

Dartford Warbler Survey 2025



Firstly, please register and select your survey square(s) from the Heathland Birds Survey webpage (www.bto.org/heathland-birds-survey), using the Request Square map. You can then download and print the square map in a variety of formats as well as display the areas with known suitable/unsuitable habitat. A survey Visit and Habitat Recording Form should be downloaded and printed for each square covered. A Letter of Introduction and other useful information can be found on the Resources section of the website.

The aim of the survey is to record all occupied Dartford Warbler territories on the square by recording singing males and other sightings located during two visits. Please see examples below of how to record your survey observations on the map and recording forms.

Field methods:

The survey runs from the beginning of April to the end of June. The square should be visited at least two times (additional visits are welcome), each visit falling within one of the following periods and not less than 10 days apart:

Visit A: 1 Apr - 15 May

Visit B: 16 May – 30 Jun

Ideally each visit should take place between dawn and 1100 hrs on mild, dry days with little wind. Cold, wet or windy conditions should be avoided. Dartford warblers are likely to be located on heather and grass heaths with gorse scrub and in conifer plantations where there are areas of open space and rides containing heather and gorse. Other potentially suitable habitats include coastal heathland and coastal gorse patches, chalk downland, moorland (with gorse) in SW England and S Wales, and also possibly areas of unimproved/rank grass with extensive/dense gorse/scrub.

The square to be surveyed should be covered as fully as possible, preferably by walking to within 100m of all parts of the square and covering all areas of potentially suitable habitat (without grey hatching = known heathland and scrub). If this is not possible, please survey from public rights of way or areas of public access. **Always obtain permission from landowners before entering privately owned land.** If the site is not a 1-km square, please outline the rough boundary of the site visited on the map. Mark on the map (using cross hatching) any areas that were not visited during the survey (**see Example on back page**) and fill in the section on 'Coverage of Square'. Any new areas of suitable habitat should be covered and marked on the map, a copy of which should be emailed to the survey organiser after the last survey visit.

Bird Recording:

Please complete (or amend, if necessary) the site and observer information in the appropriate boxes. Please ensure that a four-figure 1km-square grid reference (e.g., TL1234) is given. Record the date of each visit in the box provided. Where more than 2 visits were undertaken, please enter information in the Visit Details section, in the grey boxes provided. **NOTE If you are also surveying Woodlark at the same square,** please record all Dartford Warbler observations, even if they fall before the recommended survey periods.

Record the number of singing males located during each visit. Neighbouring birds can only be separated with certainty if they are heard or seen simultaneously. Although many territories are likely to be detected through the presence of a singing male, sometimes evidence of territories (e.g., a calling, territorial male, or a bird feeding young) may be obtained even though a singing male was never recorded. Both male and female Dartford warblers are likely to be located by calls and while showing strong territorial behaviour. Please record these as additional territories in the relevant section on each visit. After each visit fill in the minimum/maximum number of territories per visit column from the information gathered from the visit records of singing males and other territorial contacts. Note that the number of territories given for each visit should be the number recorded on that visit only and not the running total across that and the previous visits.

Each record should also be marked on the accompanying site map - **see Example on back page**: For the first visit mark the locations of the first recorded singing male as A1, the second as A2, etc.; for the second visit as B1, B2, etc.; for the third visit as C1, C2, etc. Where the same male is known to have moved location, join the sequential locations with a solid line (e.g. A1 — A1). Where different males are detected on a single visit, join their locations with a dashed line (e.g. A1 - - - A2). If unsure mark as A1 — ? — A3. Mark the records of other individuals on the site map by using standard BTO (CBC) symbols - **see Example on back page**. Also, mark the locations of any other individuals recorded outside the survey square on the edge of the map. Sound lures or call playback should **NOT** be used for this survey.

After the final visit please record the estimated total number of minimum/maximum territories in the appropriate box. This total should be the total number of territories that you think the square contains based upon the number recorded on all visits.

Habitat details (within 50m of each male/pair):

For each male/pair (coded A1, A2, B1, etc), where first observed, please indicate the main habitat by putting a "1" in only one of the grey boxes (categories 1-4) to describe the main habitat. However, if the predominant land use is equally split between two categories, please tick each of the appropriate grey boxes (categories 1-4). Then enter 'Y' for all types that apply from the white subcategories and any from section 5). For the grass/heather/bracken-dominated heath categories, dominance is defined as greater than 50% coverage. A plantation or woodland can be defined as mixed if the area contains more than 10% of both broadleaf trees and conifers. Use a single row per male/pair on each visit— see example over the page.

