



### DOS survey methodology for Woodcocks

**Safety first:** take a torch and spare batteries. Wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the conditions. Take bright or reflective clothing to wear if you are likely to walk along any roads. It is best to familiarise yourself with the site during daylight hours to make sure you can find your way home in the dark. You should have permission to access the land, or stick to public rights of way, and use well established paths and tracks within the site. Inform a family member of where you are going and when you expect to return home, and let them know when you get home. It is advisable to carry a mobile phone for use in the event of an emergency, but be aware that you may be surveying areas with limited reception. If possible, undertake this survey with a friend. You are under no obligation to the DOS to undertake this survey. You are responsible for your own safety. If you have any concerns, you should stop the survey.

**Essential requirements:** ability to hear and recognise the ‘roding’ calls of Woodcocks.

The Woodcock is probably an under-recorded breeding bird in Derbyshire, as evidence for breeding is best gained from the crepuscular display flights of the males, known as roding. However, it is a declining species on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern, and breeding evidence may help protect sites from development.

**The purpose of this survey** is to check whether Woodcocks are breeding at your site. If you wish to take part in a national survey to monitor changes in numbers then you should visit the BTO website at: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/woodcock-survey>.

They favour woodland with damp ground. They can use all types of woodland. They may also nest on open moorland, especially areas with extensive bracken cover. In particular, it is worth checking sites where you know Woodcocks have bred before to see if they are still present.

This methodology should not disturb breeding birds because it does not involve searching for nests. It is important that you do not search for nests, as Woodcocks are very prone to desert the nest if disturbed.

If you can report the sites you intend to cover on the Derbyshire Birders Facebook page or to [richard.winspear@rspb.org.uk](mailto:richard.winspear@rspb.org.uk), then it will help reduce duplication of effort and enable us all to cover more sites.

Ideally, you should aim to undertake up to three visits between the beginning of May and the end of June. As the purpose is to establish breeding evidence, if you are successful on any visit, it is not necessary to visit again.

The survey should be within the period of one hour before sunset and one hour after sunset.

You should avoid periods of precipitation and winds greater than Beaufort force 4 (15 mph, 24 km/hr, small branches move). Ideally, it should be a calm evening.

Slowly walk around the area looking and listening for roding birds. Use your torch as necessary. The birds are quite distinctive in flight, being the only woodland breeding wader flying low over the canopy with shallow wingbeats, and the call usually consists of a series of croaks followed by a short whistle. There is a recording on the RSPB website A-Z of birds [here](#).

Please report all records of roding Woodcocks to the DOS. Specify breeding status as ‘displaying’ and, if possible, provide an 8-figure grid references (e.g. SK123456) in the comments box.