

# Scientists call on public to look and listen out for cuckoos

April 21 2016

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April is the month when cuckoos will start arriving and breeding on Dartmoor and its surrounding areas. Credit: Charles Tyler.

Devon residents are being asked to record cuckoos seen or heard in the county as part of an ongoing conservation project that has received 2,000 reports of the species by the general public in the last two years.

April is the month when cuckoos will start arriving and breeding on Dartmoor and its surrounding areas, after wintering in the African Congo. The birds will spend as little as ten weeks in the UK before departing for warmer climes.

Along with the county's bird society Devon Birds, researchers at the University of Exeter are asking people to help build a better understanding of local cuckoo hotspots by entering information on sightings or hearings into a special project website.

The Devon Birds cuckoo sightings page was set up in 2014 as part of a collaboration between the society, the University of Exeter and the Dartmoor National Park Authority. The Citizen Science project has just launched the 2016 version of the page which aims to collect cuckoo sightings from across Devon to build up a detailed live map of the Devon cuckoo distribution.

Sara Zonneveld, a PhD researcher in the department of Biosciences, working on bird breeding and conservation on Dartmoor, said the information collected by the public over the last two years, with over 2,000 records submitted, has been extremely valuable.

"During this spring we hope to further expand this valuable dataset by encouraging the public to continue submitting their sightings to the website from across Devon," she said. "We know that the uplands of Dartmoor, where cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of the Meadow Pipit, are a stronghold for cuckoos, but we are also particularly interested in finding out if there are any other potential strongholds in the surrounding lowlands of Devon."

The researchers would like the public to record as many sightings as possible by making a note of any cuckoos they hear or see, together with any additional comments or observations, and share that information via an online form. Sightings will appear on a detailed map on the website showing all cuckoo sightings submitted in 2016.

The researchers are especially encouraging records of cuckoos on remote Dartmoor sites, cuckoos outside the Dartmoor National Park and across the rest of Devon, cuckoos that are seen as well as heard and juvenile cuckoos, which will help show where [cuckoos](#) might be breeding.

The cuckoo has shown sharp declines in recent decades, figures suggest

up to 70% in the last 20 years. This research hopes to identify possible strongholds and inform local conservation measures.

**More information:** To record sightings and soundings people should visit: [www.devonbirds.org/birdwatching/recording/cuckoos](http://www.devonbirds.org/birdwatching/recording/cuckoos)

Provided by University of Exeter

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