

2007

BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY

LUNT



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1.0 The Survey

This bird survey was carried out between 26th April 2007 and 10th June 2007. The object of the survey was to collect data from the Landlife fields at Lunt. I was asked to collect the following data:

- An assessment of bird species visiting the wildflower fields at Lunt.
- An assessment of numbers of birds visiting the wildflower fields at Lunt.

2.0 Summary of 2007 Findings

Compared to 2005, the number of breeding species on the site has increased by 160%, from 10 to 26 breeding species. The number of breeding pairs has also increased by approximately 136%, from 22 to 52 breeding pairs. The number of species recorded has increased by approximately 11%, from 36 to 40 species (and by approximately 45% since 2003). The number of species using the site has increased by approximately 6%, from 35 to 37, (See Section 4.3.2).

Two breeding pairs of Grey Partridge and four pairs of Linnet were recorded, compared to no breeding pairs for either species in 2005. The number of Skylark breeding pairs increased by 50%, from eight to sixteen breeding pairs. Lapwing breeding pairs increased also from one to three pairs. Breeding pairs of Whitethroat and of Reed Bunting were unchanged at three pairs each. Breeding Meadow Pipits fell from two pairs to none in 2007. No breeding Kestrels were recorded in either year although one was observed hunting over the site. Adult and juvenile Starlings were observed on the ploughed areas of the North and South fields and off site on the ploughed area to the South of the site.

The precise reasons of the changes in breeding species are difficult to identify as this is the first breeding birds survey for this site completed by the author.

The table in Appendix A records all species observed with their maximum numbers.

3.0 Site description

The site consists of two fields, one North and East of Back Lane which runs from Thornton to Lunt and another to the South of Back Lane bordered to the West by Longdale Lane. In each field, following deep inverse ploughing of the soil, mixed species of deciduous and coniferous trees and wild roses were planted in 2003.

The North field, central grid reference SD 20/30 343016, is approximately 25 hectares comprised of 17.5 hectares of grassland, five hectares plantation and two and a half hectares wild flower meadow, which is cropped for seed, with a wild flower stubble remaining over winter. There are three ponds in this field. A large pond to the centre of the field bordered by Hawthorne trees with mature alder, oak and willow trees. To the North of this large pond, there is a small pond fringed with reeds. To the West of the large pond there is another small pond also surrounded by mixed deciduous trees.

The planted trees had grown since the winter survey and varied in height from 1.30 to 3.10 metres in height. Flowers and grasses were approximately 0.8 metres high and were growing all around the Southern and Western perimeter of the field and amongst the trees.

There is a made up, signed footpath around the edge of the field along the Southern, Western and Northern boundaries and to the East of the large pond..

The South field, central grid reference SD 20/30 346016, is approximately five hectares, comprised of three and a half hectares of grassland, and one and a half hectares of plantation. To the North of this field, there is a small pond which is almost totally covered by reeds. To the South East edge of the field, there is another pond whose surface is almost totally covered in Greater Reed Mace.

This field is more raised and much drier than the Northern field. Here too, the planted trees had grown since the winter survey and varied in height from 0.74 to 1.9 metres in height. Flowers and grasses were approximately 0.8 metres high and were growing all around the Northern, Southern and Western perimeter of the field and amongst the trees. There is no signed footpath around the edge of this field, although on the June survey visit, it was noted that a mowed path had been cut through the vegetation from Longdale Lane to Back Lane and then parallel with Back Lane to Longdale Lane.

4.0 Field Methods

4.1 Birds breeding on the fields

Field methods used were in line with BTO breeding bird surveys. Three timed visits of two hours were made early morning during the survey period. I used the following criteria which had been applied in previous surveys:

4.1.1 Birds were considered breeding if a pair was seen in suitable habitat, a male was seen or heard holding territory or young were seen.

4.1.2 The welfare of the birds was always the top priority, and no attempt was made to search for nests.

4.1.3 Data are shown for the number of PAIRS estimated to be breeding, not individuals.

4.2 Birds present on the fields

Birds were recorded as present on the fields if they were feeding, resting or roosting, but not when they were obviously just flying over (as in the case of gulls). However some birds which were flying, for example Swifts and Swallows, were recorded as present because they were clearly feeding. Data are shown for the number of INDIVIDUALS seen. This figure does not include breeding pairs. Therefore, if there are two pairs breeding and 10 individuals present, the total is 14 birds.

