

Summary of 2014 BTO Peregrine Survey, Gloucestershire

General

A group of hard-working volunteers put a lot of local effort into this national survey – many thanks to all those who participated. A summary of our findings is given here, although of course it is not possible to reveal details of many of the actual sites because of the risk of persecution and because some are in private areas. Peregrines can be seen at the well-known RSPB Symonds Yat viewpoint, and also around Christchurch, Cheltenham – both these sites held successful pairs in 2014, raising 3 and 4 youngsters respectively.

Coverage

23 random 5x5km squares were surveyed, and although a couple of these squares contained nest-sites that were already known about, no new sites were found in these squares. This suggests that our previous knowledge was reasonably complete. Having said that, two previously unknown sites *were* discovered in other areas, and there might well be others. In particular, we might have pylon-nesting pairs that we haven't yet found (nests can be in cavities in the pylon structure, completely out of sight).

Almost 50 potential sites were surveyed, including every quarry we could find and get access to. Surveyors found 15 active nests in the county, and another two just outside the county border but within the area covered by "BTO Gloucestershire". Territorial behaviour was observed at a further five sites where actual nesting appears not to have taken place. Of these 22 sites, 11 are west of the Severn and 11 to the east. At a couple of sites where birds have nested previously, no nest was found this year.

Nest outcomes

The outcomes at the 17 nest-sites can be summarised as follows:

Peregrine nest-sites found in 2014 survey, BTO Gloucestershire			
Type of site	Number of nests	Number of successful nests	Number of fledged young (minimum)
Quarry (used or disused)	7	7	18
Building	4	4	13
Pylon	3	1	2
Natural cliff	3	3	5*
Totals	17	15	38

**Note that it can be difficult to monitor nests on cliffs, so this figure in particular might be an underestimate.*

The last national survey was done in 2002, and I estimate that there were about 8 nests then. Hence we can probably conclude that Peregrines are doing quite well in the county, as they are in much of southern Britain, where they make extensive use of "human" sites for nesting. We will need to wait for the full BTO report to see how they are doing elsewhere and what the population estimate is now (that was one of the aims of this survey); certainly the recent atlas indicated that they have declined in north-west Scotland.

Gordon Kirk

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