

EUROPEAN MONITORING NEWS

Introducing the EBCC board: Dawn Balmer

Danae Portolou



What is your title and the current working position?

Head of Surveys at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) in the United Kingdom

What is your current role in the EBCC?

I joined EBCC as an Observer on the Board in autumn 2018 and joined the Board formally at the AGM in 2019 and I have the role as Secretary.

What is your current role in the BTO and role in using monitoring data?

At BTO, I'm the Head of Surveys and oversee many of our long-term monitoring schemes and projects. I have worked for BTO for nearly 33 years and have organised several of our long-term projects in the past and was the Atlas Coordinator for Bird Atlas 2007–2011. I joined BTO on a short contract as an analyst on our territory mapping project called the Common Birds Census and have since been involved with many monitoring schemes!

Can you tell more about how you are using citizen science data in your work?

Volunteers and our monitoring work is at the very heart of BTO. We are fortunate to have long-term schemes such as the Common Birds Census, Breeding Bird Survey, Wetland Bird Survey, Heronries Census, Seabird Monitoring Programme which provide long-term data sets so we can present trends

in abundance and produce indicators and use the data in research, policy and conservation action. We share our information with the public through BirdFacts (<https://www.bto.org/learn/about-birds/birdfacts>). We're also able to run periodic and short-term surveys related to specific species which are not well monitored through our long-term surveys or to answer questions about habitat use. BirdTrack is our popular web/phone app project for birdwatchers to record their sightings and receives around 10 million records annually.

Do you still manage to take part in fieldwork, and if so, in which monitoring programs do you personally participate?

I really enjoy volunteering and taking part in surveys. I have two Breeding Bird Survey squares in Thetford Forest and have been covering these since 1994 and 1997. I also monitor a small inland breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. This year I've been taking part in the Heathland Birds Survey and surveying for Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* and Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and have just started fieldwork for the Winter Birds Survey — both periodic surveys that we organise. I'm a really keen birder and log my records into BirdTrack — so far I've logged 240 species, 535 submissions and 398 complete lists in the UK. I'm a fairly active bird ringer and particularly enjoy helping out with a local project on Nightjars in the forest. I'm very much looking forward to volunteering for the next bird atlas in 2027–2031!

Do you have a favourite bird or birding habitat/location?

My favourite bird is the Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* — I love all their plumages and enjoy trying to find them amongst large flocks of gulls. I have a local patch inland near home called East Wretham Heath where I try to visit a few times each week but I do love birding on the coast, and especially at migration times.