

# **DOWNTON LAKES**

(Downton Manor Farm Quarry)

# **BIRD SURVEY 2021**

Produced for the Milford Conservation volunteers



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**Wet ground at the gravel works !**



## INTRODUCTION

Formerly a working farm, Downton Manor Farm was bought by New Milton Sand and Ballast (NMSB) in 2004 and has been run as a working gravel pit. In 2020 the gravel extraction was completed on the eastern side of the site and this side was returned to farm fields. In addition a series of small lakes and ponds was constructed, running roughly north to south, parallel to the stream and the long strip of existing woodland.

As well as the ponds, a lot of rough grassland exists between the ponds and the woodland, containing many wild grasses and flowers. The stream is a small tributary of the Danes Stream and a valuable wildlife corridor. The woodland is mainly made up of native deciduous species, along with some holly, pine and a few non-native leylandii.

The bird survey was commissioned by the Milford Conservation Volunteers (MCV) and the survey ran from January to December, covering the eastern half of the site, including the ponds, grassland and woodland. For reasons of safety, there was no access to the working gravel pits, fields in the process of restoration or the old farm buildings, but important species seen on those parts of the site are also included in this report.



**NMSB map of the site**

## SURVEY TECHNIQUES

One morning visit was made each month, along with some visits at other times of day, when the site was walked from one end and back. In order to fully survey the breeding birds, a dawn visit was made in early May and an evening visit was made in mid-April. In addition to these, some bird ringing was carried out, which enabled detailed sampling of the birds present.

From January to May visits were made through the main entrance to the site, walking a set route, covering the ponds, grassland and woodland on the western half of the site. In May 2021 a Permissive Footpath was opened by NMSB, allowing some public access to walk around the ponds. Therefore from May onwards all visits were made via the Permissive Path. This enabled dawn visits and evening visits, to survey the dawn chorus and crepuscular (twilight) species.

On these visits singing birds were counted and territories mapped. Singing birds, birds collecting nest material, birds feeding young or actual nests located indicated a species was breeding, as opposed to being a visitor or a passage migrant.

In some cases it was difficult to assess whether the presence of a singing male had led to breeding success. For some species it was impossible to accurately say how many pairs bred, but often it was possible to state the number of territories found. Therefore the following phrases are used in this report to describe breeding species:

- **pairs bred** = an exact count of confirmed pairs.
- **territories** = an exact count of territories, likely to contain breeding pairs, but unconfirmed.
- a + sign after either 'pairs' or 'territories' indicates that number of pairs or territories were confirmed, but there may have been a few more, particularly those overlapping with areas just outside the survey area.

### LIST OF OTHER OBSERVERS

CB = Chris Barrass (MCV Member and photographer)

AH = Andy Hallows (MCV member)

JH = Julie Hallows (MCV Committee member)

KM = Keith Metcalf (MCV Conservation Officer)

E & TR = Eric and Tani Read (MCV Members)

NMSB = Member of NMSB on site staff



## WEATHER DURING THE SURVEY PERIOD

The year began with a cold spell, which continued into the spring. A run of northerly winds in April delayed the arrival of some of the summer migrants and it was unusually dry. After May the summer turned warmer and was at times very hot. The autumn remained mild and unusually dry and the year ended with a cold and windy start to December, followed by several mild, wet weeks.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**88 wild bird species were found during the survey year** (the list does not include feral pigeon) and 34 of these were confirmed as breeding or probably breeding at the site. 71 birds of 19 species were ringed (see the Ringing Report on Page 19).

A good range of wildfowl, waders and passerines occurred. Notable species included little grebe (breeding), gadwall (wintering), tufted duck (breeding), stone curlew (on passage), little ringed plover (breeding), snipe (wintering), green sandpiper (wintering and on passage), Mediterranean gull (on passage), kingfisher (autumn visitor), skylark (breeding and wintering), whinchat (on passage), grasshopper warbler (on passage), reed warbler (on passage), whitethroat (breeding and on passage), firecrest (breeding and wintering) and 8 species of finch, including bullfinch (resident and breeding).



