Job Title: Bird Atlas 2027–31 Organiser

Department: Surveys

Overview information:

The Bird Atlas story

Every twenty years since 1968, we have undertaken a complete stock-take of the wild birds of Britain and Ireland through a project which has harnessed the power of tens of thousands of volunteers - the Bird Atlas. Through Bird Atlas 2007–11 we used bird records provided by over 40,000 volunteers over four years to produce updated information about the distribution and abundance of our birds throughout the year. By comparing data from different atlas periods, we are able to detect changes in bird distributions and population trends - critical for understanding how factors like climate change, habitat loss, and human activities impact birds.

Bird Atlases are a popular event in the birdwatching calendar, introducing many people into the world of citizen science. More than 10,000 people engaged with BTO for the first time during Bird Atlas 2007–11. Many of the new volunteers recruited during Atlas periods progress on to other BTO surveys and schemes and choose to support BTO as members and donors, long after the project has ended.

There has never been a more important time for identifying solutions to the big threats facing our natural world. Bird Atlases have an invaluable role to play in connecting people with nature and helping us gather the information we need to target conservation interventions most effectively. Our ambition is for Bird Atlas 2027–31 to be the most inclusive and impactful Atlas yet, with demonstrable step-changes in the diversity of people we engage and the real-world outcomes for birds.

About the role

BTO is seeking an enthusiastic individual with excellent interpersonal skills, bird identification and good survey experience, and a broad knowledge of UK birds and habitats to lead the organisation of the Bird Atlas 2027-31 across the UK.

The post holder will play a pivotal role in coordinating volunteers to achieve coverage in the winter and breeding season surveys for the Bird Atlas 2027-31. This role will liaise with Organisers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (funding dependent), and volunteer Atlas Regional Organisers and Regional Representatives in the localities to ensure consistent methodologies are utilised, support surveyor recruitment and training, identify gaps in coverage and ensure data validation. This role is a crucial contact for volunteers in ensuring efficient and effective surveying.

This role will sit on the Bird Atlas Steering Group which meets monthly.

The post holder will play a key role in representing the Bird Atlas 2027-31 in the UK, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, and when UK-scale representation is required. Working with the communications team, the role will involve giving talks and contributing to media coverage as needed.

This role will support the legacy and impact ambitions of the Bird Atlas 2027-31 by contributing to the production of the Bird Atlas. Working with the Steering Group, the post-holder will develop the contents, structure and format of the final Atlas publication.

This is a full time, fixed term role. This position is based at our HQ in Thetford, Norfolk, with the option to work from home part of the time on a hybrid working regime (40% from home and 60% office based). Flexible start and finish times can also be accommodated to ensure a good work-life balance.

What you will deliver:

1. Take overall responsibility for co-ordinating the operation of the Atlas to ensure that an integrated and consistent approach is taken to the project throughout Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. This will require a close working relationship with the Atlas Organisers in the Republic of Ireland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland (funding dependent), and also with partners. The methods to be used will be those already developed by BTO staff and agreed by the Atlas Steering Group.

2. Direct responsibility for organising Atlas coverage in the UK, Isle of Man and Channel Islands (may change depending on funding for country organisers). This will require maintaining a network of Atlas Regional Organisers (AROs) (typically with one or more ARO per county). It will be necessary to work closely with the BTO's Engagement team to fill gaps in the ARO network. Where AROs cannot be found, the postholder will be directly responsible for organising coverage in those BTO regions under their remit.

3. Support and motivate the volunteer Atlas Regional Organisers to fulfil coverage targets in all regions of the UK, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Support the provision of volunteer training, working closely with the Engagement and Training Teams.

4. Ensure that quality of records is maintained for the entire Atlas by (a) ensuring that the methods are adhered to consistently, (b) that appropriate data checking procedures are in place, (c) liaison with local experts where necessary.

5. Be responsible for maintaining oversight of data collection and the integrated database for Britain and Ireland, including the computerisation of any paper records, verification, handling of sensitive records and so on.

6. Input into methods for feedback of provisional results and coverage information, and on

methods of final presentation of results. Maintain oversight of all feedback to volunteers across the UK, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands working with partners and the Engagement Team (may change depending on funding for country organiser roles).

7. Report progress and all aspects of implementation to the Atlas Steering Group, and to other committees as required.

8. Promote the Atlas through BTO and other publications, websites, the press, radio and television interviews, and through talks to bird clubs and at conferences. This will require close liaison with staff in the BTO's Engagement and Communications Teams, according to the agreed Communications Plan.

9. Contribute to Atlas fundraising, which may include presentations to funders, working closely with the Fundraising Team.

10. Work with partners, organisations and other stakeholders to promote opportunities for professional fieldwork contribution to the atlas through sabbaticals, work away days etc.

11. Liaise with other surveys and data sources to mobilise records for inclusion, under the guidance of the Methodology Working Group.

12. Provide support to local atlas projects underway across Britain, Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

13. Take a major role in developing the contents, structure and format of the final Atlas products and in preparing maps and text for those products.

14. Recruit and manage contract Atlas fieldworker(s) (probably in the last two years of the project).

15. May be required to carry out limited fieldwork, possibly requiring periods away from home.

This is not an exhaustive list; the successful applicant will agree objectives with the line manager.

What you will bring to the post:

Essential

- Ability to inspire and engage a variety of people to get involved with the atlas, with a demonstrable passion for birds and excellent interpersonal skills.
- Experience of volunteer management and the ability to understand, enthuse and motivate volunteers from a range of backgrounds, with differing learning styles
- Broad knowledge of UK's birds and habitats
- Experience of participating in volunteer surveys that monitor wildlife populations
- Good electronic data management skills, including manipulating spreadsheets

- Excellent communication skills, including writing for non-scientific publications, but also for more technical purposes, and giving presentations to a range of audiences
- Excellent time management skills with the ability to prioritise multiple work streams and meet strict deadlines
- Highly self motivated with excellent organisational skills and ability to work independently for extended periods of time
- Ability to build and maintain strong working relationships across teams internally and externally.
- Confidence to recruit and manage fieldworkers and plan and deliver expeditions
- A good working knowledge of the standard Microsoft Office packages such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- Ability to work as part of a team or independently
- A current UK driving licence
- Willingness to travel
- Willingness to work flexibly (some weekend and evening work will be essential)

Desirable

- Experience of participating in previous bird atlas(es)
- Experience of hillwalking and/or the ability to interpret Ordnance Survey maps
- Experience of training volunteers
- Budget management experience
- Experience of writing social media content
- Knowledge of GIS and/or querying relational databases

Find out more:

For an informal chat about the position please call Dawn Balmer on 01842 750050 (email: dawn.balmer@bto.org)

Closing date: 23.59hrs on 4 November 2026 **Interview date: 18 November 2026**

Salary: £38,712

Benefits include: 11% employer pension contribution, Employee Assistance Programme, discounts on books, flexible working and social events.