

2008

BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY

BROOMS CROSS

LUNT



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1.0 The Survey

This bird survey was carried out between March 2008 and June 2008 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 2008 Findings

Compared to 2007, the number of breeding species on the site has decreased by 15%, from 26 breeding species in 2007 to 22 breeding species in 2008. However, the number of breeding pairs remained the same at 52 breeding pairs. The number of species recorded on site in the survey has decreased by approximately 5%, from 40 to 38 species.

Breeding pairs of Grey Partridge remained the same at two pairs. Breeding pairs of Linnet increased by 25% from four pairs in 2007 to five pairs in 2008. The number of Skylark breeding pairs decreased from sixteen breeding pairs in 2007 to fifteen breeding pairs in 2008. Breeding pairs of Lapwing fell by 33% from three pairs in 2007 to two pairs in 2008. Breeding pairs of Whitethroat were unchanged at three pairs with Reed Bunting breeding pairs increased by 25% to four pairs. Blackcap and Willow Warbler were unchanged at one breeding pair respectively. No breeding Meadow Pipits were recorded in either 2007 or 2008. One pair of breeding Kestrels was recorded in 2008. 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. No House Martins were observed feeding over the site.

The precise reasons of the reduction in the number of breeding species are difficult to identify. Potential local factors include loss of feeding habitat (from fire); habitat less suitable for some species; disturbance, for example, from illegal hawking and predation by breeding Kestrels. The number of breeding species may also have been reduced through adverse events affecting adult birds in their overseas wintering areas.

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 increased in height since the winter survey to between 1.50 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 between 1.20 to 2.10 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. 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. 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 East 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.

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.

5.1.2 Comparison with 2007 and Previous Years' Breeding Birds Survey

The figures given in brackets are for 2007, 2005, 2004 and 2003.

No. of species recorded during the survey	=	38 (40, 36, 26, 18)
No. of species using Landlife fields	=	33 (37, 35, 24, 14)
No. of breeding pairs on Landlife fields	=	52 (52, 22, 14, 7)
No. of breeding species on Landlife fields	=	21 (26, 10, 8, 5)
No. of breeding pairs nearby	=	42 (42, 8, 8, 6)
No. of breeding species nearby	=	24 (18, 5, 4, 4)

The following comparisons are made between 2008 and 2007 figures. The number of breeding species on the site has decreased by 15%. The number of breeding pairs remained unchanged at 52 breeding pairs. The number of species recorded has decreased by approximately 5%. The number of species using the site has decreased by approximately 11%.

5.13 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	2007 Breeding Pairs	2008 Breeding Pairs
Kestrel	0	1
Grey Partridge	2	2
Lapwing	3	3
Sky Lark	16	15
Meadow Pipit	0	0
Starling	0	0
Linnet	4	5
Reed Bunting	3	4

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 South ploughed field.

5.3 Other Observations

The site and the area around the site suffers from "fly tipping" and after every most survey visit the author has reported incidents to Sefton Council. Incidents of "fly tipping" occur along Back Lane and on Longdale Lane. In June, the author informed Sefton Council that both domestic items and white asbestos roofing sheets had been dumped there.

In June, the meadow area to the South of the large pond in the North field showed evidence of damage from a grass fire. The footpath around the North field showed signs of being used by motor cycles and vehicles.

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

6.0 Conclusions

Compared to 2007, the total number of breeding species observed on the site has decreased. However, the number of breeding pairs has only reduced by one pair. Potential local factors are loss of suitable habitat for foraging for food, disturbance, for example, from illegal hawkers and predation from the breeding Kestrels on the site. The number of adult birds returning to breed in the UK may have also been reduced by adverse events in their overseas wintering areas. Compared to 2007, breeding pairs of Skylarks, Linnets, Lapwings, and Grey Partridge have remained around similar levels.

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.

The author recognizes implementation of this and previous 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 bird survey. It has been a pleasant and informative task.

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	1	0	0
Mallard	2	1	0	0	0
Kestrel	3	1	0	0	0
Grey Partridge	4	2	0	0	0
Pheasant	5	2	0	1	1
Moorhen	6	2	0	0	0
Oystercatcher		0	0	1	1
Lapwing	7	2	0	1	2
Woodpigeon		0	0	4	0
Collared Dove	8	0	1	2	0
Swift	9	0	1	1	0
Skylark	10	15	0	2	0
Swallow	11	0	2	1	0
Wren	12	2	0	3	0
Dunnock		0	0	1	0
Meadow Pipit	13	0	6	0	0
Pied Wagtail	14	0	1	0	0
Robin	15	1	0	1	0
Blackbird	16	3	0	2	0
Song Thrush	17	1	0	2	0

Species Name	Total N° of Species	Breeding Pairs on Site	Individuals Present on Site	Breeding Pairs Nearby	Individuals Present Nearby
Sedge Warbler	18	3	0	3	0
Whitethroat	19	3	0	2	0
Blackcap	20	1	0	0	0
Chiffchaff	21	0	1	0	0
Willow Warbler	22	1	0	0	0
Blue Tit	23	2	0	0	0
Goldcrest	24	0	1	0	0
Great Tit	25	1	0	0	0
Magpie	26	0	5	2	0
Jackdaw		0	0	1	0
Carrion Crow	27	0	1	1	0
Starling	28	0	61	2	3
House Sparrow	29	0	1	5	0
Chaffinch	30	1	0	1	0
Goldfinch	31	2	0	1	0
Greenfinch		0	0	1	0
Linnet	32	5	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	33	4	0	1	0

Other Species Observed

Brown Hare	Present on Site	Present Nearby
GR 349014 (North Field)	1	0
GR 342014 (South Field)	1	0