## FULL LIST OF BIRDS

Species are listed in Voous Order, (i.e. Grebes to Buntings), using the vernacular English names alongside the scientific names in *italics*.

The description in **blue** ink alongside each species' name describes the status of the bird at Downton Lakes. Certain birds may be more common or rarer within Hampshire and the UK, but here they are assessed by how often or how seldom they occurred at Downton Lakes.

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LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**Common breeding species in small numbers. 2-3 pairs bred.**

There was only one record of a little grebe wintering at the site, on December 11<sup>th</sup>, probably because the ponds freeze in cold weather. In spring the first returning grebe was seen on the largest pond on March 18<sup>th</sup>. By May 2<sup>nd</sup> there were 2 pairs and by May 28<sup>th</sup> there were 3 pairs, 2 of which were using the smaller ponds. No young were seen until August 16<sup>th</sup>, when one large chick was being fed by an adult on the largest pond. A second large chick was seen being fed by an adult on one of the smaller ponds on September 5<sup>th</sup>. Therefore breeding was confirmed at 2 locations. Little grebes like to build floating nests attached to bank side vegetation. The ponds are still in the early stages of being colonised by vegetation, therefore most of the grebe nests were probably exposed to predation by mammals and corvids.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

**Common winter visitor in small numbers.**

A maximum of 2 cormorants were seen fishing in the largest pond at the beginning of the year. A single young bird was seen there in the autumn. Others were sometimes seen flying over the site during winter months.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

**A scarce visitor.**

2 flew north over the site on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

**A common visitor in small numbers.**

A single adult was regularly present around the largest pond. 2 juveniles flew south over the site on June 13<sup>th</sup>. A juvenile was beside the largest pond in November.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

**Common outside of the breeding season.**

Large flocks of Canada geese were present during the winter months, but none stayed to breed. A list of the counts made on the monthly survey visits appears below:

Jan	75
Feb	57
Mar	14
Apr	14
May	0
Jun	0
Jul	0
Aug	38
Sep	0
Oct	0
Nov	0
Dec	12

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

**An occasional visitor in spring and summer.**

A pair arrived in mid-March and was present into May, using the temporary pools created by the gravel workings. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 pairs were present. No breeding took place, but the presence of these birds suggests that the adults might have been prospecting for nest sites. On July 5<sup>th</sup> a full grown juvenile was seen in the same area, which probably originated from the nearby coastal areas of Keyhaven or Pennington Marshes, where a few pairs bred.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

**A common visitor in small numbers.**

A pair was regularly seen from January until July, including during the breeding season, but no young were seen. There were no sightings later in the year.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

**A common visitor and reasonably common breeding species. 2 bred.**

Mallard used all of the ponds. 2 broods of ducklings were seen; the first was of 3 on the largest pond, then a brood of 5 on one of the smaller ponds. However, by late May these had dropped to just one duckling on the smaller pond. Levels of predation are clearly high and it is not known if the last duckling managed to fledge.

A list of the counts made on the monthly survey visits appears below:

Jan	18
Feb	12
Mar	7
Apr	8 (+ 3 ducklings)
May	12 (+ 7 ducklings)
Jun	3 (no ducklings)
Jul	0



Aug	9
Sep	5
Oct	20
Nov	22
Dec	8

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

**A regular wintering species in small numbers.**

A male was sometimes present in January, but then there were no sightings until early April, when 3 males and 2 females were seen. One pair remained into May, but from the end of May until early September none were found. A male was associating with mallard on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

**A reasonably common wintering species. 1 bred.**

The first tufted duck were noted in March, when 4 males and a female were seen. For the rest of the spring numbers fluctuated between 5 and 6 birds with 2 clear pairs and some spare males. In early July only a single female remained and on July 17<sup>th</sup> she was seen with 4 ducklings. On August 16<sup>th</sup> only 3 ducklings were seen, but they had reached the fledging stage. Therefore the one female successfully bred. Other nesting attempts may have taken place, but if they did they were predated at the egg stage.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