4.3 Birds breeding nearby

I adopted the same criteria for these as used for the birds breeding on the fields. An important point to note here is that the adjacent fields cover a much larger area than the Landlife fields. Whilst they might appear likely to hold more breeding birds, most of the surrounding habitat differs from the Landlife fields. Several of the surrounding fields consist of arable crops. To the North a field of rape, to the North East, a field of wheat and to the South East a field of potatoes. Consequently, it is likely that for many species, this habitat is unsuitable for breeding. As these fields contained arable crops, I did not cover the adjacent area in as much detail as I did the Landlife fields. However, I did spend more time examining the uncultivated and ploughed areas to the West and South of the Landlife site.

4.4 Birds present nearby

I adopted the same criteria for these as used for birds present on the fields.

4.5 Excluded Bird Species

I excluded birds seen in the rear gardens of the houses in Lunt which border the East and South edges of the ploughed section to the East of the South field. However, species of conservation concern were recorded and reported separately to Mr Steve White, County Recorder.

5.0 Detailed Findings

5.1 Number of different bird species identified on Landlife's wildflower fields at Lunt

5.1.1 Birds recorded during the survey

Data are shown in the table Appendix A for each species observed during survey visits, from the Landlife fields and the adjacent fields. The number given for adjacent fields is extra to those on the Landlife fields. Any species not listed was not observed during any survey visits. Grid References are given for species of conservation concern for reporting to Mr Steve White, County Recorder.

5.1.2 Comparison with 2007 and Previous Years' Breeding Birds Survey

The figures given in brackets are the figures for 2005, 2004 and 2003.

No. of species recorded during the survey	= 40 (36, 26, 18)
No. of species using Landlife fields	= 37 (35, 24, 14)
No. of breeding pairs on Landlife fields	= 52 (22, 14, 7)
No. of breeding species on Landlife fields	= 26 (10, 8, 5)
No. of breeding pairs nearby	= 42 (8, 8, 6)
No. of breeding species nearby	= 18 (5, 4, 4)

The following comparisons are made between 2007 and 2005 figures. The number of breeding species on the site has increased by 160%. The number of breeding pairs has increased by approximately 136%. The number of species recorded has increased by approximately 11% (and by approximately 45% since 2003). The number of species using the site has increased by approximately 6%.

5.1.3 Comparison with Previous Years' Counts for Species of Conservation Concern

Analysis was performed on the current and previous year's breeding pairs on the Landlife site for species of conservation concern, giving the following results.

Species	2005 Breeding Pairs	2007 Breeding Pairs
Kestrel	0	0
Grey Partridge	0	2
Lapwing	1	3
Sky Lark	8	16
Meadow Pipit	2	0
Starling	0	0
Linnet	0	4
Reed Bunting	3	3

5.2 Other Species Recorded

Brown Hare, a Biodiversity Action Plan species, were seen on the North edge of the ploughed area of the North field and on the off site South ploughed field on every survey visit, albeit in small numbers.

In the Northern field, subsequent to this breeding birds survey, two species of dragon fly, Emperor and Common Darter, were seen flying over the small pond to the North of the field. An Emperor female was also seen egg laying.

5.3 Other Observations

A concern from one visit was when the author observed what he believes was the remains of a Hare's hind leg on the Southern path running East to West of the ploughed area of the North field. This may indicate that illegal hunting of hares with dogs is taking place, for example, via Lamping. A photograph was taken and the author will inform Merseyside Police's Wildlife Crime Office, PC Steve Harris.

There was evidence that motor bikes were using the Southern and Western paths of the North field. Tracks were also observed on the ploughed Southern area of the North field.

Although several dogs were observed off lead during these survey visits, the author did not experience any confrontations with dogs. Possibly due to the height and density of the vegetation, there was no observed disturbance from dogs going off the path. No disturbance from dogs was observed on the ploughed areas of the Northern field, nor off site on the South West field. However, one dog was observed entering the small Northern pond.

The small pond in the South Eastern corner of the South field has no open water due to Greater Reedmace, which has reduced the value of the pond's habitat.

