

Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

2010 Warbler Survey Fieldwork Guidance Notes



Route Selection and Description:

- Select any convenient route expected to be reasonably productive for encountering warblers.
- There is no specified length required which is for individual surveyors to choose.
- Willow Warbler and other long distant migrant warblers are priority species to be taken into account when selecting a survey route but all warbler species are of interest to the survey.
- The chosen location, in terms of a site name and an approximate central OS grid reference, should be given to David Cogger at the address below when signing up to take part in the survey.
- A map of the area will then be provided. Please mark on the route and return for our records.
- Habitat recording is optional – see instructions on page 2 of these guidance notes.

Survey and Count Methodology:

- Surveyors should undertake a minimum of three visits at about monthly intervals from late Apr / early May to July but records from more frequent visits would be welcome.
- Take the time required for effective observation; follow up sightings to maximise breeding evidence but follow the Birdwatchers Code to avoid disturbance and respect public rights of way.
- Count the number of adults of each species encountered within each of the breeding code categories in the table below.
- i.e. visit records summarise the following: Date; Species; Breeding Code; Count; (Comment).
- Use the highest code applicable, e.g. record a **Pair Building** as a count of 2 at code “B”.
- For **Pairs** seen at higher codes (N, B, A, ON etc) count both individuals and enter a note in the comment column that a pair was seen at this code.
- For the “RF” code, count the adults seen and supply counts of juvs as comments if available.
- Morning visits are preferable but visits can be undertaken at any time of day that suits - please provide a record of the approximate time of day of the visit (am, pm, evening).
- Some further guidance and hints for surveying are given on page 3 of these guidance notes.

Breeding Codes

H	Species in suitable nesting H abitat
S	S inging male, or breeding calls heard
P	P air in suitable nesting habitat
D	D isplay or courtship
N	Bird visiting probable N est site
B	Bird seen B uilding a nest or carrying nesting material
A	A gitated behaviour or anxiety calls, suggesting a nest or young nearby
ON	O ccupied N est in use (where contents cannot be deduced)
FS	Adult carrying F aecal S ac away from nest site
FY	Adult carrying F ood for Y oung
RF	Parent(s) with dependent R ecently F ledged young
NE	N est with E ggs
NY	N est with Y oung

Warbler Species
and 2 Letter Codes

GH	Grasshopper Warbler
SW	Sedge Warbler
RW	Reed Warbler
LW	Lesser Whitethroat
WH	(Common) Whitethroat
BC	Blackcap
GW	Garden Warbler
WO	Wood Warbler
CC	Chiffchaff
WW	Willow Warbler

Comments and other information

- Provide any relevant additional information as comments.
- e.g. indicate where records on separate visits refer to the same sites / birds.
- If possible, give estimates of numbers of territories along the route.
- Provide additional habitat data in respect of sites of more interest where birds are concentrated.

Queries and submission of records

- If queries come up during the course of fieldwork contact David Cogger in the first instance.
- Electronic submission is preferable in Excel spreadsheet format using the form provided; please send to davidcogger@cawos.org. Paper forms should be sent to David Cogger at 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich, Cheshire CW10 9HD
- Please return forms by 31st August 2010

Habitat recording - Optional

The primary objective of the survey is to gather count data and establish a reference for future change. Nevertheless, habitat information is of interest and providing this data is an optional extra.

Identify the main habitat types and the approximate proportion of each along the survey route as a whole (say within the first 50 – 100 m either side where most birds have been located in the survey), using the codes shown below. For water courses such as rivers and canals, identify the proportion of the route running alongside these feature, in addition to the adjacent terrestrial habitat.

Where activity of particular species can be linked to specific habitat types along the route, please provide this information as a comment on the visit / count part of the record form. For example, identify where activity is linked to specific wetland and scrubland habitat in another habitat type.

