

WATERWAYS BREEDING BIRD SURVEY HABITAT RECORDING FORM



BTO
Looking out for birds



JNCC
Joint Nature Conservation Committee



giving
nature
a home

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Observer name		Obs. code (office use)		Year										
Nominal 1-km square reference (e.g. TL1234)		County code (e.g. GBSY)												
Waterway name														
Start of first section: altitude (m)		grid reference (2-let 6-fig)												
End of final section: altitude (m)		grid reference (2-let 6-fig)												
500-metre transect section	Waterway habitat (the waterway itself)				Primary habitat (surroundings)				Secondary habitat (surroundings)				Comments	
	Levels:				Levels:				Levels:					
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														
9														
10														

For each 500-metre section of your WBBS plot, please record details of the waterway itself and for up to two main surrounding or adjacent habitat types. Each box should contain either one letter (A to J) or one number (1 to 15). The full list of BTO habitat codes is given overleaf.

Recording the 'Waterway habitat':

Levels 1 & 2: Only G6 & G7 (streams/ivers) and G9 & G10 (small/large canals) should apply. Use average figures to decide the appropriate width category for each section.

Level 3: Use up to two codes per section. *Please give priority to coding fishing and other disturbance, and use other codes only where space allows.* Note the additional (non-standard) codes for recording boat traffic. Boat traffic includes both pleasure-boats (motorised) and industrial craft. Record canoeing, rowing, sailing and sports boating under water sports (2), and use the comments column to specify which are present.

Level 4: Use up to two codes per section. *Give priority to codes for water quality and speed of flow.* Eutrophic water (1) has green algae profusely in suspension; an oligotrophic water (2) has less growth of vascular plants than a marl (4); dystrophic water (3) has almost no green water-plants apparent. Use 6 (fast-running) where water surface is not smooth (riffles etc), but ignore isolated weirs etc in otherwise slow stretches. Use 7 (dredged) where river course has been altered in the past, and for canals and rivers where there is evidence of recent dredging.

Please also send us a sketch map of the stretch, showing the start and end points, the divisions between the 500-metre sections, and the section numbers (matching those used on your field and summary sheets).

BTO HABITAT CODING SCHEME

Each shaded box refers to one Level 1 habitat (A–J).

For each transect section, note the appropriate Level 1 habitat, then choose the relevant options for Levels 2, 3 and 4 from within the box.

A – WOODLAND

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Broadleaved	1 Mixed-aged or semi-natural	1 Dense shrub layer†
2 Coniferous	2 Coppice with standards	2 Moderate shrub layer
3 Mixed (>10% of each)	3 Coppice without standards	3 Sparse shrub layer
4 Broadleaved waterlogged	4 Mature plantation (taller than 10m, with closed canopy)	4 Dense field layer‡
5 Coniferous waterlogged	5 Young plantation (5–10m, open canopy)	5 Moderate field layer
6 Mixed waterlogged	6 Parkland (scattered trees and grassy areas)	6 Sparse field layer
	7 High to medium disturbance from people	7 Grazed (moderate to heavy)
	8 Low disturbance	8 Lightly grazed
	9 Near road (within 50m)	9 Dead wood present
		10 Dead wood absent

B – SCRUBLAND (includes young woodland <5m tall)

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Regenerating natural or semi-natural woodland	1 Broadleaved	1 Predominantly tall (3–5m)
2 Downland (chalk)	2 Coniferous	2 Predominantly low (1–3m)
3 Heath scrub	3 Mixed (at least 10% of each)	3 Dense shrub layer†
4 Young coppice	4 Broadleaved swamp scrub	4 Moderate shrub layer
5 New plantation	5 Coniferous swamp scrub	5 Sparse shrub layer
6 Clear-felled woodland with or without new saplings	6 Mixed swamp scrub	6 Extensive bracken
7 Other	7 High to medium disturbance from people	7 Dense field layer‡
	8 Low disturbance	8 Moderate field layer
	9 Near road (within 50m)	9 Sparse field layer
		10 Grazed (moderate to heavy)

†*Shrub layer* comprises woody plants less than 5m tall.

‡*Field layer* comprises herbaceous, non-woody plants.

