

Sussex Turtle Dove survey 2019

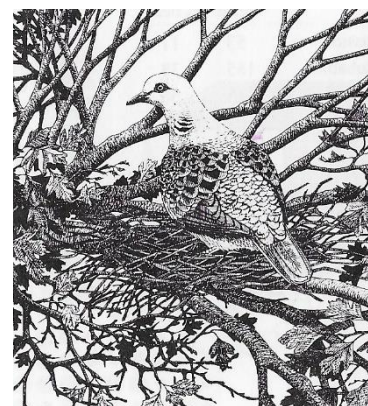
SOS - Countywide survey in 60 tetrads

Volunteers needed – can you help?

Two morning visits in May/June and June/July

Background

The Turtle Dove is one of the most rapidly declining species in UK and elsewhere in northern Europe. It is the subject of a Europe wide action plan designed to determine the causes of the decline and bring about a recovery in the population. In UK there have been research projects led by Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and RSPB investigating the ecology of the species and there is currently to a national conservation initiative putting practical measures in place led by RSPB, Natural England and others (Operation Turtle Dove).



The core breeding range now stretches from Hampshire through Sussex and Kent and into East Anglia. Sussex is very much on the southwest edge of the range but still holds significant and nationally important numbers. In the 2008-11 breeding atlas there was evidence of breeding (proved, probable and possible) in 195 tetrads in Sussex. Since then there have been between 200-300 records submitted each year to the County Recorder.

There are also at least two sites in the county (Butcherlands SWT and the Knepp Estate) where Turtle Dove numbers have increased in response to large scale habitat change. As part of Operation Turtle Dove, the RSPB have been monitoring a sample of sites in and around the Adur valley and working with farmers to provide suitable breeding and feeding sites.

Given the continued importance of Sussex for Turtle Doves, the SOS Scientific Committee decided that we should try to establish the current status of the species and recent population trends. Given the pressures on land-use in the county, we also felt that it was important we know the key breeding sites so they can be safeguarded as part of SOS conservation work.

Objectives

Our first objective is to look for changes in the distribution of Turtle Doves in Sussex over the last decade by re-surveying a sample of tetrads which held breeding birds during the 2008-11 atlas. The atlas records simply record presence and the breeding status in each tetrad. To arrive at an estimate of the numbers of breeding Turtle Doves in the county we will map and count the ‘purring’ males within the randomly selected tetrads.

Survey methods

We have selected at random a sample of tetrads occupied by Turtle Doves in the 2008-11 breeding atlas – 40 tetrads with proved or probable breeding in 2008-11 and 20 tetrads with possible breeding. We are asking volunteers to survey as many of these as possible in 2019. We settled on 60 tetrads as this is a large enough sample to provide reliable estimates of change and numbers. If the interest and demand is great enough, we have further random tetrads which we can allocate in due course.

Turtle Doves have a long and comparatively late breeding season which is an advantage for surveyors. However, they are also relatively inconspicuous which means that the ground needs to be covered closely if they are to be detected. Their ‘purring’ is not all that loud, and they tend to do it mostly in the early morning.

You should make two survey visits to check out all the suitable habitat as closely as possible, Visit 1 between May 11 and June 20, Visit 2 between June 21 and July 24. Visits should be in the early morning (between first light and 09.00) in good weather conditions. We will provide 1:25,000 maps of your tetrad.

You should try to check out all areas with scrub or dense tall hedgerows, the favoured Turtle Dove nesting habitat, and record your Turtle Doves using standard BTO codes. There will inevitably be areas of the tetrad where access is not possible or where the habitat is clearly unsuitable, and we will ask you to mark these on your survey map with cross hatching.

In addition to the survey of random tetrads we will encourage observers to check their local Turtle Dove haunts and submit all records.

How to take part?

