

Recruiting and managing fieldworkers – an overview.

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European Breeding Bird Atlas



Lack of fieldworkers



Aim

To facilitate discussion and problem solution

What we need from fieldworkers

- What
- When
- Where
- How
- Why

Where to seek for fieldworkers?

- Ornithologists (professionals)
- Students
- Retired people
- Hunters
- Farmers
- Staff of protected areas
- Professional nature conservationists
- ...

Motivation of fieldworkers

an approach 'catch all rarely works'

Different groups have different motivation, e.g.:

- Fun
- Science
- Nature conservation
- Adventure
- Exclusive access to certain places
- Being part of a community
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Pay or not to pay?



Should amateur fieldworkers be paid or not? Some countries manage large programmes of amateur-based surveys without even paying the volunteers' travel expenses. There is no evidence that not being paid (or even having to pay to take part in a survey, in order to help defray running costs) seriously weakens peoples' commitment to the work. Given that any money that is not used to pay volunteers can be used for better organisation, analysis or communication, it is therefore usually better not to pay them.

When starting a new programme it may be tempting to offer payment in order to boost the number of participants. What needs to be borne in mind, however, is that it will then be difficult to stop paying in future, which makes the work particularly vulnerable to the withdrawal of funding. Furthermore, it sets a precedent: people start to expect payment for any similar work. An alternative might be to allow fieldworkers the chance of winning a prize as an incentive, for example an identification guide, a distribution atlas, or pair of binoculars.

General difficulties

- Money
- Skills required
- Standardised fieldwork
- Atlas contributory rather than participatory project
- Long-term commitment
- Health and safety
- Data ownership

Maintaining fieldworkers and improving quality

- Equipment
- Training
- Guidelines
- Data sheets
- Aims to be clearly communicated
- Feedback (reports, maps, meetings, ...)
- Acknowledgements
- ...

Be creative

Steal ideas from others

Test, test, test

Questions for discussion/brainstorming

- Identify groups of potential fieldworkers
- Generate arguments 'why I should take part in'