

2009 BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY

BROOMS CROSS LUNT



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1.0 The Survey

This bird survey was carried out between March 2009 and July 2009. 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.
- An assessment of birds species and numbers of birds in fields adjacent to the wildflower fields at Lunt

2.0 Summary of 2009 Findings

The number of on-site breeding species site has decreased by 15%. The number of on-site breeding pairs has decreased by 29%. The number of species recorded has decreased by 13%. Potential causes are unsuitable habitat for breeding and food, such as unploughed and fallow fields, unmown vegetation; predation and disturbance.

The number of breeding species off-site has decreased by 38%. The number of breeding pairs has increased by 5% (two pairs). The number of species recorded has decreased by approximately 5%. The number of species observed off-site has decreased by 29%. Potential causes are unsuitable habitat for breeding and food due to agricultural crops; predation and disturbance.

Compared to 2008, breeding pairs of Linnets were reduced from five to three pairs. Breeding pairs of Skylarks, Lapwings and Reed Buntings were slightly reduced. No breeding Grey Partridge or Starlings were recorded on site in 2009. Potential causes are the unploughed and fallow North East and South East fields and the height of uncut grasses on the South Field, which normally has an access path cut around and through the site.

Long Tailed Tit was a new species observed on site, with Grasshopper Warbler and Great Spotted Woodpecker observed off-site. No Blackcaps were observed in 2009. This may have been due to ongoing problems in their African wintering habitat.

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 of unploughed fallow land. 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 last breeding bird survey to between 1.50 to 3.5 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 unploughed, fallow land, and one and a half hectares of plantation. To the North of this field, there is a small pond which is almost covered by reed. 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 last breeding birds survey and varied in height from between 1.50 to 2.10 metres in height. Flowers and grasses were approximately 1 metre 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 a path has previously been mowed around and through the field, no mowing had taken place in 2009.

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

The same criteria were used 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 and feeding. 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 fallow 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 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.

The following comparisons are made between 2008 and 2009 figures.

5.1.2 Comparison with 2008 and Previous Years' Breeding Birds Survey

The figures given in brackets are for 2008, 2007, 2005, 2004 and 2003.

No. of species recorded during the survey	=	34 (38, 40, 36, 26, 18)
No. of species using Landlife fields	=	28 (33, 37, 35, 24, 14)
No. of breeding pairs on Landlife fields	=	37 (52, 22, 14, 7)
No. of breeding species on Landlife fields	=	28 (21, 26, 10, 8, 5)
No. of breeding pairs nearby	=	44 (42, 42, 8, 8, 6)
No. of breeding species nearby	=	16 (24, 18, 5, 4, 4)

5.1.3 2009 On-Site Breeding Species

The number of breeding species on the site has decreased by 15%. The total number of on-site breeding pairs has decreased by 29%. The number of species recorded has decreased by 13%. Potential causes are unsuitable habitat for breeding and food, such as unploughed and fallow fields, unmown vegetation; predation and disturbance affecting ground nesting birds.

Long Tailed Tit was a new species in the breeding bird survey. No Blackcaps were observed in 2009. This may have been due to ongoing problems in their African wintering habitat.

5.1.4 2009 Off-Site Breeding Species

The number of breeding species off-site has decreased by 38%. The number of breeding pairs has increased by 5% (two pairs). The number of species recorded has decreased by approximately 5%. The number of species observed off-site has decreased by 29%. Potential causes are unsuitable habitat for breeding and food due to agricultural crops; changes to existing habitat, such as fallow fields, predation and disturbance affecting ground nesting birds.

New species observed were Grasshopper Warbler and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

5.15 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	2008 Breeding Pairs	2009 Breeding Pairs
Kestrel	1	1
Grey Partridge	2	0
Lapwing	3	2
Sky Lark	15	13
Meadow Pipit	0	2
Starling	0	0
Linnet	5	2
Reed Bunting	4	3

Compared to 2008, breeding pairs of Skylarks, Lapwings and Reed buntings are slightly reduced. No breeding Grey Partridge or Starlings were recorded on site in 2009. Potential causes are the unploughed and fallow North East and South East fields and the height of uncut grasses on the South Field, which normally has an access path cut around and through the site.

5.2 Other Species Recorded

Brown Hare, a Biodiversity Action Plan species, were seen on the North field and on the South fallow 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 “fly tipping” incidents to Sefton Council. Tipping of grass cuttings, tree branches and plants was observed on one occasion on the South East Filed boundary with Lunt Village houses.

Criminal activity burning off plastic insulation from copper cable has also been observed one on occasion.

The small pond in the South Eastern corner of the South field has no open water due to Greater Reedmace, consequently, it now has little value as a wildlife habitat.

6.0 Conclusions

Compared to 2008, the total number of breeding species observed on the site has decreased by five species with the total number of breeding pairs reduced by 15 pairs.

7.0 Recommendations

As previously recommended, 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 are 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 an enjoyable and informative task.

Appendix A
Detailed List and Location of Bird Species

Species Name	Total N° of Species On site	Breeding Pairs on Site	Individuals Present on Site	Breeding Pairs Nearby	Individuals Present Nearby	Total N° of Species
Kestrel	1	1				1
Grey Partridge				1		2
Pheasant	2	1		2		3
Moorhen	3	1				4
Lapwing	4	2		10		5
Woodpigeon	5	2	3			6
Snipe	6		1			7
Swift	7		1			8
Great Spotted Woodpecker					1	9
Skylark	8	13		10		10
Swallow	9		2			11
House Martin	10		2			12
Wren	11	1		1		13
Duncock	12	1				14
Meadow Pipit	13		2			15
Robin				1		16
Blackbird	14	2		2		17
Song Thrush				1		18
Missel Thrush	15		1			19

Sedge Warbler	16	4		2		20
Whitethroat	17	1		2		21
Chiffchaff	18	1				22
Willow Warbler	19	1		1		23
Grasshopper Warbler				2		24
Blue Tit	20	2				25
Long Tailed Tit	21	1				26
Magpie				6		27
Jackdaw	22		2			28
Starling	23		1			29
House Sparrow	24		1			30
Goldfinch	25		24			31
Greenfinch	26		1	1		32
Linnet	27	2	43			33
Reed Bunting	28	3		2		34
	28	39	84	44	1	34

Other Species Observed

Brown Hare	Present on Site	Present Nearby
GR 349014 (North Field)	4	1
GR 342014 (South Field)	1	0