6.0 Conclusions

The number of breeding species and breeding pairs, especially Skylarks, Linnets, Lapwings, and Grey Partridge has increased. However, the precise reasons for this increase are difficult to identify as this is the first breeding birds survey completed by the author for this site.

7.0 Recommendations

At least 50% of the total pond area of the small pond in the South Eastern corner of the South field should be cleared of Greater Reedmace to create more open water. This will benefit not only aquatic life and water fowl but will also create good habitat for dragon fly and damsel fly species.

Consideration should be given to the erection of notices on the North pond advising that it is a dragonfly breeding pond and requesting dog owners not to allow dogs to swim in the pond.

The author recognizes implementation of these suggestions is dependent on the availability of funding and subject to strategy and policy decisions.

Finally, the author thanks Landlife for the opportunity to undertake this breeding birds survey. It has been a very pleasant and informative task. The South East field with its wonderful display of poppies, corn flowers, pink campion and other flowers was an especially beautiful sight.

Appendix A

Detailed List and Location of Bird Species

Species Name	Total N ^o of Species	Breeding Pairs on Site	Individuals Present on Site	Breeding Pairs Nearby	Individuals Present Nearby
Grey Heron	1	0	2	0	1
Mallard	2	0	1	0	1
Kestrel	3				
GR 345013		0	0	1	0
GR 348018		0	1	0	0
Grey Partridge	4				
GR 348015 (South Field)		1	0	0	0
GR 345015 (North Field)		1	0	0	0
GR 346013		0	0	1	0
Pheasant	5	1	0	2	2
Moorhen	6	2	1	0	0
Coot	7	1	0	0	0
Oystercatcher	8	0	2	0	0
Lapwing	9				
GR 342016 (North Field)		2	0	0	0
GR 348018 (South Field)		1	0	0	0
GR 342018		0	0	2	0
GR 348013		0	0	1	0
GR 345012		0	0	1	0
GR 343016		0	0	1	0
GR 342016 (North Field)		0	2	0	0
Common Gull	10	0	2	0	0
Stock Dove	11	0	0	0	1
Woodpigeon	12	0	0	0	12

Species Name	Total N° of Species	Breeding Pairs on Site	Individuals Present on Site	Breeding Pairs Nearby	Individuals Present Nearby
Collared Dove	13	0	1	0	0
Swift	14	0	1	0	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	15	1	0	0	0
Skylark	16				
GR 343016 (North Field)		12	0	0	0
GR 346013		0	0	10	0
GR 346016 (South Field)		4	0	0	0
House Martin	17	0	0	0	2
Swallow	18	0	4	0	2
Wren	19	3	0	4	0
Dunnock	20	1	0	1	0
Robin	21	1	0	1	0
Northern Wheatear	22	0	1	0	0
Blackbird	23	3	2	2	0
Song Thrush	24				
GR 344016		1	0	1	0
Sedge Warbler	25	2	0	1	0
Whitethroat	26	3	0	5	0
Blackcap	27	1	0	1	0
Willow Warbler	28	1	0	0	0
Blue Tit	29	1	0	1	3
Great Tit	30	1	3	0	0
Magpie	31	1	3	0	5
Rook	32	0	2	0	0

Species Name	Total N° of Species	Breeding Pairs on Site	Individuals Present on Site	Breeding Pairs Nearby	Individuals Present Nearby
Jackdaw	33	2	1	0	0
Carrion Crow	34	1	20	0	0
Starling	35				
GR 348018		0	52	0	0
GR 344013		0	0	0	46
GR 344016		0	82	0	0
GR 345012		0	0	0	6
Chaffinch	36	1	0	0	0
Goldfinch	37	5	0	1	0
Greenfinch	38	1	0	1	0
Linnet	39				
GR 345015		0	34	1	0
GR 346013		0	0	1	0
GR 346015		2	0	0	0
GR 348014		2	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	40				
GR 345012		1	0	0	0
GR 348016		2	0	0	0
GR 343012		0	0	1	0
GR 346014		0	0	1	0

Other Species Observed

Brown Hare	Present on Site	Present Nearby
GR 345015 (North Field)	1	0
GR 348018 (South Field)	1	0
GR 347019 (South Field)	1	0
GR 344015 (North Field)	1	0
GR 347016 (South Field)	1	0
GR 345015	0	1
GR 344016 (North Field)	1	0
GR 344017 (North Field)	4	0