Other Heathland Assemblage Species

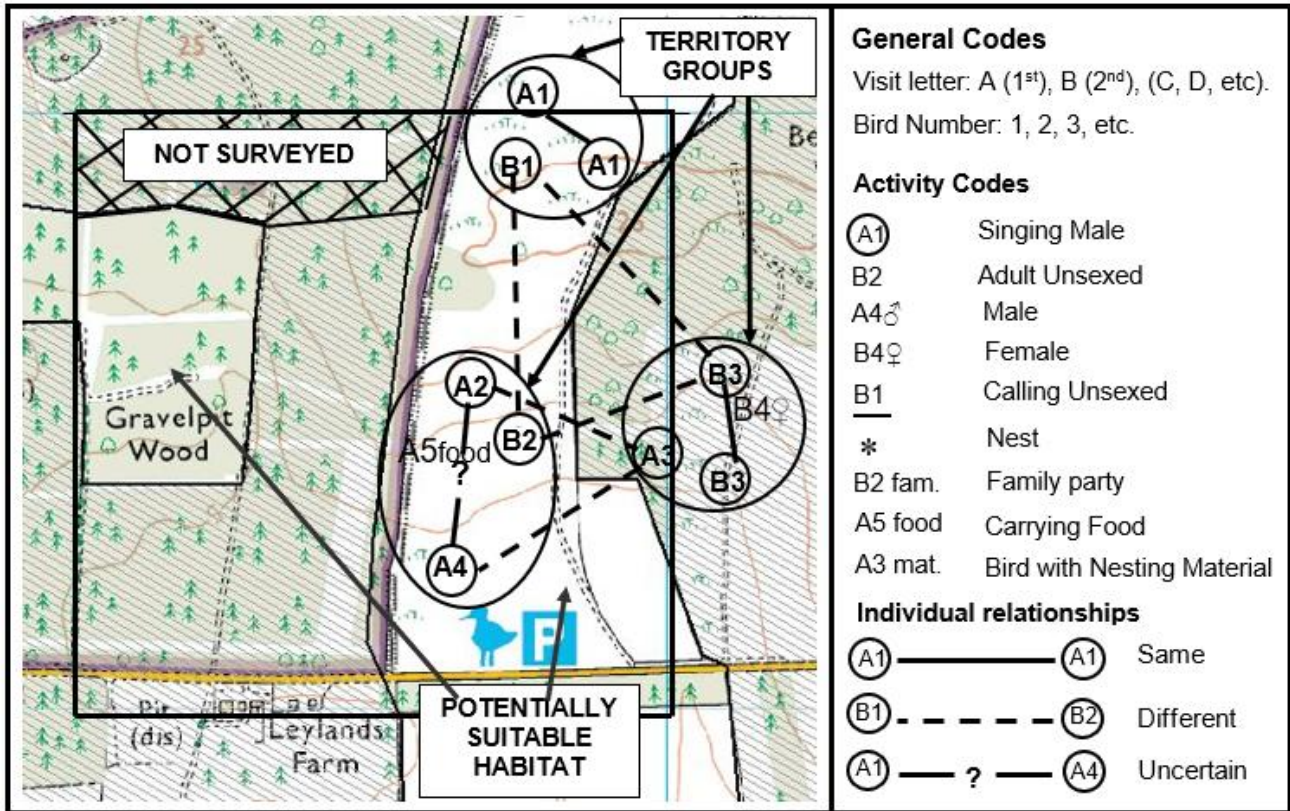
Records of the following species are also requested: Cuckoo, Curlew, Grasshopper Warbler, Hobby, Linnet, Long-eared Owl, Redstart, Redshank, Snipe, Stone Curlew, Stonechat, Tree Pipit, Wheatear, Whinchat and Woodcock. Please record the number of males/territories detected on each visit. If you make any additional or casual visits e.g. for Woodcock or Long-eared Owl, etc, please enter these records into BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net) for the 1-km square or actual location (use the Pinpoint option).

Confidentiality:

Dartford Warbler is protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Breeding birds and their nest sites should NOT be disturbed unless an appropriate licence is held. Please note that searching for nests is NOT part of this survey. All sensitive sites will be treated as confidential.

Examples of bird and habitat recording

Map of plotted registrations and codes



Example of Habitat details recorded for each territorial/singing male or pair.

Habitat Recording Form (males/pairs only). Species : Woodlark / Dartford Warbler / Nightjar (delete as required) Square: |

For the 50m radius around each territorial male/pair, select one main Habitat Category (1-4) and as many items that apply in each subcategory, plus any items from 5)

Bird	1) Farmland	2) Heathland	3) Woodland/Forestry	Broadleaved	Coniferous	Mixed	Parkland	Scrub/young or regenerating woodland	Copice	Un-managed	4) Other Habitats	5) General	Grazed (Y/N)	Bare ground present - natural	Bare ground present - burnt	
A1			1		Y									N	Y	N
A2		1												N	Y	Y
B1	1													N	Y	N

Submitting your data and survey help

Please submit your survey data using the dedicated online survey application: www.bto.org/heathland-bird-survey
 If you don't have access to a computer then please send your completed maps and survey forms to your local organiser by 31st July, who will enter them on your behalf, or to David Norfolk, British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU.
 Email: heathlandbirds@bto.org

