. If you might be interested in these, please contact the email below, but please note that, owing to COVID-19 restrictions, there may be limited availability.

Through partnership with the BTO, we have an online map showing the location of all the tetrads in East Lothian and it is through this map that you can request a tetrad. Once your request has been accepted, you will be sent further background documentation and more detailed guidelines plus a copy of a simple excel spreadsheet to be used as a template for submitting records. You can find the online map and registration system here:

https://app.bto.org/batmap/squares/EastLothianWinterAtlas.

So, go on, have a look and pick an area you want to find more about this winter! We have 212 tetrads to cover so there is something for everyone.

We also set up two other things which we hope will be of help to volunteers. Firstly, we have software which can be used on a smartphone to enable you to identify the tetrad you are in at any time, to help ensure your records are correctly placed. And secondly we have set up a What's App group for anyone participating in the project to join if they wish, so that volunteers can keep in touch with each other and share anecdotes or ask questions. The organisers can also use it to provide updates on how the project is going. Details of these will be sent to signed-up volunteers.

Further questions should be directed to <a href="mailto:sescotatlas@gmail.com">sescotatlas@gmail.com</a>.

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