C – SEMI-NATURAL GRASSLAND/MARSH

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Chalk downland	1 Hedgerow with trees	1 Ungrazed
2 Grass moor (unenclosed)	2 Hedgerow without trees	2 Cattle
3 Grass moor mixed with heather (unenclosed)	3 Tree-line without hedge	3 Sheep
4 Machair	4 Other field boundary (wall, ditch, etc)	4 Horses
5 Other dry grassland	5 Isolated group of 1–10 trees	5 Rabbits
6 Water-meadow/grazing marsh	6 No field boundary	6 Deer
7 Reed swamp	7 Montane	7 Other grazers
8 Other open marsh	8 High to medium disturbance from people	8 Extensive bracken
9 Saltmarsh	9 Low disturbance	9 Hay
	10 Near road (within 50m)	

D – HEATHLAND AND BOGS

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Dry heath	1 Montane	1 Ungrazed
2 Wet heath	2 Raised bog	2 Cattle
3 Mixed heath	3 Valley/basin bog	3 Sheep
4 Bog	4 Blanket bog	4 Horses
5 Breckland	5 Heath mixed with rough grass	5 Rabbits
6 Drained bog	6 Heath without grass	6 Deer
7 Bare peat	7 Heath with extensive bracken	7 Other grazers
	8 Undetermined bog	8 Ploughed
	9 Isolated group of 1–10 trees	9 Burned
	10 High to medium disturbance from people	10 Planted with saplings less than 0.5m tall
	11 Low disturbance	
	12 Near road (within 50m)	

E – FARMLAND

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Improved grassland	1 Hedgerow with trees	1 Ungrazed
2 Unimproved grassland	2 Hedgerow without trees	2 Cattle
3 Mixed grass/tilled land	3 Tree-line without hedge	3 Sheep
4 Tilled land	4 Other field boundary (wall, ditch, etc)	4 Horses
5 Orchard	5 Isolated group of trees	5 Other stock
6 Other farming	6 Farmyard (active)	6 Bare earth/plough
	7 Near road (within 50m)	7 Autumn cereal
	8 No field boundary	8 Spring cereal
		9 Root crops (specify)
		10 Other crops (specify)
		11 Oilseed rape
		12 Other brassicas (specify)
		13 Stubble (clean)
		14 Stubble (weedy)
		15 Unsown/fallow

F – HUMAN SITES

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Urban	1 Building	1 Industrial
2 Suburban	2 Gardens	2 Residential
3 Rural	3 Municipal parks/mown grass/golf courses/recreational areas	3 Well-wooded
	4 Sewage works "urban"	4 Not well-wooded
	5 Near road (within 50m)	5 Area of large gardens
	6 Near active railway line (within 50m)	6 Area of medium gardens
	7 Other	7 Area of small gardens
	8 Rubbish tip	8 Many shrubs
		9 Few shrubs
		10 Disused

G – WATER-BODIES (freshwater)

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Pond (less than 50m ²)	1 Undisturbed/disused	1 Eutrophic (green water)
2 Small water-body (50–450m ²)	2 Water sports (sailing, etc)	2 Oligotrophic (clear water, few weeds)
3 Lake/unlined reservoir	3 Angling (coarse or game)	3 Dystrophic (black water)
4 Lined reservoir	4 Coarse angling	4 Marl (clear water, large water-weeds)
5 Gravel pit/sand pit, etc	5 Game fishing	5 Slow-medium-running
6 Stream (<3m wide)	6 Industrial activity	6 Fast-running
7 River (>3m wide)	7 Sewage processing "rural"	7 Dredged
8 Ditch with water (<2m wide)	8 Other disturbance (specify)	8 Undredged
9 Small canal (2–5m wide)	9 Small island	9 Banks cleared
10 Large canal (>5m wide)	10 Boat traffic relatively light	10 Banks vegetated
	11 Boat traffic medium to heavy	

H – COASTAL

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Marine – open shore	1 Mud or silt	1 Cliff – vertical/steeply sloping
2 Marine shore – inlet/cove/loch	2 Sand	2 Dune
3 Estuarine	3 Shingle	3 Flat/gently sloping
4 Brackish lagoon	4 Rocky	4 Small island
5 Open sea	5 Fully vegetated	5 Spit
	6 Sparse/medium vegetation	6 Dune slack
	7 Intertidal	7 Sloping ground
	8 Below low-water mark	8 Undisturbed
		9 Disturbed

I – INLAND ROCK

LEVEL 2 options	LEVEL 3 options	LEVEL 4 options
1 Cliff	1 Active	1 Bare rock
2 Scree/boulder slope	2 Disused	2 Low vegetation present (mosses, liverworts, etc)
3 Limestone pavement	3 Montane	3 Grasses present
4 Other rock outcrop	4 Non-montane	4 Scrub present
5 Quarry	5 High disturbance from climbers/walkers, etc	
6 Mine/spoil/slag heap	6 Medium disturbance	
7 Cave	7 Low disturbance	

J – MISCELLANEOUS (please specify)