

Carrying out your own look-see survey

1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to suggest a structured approach to carrying out a piece of research in your area, analyse the data and draw conclusions.

It can be read in conjunction with the worked example produced for the Hurst Water Meadow.

1.1. What was the purpose of the project

The purpose of this project was to:

- Identify different species of birds seen [enter location]
- Determine how often they are seen over a period of time

1.2. When did the project take place

[Enter number of visits] visits were made between [Start date] and [End date]. The visits were made at different times of the day and lasted approximately [Enter time taken].

Consider how many visits should be made, when, time of day.

Consider sources of bias, e.g. time of year, weather conditions, disturbances.

Consider how long should be taken on each observation. The more time spent, the higher the likelihood of seeing more species.

1.3. Where did the project take place

[Describe in detail the whereabouts of the area surveyed]

[Describe briefly the type of habitat]

1.4. Who was involved

[Details of who took part in the survey]

Consider the abilities of the observers and if training is required to help them to identify birds expected to be seen in the area.

1.5. How was the project carried out

[Describe how the project was carried out]

XX walked the same route each time looking for different species of birds. They used the following techniques to detect birds:

- Listening for different bird songs and calls to help locate their whereabouts.
- Looking in trees, hedges, on the meadow, stream, neighbouring properties / sites and in the air.
- If a species was positively identified s/he recorded the name of the bird in a notebook.
- If s/he was unsure of the bird's identity it was not recorded.
- S/he spoke to local people who frequently visited the area to gain knowledge as to the types of bird seen by them.

Consider how the results will be recorded.

How will you deal with birds in hiding, flying over the area?

1.6. Results

Prepare a table showing the results. Here is an example.

Name	28-Feb	04-Mar	07-Mar	10-Mar	14-Mar	17-Mar	21-Mar	24-Mar	27-Mar	Total
Blackbird	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Blue tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	8
Bullfinch				1	1					2
Carrion crow		1	1	1	1	1			1	6
Chaffinch		1	1	1	1					4
Chiffchaff								1		1
Dunnock					1					1
Great tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Greenfinch		1								1
Green woodpecker						1				1
Grey wagtail				1						1
Grey heron	1	1	1						1	4
Jackdaw	1			1	1	1	1	1		6
Kestrel	1					1	1	1	1	5
Kingfisher			1		1					2
Long-tailed tit		1		1	1					3
Magpie							1	1	1	3
Mallard	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Moorhen	1	1		1		1		1		5
Pheasant						1	1	1		3
Reed bunting			1							1
Redwing		1								1
Robin	1		1		1	1		1		5
Rook		1		1						2
Song thrush	1	1	1	1		1			1	6
Mute swan							1			2
Treecreeper					1					1
Wood pigeon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Wren	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Total	12	15	12	15	16	14	11	12	11	

The number 1 indicates that a bird was seen and positively identified.

1.7. Some interesting information from the data collected

Analyse the data.

Most frequently seen	
Least frequently seen	

Number of different birds seen	
Most seen in one day	
Least seen in one day	
Average seen in one day	

1.8. Asking questions about the data

When analysing data it is important to think about things that may cause the results to be biased. For example consider the following questions and write some possible answers in the empty boxes.

How good were the recorders at identifying the birds?	
Are there any factors that might make the results different on one day than another?	
Were there any birds hiding?	

1.9. Presenting data in different ways

For the purpose of this exercise you may wish to look at say the top ten birds seen.

1.10. Redraw data table

Produce a new table for the top ten or so birds. Example.

Name	28-Feb	04-Mar	07-Mar	10-Mar	14-Mar	17-Mar	21-Mar	24-Mar	27-Mar	Total
Blackbird	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Blue tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	8
Carrion crow		1	1	1	1	1			1	6
Great tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Jackdaw	1			1	1	1	1	1		6
Kestrel	1					1	1	1	1	5
Mallard	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Moorhen	1	1		1		1		1		5
Robin	1		1		1	1		1		5
Song thrush	1	1	1	1		1			1	6
Wood pigeon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Wren	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Total	11	9	8	10	9	12	8	9	9	

1.11. Displaying data in a graphical format

Displaying numbers as a table is not always the easiest way to communicate information. Most people find it easier to see tables of numbers presented graphically.

Look at different ways to present the results of your survey. Consider using:

- Block diagrams
- Time lines

- Frequency charts

1.12. Using the data for predictions

Consider how useful the results of your survey were and where you might make improvements.

1.13. Making comparisons

Compare the results of your data with that taken by colleagues in the same area and with that taken in different areas.