

## Sussex Corn Bunting Survey 2024

Sussex Ornithological Society is organising a breeding Corn Bunting survey for 2024. The last full county-wide survey was carried out in 2014 and it covered 47 tetrads and identified a minimum of 173 singing Corn Buntings. Extrapolating the population across un-surveyed areas suggested the population is between 536-647 singing males. The estimate of the county population in *The Birds of Sussex* (Thomas, 2014), based on the BTO Atlas 2007-11, was between 240-350 singing males.

Corn Buntings are strongly associated with arable farmland and semi-natural grasslands, and in Sussex their populations are strongest to the South Downs with a few smaller breeding areas on the levels of East Sussex and the coastal plain of West Sussex.

Selection of tetrads is based on those selected for the previous surveys in 2014, and recent breeding records submitted to SOS, and is aimed to be representative of the current range of Corn Buntings across the county.

To get started, view the county map to see which tetrads (2km x 2km) are available.

### **Preparing for your survey**

Once you have decided which tetrad(s) to take on, you can confirm your interest on the website and print a 1:25000 OS map of the tetrad and a recording form from the links on the website. Before your first survey visit, it is a good idea to plan your route by identifying areas of potential habitat using your local knowledge of the tetrad and the habitats, or via Google earth or OS maps. Ideally, you should aim to get to within 100m of all the suitable habitat in the square. We are assuming that most of the surveying will be done from public rights of way or access land. If you can obtain permission to enter private land that would be ideal.

### **Survey Instructions**

Surveyors should be confident in identifying Corn Buntings by sight and sound. Surveyors are encouraged to visit the tetrad before the surveys to familiarise themselves with the site and the habitats present.

The survey comprises a minimum of two visits to the tetrad, preferably three. At least two visits to each site are required between 15<sup>th</sup> April and the end of June. Visits should be spaced at least 2 weeks apart, and as Corn Buntings are relatively late breeders, at least one of the visits should be in June.

All singing Corn Buntings should be recorded on each visit, and at the end of the survey the surveyors are asked to record the number of males deemed to be holding territory in the tetrad.

Visits should be carried out in calm weather, and before 11am.

Surveys should not be conducted if the wind speed exceeded force 4 (moderate breeze raises dust and loose paper, small branches move).