

Online survey of ringer attitudes to CES, RAS and nest-recording

An email announcing a preliminary version of the 2010 online ringing report was sent to all those ringers for whom we have email addresses. This included a link to a summary of the discussion held at the Ringers' workshop at the 2010 Swanwick conference and a link to a questionnaire asking about their attitudes to CES, RAS and Nest Recording. The questions are listed below as they were asked and most were presented as simple 'tick-box' choices, though some had an additional comments field. People were asked to give their permit number or status and most, but not all, did so. A summary of the responses is provided, broken down by A, C, T permits where this seemed informative; where useful comments were made these are summarised.

In all 195 ringers responded by 10 April when the results were analysed. 119 (61%) respondents were A permits (of ~1200 registered, 10%), 52 (27%) held C permits (of ~800 registered, 7%) and 12 (6%) were Trainees - so possibly not a random sample, but broadly representative.

Q1 Are you a ringer, nest recorder or both?

35% indicated they were both ringer and nest recorder, this proportion was similar for A (39%) and C (35%) permits, no trainee did.

Q2 Do you participate in CES Ringing?

Overall, 38% of respondents were involved in CES - 12% ran a CES and 26% helped out. These proportions were similar amongst A's and C's though fewer C's actually ran a site. Amongst T's 60% helped at a CES site, 40% did not.

Q3 If you do not participate in CES is this because... [tick all that apply]

41% said they didn't have time, 39% that they didn't have a suitable site, 32% they preferred to do other ringing and 23% that it was too much commitment. 24% ticked 'other reason'. These reflected mostly local issues relating to availability of a suitable site or access/landowner issues. Several had run a CES previously but had given up (all for seemingly local reasons). Several C permits thought they needed more experience to take on a CES. Very few (5) people "didn't know enough about it".

Q4 Do you participate in RAS?

Overall 18% of respondents ran a RAS. The proportion was higher for A's (21%) than for C's (15%).

Q5 If you do not have a RAS project is this because... [tick all that apply]

Most (43%) said they did not have a suitable species or site, or didn't have the time (35%). Relatively few thought it was too much commitment (12%) or preferred to do other activities (18%). RAS is less well known than CES with 11% not knowing enough about it and 9% never having thought about doing one. Of those that ticked other (19%), concern about catching enough birds was the main reason cited. Several didn't think they could commit for the long-term and C permits wanted more experience (the same people as for CES?). Some people ringed a particular species, but in winter.

Q6 Do you submit nest records (either on paper or through IPMR) when you ring pulli?

Overall 47% said they did (14% of these on paper!). A permits were much more likely to do so (55%) than C permits (37%).

Q7 If you do not submit Nest Records is this because... [tick all that apply]

The commonest reason (33%) given was not enough time. Similar numbers (~15%) thought finding nests too difficult, didn't know how to use IPMR to submit nest records or were worried about disturbance at the nest. 37% ticked the "other" box, most of these were to do with other people submitting data on their behalf, not quite having got round to it or thinking nest records were of little value because they only ringed common species. C permit holders were much less informed than A's – 8% (1%) didn't know how to get started, 14% (7%) thought finding nests was difficult and 12% (7%) didn't know how to use IPMR for nest recording (comparable % for A's in parentheses). Several people seemed to think NRs of common species are not useful – a myth we need to dispel!

Q8 If you ring any of the following groups - to what extent does the price of rings influence how many birds you ring?

Raptor and wader ringers did not show much concern over the price of rings with c20% indicating it had some influence on numbers ringed. C's were marginally more influenced than A's. Nearly 40% of ringers said price influenced the number of passerines ringed (hirundines were mentioned specifically), though only a few (5%) said by 'quite a lot'; C's and A's responded similarly. About 40% of seabird ringers were influenced by the price of rings, interestingly A's (40%) were apparently marginally more influenced than C's (31%). Wildfowl ringers were most influenced by the price of rings with 46% saying they were to some extent and 20% 'quite a lot'. Several people commented that their response to this question was predicated on the existence of current subsidies, to remove them would make ringing particularly seabirds, waders and wildfowl prohibitively expensive (most did these species as part of a group to spread the cost and to make it easier to apply for funding to contribute to the overall cost).

Q9 We would like to be able to subsidise ringing of conservation importance as much as possible. Given a limited pot of money, which single option do you think would help ringers the most...

42% preferred refunds on particular species (the Red/Amber lists seem popular), 28% refunds on birds ringed project ringing (ie CES/RAS), 17% help with equipment for CES/RAS. Only a minority (1%) thought help with transport costs would be useful. C's were more likely to favour refunds for project rings (35% cf 27%) or help with equipment (19% cf 11%) than A's, half of whom favoured general species refunds. Most T's supported help with equipment costs. Several indicated they actually thought a balance would be better and lots of people that 'other project' ringing should attract a similar subsidy to CES/RAS. A few suggested that subsidies for particular species could be geographically variable or that pulli ringing should be subsidised where accompanied by a multi-visit nest record card.

Q10 For you, what is the most important use of ringing/nest-record data. Is it to...

Most (44%) said "contributing to a national dataset for scientific analysis", 23% "provide data for monitoring populations" and 19% said "help in species conservation". Few respondents ticked generating recoveries or providing information for local site managers. A's (13%) were less likely to tick the conservation box than C's (29%), otherwise responses were broadly similar. Those that ticked "other" mostly did so to say 'all of the above'. Several commented that though they did it for such 'altruistic' reasons, the proximate motivation was interesting recoveries, and others also mentioned local site information particularly for scarcer species.