



WINTER GULL SURVEY

WinGS Organiser Handbook



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@BTO 2023

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Front cover photograph: Common Gull by Sarah Kelman

Introduction and Overview

The success of surveys such as WinGS is dependent on the important work of the dedicated BTO regional network. We are reliant on your excellent efforts to develop and maintain contacts with your volunteer network in order to collect quality data to better inform the conservation efforts of UK avian species.

The current Winter Gull Survey (WinGS) will aim to collect information on Wintering Gulls in the UK across the winters of 2023/24–2024/25. The last survey took place from 2003/04–2005/06 and concluded that the UK and near-shore coastal waters supported over 3.8 million wintering gulls at that time. Population trends from the BTO/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) for gull species present in the UK in winter are variable and updated information is necessary to identify potential Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for gulls.

1.1 Key responsibilities

- **Ensuring coverage** – Wings Organisers (WOs) are responsible for coordinating a team of counters covering a particular area ('Region'), usually a county or large site (e.g. an estuary). Coverage is especially important at Key Sites where known and substantial gull roosts occur. Sample sites also require efforts to ensure coverage. Sites will need to be covered at least once during the key count periods of January 2024 and January 2025 along with additional roost counts in Autumn 2024.
- **Data Submission** – We ask WO's to encourage the use of WinGS Online where possible and to use WinGS Online to monitor data submission. In the case that you have counters that do not have access to the internet, we ask WO's to distribute recording forms. Please collate the returned forms and either submit the results online (this is optional) or return them to the WinGS Office by the end of each winter survey period.
- **Verifying WinGS data submissions** – We ask WO's to check each count entry for obvious mistakes, querying any potential problems with the relevant counter or accepting the submission if there are no obvious mistakes.
- **Promoting WinGS** – we ask WO's, where possible, to publicise and promote WinGS.