

THE PANS WETLANDS KEYHAVEN, HAMPSHIRE BIRD RINGING REPORT 2020



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Photographs (from top left to bottom right): Firecrest, Kingfisher, Grasshopper Warbler and Yellow Wagtail.

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INTRODUCTION: The report covers the second full year of bird ringing at the site. Unfortunately there was an interruption in activities, caused by the national Covid Lockdown in the spring, but ringing was carried out for most of the rest of the year. Heavy winter flooding made it difficult to attempt any netting of waders.

383 birds of 27 species were ringed. The totals included some key resident and migrant species, such as kingfisher, yellow wagtail, Cetti's warbler, grasshopper warbler, firecrest, bearded reedling and reed bunting.

BIRD RINGING TOTALS 2020

SPECIES	CHICKS	FULLY GROWN	TOTAL
Sparrowhawk		1	1
Kingfisher		9	9
Sand Martin		44	44
Swallow	5	95	100
Yellow Wagtail		50	50
Wren		1	1
Dunnock		3	3
Robin		5	5
Stonechat		3	3
Cetti's Warbler		2	2
Grasshopper Warbler		5	5
Sedge Warbler		25	25
Reed Warbler		40	40
Whitethroat		5	5
Garden Warbler		1	1
Blackcap		3	3
Chiffchaff		16	16
Willow Warbler		15	15
Goldcrest		6	6
Firecrest		1	1
Blue Tit		13	13
Great Tit		6	6
Greenfinch		6	6
Goldfinch		1	1
Linnet		8	8
Bullfinch		1	1
Reed Bunting		3	3
TOTAL	5	378	383

RINGING RESULTS

Birds ringed at the site last year or earlier this year were re-caught (identified by their unique ring numbers), giving good information on survival rates and, in some cases, their migrations. A selection of the most interesting of these appears below.

AVOCET (Yellow Flag AJ): A colour-ringed avocet was photographed at the site in May this year by Chris Barrass. It had been ringed as a chick at Needs Ore (Beaulieu) in May 2018 and subsequently seen wintering at Poole Harbour in Dorset and summering at Pennington Marshes.

KINGFISHER: Between July and November, 9 kingfishers were ringed and 3 of these were re-caught later during the same period. A full analysis of these birds appears on Page 4.

REED WARBLER (AED4378): Ringed at The Pans as a breeding adult male on 22.06.19, re-caught breeding back at the site on 07.07.20.

REED WARBLER (AKB6051): Ringed at The Pans as a breeding adult male on 23.07.19, re-caught breeding back at the site on 07.07.20.

REED WARBLER (APJ9066): Ringed at The Pans as a juvenile on 08.08.19, re-caught back at the site as a breeding adult male on 07.07.20.

BEARDED REEDLING (AKB6015): An adult male, which was ringed at The Pans on 10.07.19 and thought to be breeding nearby, was re-caught at *Lytchett Bay, Poole Harbour in Dorset* on 17.07.20. It is not unusual for this species to roam in winter and to relocate to a different reedbed the following summer.

BEARDED REEDLING (AXK9589): A photograph of a small flock of bearded reedlings, taken from the Observatory by Chris Barrass on 22.11.20, revealed one male with a ring. The photograph was good enough for several numbers on the ring to be read and matched to a juvenile male, which had been ringed at the Southern End of The Pans on 07.07.20

GREENFINCH (TY08546): A juvenile male, ringed by Marcus Ward on the nearby Keyhaven Marshes on 12.07.20, was re-caught at the Southern End of The Pans on 23.11.20.

SPECIES REPORTS

During the year some species encountered stood out, either due to their rarity, their importance to the site or because of other factors. Accounts of these species appear below.

KINGFISHER: Following a settled summer, when breeding at local sites was productive, fully grown juvenile kingfishers began to appear at The Pans from July. No breeding takes place at the Pans, rather it is thought that these juveniles originate from nests further up Avon Water or from streams in the New Forest. They head for the coast for the winter, because the coast offers milder conditions and less muddied waters than inland sites.

Between July and November, 9 kingfishers were ringed. 3 of these were re-caught, giving interesting information on weight gain. The increase in weight by each individual demonstrates how these young kingfishers can quickly perfect their fishing skills and how important The Pans and surrounding areas are to these birds. The tables below show the weight gains by 3 birds during the end of summer and autumn (all were caught and re-caught during the first part of the morning).

