

Hertfordshire Bird Atlas



Mapping the distribution of Hertfordshire's birds

Volunteers' Newsletter

Issue 1 - March 2008

Overview

The Hertfordshire Birds Atlas is a tetrad scale distribution atlas project for both winter and breeding seasons and is running alongside Bird Atlas 2007-11, the new atlas for the whole of Britain and Ireland being organised by the British Trust for Ornithology in collaboration with the Scottish Ornithologists Club and BirdWatch Ireland. In Hertfordshire we are aiming to cover all 491 tetrads (2km x 2km squares) which include part of the county - as was done in the 1988-92 breeding atlas.

Fieldwork started on 1 November 2007 with the winter season spanning the months of November to February inclusive, and will continue during those months for four years. Breeding season fieldwork will also run for four years and from the start of April to the end of July.

Local Coverage Status

The situation at the end of the first winter fieldwork season is significantly better than I had hoped, with 280 (57%) of the 491 Hertfordshire tetrads having volunteers for either Roving Records or Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs). By 3 March 2008, data for both early and late winter TTVs had been entered online for 167 of those tetrads and a further 16 had their early TTV entered. In addition, 212 tetrads had at least one Roving Record submitted.

This is an amazing response and I'd like to thank everyone who has helped get this project off to such a good start. Many volunteers have offered to take on their tetrads in both the winter and breeding seasons and breeding season paperwork will be distributed during March. I'll also be supplying a Hertfordshire Bird Atlas record card for the breeding season. I am hoping that those of you who entered their winter data online will do likewise for the breeding season.

The Hertfordshire Bird Atlas Website

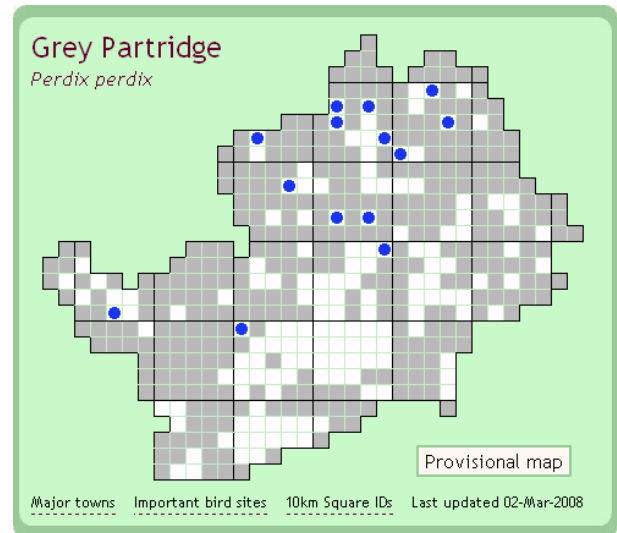
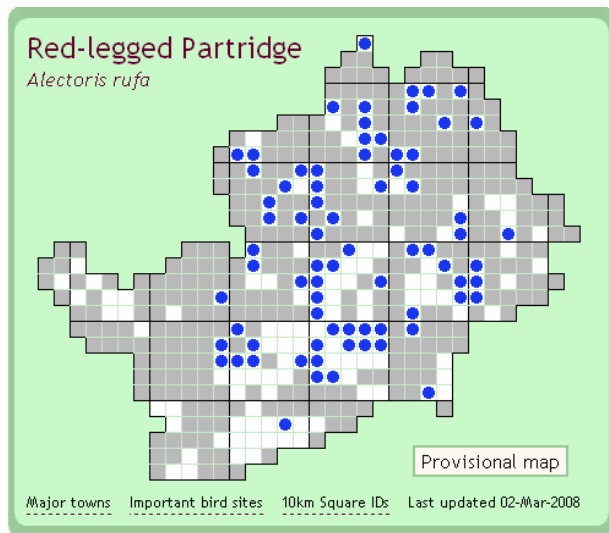
In contrast to the previous atlases, the availability of the internet provides a major opportunity to provide information about the aims of these projects and to provide timely feedback. The Hertfordshire Bird Atlas website (www.hertsatlas.org.uk) provides access to the tetrad-scale maps and species lists from the previous two breeding atlases and 10km results for the 1981-84 winter atlas.

The first batch of results from this winter's Timed Tetrad Visits and Roving Records was loaded onto the website on 5 February. All data entered online up to 8 January 2008 is included. An initial batch of BirdTrack records has also been loaded and more will follow, so please keep a watch on the news on the home page.

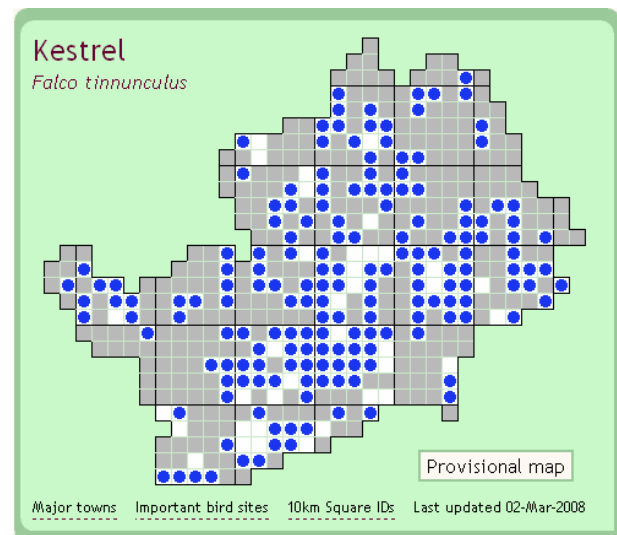
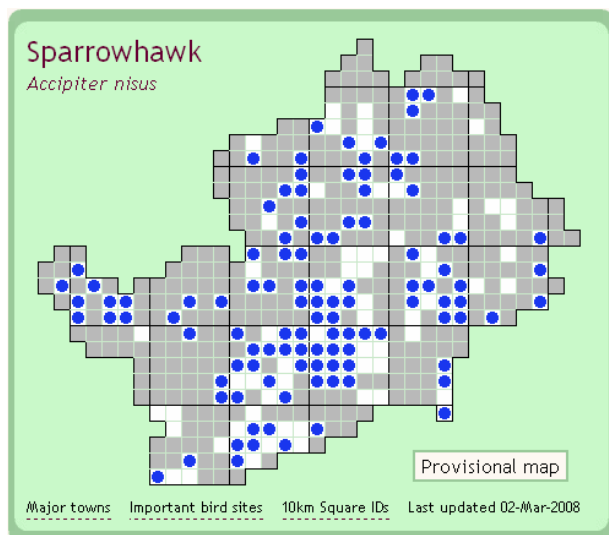
Preliminary Results

With this provisional data for the start of the current winter season now starting to become available, we are beginning to get an indication of the winter distribution, but coverage is still far from complete, so absence of a record does not mean that the species is absent.

Nevertheless, some interesting results are starting to appear. In the maps below, the dots indicate where the species has been recorded. Shaded squares have probably not received enough attention to be sure that the species is absent. Red-legged Partridges have been located in five times as many tetrads as Grey Partridges.



Kestrels do still seem to be more widely distributed than Sparrowhawks, whilst Buzzards have been observed in more than 100 tetrads.



More Help Still Needed

If you are not already helping with this important project and would like to get involved, please contact me by email at hertsbto@hotmail.com or by telephone on 01279 755637.

Chris Dee - Hertfordshire BTO Regional Rep. and Hertfordshire Bird Atlas Organiser