



JNCC Bulletin August/September 2022

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New bird monitoring partnership agreement

We are delighted to have signed a [new bird monitoring partnership agreement](#) with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Signed by the chief executives of the three organisations (pictured), the new agreement is a scientific partnership covering 2022-2027 and reaffirms the organisations' long-standing commitment to long-term bird monitoring schemes.

Birds are recognised as indicators of changes to the wider natural world. Monitoring bird populations helps us understand not only how birds are faring, but also the habitats and environments they are associated with. The evidence from surveillance schemes is used to inform how we can protect and secure a better future for birds and nature more broadly.

Recent results from these schemes have shown that birds such as the Swift and Greenfinch are declining in numbers in the UK, whereas others, such as the Red Kite, are increasing thanks to dedicated conservation efforts to reverse historic declines.

These schemes rely on thousands of dedicated and highly skilled volunteers who give their time to record information about our bird populations. Our Chief Executive, Dr Gemma Harper, commented: 'Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do, and we are delighted to continue to support this critical partnership.'

Enhancing coral reef conservation

We work in collaboration across land and sea with partners in the UK Overseas Territories to drive nature recovery.

The Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territories, or C-COT, working group brings together government and non-governmental organisations from the six Caribbean and Western Atlantic territories with scientific experts and practitioners from across the region to share knowledge and expertise on coral reef management. Funded by the UK Government's Darwin Plus programme and Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, the C-COT working group has a particular focus on responding to the current stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) outbreak impacting Caribbean coral reefs.

The first in-person workshop of C-COT, held recently in Grand Cayman, offered an invaluable opportunity for enhancing coral reef management. The workshop provided a unique and inspiring platform to build skills, share knowledge and collaborate towards coral conservation across the Caribbean and Western Atlantic region. Classroom and dive sessions included coral reef response planning, photogrammetry and data analysis, field methods for monitoring coral disease and developing probiotics to treat SCTLD.

Offshore wind research priorities published

Delivered by JNCC, the Offshore Wind Strategic Monitoring and Research Forum (OWSMRF) is a collaborative partnership between the offshore wind industry, nature conservation bodies, non-government organisations, researchers and regulators. The [latest published outputs from OWSMRF](#) highlight research priorities on black-

legged kittiwakes to improve assessments of future offshore wind projects. Five high-priority research areas have been developed into detailed scopes of work with the purpose of closing key knowledge gaps. The proposed research is looking at how kittiwakes behave in the vicinity of wind turbines, how they use the marine environment, and how they move between colonies.

Lise Ruffino, Senior Marine Industries Ornithologist at JNCC, said: 'The research identified through OWSMRF builds on latest advances in technology and science to address key knowledge gaps, and is the result of successful collaboration with research partners, experts and stakeholders.'

New partnership formed for important survey scheme

Partnership working is an area that is greatly valued at JNCC and one in which we hold considerable expertise and experience. The [Goose and Swan Monitoring Programme \(GSMP\)](#), an important survey scheme that monitors selected goose and migratory swan populations during the non-breeding season, has been successfully run for 20 years in partnership between Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), JNCC and NatureScot.

Prompted by WWT's decision to step down from national monitoring programmes to concentrate its conservation activity for waterbirds and their wetland habitats in other areas, JNCC and NatureScot have formed a partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) to take forward the GSMP. WWT remains fully supportive of the important work of the scheme. This new partnership secures the future of this vital programme and offers the opportunity to strengthen existing links with the [Wetland Bird Survey](#), which has been organised by BTO for many years, ensuring that all information on wintering waterbirds is easily accessible in one place. The GSMP focuses on our internationally important wintering goose and swan populations, all of which are Red or Amber-listed species in the latest Birds of Conservation Concern assessment. For many of these goose and swan populations, the majority of the entire world population relies on UK wetlands during the non-breeding season. The results enable us to assess the status of geese and swans wintering in the UK and inform conservation action both in the UK and internationally.

Seabirds at Sea

Members of our Seabird Monitoring Team attended the Seabird Group Conference in Cork, Ireland to promote the Volunteer Seabirds at Sea (VSAS) project. The project recruits and trains volunteers to collect high quality seabirds at sea data onboard ferries in the UK. As seabirds spend most of their lives at sea, it is essential that we monitor them in the marine environment to help the UK meet national and international conservation commitments, inform assessments for offshore industry and aid research. Follow us on Twitter, [@jncc_ukseabirds](#), to discover how you can get involved in all thing's seabird!