**A scarce visitor.**

On June 6<sup>th</sup> a 2<sup>nd</sup> year male was hunting over the site. It failed to catch anything and it disappeared to the south.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

**An uncommon visitor.**

Surprisingly there were only 3 records, one of a male flying over the site in April and one of a young male chasing a goldfinch in August. A young male was again seen over the site in November.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

**A scarce visitor.**

A female was seen hunting over the site on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

COMMON BUZZZARD *Buteo buteo*

**A common resident and visitor, which may have bred nearby.**

The most common raptor to occur at the site, seen on the majority of visits in ones and twos. The highest count was of 3 on August 16<sup>th</sup>, when a juvenile was present.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

**A reasonably common visitor.**

A male was seen going to roost in the farm buildings on one evening in April. One was hunting over the grasslands beside the ponds on August 29<sup>th</sup>. 2 fully grown juveniles were hunting over the grassland on September 5<sup>th</sup>. One was hunting over the site on October 10<sup>th</sup>. A young male was hunting over the pony paddocks on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

**A scarce visitor.**

An adult male flew south over the site on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

**A common resident with numbers augmented by local introductions.**

Most pheasants were of the common ring-necked race, but early in the year 2 males of the blue-purple 'Japanese' race were often present at the southern end of the site.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

**A reasonably common resident in small numbers. 3 pairs bred.**

At the beginning of the year moorhens were only observed on one of the smaller ponds, but by May it was evident that there was more than the one pair. By August 3 broods of chicks were seen, thus confirming that 3 pairs had bred. By December only 1 adult pair and a single juvenile remained.

COOT *Fulica atra*

**A reasonably common resident in small numbers. 2-3 pairs bred.**

Present throughout the year. 2 small broods of young appeared in June and July and a 3<sup>rd</sup> pair was also present in likely breeding habitat, but that pair was not observed nesting. As with other aquatic species at the site, evidence of predation was clear, as by August only one pair had raised a single chick to fledge. By December it appeared that 2 pairs remained to winter.

STONE CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

**A rare passage migrant.**

One was heard on October 10<sup>th</sup>, (heard by GG, AH and JH), calling from behind the bank of sand and gravel in the area of the gravel workings. This species breeds at sites to the north in Wiltshire and in autumn these birds migrate south to wintering grounds in Africa. Individuals have occasionally been seen stopping off on the Hampshire coast. Therefore, given their liking for open ground, particularly large areas of bare stony ground with short grass, it is not that surprising that one was briefly present at Downton.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

**A reasonably common summer visitor in small numbers. 1 pair bred but the nest failed.**

It was a good year for this uncommon species across the region with more pairs than usual arriving from Africa in the spring. A pair of little ringed plovers was first noticed at Downton on March 16<sup>th</sup> using the temporary pools created by the gravel workings, a short way west of the smaller ponds. The male was displaying and it seemed that egg laying would be imminent. The pair stayed in that area throughout the spring, but in May and June no further displays were witnessed, the pair only appeared to be feeding. By July they had left the site.

On April 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> a 3<sup>rd</sup> little ringed plover was observed on the field about 100m from the existing pair. Then on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 pairs were seen on the temporary pools. By May 28<sup>th</sup> only 1 pair remained.

In summary, a pair tried to nest, but that nest and any subsequent attempts were either predated (paw prints of fox and badger were seen in the vicinity, plus numerous corvids and gulls were also present in the area) or accidentally disturbed by the gravel workings.

