



For immediate use

Are these Britain's least favourite birds?

Since September 2007, the British Trust for Ornithology has been looking for companies, wildlife groups and people to sponsor Britain's birds. They have already found 121 species champions, and interest has been expressed in 47 more but that still leaves fifty species including the royal icon – the Mute Swan. Money raised is supporting *Bird Atlas 2007-11*, the biggest stock-take of British and Irish birds ever carried out.

As well as the Mute Swan, the list of birds left on the shelf includes Mallard, Pied Wagtail and the rare but beautiful Golden Oriole. So, are these our least favourite birds? The BTO may well be able to answer this question after its *Bird Atlas 2007-11* Species Sponsorship Auction, which is being run between the 1-12 February this year. They are calling for individuals and clubs, conservation groups, or companies to take part in this auction and show these birds that someone appreciates them, at the same time as giving their support to the work being done by thousands of volunteer birdwatchers involved in the Atlas.

Birds like Robin, Blue Tit, Red Kite, Swallow and Osprey were snapped up in the early stages, by sponsors who were all keen to back this influential survey, but some remarkable species are still requiring sponsors. People who are dotty for ducks, would go 'ga-ga' for a goose, are crazy about Coots, have a passion for sandpipers or would swoon for a swan, are all invited to take part in the February auction

Kate Aldridge (BTO Fundraiser) commented that "It is unbelievable that so few of the ducks and waterbirds have found friends, when feeding Mallards and Mute Swans on our local waterways and ponds is a British pastime. How people have managed to resist the Pied Wagtail is beyond me. We hope that all these birds will find fans during the Auction so that none are crowned with the title of Britain's least favourite bird."

The auction will run between 1-12 February 2010. Bids of a minimum of £300 will be taken during office hours Monday to Friday and can be placed by calling the BTO on 01842 750050 or by e-mailing fundraising@bto.org. Bidding will close at 5pm on Friday 12 February.

The bidding can be tracked at www.bto.org/bird-atlas-bird-auction

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Notes for editors

1. **The Bird Atlas Species Sponsorship Scheme** was launched in September 2007. Companies, organisations and individuals have sponsored species at a minimum of £2,000 per species and have contributed over £260,000 to the £1,400,000 costs of *Bird Atlas 2007-11*. However, 97 species remain unsponsored and will be available to sponsor during the Bird Atlas Bird Auction. The starting bid has been lowered to £300 for the auction and yet no interest has been expressed in 50 species.

Species available to sponsor at the BTO's *Bird Atlas 2007-11* Auction. * Species in which no interest has been expressed.

Mute Swan*	Goosander	Knot*	Glaucous Gull	Mistle Thrush*
Bewick's Swan	Ruddy Duck*	Little Stint*	Great Black-backed Gull	Cetti's Warbler*
Bean Goose*	Black Grouse	Dunlin*	Common Tern	Grasshopper Warbler*
Pink-footed Goose	Red-legged Partridge*	Ruff*	Arctic Tern	Whitethroat
Greylag Goose*	Quail*	Jack Snipe	Razorbill*	Bearded Tit
Barnacle Goose	Red-throated Diver	Snipe	Little Auk	Marsh Tit
Egyptian Goose*	Black-throated Diver	Bar-tailed Godwit*	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon*	Willow Tit
Shelduck*	Little Grebe	Whimbrel*	Woodpigeon*	Golden Oriole*
Mandarin Duck*	Red-necked Grebe*	Spotted Redshank*	Collared Dove	Great Grey Shrike*
Gadwall*	Slavonian Grebe	Greenshank*	Turtle Dove	Jay
Teal*	Black-necked Grebe	Green Sandpiper	Ring-necked Parakeet*	Carrión Crow
Mallard*	Fulmar	Wood Sandpiper*	Long-eared Owl	Tree Sparrow
Pintail*	Leach's Petrel	Common Sandpiper*	Cuckoo	Chaffinch
Garganey*	Bittern	Turnstone*	Tree Pipit*	Brambling*
Pochard*	Spoonbill	Arctic Skua*	Rock Pipit*	Siskin
Tufted Duck*	Honey-buzzard	Great Skua	Water Pipit*	Lesser Redpoll
Scaup*	Water Rail	Mediterranean Gull	Pied Wagtail*	Lapland Bunting*
Velvet Scoter*	Coot*	Black-headed Gull	Waxwing	
Smew	Ringed Plover*	Herring Gull	Wheatear	
Red-breasted Merganser*	Dotterel	Yellow-legged Gull*	Redwing	

2. ***Bird Atlas 2007-11*** is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) and BirdWatch Ireland. *Bird Atlas 2007-11* will map the distribution and relative abundance of birds in Britain and Ireland during the breeding season and winter. **Results produced by *Bird Atlas 2007-11*** will form the basis of conservation priorities for coming decades. **Maps from previous atlases are available from dawn.balmer@bto.org for use in publications.**
3. **The BTO is the UK's leading bird research organisation.** Over thirty thousand birdwatchers contribute to the BTO's surveys. They collect information that forms the basis of conservation action in the UK. The BTO maintains a staff of 100 at its offices in Norfolk and Stirling, who analyse and publicise the results of project work. The BTO's investigations are funded by government, industry and conservation organisations.

Contact information

Kate Aldridge or Rachel Irvine
(BTO Fundraisers)
Office: 01842 750050 (9am to 5.30pm)
Email: fundraising@bto.org

Paul Stancliffe (BTO Press Officer)
Office: 01842 750050 (9am to 5.30pm)
Mobile: 07845 900559 (anytime)
Email: press@bto.org

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Please contact us to book an interview
Office: 01842 750050