

# ROOKERY SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

A standardised methodology allows comparisons with past and, hopefully, future surveys. The following methodology has been adopted from that used by national surveys (in 1975, 1980 and 1986) and most local, usually county-based, surveys, e.g. Bedfordshire Rookery Survey 2013 – 2016, Oxfordshire Rookery Survey 2013-2014 and The Rookeries of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire in 1973.

The aims of the survey are to

- Record (and map) the location of all rookeries in the survey area;
- Count the number of nests in all rookeries in the survey area;
- Record other pertinent data, e.g. tree species in which nests are located;
- Provide an estimate of current breeding population in the survey area.

A rookery is defined as any group of nests 100m or more from the next nearest group. Whilst this is an arbitrary definition it has the advantage of being relatively easy to apply in the field and hence repeatable. In some local situations, this may require amendment. A consequence of this definition is that a single rookery may be spread out over a large area or an area with many nests could comprise a number of rookeries.

The difficulties of counting nests in rookeries are well known; the most obvious problems concern the counting of nests in conifers, the counting of multiple nests, the difficulty (in large rookeries) of arriving at a similar total each time, and the inaccuracy that can result from counting nests from a distance.

Rookeries can, of course, be located at any time of year, but it is best to count the nests as late in the season as possible. The best period to count nests in a rookery is between 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April as all nests should then be complete and in use, but the trees will not yet be in full leaf obscuring the nests. Counts made earlier in the season will be accepted as a visit may not be possible during the best time. There is no need to differentiate between occupied and unoccupied nests as this can present difficulties and be time consuming, but should this be recorded, please include a note. Generally, a single nest in an isolated tree is likely to be that of a Carrion Crow, but single Rook nests can occur and should be recorded as a rookery. Where it is impossible to get an accurate nest count, e.g. where nests are in conifers, please make an estimate of number of nests. Where possible, please record the tree species in which nests are built. Not all nests in a single rookery will necessarily be in the same tree species. Such data may prove useful when trying to assess the impact of various tree diseases, e.g. ash dieback fungus, on nesting Rooks.

Surveyors are asked to record the following for each rookery:

- Rookery name;
- the six-figure national grid reference;
- date of count;
- number of nests;
- number of nests in each species of tree used.

*Based on instructions produced by Ben Carpenter for the Oxfordshire Rookery Survey 2013 and 2014*