*There was an unconfirmed report from a member of NMSB staff that 'plover' chicks were seen in that same area last summer (2020). It is not known exactly what species was seen or if they survived to fledge, but it seems possible that these might have been little ringed plovers.*

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

**A scarce winter visitor in small numbers.**

In January 10 lapwing were on the largest field to the south west of the largest pond.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

**A reasonably common winter visitor in small numbers.**

Snipe were found on the margins of the ponds and on winter puddles, particularly during periods of cold weather. A list of the counts made on the monthly survey visits appears below:

Jan	5
Feb	0
Mar	5
Apr	1
May	0
Jun	0
Jul	0
Aug	0
Sep	0
Oct	3
Nov	0
Dec	0

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

**A scarce passage migrant.**

4 flew low east over the site on September 5<sup>th</sup> and alighted in a neighbouring field.



GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

**A scarce passage migrant.**

2 flew in to the temporary pools created by the gravel workings on August 29<sup>th</sup>.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

**A reasonably common winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.**

A green sandpiper wintered at the site and it was present from the beginning of the year until April. On March 16<sup>th</sup> there were 2, but 2 days later only one remained. In the autumn, the first returning birds were noted on August 16<sup>th</sup>, when there were 2. Then 1 was seen on December 11<sup>th</sup>, which was presumably wintering at the site.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

**A common spring passage migrant.**

The first were 3 adults seen among a flock of around 50 black-headed gulls, feeding on invertebrates in the grass areas beside the ponds on March 16<sup>th</sup>. 3 were again present in April, then the numbers rose to 15 on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The majority of these 15 were adults in breeding plumage with a few second-years. The arrival coincided with the now annual passage of migrant Mediterranean gulls, making their way from southern European wintering grounds to breeding colonies in north-east France, Belgium and Poland.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

**A common visitor outside of the breeding season.**

Usually present in the winter months, when around 30 were often present. Numbers then increased sharply in the spring. The highest counts were in April (200+) and May (100+). The counts then dropped to just 10 in June, 1 in July and 0 in August, before rising again in the autumn.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

**A common visitor in small numbers.**

From the beginning of the year into spring between 5 and 15 herring gulls were regularly counted. The highest count was of 20 in March. During the summer numbers dropped to between 1 and 6. All counts involved a mixture of adults and younger birds.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

**A scarce spring and autumn visitor.**

There were a few sightings in spring: the first was of an adult flying north over the site on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the second was of an adult and a sub-adult loafing on the temporary pools created by the gravel workings on May 28<sup>th</sup>. An adult and a juvenile were in that same area on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

**An occasional visitor in small numbers.**

A single adult was seen on the temporary pools created by the gravel workings in January. An adult and a sub-adult were there in June.

FERAL PIGEON *Columa livia*

**A scarce visitor (not a wild species, those seen were thought to be racing pigeons)**

1 flew north over the site on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Others were occasionally seen on the disused farm buildings.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

**A common resident in small numbers. 3+ pairs bred.**

Songs and displays were witnessed at 3 distinct locations, 1 at the southern end and 2 at the northern end. One pair nested in an owl box, a juvenile was seen sitting in the entrance hole on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

**A common resident and visitor. 2 + pairs bred.**

No large flocks were observed, but pairs and individuals were omnipresent. Singing in likely nesting habitat was noted at 2 places, but it is likely that several pairs went undetected in the thicker hedgerows and wider woodland.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

**A common resident in small numbers. 1-2 pairs possibly bred.**

On an evening visit in April, 2 territories were identified, with owls heard calling and one was seen. One territory was in the thick woodland, another was around tall oaks and hedgerows.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

**An uncommon summer visitor.**

A swift flew east over the site on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. 9 swifts were feeding low over the largest pond on July 8<sup>th</sup>.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

**Scarce autumn visitor.**

A juvenile was caught and ringed beside the ponds on August 29<sup>th</sup> and one was seen on the ponds on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

**A common resident in small numbers. 1 pair possibly bred.**

During the spring territorial calling was regularly heard from woodland at the southern end and single birds were seen and heard throughout the year.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopus major*

**A common resident in small numbers. 2 pairs probably bred.**

During the spring 2 territories were identified. Ones and two were seen and heard throughout the year.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

