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**DE Environmental Support Team (Natural Environment)**

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Date

23 March 2005

## MINISTRY OF DEFENCE BIRD COUNT 2005

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to invite your participation in the MOD Bird Count 2005.

First of all, thank you to those who participated in the MOD Bird Count 2004, or previous years. Please accept our apologies for the delays in sending out the MOD-wide reports, due to the loss of Col. Clayden and a reduction in our administrative staff.

Please note that this year we have made some changes to the methods and forms, to bring the Bird Count more in line with other national surveys, to make the information more valuable for site-level conservation, to support the MOD's corporate reporting obligations, and to enable us to share the data with the BTO, RSPB, and county recorders.

The main changes are:

- Rather than restricting the MOD Bird Count to a particular week, which has resulted in having to survey in unsuitable weather conditions, missed counts due to holidays or illness, or missing the breeding season for northerly or southerly sites, this year you are free to pick the most suitable week in May to June for your site.
- When analysing the data from previous years, it has proved difficult to identify what areas were surveyed. To overcome this, we need you to record the kilometre squares in which the count takes place. This will be a four-digit grid reference from an Ordnance Survey map, eg. the DE office at Westdown Camp falls within square SU 04 47
- If your site covers more than one kilometre square, we need you to complete a separate form for each square that you survey. If the site/survey does not cover a complete square, please note the rough percentage covered/surveyed, eg '50%'. NB One kilometre square is 100 hectares or about 250 acres. We do not want this to become an onerous undertaking, so please be pragmatic in deciding how to carry out and record the count at your site.
- Some other changes to the site proforma include standard letter codes for the habitats, tick boxes for weather, and a general comments box. We've also removed the boxes for rookeries, heronries & sandmartin colonies - these can be recorded in the main data form.

This year the Service Ornithological Societies have offered additional help to undertake the MOD Bird Count, filling in some key gaps in recent coverage, and enabling more of their members to become involved in conservation on the Defence Estate. To ensure that the count

runs smoothly, and prevent duplication of effort, the count for each site needs to be co-ordinated by the Conservation Group Chair, the Head of Establishment, or their nominated representative.

If at possible, we would be very grateful if you could assist us by completing electronic copies of the MOD Bird Count forms. The electronic forms can be obtained by:

- Downloading from the Defence Estates Internet site  
[http://defence-estates.mod.uk/conservation\\_enviro/index.htm](http://defence-estates.mod.uk/conservation_enviro/index.htm)
- Downloading from the Defence Estates Intranet site  
[http://deintranet.de.r.mil.uk:164/conservation\\_enviro/index.htm](http://deintranet.de.r.mil.uk:164/conservation_enviro/index.htm)
- Emailing our [ESTConservation@de.mod.uk](mailto:ESTConservation@de.mod.uk)

Please email completed forms to [ESTConservation@de.mod.uk](mailto:ESTConservation@de.mod.uk)

We hope that the amended MOD Bird Count methodology and forms are clear and work well for you and your site. If you anticipate any problems in advance of the count, please don't hesitate to contact me. If you have any feedback after the count, please include comments with your returns, or contact me direct.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Otway', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Stuart Otway  
Natural Environment Adviser