

Monitoring Brown Hares in the Cheshire region

Guidance Notes

These notes explain how to prepare for and undertake a transect walk to help monitor Brown Hares in Cheshire. They accompany the transect walk recording form. Please read these guidelines and the information on the recording form carefully before undertaking your transect walk. Thank you for your support!

The Brown Hare Group is seeking help to undertake long-term monitoring of hares in the Cheshire region. We need as many people as possible to undertake a simple transect walk recording habitat types and the number of hares seen. Ideally, each transect would be repeated each year to build up regular data that can allow us to estimate population changes across the Cheshire region.

In order to achieve meaningful results we need data from as many transects as possible widely dispersed across the whole of the Cheshire region. Transects can be walked in areas where hares are known to live and in areas where there is no evidence of hares or where they are rarely seen. It is vitally important that you return a form from a completed transect walk even if you see no hares: this data counts just as much as sightings of the animals.

Before You Undertake the Transect Walk

1. From a map, please **select an area of the countryside where you have access**, either as landowner, tenant or manager or where a footpath allows access. The transect should be a minimum of 1kilometre, starting and finishing at recognisable landmarks such as a road, building or landscape feature. Work out a suitable scale for the grid on the recording form according to how far you intend to walk (note the scale on the grid to show the distance of your walk can be different to the scale you choose for the width of the transect).

2. Accurate distance estimation is key to successfully undertaking this survey. This can be achieved with practice using the following two-stage exercise **before** you embark on your transect walk. You should **not** do this at the start point of your transect walk as you may scare away any hares by your presence before you head off to record them.

learning to estimating distances

- (a) Using a scale on a map or a tape measure, count the number of paces you take to walk 100m.
- (b) Select a landmark and measure 50 metres from it. With practice at recognising this distance you can use it as a base unit to measure in units of fifty metres (note that undulating landscape and different habitats can alter perspective).

3. **Familiarise yourself with the recording form.** If you have any concerns or queries about how to use and complete the form, please contact Rick Rogers on 01744 456191 or Jacqueline Potter on 01244 375444.

Completing the Transect Walk

- 1. At the start point of your walk, estimate how far you can comfortably see both sides of the transect route (without binoculars). Estimate the distance and use that as a baseline for your transect width using an appropriate scale. This may change as you walk along the transect. Note the start time of your walk.
- 2. As you walk, mark on recording form grid the habitat types you see in relation to the transect line and any hares you see. Try to place the hares on the grid as accurately as possible using the grid to set a scale for the distances between you and the habitats and any hares.
- 3. Count your paces and stop every 100m for 1 minute and have a good look around.
- 4. At the end of the walk note your finishing time and complete the other details requested on the recording form.

After the Transect Walk

Return your completed recording form to: The Brown Hare Group, c/o Countdown Coordinator, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, Reaseheath, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DG

Remember! Even if you saw no hares, we want to know where and when you undertook the survey!