**A common resident and visitor in small numbers. 1-2 pairs bred.**

Sightings were scarce at the beginning of the year, but one male was regularly singing over the fields to the east of the site. As the herbage grew on the largest 2 fields, a male was seen and heard displaying over the largest field to the west of the largest pond on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Two males were singing and displaying on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the original bird and a second a bit further south. These two males held their territories for the summer. 5 fully grown juveniles were seen in the first territory on July 5<sup>th</sup>, strongly suggesting that successful breeding took place there. The highest winter count came on December 11<sup>th</sup>, when a flock of 16 arrived from the east.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

**A reasonably common summer visitor.**

The first 2 were seen feeding over the largest pond on April 11<sup>th</sup>. In May up to 12 were feeding along the gravel ridge created by the gravel workings. Some of these birds were seen to inspect that ridge, presumably looking for possible nesting opportunities, but none of these birds attempted to dig nest holes. During the summer smaller numbers continued to feed over the site. In the autumn small numbers were seen on passage, with the largest count being 10+ with other hirundines on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

**A reasonably common summer visitor in small numbers.**

The first were 2 seen over the site on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. During the summer months only singles were seen, but numbers increased to small flocks of up to 10+ in August and September.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

**A common summer visitor. 1+ pairs bred nearby.**

The first was seen flying north over the site on April 4<sup>th</sup>. By April 11<sup>th</sup> there were 6 feeding around the largest pond. At least one pair took up residence in the stables nearby and it is thought that these bred. In early July a brood of 4-5 juveniles was feeding over the site and on July 17<sup>th</sup> a flock of around 20 swallows was seen emerging from a roost in the reeds surrounding one of the smaller ponds. Later that morning a flock of 40+ swallows was feeding over the site, accompanied by a few sand martins. The last were 3 feeding over the site on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

**A scarce autumn passage migrant.**

One flew up from the grass at the southern end on August 16<sup>th</sup> and flew off east. 1 flew over the site on August 29<sup>th</sup>.



MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

**A common winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Small numbers were usually present in the open grassy areas between January and March. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> a flock of 5 flew high north over the site. These may have been migrants returning to northern breeding grounds. Surprisingly none bred at the site but from the end of the summer small numbers returned and the highest winter count was of 23 present on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

**An uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.**

1 was seen flying over the ponds in January. 1 flew over on August 29<sup>th</sup>. 1 flew over the site and landed on the gravel workings on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima*

**A scarce passage migrant.**

2 flew over the site and they may have landed to feed on August 29<sup>th</sup>. 1 flew over the site on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

**A common resident and visitor. 1+ pairs bred nearby.**

From the beginning of the year up to 6 were regularly on the grass and around the largest pond. Juveniles appeared in the summer and it is thought that a pair bred in the old farm buildings.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

**A common resident. 8+ pairs bred.**

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

**A common resident. 6+ pairs bred.**

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

**A common resident. 8+ pairs**

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

**A scarce autumn migrant**

One was with 3 stonechats, feeding along the fence line by the ponds on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

**A common winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.**

In January and February a wintering pair was present, often along the fence posts to the new paths, along the edge of the ponds. The first returning birds in autumn were 3 juveniles associating together on September 5<sup>th</sup>. On October 10<sup>th</sup> a pair was present by the ponds and a single male was using the fields at the northern end of the site. The pair

remained in November and, in December, a second pair took up residence. Therefore the year ended with 2 pairs and a single male wintering at the site.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

**A scarce autumn migrant**

One was feeding along the fence line by the ponds on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

**A common resident. 5+ pairs bred.**

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

**A scarce winter visitor.**

3 were sitting in the isolated oak trees beside the largest pond on January 8<sup>th</sup>.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

**An uncommon winter visitor.**

2 were ringed in the woodland in January. 4 flew over the site on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

