

Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group & Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project

Estimating the Red Grouse Population on the Long Mynd

Project Briefing 2019

Complete the Participant Details Sheet

Which dates can you come? (Absolutely necessary for our planning)

Are you willing to cover a Watch Point on a main footpath, or on the open heath, rather than on the road?

Training is available in the field, if you want it, on the first evening you are able to attend.

N.B. Mobile Phone Number is important, if you have one. We will give it out to other participants, partly so you can confer with adjacent observers, and partly for health and safety reasons.

We will endeavour to provide lifts from Carding Mill Valley to Pole Cottage for those that want them, but that is conditional on other people being willing to offer them. If you want a lift, or can offer lifts, please complete the relevant parts of the Participant Details form.

Observation Dates (All Thursdays) and times

Sunset is about 7.45pm on the first date, and gets later by 15 minutes per week. Start times are:-

- 6.20pm, 4th April
- 6.50pm, 18th April
- 7.10pm, 2nd May
- 6.35pm, 11th April
- 7.00pm, 25th April
- 7.20pm, 9th May

We will check the weather forecast the day before and notify you if the count is postponed. We will try and re-arrange it for the following Monday or Tuesday, so please include the additional days you can do on the Participants Form.

Watch Points

The survey will be carried out by watching and listening from a series of pre-determined Watch Points. All Watch Points are marked on the survey maps which will be issued to you. You will be allocated a Watch Point number on each evening you have told us you can come on the Participants Form. If your availability changes, please tell Barbara Burns immediately. Your Watch Point number (together with the number of the Survey Map you need to take) will be sent out by email the afternoon of the day before. Go directly to your Watch Point by the Start Time for that date. Otherwise meet at Pole Cottage Car Park (OS Grid Reference SO413937) on the first date, or meet just east of the Carding Mill Valley Tea Room (by the staff car park) half an hour earlier if you've booked a lift up. N.B. Lifts must be booked in advance. See above. If you need to meet up to collect maps, etc. this will need to be by prior arrangement with Barbara after the first evening.

The Watch Points have been selected to give a good field of view over places where Grouse have been recorded before. At some Watch Points, note the contour lines on the map around the Watch Point to determine the direction you should be looking. They are not necessarily at the highest point, as that may offer a poor field of view. Use your discretion on where to stand / patrol – maximise your field of view. Stepping up onto the bank next to the road / path may provide a much better view. If there is a particular hot-spot of Grouse activity, you may wish to leave the Watch Point to investigate. Be careful on rough terrain!

You don't need to stand still for the whole period (you'll need to keep warm!), but please spend almost all of your survey time within 50 metres of the Point marked on the map.

If possible, stay at the Watch Point until 15 minutes after sunset (but make sure you can get back to your car in daylight, if you don't have a torch).

Change of Plans

If you've said you're coming, but find you can't, please leave a message with Barbara at the NT office (01694 725001) as soon as possible (office open until 4.30pm). **N.B. If you are allocated a Watch Point on any date, but you cannot get there, for whatever reason, please email Barbara Burns the following day** (Barbara.Burns@nationaltrust.org.uk). This is **essential** in planning subsequent surveys, as we aim to cover each Watch Point three times, and if you don't tell us your Watch Point wasn't covered, we'll assume that it has been.

Estimating Distance

It is important that your observations are mapped as accurately as possible. Use the features on the map (especially the contours) to determine locations. If you aren't familiar with the terrain, or estimating distances, you may want to pace out 100 metres before you start to help you to estimate distance

What to Record on the Site Visits

Name, Date & Watch Point Number

Start Time and Finish Time at Watch Point

Mark your observations on your Survey Map as accurately as possible, particularly the landing point at the end of the Display Flight. Number each observation.

Use the symbols below (they are all reproduced on the Fieldwork Record sheet).

The most useful observations are of two birds seen or heard concurrently. **Therefore using the dotted line, to distinguish two separate birds, is particularly important.**

Symbols to use on Map

- M = male Red Grouse (seen - position certain)
P = pair of Red Grouse (seen - position certain)
? = Unseen Male calling in distance, position uncertain
D = Display flight

Two males seen concurrently

 Territorial Aggression

→ = Direction Of Flight

M — M = Same bird moved
(solid line)

→ = Bird disappeared from view

M - - - M = Two different birds
(dotted line)

—X = Landing Place

—D = Landing Place

Clearly identify observations that are definitely different Males

Put the Map and the Fieldwork Record Sheet on separate pieces of paper. Put Name and WP Number on both. Write neatly – if the observations are illegible, there's no point in sending them in!!!!

Different Males heard Simultaneously

You are more likely to hear two male birds than see them, when they display against each other. These calls are usually not simultaneous, but the second will be heard a minute or so after the first. **If it's not physically possible for a single bird to fly the distance between the two different locations in the time interval, or if you have a clear field of view of the ground between the two calls and no Grouse flew across it, mark the two calls as definitely different birds with the dotted line. Use your judgement.**

Estimate the number of different Grouse you have observed

Put your estimate in the space provided at the bottom of the recording sheet. Use your judgement.

Liaison with Neighbour

Are any of your observations also on your neighbour's map, or not (use mobile phone for contact – if so, enter "Also recorded from WPx".in comments column. Check that both watches say the same time!!!).

Other Species – Optional Extra

If you can, please record any Curlew, Snipe, Red Kite, Whinchat and Grasshopper Warbler you see or hear.

What to bring (in addition to Survey Map and two copies of Recording Sheet)

Coloured pen (fine felt tip best) & clipboard / book to rest on

Watch & mobile phone. NB Check the watch is accurate, or adjust the times you record so they are correct.

Very Warm, Windproof and Waterproof Clothing (it can get very cold)

Possibly a Torch, if you volunteer to leave the road

Possibly a compass, if you have one, to help map the direction of your observations

Inclement Weather

Weather forecasts are not always accurate, and might change at the last minute. Check your email before setting off, but otherwise we won't be able to have last-minute cancellation arrangements. If the plateau is in thick mist, or it's raining hard, or it's very windy, and it's not going to change, don't come. If in doubt, turn up. If you don't turn up, let us know the next day. If you come and it starts to rain continuously, there's no point in staying. If you see lightning, or hear thunder close by, leave immediately.

Handing in Survey Maps

If you can, hand them in to Leo Smith before going home. If not, either bring them next week, or post to Barbara Burns, National Trust, Carding Mill Valley, Church Stretton SY6 6JG

Casual Records

If you are on Long Mynd any other time, and see 2 male Grouse displaying against each other, or a pair, please mark the locations on a Survey Map.

If it's on the same map as you use for your next Survey, mark the locations on that (but clearly record that observation was on a separate date). If you want more maps for such records, please ask.

More Information

If in doubt, please ask Barbara Burns (Barbara.Burns@nationaltrust.org.uk) or Leo Smith (01694 720296) (leo@leosmith.org.uk).

Feedback - Project Report

By comparing the information on all the maps at the end of the survey period, plus casual records collected between now and July, we hope to be able to define the different territories, and count them. The results will be presented in a report which will be sent to all participants, probably early next year.

Repeat Next Year

Long term monitoring is important, so hopefully participants will join in again next year.