- A1: Woodland: - more than 5m tall – broadleaved
- A2: Woodland: - more than 5m tall – coniferous
- A3: Woodland: - more than 5m tall – mixed broadleaved & coniferous (at least 10% of each)
- A4: Woodland: - more than 5m tall – broadleaved waterlogged
- A5: Woodland: - more than 5m tall – coniferous waterlogged
- A6: Woodland: - more than 5m tall – mixed broadleaved & coniferous waterlogged (at least 10% of each)
- B1: Scrubland - (or very young – regenerating natural or seminatural woodland)
- B2: Scrubland - Downland (chalk)
- B3: Scrubland - Heath scrub
- B4: Scrubland - Young coppice
- B5: Scrubland - New plantation
- B6: Scrubland - Clear felled woodland (with or without new saplings)
- B7: Scrubland - Other
- C2: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Grassmoor (unenclosed)
- C3: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Grassmoor mixed with heather (unenclosed)
- C4: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Machair
- C5: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Other dry grassland
- C6: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Water-meadow/grazing marsh
- C7: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Reed swamp
- C8: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Other open marsh
- C9: Natural or semi-natural grassland – Salt Marsh
- D1: Heathland and bog – Dry heath
- D2: Heathland and bog – Wet heath
- D3: Heathland and bog – Mixed wet / dry heath
- D4: Heathland and bog – Bog
- D5: Heathland and bog – Breckland
- D6: Heathland and bog – Drained bog
- E1: Farmland – Apparently improved grassland
- E2: Farmland – Apparently unimproved grassland
- E3: Farmland – Mixed grass / tilled land
- E4: Farmland – Tilled land
- E5: Farmland – Orchard
- E6: Farmland – Other farming
- F1: Human Sites – Urban
- F2: Human Sites – Suburban
- F3: Human Sites – Rural
- G1: Water bodies (freshwater) – Pond (less the 50 sq m)
- G2: Water bodies (freshwater) – Small water body (50 – 450 sq m)
- G3: Water bodies (freshwater) – Lake / unlined reservoir
- G4: Water bodies (freshwater) – Lined reservoir
- G5: Water bodies (freshwater) – Gravel pit / sand pit etc
- G6: Water bodies (freshwater) – Stream (less than 3 m wide)
- G7: Water bodies (freshwater) – River (more than 3 m wide)
- G8: Water bodies (freshwater) – Ditch with water (less than 2 m wide)
- G9: Water bodies (freshwater) – Small canal (2-5 m wide)
- G10: Water bodies (freshwater) – Large canal (more than 5 m wide)

Further guidance and hints for surveying

Calls and song

It is recommended that those not confident about identification of warblers by song polish up on recognition by listening to CD recordings or the recordings accessible through the RSPB Birds by Name web site (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name>).

Alarm and contact calls can also be a useful aid to picking up the presence of some species and to identification. Though similar in some respects, the alarm call of Willow Warbler is distinct from that of the Chiffchaff and, with practice, provides a means of distinguishing the two species when not in song. The description by Geoff Samples on his CDs may be a useful reminder in the field (but it helps to hear the two in comparison on a recording first!):

Willow Warbler: A rounded disyllabic "Hoo-weet".

Chiffchaff: A more slurred "Choo-wee" in a voice with a hint of a squeaky toy.

The calls may be particularly helpful in picking up family parties and providing breeding evidence through recently fledged young later in the season.

The various harsher alarm calls of the *Sylvia* warblers (Whitethroat, Blackcap and Garden Warbler) are useful aids to detection.

Field recording

Some volunteers may have well-established approaches to field recording and we would be interested to hear about these for use in future surveys.

The following approach is a suggestion which some surveyors not familiar with recording these sorts of observations might find gives useful.

The two letter codes in the adjacent table provide a convenient short hand means of recording species observed in a field note book.

Together with the one and two letter breeding codes presented earlier, each different type of observation can be recorded succinctly.

Simply add another stroke to record each additional observation in a previously observed combination of species and breeding code and species. Add more categories of combinations of species and breeding code as they are encountered.

Add simple comments to the right as they arise or make more detailed comments on another page of the note book where appropriate.

See the example below for further explanation.

Warbler Species
and 2 Letter Codes

GH	Grasshopper Warbler
SW	Sedge Warbler
RW	Reed Warbler
LW	Lesser Whitethroat
WH	(Common) Whitethroat
BC	Blackcap
GW	Garden Warbler
WO	Wood Warbler
CC	Chiffchaff
WW	Willow Warbler

Note book record example

Gorse Covert 01/05/10

WW S HHH /

BC P //

CC S |||

CC B // pr

Willow warbler singing – a total of 6 individuals heard during the visit.

A single pair of Blackcaps encountered.

Three singing Chiffchaffs.

A pair of Chiffchaffs building a nest.