

BREEDING FIRECREST SURVEY 2018

INSTRUCTIONS



This survey aims to improve our understanding of the distribution of breeding Firecrests in Sussex, to enable the estimation of population densities in different habitats in Sussex, and to provide detailed information on the habitat preferences of breeding Firecrests in Sussex. The survey is being organised on behalf of the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) and will involve the searching of all potentially suitable habitat within 1-km squares and the counting of singing Firecrests and Goldcrests. The 1-km squares surveyed will be those where singing Firecrests have been recorded previously or where there is thought to be particularly suitable habitat, as well as some randomly-selected squares where at least some potentially suitable habitat exists.

SURVEY METHOD

Please contact the survey organiser to be allocated a 1-km square to survey or to register your chosen square, and then please visit your square at least once (but preferably two or three times) during the period of peak song output **between 14 April and 30 June**. Ideally one visit or the only visit should be made **between 7 May and 7 June**. Any visit made in April or very early in May could detect singing migrant birds and so must be followed up with at least one later visit. Each visit should cover all suitable Firecrest breeding habitat within the square and should preferably be made between the early morning and mid-morning.

Please map all singing FIRECRESTS and GOLDCRESTS, along with any other observations of these species, on a separate map copy for each visit. Indicate that a bird is heard singing by circling the registration on the map, and indicate any other observed activity such as a bird carrying food or nesting material using written notes. Most importantly, please also indicate on each map whether:

- (a) Two singing males are heard singing simultaneously (i.e. definitely different individuals), by joining the map registrations with a dotted line; or
- (b) Two map registrations relate definitely to the same individual bird (e.g. the bird was observed or thought to be moving between locations), by joining the map registrations with a solid line.

For FIRECRESTS: after all visits have been completed, please combine all observations on one map, group any observations that are considered to relate to the same territory, and allocate a reference number to each territory. Please indicate clearly any uncertainty about territory location and extent. For each territory please then record on the accompanying results sheet information about habitat and observed bird activity.

For GOLDCRESTS: please simply estimate the number of singing males encountered in the square.

Please also record visit dates and times on the results sheet and on all of the map copies, and please indicate on the maps any areas that you have been unable to survey for any reasons.

Please do not attempt to survey birds in persistent heavy rain, very poor visibility or strong wind. Access private land only with the permission of the landowner, and please take account when planning survey visits of the need to avoid disturbance to nesting birds (see below). Song/call playback must NOT be used.

OBTAINING 1-km SQUARE MAPS AND OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Use the website <http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ3025> to check the location of your allocated 1-km square and to print maps of your allocated or chosen square(s). Replace the grid reference at the end of the link with the grid reference of your square. There are many other sources of 1-km square maps available, and for the purposes of this survey, maps printed or photocopied from any of these sources are acceptable

Please read the general health and safety information for volunteer fieldworkers that is published by the BTO and available at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/bbs> or on request. Please record other species that you encounter during your surveys in BirdTrack at www.bto.org/birdtrack.

Firecrests are listed on Schedule 1 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which means that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb them (including by the use of song/call playback) at or near an active nest. For the purposes of this survey there is no need to disturb nesting birds; where possible please keep to public rights of way and if nesting birds are accidentally approached closely then please move away immediately and make observations from a distance during subsequent surveys. Precise locations of nesting sites identified by this survey will be treated as confidential.

HABITAT RECORDING

Firecrests are thought to prefer western hemlock, douglas fir and spruce plantations, stands of other conifers (except pines and cypress), ornamental gardens with exotic conifers, and deciduous and mixed woodland with holly or ivy or yew. They can be found in smaller gardens or churchyards with exotic conifers and in small areas of suitable woodland or small stands of suitable conifers. For each Firecrest territory located within your square please consider the habitat in the immediate area and select from the following list as many categories as are applicable:

1. Conifer plantation
2. Mixed woodland
3. Deciduous woodland
4. Park/large ornamental gardens
5. Smaller domestic gardens
6. Churchyard
7. Western hemlock
8. Douglas fir
9. Norway spruce
10. Spruce spp.
11. Grand fir
12. Western red cedar
13. Holly
14. Ivy
15. Yew
16. Other tree species (please specify)
17. Young plantation (<5m high)
18. Mature plantation
19. Other habitat feature (please specify)

RETURNING RESULTS

Please return all survey forms and maps, either by post or as email attachments, by **31st August 2018** to: Helen Crabtree, 3 Myrtle Cottages, Ardingly Road, Cuckfield, RH17 5HD. Tel. 01444 441687. Email hcrabtree@gmail.com.