If you are interested in taking part in this important survey please contact me, Ken Smith. Please have a look at the randomly selected tetrads listed below and indicate which one(s) you can cover. I will organise the maps and recording forms to be sent to you well before the 2019 season. Thank you for your help

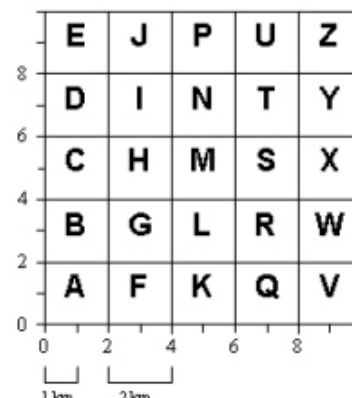
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The randomly selected tetrads for survey, sorted approximately west to east

In the list a letter identifies and locates the relevant [2km x 2km] tetrad within the 10km square as shown in this grid.



10k square	Tetrad	Place name	Breeding status 2008-11
SU70	M	Emsworth Hbr	Probable
SU70	N	Emsworth/Westbourne	Probable
SU81	C	East Marden	Possible
SU81	M	Westdean Woods	Probable
SU82	U	Elmers Marsh	Probable
SU91	R	Bignor Post	Possible
SU91	V	Madehurst/Houghton Forest	Probable
SU92	T	Ebernoe Common	Possible
SU92	Z	Roundwyck Hse, Ebernoe	Possible
SZ89	I	Almodington/Earnley Grange	Possible
SZ89	N	Keynor, Siddlesham ferry	Probable
SZ89	T	Siddlesham Quay/Pagham Hbr	Probable
TQ02	M	Wisborough Green south	Possible
TQ11	U	Hobshort Fm, E of Dial Post	Probable
TQ11	X	Horsebridge Com, Henfield	Probable
TQ12	F	Whitehall/Broomers Corner	Probable
TQ12	V	Littleworth	Possible

10km sq	Tetrad	Place name	Breeding status 2008-11
TQ21	D	Henfield, north	Probable
TQ21	F	Edburton	Probable
TQ22	X	Cuckfield Park	Probable
TQ31	Q	Ashcombe Bottom	Probable
TQ32	Q	Longridge, E of Wivelsfield Gr	Possible
TQ32	U	Horsted Keynes station	Possible
TQ33	X	Weir Wood Res	Possible
TQ40	V	Seaford N	Possible
TQ40	W	E of Alfriston	Probable
TQ41	I	Mount Pleasant/Spithurst	Possible
TQ42	E	helwood Common	Possible
TQ42	J	Chelwood Beacon	Probable
TQ42	N	Nutley	Probable
TQ42	P	Marlpits	Probable
TQ42	U	Camp Hill	Probable
TQ43	F	Llama Park/Pippingford	Probable
TQ43	Q	Old Lodge/Pillow Mounds	Proved
TQ43	R	Jumper's Town	Probable
TQ43	W	E of Buxsted	Probable
TQ50	N	Arlington	Probable
TQ53	T	Strawberry Hill, Tunbridge	Probable
TQ61	H	Cowbeech	Possible
TQ61	S	SW Ponds Green	Probable
TQ61	Z	Darwell Hole	Possible
TQ62	H	Great Broadhurst Farm	Probable
TQ63	D	Frant Station	Possible
TQ63	Q	Tolhurst, Bewl Water	Possible
TQ71	S	Telham, SE of Battle	Possible
TQ71	X	Kent Street/Beauport Park	Probable
TQ72	F	Mountfield	Possible
TQ73	A	Flimwell/Union Street	Probable
TQ81	J	Brede/Broadland Row	Probable
TQ81	S	N of Pett	Probable
TQ81	X	Pannel Farm/Elms Fm, Pett	Proved
TQ81	Z	Cock Marling	Possible
TQ82	K	Beckley Woods	Probable
TQ82	W	Peasmarsh	Probable
TQ91	J	Rye Harbour	Probable
TQ91	P	Camber Golf Course	Probable
TQ92	A	W of Rye	Probable
TQ92	B	Iden/Rye Foreign	Probable
TQ92	G	Houghton Green	Probable
TQ92	K	Black House, E Guldeford	Probable

Acknowledgement: the Turtle Dove drawing is by G Clayton