**A common resident in small numbers. 3 pairs bred.**

In the spring 3 males held territories along the woodland. In the summer juveniles were seen and a recently fledged juvenile was ringed in July, which is likely to have come out of a nest at the site.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

**A reasonably common visitor. 1 pair bred nearby.**

One or two were often present. In late summer a flock of 3 included at least one juvenile.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

**A scarce autumn passage migrant.**

One was caught and ringed on August 29<sup>th</sup>.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

**A scarce autumn passage migrant.**

None were found in the spring or summer. However, one was feeding in the reeds around the southernmost pond on August 16<sup>th</sup>. Then one was caught and ringed on August 29<sup>th</sup>. As the reeds thicken up around some of the smaller ponds, it is likely reed warbler will soon become a breeding species at the site.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

**A reasonably common summer visitor and passage migrant. 1-2 pairs bred.**

From May 2<sup>nd</sup> a male held territory on the scrubby edge of the woodland. From May 28<sup>th</sup> a second male held territory in the hedge towards the north of the site. The first territory

led to successful nesting, as adults were seen carrying food in early July and a recently fledged juvenile was ringed later there that month. It is not known if breeding took place in the second territory. Several were seen on autumn passage.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

**A scarce autumn passage migrant.**

One was caught and ringed on August 29<sup>th</sup>.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

**A common summer visitor and passage migrant. 3 pairs bred.**

In the spring 3 singing males were heard and in July an adult female with a brood patch was caught and ringed. 2 passage migrants were caught and ringed at the end of August.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

**A common summer visitor and passage migrant in small numbers. 3 pairs bred**

In the spring 3 singing males were heard. Several individuals were seen passing through the site in autumn.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

**A scarce spring passage migrant and reasonably common autumn passage migrant.**

2 males were present on April 9<sup>th</sup>, then none were found until August 16<sup>th</sup>, when several willow warblers were passing through the woodland. 2 were caught and ringed on August 29<sup>th</sup>.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

**A reasonably common resident and wintering species in small numbers. 1 pair bred.**

5 were ringed in the woodland on January 8<sup>th</sup>. In the spring there were occasional sightings at the northern end of the site and it was there in August that a family group was seen. 2 were ringed in the woodland on December 16<sup>th</sup>.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

**A reasonably common resident and wintering species in small numbers. 1 pair bred.**

One was seen on January 8<sup>th</sup>. In May and June a male was singing in likely breeding habitat and on July 7<sup>th</sup> 3+ firecrests were seen there, suggesting that breeding was successful. In December a female was ringed at the southern end of the site.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*

**A reasonably common resident and wintering species in small numbers. 1 pair**

**possibly bred.** From January a male was singing in likely breeding habitat. Outside of the breeding season ones and twos were seen and heard.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes cearuleus*

**A common resident and visitor. 4+ pairs bred.**



GREAT TIT *Parus major*

**A common resident and visitor. 3+ pairs bred.**

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

**A common resident and visitor. 2 pairs bred.**

12 were ringed together on January 8<sup>th</sup>.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

**An uncommon resident and visitor. 1 pair possibly bred.**

Nuthatches were often heard in the woodland at the southern end. A male was singing there in the spring. In December 1 was seen at the northern end of the site.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

**An uncommon visitor.**

2 were with a tit flock moving through the woodland at the northern end of the site on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

**An uncommon resident or visitor.**

The first was not found until October with further sightings of single jays in November and December.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

**A common resident and visitor. 1 pair probably bred nearby.**

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

**A common resident and visitor. 1 pair bred.**

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

**A common visitor. Some probably bred nearby.**

JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*

**A common visitor. Some bred nearby.**

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

**An scarce visitor.**

4 flew over the southern end of the site on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

**A common resident and visitor. 2+ pairs bred.**

Small flocks were often feeding on the ground in the winter months. 2 nests in tree holes were found in the spring.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

**A common resident nearby and a common visitor. Some bred nearby.**

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

**A common resident and visitor in small numbers. 1 pair probably bred.**

The majority of sightings and singing heard came from the northern end of the site.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

**A common resident and visitor in small numbers. 1 pair bred.**

A pair was regularly observed at the northern end of the site and in August a nest site was found. Outside of the breeding season there were regular sightings of small numbers using the northern end, with the highest count being of a flock of 5 there on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

**A common resident and visitor. 1 pair probably bred.**

Always present, with the largest count of 50+ on October 10<sup>th</sup>, when they were feeding on thistles beside the ponds. It is interesting that this flock occurred on the same date as a large flock of linnets (see below under Linnet) and it may be that these were migrants.

LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

**A reasonably common visitor in small numbers.**

Small flocks and individuals were often seen flying over the site and coming down to drink from puddles. However, on the morning of October 10<sup>th</sup>, a flock of 50+ were seen coming out of a roost in a hedgerow at the south western end of the site. It is likely this was a migrant flock (northern populations of linnets often move south to winter in Spain).

SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

**A scarce winter visitor.**

2 flew east over the site on October 10<sup>th</sup>. This date was productive for migrant finches (see above under Linnet and Goldfinch).

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**A common resident and visitor in small numbers. 1 pair probably bred.**

A pair was present in the woodland and a male was heard singing in the spring. Individuals and pairs were seen and heard at the southern end and at the northern end throughout the winter months.

REDPOLL (Lesser Redpoll) *Acanthis cabaret*

**A scarce winter visitor.**

One flew over the site on January 8<sup>th</sup> and one was in the silver birches at the southern end of the site on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

## BIRD RINGING REPORT



Grasshopper warbler



Firecrest

71 birds of 19 species were ringed. Birds were caught by the use of mist nets. 5 Ringing sessions were carried out, covering all of the seasons. Among the birds ringed there were some of particular note, such as kingfisher (a key wetland species), grasshopper warbler (a scarce migrant) and firecrest (an uncommon breeding and wintering species).

### BIRD RINGING TOTALS

SPECIES	NUMBER RINGED
Kingfisher	1
Redwing	2
Song Thrush	1
Blackbird	1
Robin	3
Dunnock	5
Wren	6
Reed Warbler	1
Grasshopper Warbler	1
Blackcap	3
Garden Warbler	1
Whitethroat	2
Willow Warbler	2
Chiffchaff	1
Goldcrest	7
Firecrest	1
Great Tit	8
Blue Tit	13
Long-tailed Tit	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>

## **OTHER WILDLIFE**

MAMMALS: fox, badger, rabbit, roe deer and munjac were all recorded. The highest count of roe deer was 8 on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

BUTTERFLIES: meadows brown (in large numbers), gate keeper, dark-green fritillary, marbled white, large white, small skipper, holly blue.

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES: blue-tailed damselfly, azure damselfly, ruddy darter, broad-bodied chaser, golden-ringed dragonfly, emperor dragonfly, common hawkler, southern hawkler.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many of the smaller ponds have very steep sides, thus limiting access for wading birds and limiting the wetland vegetation. Would it be possible to make the western banks of some of the ponds shallower ?

There have been suggestions for a tern raft to be installed on the largest pond. In my opinion this would be a waste of time and resources. No terns were recorded during the survey. However, the suggestion to build a sand martin nesting bank is an excellent idea and, if correctly positioned on the western side of one of the ponds with the nest holes facing east, it would quickly be colonised by martins.

Several of the farm fields have been planted with Elephant Grass for use as a bio-fuel. Unfortunately this non-native tall grass is rapidly spreading across parts of the site and it was noticed growing on the western side of the second pond up from the southern end. There is the worry that seeds or rhizomes will enter the water course and end up colonising the Danes Stream and the Pleasure Grounds, which would be an environmental disaster.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **REFERENCES**

- Hampshire Ornithological Society – *Bird Report 2020* - published in 2021 containing the most up to date data on the county's birds.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

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