Ring Number: SB75162 juvenile male

DATE	PLACE	WEIGHT
07.07.20	Southern End	36.0
29.07.20	Northern End	37.2

Ring Number: SB75163 Juvenile female

DATE	PLACE	WEIGHT
29.07.20	Northern End	34.5
23.11.20	Southern End	40.1

Ring Number: SB75167 Juvenile female

DATE	PLACE	WEIGHT
05.09.20	Northern End	37.6
15.09.20	Northern End	37.7

HIRUNDINES: A pair of swallows successfully raised 2 broods in a garage at Vidle Van Farm. In the spring and autumn, migrant swallows, sand and house martins fed over the site and from July through to October varying numbers of swallows and sand martins used the reeds to roost in at night. The highest count was made on the evening of 20.07.20, when an estimated 1000 swallows and 100 sand martins were present.

Between July and August 3 roost catches were carried out, resulting in 94 swallows and 44 sand martins being ringed.

YELLOW WAGTAIL: Following reports of good breeding seasons in Wiltshire and Lincolnshire, more yellow wagtails than usual were seen along our coast at the end of the summer. This species sometimes uses the reeds at The Pans and those at Avon Water as a nocturnal roost, but in the past only small numbers have been observed.

A roost catch at the site on 31.08.20 produced a remarkable 50 yellow wagtails ringed, of which 95% were juveniles. That evening 2 flocks arrived to make an estimated combined count of 100+ yellow wagtails at the roost.

To put this into perspective, last summer the highest count was of 10 and only 1 was caught and ringed.

CETTI'S WARBLER: 2 fully grown juveniles were ringed during the second half of the summer. From listening to the territorial songs of the males, the numbers of territories at the site have increased from 2 last year to 3 this year.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER: Due to its skulking nature and its scarcity, this species often goes undetected. Therefore it was useful to again ring some this autumn. 5 fully grown juveniles were ringed at the Northern End of the site, 1 in July and 4 in September. Grasshopper warbler has for several decades been extinct at most former breeding sites in Hampshire. It is likely the birds ringed will have come from other parts of the UK or elsewhere in Northern Europe and were passing through our region, on their way to winter in Africa. The Pans and the wider valley of Avon Water appear to be an important stop-off point for this scarce species.

REED WARBLER: Heavy winter flooding and a defective drain left the reeds at the Southern End of The Pans in a poor state. Salt water entered from Keyhaven Harbour, killing off much of the reed growth in front of the Observatory. It was noticeable how much greener and lush the reeds were in summer at the Northern End and on the neighbouring Avon Water side. Several pairs of reed warbler will have been forced to avoid these areas of dead reed, where last year they successfully nested and fed.

I understand that the Environment Agency has looked at the problem, which is on the Keyhaven Harbour side, but only temporary measures have been put in place to improve the situation.

The healthy sections of the reeds were used a great deal by breeding and migratory reed warblers. During the summer and the autumn, 40 were ringed (11 adults and 29 juveniles), and several of last year's birds were re-caught back at the site this year (for details see *Ringing Results* on Page 3).

The fine spring and summer weather resulted in good numbers of Plum Aphids appearing on the reeds. This insect is an important food source for *Acrocephalus* warblers. In recent years, poor springs or wet summers have led to the aphids not being present in any numbers.

SEDGE WARBLER: Only 1 pair of Sedge Warblers breeds at the site, but in late summer into the early autumn reedbeds in Southern England are very important for this species, as sites where they can fatten up, prior to flying non-stop to Southern France or Northern Spain. The Pans offers good habitat for these passage migrants, particularly this year, when a high number of aphids were present on the reeds (see the reference above under the heading *Reed Warbler*).

FIRECREST: This species is no longer the rarity that it was, but firecrests only sporadically occur at the site and most people do not see them, therefore any record is still of note. In October a male was ringed at the Southern End of The Pans, which is the same time and place where 2 were ringed last year. A photograph of the bird appears on the front cover of this report. Firecrests seen at Keyhaven are likely to be birds moving off the New Forest, looking for warmer wintering sites, or from Northern France or Belgium, from where we know some small birds come in the autumn.

BEARDED REEDLING: The Lockdown restrictions made it difficult to cover the full breeding season and it is possible that some valuable information on numbers of breeding pairs was lost. However, in July an adult pair with 2 juveniles was ringed near the Observatory. On the same day, the same birds were seen in the company of a 3rd juvenile. It is assumed that the pair had bred nearby.

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All ringing activities were carried out under the necessary BTO and NE licenses.

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