



WINTER GULL ROOST SURVEY COASTAL SAMPLE SITE COUNT FORM

INTRODUCTION

The Winter Gull Survey (WinGS) for 2023/24–2024/25 has returned after a gap of 20 years. The last survey took place from 2003/04-2005/06 and concluded that the UK and near-shore coastal waters supported over 3.8 million wintering gulls at that time. Updated information on population trends is necessary to contribute to and inform effective conservation actions for gulls (*Bird Study* 13, 60:1, 87-101).

The 2023/24-2024/25 Winter Gull Roost Survey (WinGS) aims to produce total winter (January) gull population estimates for the UK. To do this the survey will cover **a.** Inland and Coastal Key Sites **b.** Randomly Selected Inland Samples and **c.** Randomly Selected Coastal Samples. Key Sites were identified from previous winter gull roost surveys and other recent reports.

The populations of gulls in the UK vary considerably over seasons. In order to investigate this change, we encourage additional Key Sites counts throughout autumn. We would also welcome Supplementary Counts from other smaller roosts throughout the survey period.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read these instructions carefully before making your visit.

- THIS FORM IS FOR RECORDING SINGLE COUNTS OF ROOSTING GULLS AT COASTAL SAMPLE SITES IN JANUARY 2024.**
- SITE MAP:** Ask your WinGS Organiser to download and print your site map from WinGS Online. Please study the map and identify possible vantage points. The vantage point should be chosen for the view it provides of the coast and not be biased by the distribution of roosting flocks. Please do not include any counts of gull present outside of the count boundary designated on the map. Record all the gulls roosting on the sea, cliffs, small islands or intertidal areas for a distance along the defined stretch of coast. Please attach your map to this count form with annotations of the observer position and location of the roost / flight lines.
- COUNTER DETAILS:** Please fill in your details and the name of your local co-ordinator.
- DATE & TIME:** Sample Sites require a single visit in January. Record the date of your visit overleaf and then the approximate start and finish times using the 24-hour clock (e.g. 1500, 1700). You should aim to start your roost count about 2 hours before dark and should stop as soon as it is too dark to count
- COUNTS:** Counts should be made for each of the species arriving at roosts up until dark, though should take into account any birds that may have departed before then. **Counts should only include birds that roost on the sea up to 2km out, cliffs, small islands or below the high tide mark within the defined site boundary.** Counts of birds roosting behind the high water mark on terrestrial habitats and those that fly over the Count Section, but do not roost within it should be excluded. Please **do not** attempt to estimate the numbers of gulls that may have joined roosts after dark or any that may have left after dark.

The best method of counting gulls at roosts is to count birds on the flight lines going to roost. Counting birds on the water can be very difficult especially if there is any wind. Please be aware if you are counting any sub-sites or team sites that may necessitate coordinated counting efforts. It may be necessary to familiarise yourself with the site before the survey date.

If it was not possible to distinguish between Black-headed Gulls, Common Gulls and Mediterranean Gulls, during all or part of the count, or on a particular flight line, please provide a count of 'Unidentified Small Gulls'. Likewise, if it was not possible to distinguish between Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls during all or part of the count, please provide a count of 'Unidentified Large Gulls'.

If it was not possible to identify birds to species or place them into one of these size classes, counts should be entered as 'Unidentified (unspecified)'. Any species noted that are not on the list should be recorded as 'Other Species' – please specify what these are (i.e. Glaucous Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Kittiwake).

If the site was not visited but the count of gulls is assumed to be zero based on habitat, please put a ✓ in the box at the bottom of the table (please only submit assumed zeros after consulting with your WinGS Organiser).

Make a note of whether water bodies within the sample square had any ice cover and whether, in your opinion, counts were lower than expected due to visibility/weather conditions or disturbance.

PLEASE RETURN FORMS (EVEN IF YOU VISITED THE SITE AND SAW NO GULLS) BY 28 FEBRUARY 2024, EITHER TO YOUR LOCAL CO-ORDINATOR OR TO: WinGS, The Wetland & Coastal Ecology Unit, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

COMPLETING THIS PAGE: Please record your name and address and the name of your local co-ordinators at the top.

Insert visit date and times and your gull counts in the table below. If species identification was not possible, use the most suitable category (e.g. Unidentified Small Gull) – see instructions. Please record the numbers of gulls roosting within your site. If the site was visited and no gulls were present, please tick the box above the column. If you split your count unit into smaller count units, please use separate columns to count them and notate your printed map with this information.

Please also make a note of Tide State at dusk and inform us whether the numbers of gulls counted may have been affected by weather conditions, visibility, or disturbance.

WinGS Reference Code [_____] WinGS Site Name [_____]

OBSERVER(S): ADDRESS: e-mail:

WinGS CO-ORDINATOR:

COUNTS				
DATE(S) (e.g. 22/01/24)				
TIME (use 24 hour clock)	START			
	FINISH			
		Please ✓ box if the site was visited and no gulls were observed		
Species	Code	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Black-headed Gull	BH			
Common Gull	CM			
Mediterranean Gull	MU			
Unidentified Small Gull				
Lesser Black-backed Gull	LB			
Herring Gull	HG			
Great Black-backed Gull	GB			
Unidentified Large Gull				
Unidentified (unspecified)				
Other Species (specify):				
TOTAL				
Please ✓ box if the site was not visited as you were confident that no gulls were present		<input type="checkbox"/>		

Conditions:
Visibility: GOOD MODARATE POOR
(Please circle)

State of Tide at Dusk:
RISING HIGH
FALLING LOW (Please circle)

Did you see any dead or sick gulls?
YES NO (Please circle)
If yes, please give details:

Any areas within boundary not covered?
YES NO (Please circle)
If yes, % area of suitable roost habitat not surveyed: _____

In your opinion, were the numbers of gulls counted lower than expected due to:

Visibility/Weather conditions: YES NO
(Please circle)
Please specify why:

Disturbance: YES NO
(Please circle)

Please specify the cause of the disturbance:

Other Comments:

