

STURT POND

Milford-on-Sea



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BIRD SURVEY AND RINGING REPORT

September 2019 to September 2020

Produced for Milford Conservation Volunteers

By

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INTRODUCTION

The Reserve extends from Milford-on-Sea to Hurst Spit and includes scrub, hedgerow, small pieces of woodland, grazed grassland, large areas of reedbed, saltmarsh, a stream and an extensive tidal saline lagoon called Sturt Pond. The whole area covers 11 Ha and the majority of the Reserve is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The Reserve is owned and managed by New Forest District Council. A public footpath runs along the eastern and southern sides, and in 2009 the Milford Conservation Volunteers (MCV) erected an excellent bird watching hide in the south west part of the Reserve. MCV maintain the hide and it is open to the public. A wader scrape was also created in front of the hide, which has enhanced the habitat for birds.

In 2002, prior to the hide being built, MCV commissioned a year long bird survey (*Sturt Pond Bird Survey and Bird Ringing Report 2002-03 by Graham Giddens*). MCV commissioned another year long bird survey, running from September 2019 to September 2020, and this survey report contains the results of data gathered from observational and bird ringing visits made during that period.

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 Virus, the government implemented restrictions on social interaction and movement from late March to early May 2020. The bird survey was able to continue, but there were no visits to the Hide, no MCV observers and limited coverage by other bird watchers. The BTO also had to fall into line with government guidelines and therefore during this period all ringing activities were suspended. Although extra survey visits were made, there may have been some loss of data.

WEATHER DURING THE SURVEY PERIOD

The autumn of 2019 produced long spells of settled weather, making conditions ideal for summer migrants to leave and winter migrants to arrive. The winter saw a lot of wet and windy weather, with only a few hard frosts and no prolonged cold spells. Met' Office statistics released at the end of the winter declared that the winter of 2019-2020 was the second mildest on record. On at least two occasions during the high tide the footpaths and the Marsh in front of the Hide were completely submerged.

In March the water levels returned to normal as an extended period of dry weather lasted well into the summer. The rest of the summer was characterised by long spells of fine weather, which will have greatly aided the breeding birds. However, 2 weeks of wind and rain towards the end of August made life difficult for migrant birds and for bird watchers.

SURVEY TECHNIQUES

Mist netting sessions were carried out throughout the year in the area in front of the bird hide, covering the saltmarsh, reedbed and scrub habitats. In order to fully survey waders using the site and to survey for owls, some of the sessions took place at night. The whole site was walked at times to cover all seasons and many hours were spent watching from the hide. To survey wintering waders, in particular snipe, the saltmarsh in front of the hide was walked at dawn once a month.

In order to fully survey the breeding birds, dawn visits were made, two in April and one in May. The site was walked from north to south and back again, along with the area in front of the hide. 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 presence as a breeding species, as opposed to being a visitor or passage migrant.

In some cases it was difficult to assess whether the presence of a singing male had led to breeding success. Plus it was difficult to access some of the habitat in the middle and areas of the north western side of the site. For some species it was impossible to accurately say how many pairs bred, but often it was possible to state the exact 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 private gardens which border the Reserve.

A good deal of information was gleaned from other observers, who reported their sightings in the Hide Logbook, on the website *goingbirding*, or directly to me.

LIST OF OBSERVERS

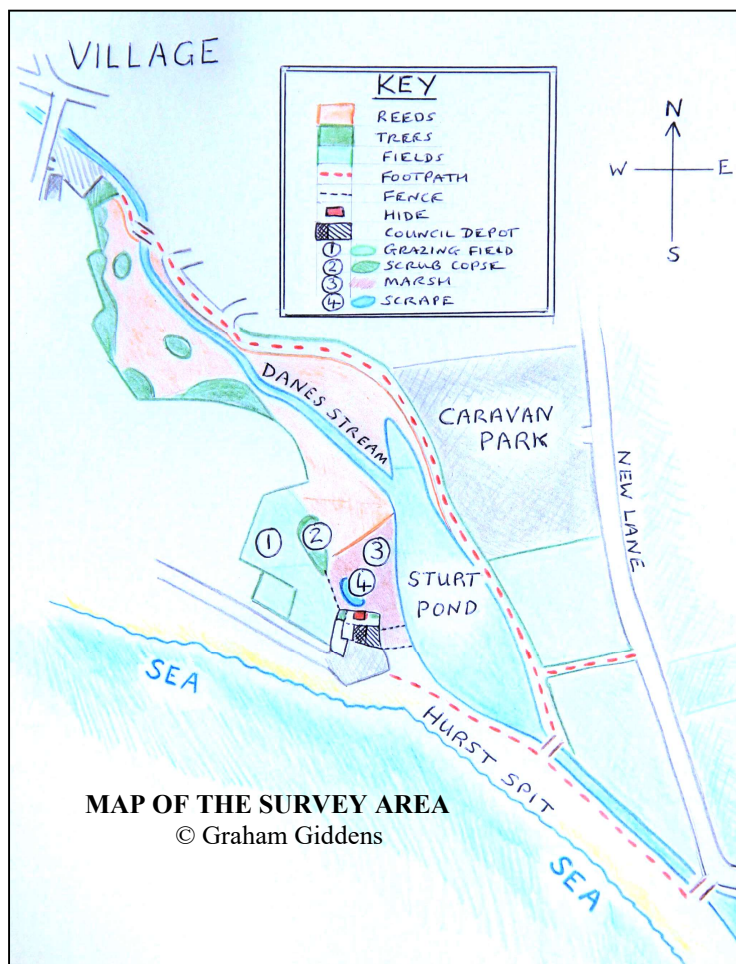
CB = Chris Barrass (MCV Member and photographer)
KB = Keith Betton (HOS County Recorder)
TB = Tony Blakeley (MCV Member)
SK = Steve Keen (local bird watcher)
KM = Keith Metcalf (MCV Conservation Officer)
MM = Marc Moody (local bird watcher)
E & TR = Eric and Tani Read (MCV Members)
AT = Andy Tew (local bird watcher and photographer)
UC = Unidentified Contributor to the logbook in the Hide

RECORDS FROM THE HIDE LOGBOOK

Although the open to all aspect of the hide is wonderful, there have been a few negatives. Non-bird watchers have left undesirable drawings and irrelevant comments in the logbook. Some fanciful species have also appeared in the logbook, presumably reported by inexperienced observers. Therefore the likes of Hooded Merganser (changed in the logbook to Red-breasted Merganser, but the correct species was actually Goosander), Shags (undoubtedly Cormorants), Sandpiper (which one ?), Tree Sparrow (presumably House Sparrow), water vole (presumably rat) and field mouse (there is no such species) have all had to be ignored.

It was also difficult to know if the one or two Yellow-legged Gulls reported were correctly identified. No age or description was given for these birds. Adult Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls can be relatively easily separated by an experienced observer. However, some adults seen at distance or in poor light (both species have grey backs and yellow legs) and certainly most juveniles are sometimes tricky to separate. Both species only occasionally occur at Sturt Pond and this summer a hybrid was present, therefore I would suggest that in future observers always state the age of the bird seen and give a brief description.

Sadly, following government edicts to protect people from the C-19 Virus, the hide had to be closed from late March to the end of the survey period. Therefore there were no observational records from the hide for the last 5 months of the survey.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

113 bird species were found during the survey year, not including feral pigeon or the hybrid gull, and 26 of these bred at the site. 215 birds of 24 species were ringed (see the Ringing Report on Page 27).

KEY SPECIES FOUND DURING THE SURVEY

- BRENT GOOSE – a regular wintering species with daily counts of up to 400.
TEAL – a regular wintering species with daily counts of 100+.
GOOSEANDER – a scarce autumn visitor with up to 4 seen.
MARSH HARRIER – a scarce visitor. 2 individuals seen hunting over the site.
WATER RAIL – a resident and wintering species. 2 territories during the summer.
JACK SNIPE – a scarce winter species. 2 were seen.
SNIPE – a common winter visitor with up to 20 present.
BLACK-TAILED GODWIT – a common wintering species with up to 300 present.
BLACK-HEADED GULL – a common visitor with a peak count of 750.
COMMON TERN – a common summer visitor in small numbers.
KINGFISHER – a common winter visitor in small numbers. 3 individuals identified.
WRYNECK – a rare autumn passage migrant. 1 seen in October.
TREE PIPIT – a scarce autumn migrant. 2 were ringed and 1 seen in August 2020.
MEADOW PIPIT – Present throughout the year with large flocks of 100+ present in autumn, likely to be passage migrants.
YELLOW WAGTAIL – a reasonably common autumn migrant in small numbers.
REDSTART – a rare passage migrant. 1 was present in early November and it was a first for the site (MCV records).
BLACK REDSTART – a scarce autumn migrant. 2 were present from late October to early November.
WHINCHAT – a scarce autumn passage migrant. A few were seen in September.
STONECHAT – a common passage migrant and wintering species. Up to 8 seen in September.
WHEATEAR – a relatively common passage migrant with 9 seen in autumn and 1 in spring.
GRASSHOPPER WARBLER – a scarce passage migrant. 4 were ringed.
REED WARBLER – a common breeding species and passage migrant. 8 pairs bred.
SEDGE WARBLER – a common autumn passage migrant.
BEARDED REEDLING – a scarce autumn visitor in small numbers.
LINNET – a common resident and passage migrant. 4 pairs bred.
REED BUNTING – a common resident and winter visitor in small numbers. 2 pairs bred.

FULL LIST OF BIRDS FOUND DURING THE SURVEY YEAR

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

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

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A common wintering species.

During the winter 2 were resident where the Danes Stream meets Sturt Pond. However, from April they were absent and no breeding took place. The first little grebes seen in autumn were 2 adults on 23.08.20.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

A common visitor.

There were daily visits in winter from 3 – 4 birds, most of which were adults. By late April and into the early summer the numbers dropped to 1-2 birds, all of which were younger non-breeders. In the second half of summer a mixture of adults and younger birds were seen.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

A common visitor.

Between 2 and 3 little egrets were present most days. The maximum count was of 4 flying in together at dawn on 05.10.19.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

A common visitor in small numbers.

An adult was usually present with the occasional younger bird also in the vicinity. The highest count was of a flock of 10 which flew over, heading west on 31.08.20. These are likely to have been young birds dispersing west for the winter.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

A common resident and winter visitor. No breeding took place.

Winter numbers peaked at 26 on 09.02.20 (KM). In spring and summer fewer swans were present, with only 10 in May and June (a mixture of 2nd and 3rd years).

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

An uncommon and irregular visitor throughout the year.

Although a very common species at nearby sites, there were surprisingly few sightings of Canada Geese at Sturt Pond. In the winter the highest count was of 12 on 18.01.20 (UC). In the spring and summer a pair was resident but they did not breed.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

A common winter visitor, sometimes in large numbers.

All of the sightings relate to Russian dark-bellied Brent geese. Although some of the other races have been seen at Sturt Pond in previous years, none were seen during the survey period. Brent geese use the Pond daily from October to March. A list of the highest counts appears below:

- 2 on 05.10.19 (GG) the first returning birds.
- 148 on 03.11.19 (KM)
- 412 on 04.11.19 (GG)
- 500 (estimated) on 04.12.19 (UC)
- 192 on 22.12.19 (GG)
- 2 on 03.04.19 (GG) the last of the spring

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

A sporadic visitor, mainly found in winter and spring.

Shelduck were surprisingly irregular visitors to the site. A few were recorded during the winter months. Between April and July a pair took up residence on the Pond and they were regularly seen on the Marsh and the Scrape. On 23.08.20, 6 fully grown juveniles were loafing on the low tide mud of the Pond. These would have come in from elsewhere, but it was good to see a reasonable number of fledged juveniles.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegytiacus*

A rare visitor.

2 were present on 17.01.20 (UC). A pair was on the Pond on 17.05.20 (GG).

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

An uncommon winter visitor in small numbers.

Small numbers of wigeon were occasionally found loafing and feeding on the western side of the Pond in the main winter months. All sightings involved less than 8 birds.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

A scarce winter visitor.

In recent years this species has occasionally appeared at Sturt Pond in autumn and winter. This year, there was only one record of 4 seen on 25.11.19 (MM).

TEAL *Anas crecca*

A very common winter visitor.

This species was by far the most numerous wintering duck. Teal fed and loafed on the Danes Stream, on the western side of the Pond, the 'Ledge', the Marsh and the Scrape. The highest counts are listed below:

- 5 on 01.09.19 (GG)
- 127 on 21.10.19 (GG)
- 76 on 26.10.19 (KM)
- 141 on 25.11.19 (MM)
- 81 on 22.12.19 (GG)
- 45 on 25.01.20 (KM)
- 107 on 02.02.20 (UC)
- 41 on 12.02.20 (KM)
- 25 on 23.03.20 (GG)
- 25 on 03.04.20 (GG)
- 2 on 19.04.20 (GG) the last of the spring.
- 5 on 16.08.20 (GG) the first of the autumn.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

A common resident and winter visitor. 1+ pair bred.

The highest winter counts were of 32 on several dates in December and January. In the spring numbers dropped to only 5 in late March and 10 in April. By June the non-breeders and failed breeders assembled to moult and the following counts were made:

- 63 on 07.06.20
- 84 on 22.06.20 (the total included a female with 2 half-grown ducklings)
- 104 on 02.08.20

POCHARD *Aythya farina*

A rare spring visitor.

A drake landed briefly on the pond on 04.05.20 (MM). It was a first record for the site.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

An reasonably common winter visitor in small numbers.

An adult male was regularly fishing in Sturt Pond during January and February 2020.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

A scarce autumn visitor.

3 'redhead' (female or juvenile) goosanders were present from early September into October. These were the first goosanders to be recorded at the site. They fished in Sturt Pond and loafed on the western edges. They were also seen at various other local sites. Later in October 4 were seen. It is not known if these were different birds to the original

group of 3. Then in the autumn of 2020 a single redhead was present on the Pond. The relevant sightings are listed below:

- 3 on 04.09.19 (KM) loafing on the 'ledge' (western side of the Pond).
- 3 on 03.10.19 (CB).
- 4 on 25 and 26.10.19 (KM)
- 3 on 04.11.19 (GG) flying west.
- 1 on 23.08.20 (GG).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

[A rare visitor.](#)

Red kites were seen on 2 occasions:

- 1 was seen flying over, heading north east, on 16.11.19 (KM and CB).
- 3 drifted over the north end of the site and over Milford Village on 09.05.20 (VS *et al*).

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

[A rare visitor.](#)

On 24.05.20 an adult male was hunting over the reeds and was seen to catch what was believed to be a water rail (MM). On 16.07.20 a fully grown juvenile female was hunting over the reeds. Then it headed east (GG).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

[A common visitor throughout the year.](#)

During the autumn and early winter a first-winter female was a daily visitor to the Scrub Copse, Marsh and even sometimes around the hide, where it hunted a variety of birds. In October it was seen making a serious attempt to catch a teal and the plucked remains of a snipe were found beneath its favourite perch in the Scrub Copse. During the autumn a first-winter male was also present on 01.09.19. An adult male was photographed with a starling in its talons, fighting with a carrion crow on 05.11.19 (AT). Therefore there were at least 3 different sparrowhawks using the site in the latter part of 2019.

In the spring a pair was observed flying high over the northern half of the site on 03.04.20 and the female made an attack on prey in a private garden. On the same day a second male also appeared, but it was soon chased off by the male of the pair. On 12.04.20 a third year male was seen perched in the tall trees in the north western end of the site. On 27.04.20 a second year male was hunting along the western side. These observations further demonstrate that the site attracts several sparrowhawks.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

[An uncommon visitor, usually only seen flying over.](#)

In the autumn of 2019 a single buzzard regularly roosted in the Scrub Copse and was seen over the site. This buzzard, or other individuals, was sometimes seen soaring high over the northern end of the site.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

A rare passage migrant.

1 was seen coming in off the sea on 26.04.20. It hovered over the Pond, but did not catch anything. It then headed north (MM).

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

An occasional visitor.

Single kestrels were sometimes seen hunting over the fields to the east of the Pond and occasionally flying over the site. For example a female flew north over the hide on 19.01.20.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

A scarce winter visitor.

There were only 2 records:

1 on 03.11.19 (UC), reported as a female, flying over.

1 on 30.11.19 (KM), flying over.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

A scarce autumn visitor.

1 flew low over the Marsh and reeds, hunting hirundines on 15.09.19 (GG).

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

An occasional visitor.

There were occasional records relating to single peregrines flying high over the Reserve, but on 19.09.19 a young male attempted to catch a black-headed gull beside the Pond (GG *et al*). Then on 02.10.19 and 25.02.20 a young male was actively hunting feral pigeons over the northern end of the site (GG *et al*). An adult male flew from Milford Village, over the Pond carrying a feral pigeon on 23.08.20 (GG & photographed).

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Common in small numbers.

A few were regularly seen and heard, mostly on the western edges of the site, but occasionally also on the fields to the east of the Pond.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Common in small numbers. 2 territories.

Water rails were sometimes seen from the hide, especially in winter, but more usually their presence was noted by their calls. 2 territories were found during the breeding season, indicating that 2 pairs bred.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

A common resident and winter visitor. 2 pairs bred.

During the winter 4 adults and up to 3 juvenile moorhens were present. In the spring 2 pairs had territories, one near the mouth of the Danes Stream and another on the Stream at the Village end. In June the pair at the mouth of the Danes Stream was seen feeding a chick.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

A common visitor in small numbers.

2 oystercatchers were daily visitors to the Pond and to the fields on the eastern side of the Pond. The highest counts occurred during the winter months and the 3 highest counts are listed below:

- 17 on 08.01.20 (KM)
- 15 on 10.01.20 (KM)
- 18 on 31.01.20 (UC)

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

An occasional winter visitor in small numbers.

The low tide mud, where the Danes Stream joins the Pond, is a favoured place for this species to feed and rest. 1 or 2 ringed plovers used that area on occasion throughout the autumn and winter, for example 2 adults on 17.09.19 (GG *et al*) and 2 fully grown juveniles on 26.08.20 (GG).

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

A rare winter visitor.

2 were sitting with lapwings on the field to the south east of the pond on 19.09.19 (GG) and 1 flew west over the Pond on 22.12.20 (GG).

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

An occasional winter visitor in very small numbers.

The low tide mud, where the Danes Stream joins the Pond, and on the western side are favoured places in winter for this species to feed. However, only occasional single grey plovers were seen.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

A common winter visitor.

This species was commonly present from autumn through the winter and into the spring. Lapwings primarily used the western side of the Pond and the Marsh as a loafing area during the day. The highest counts are listed below:

- 8 on 17.09.19 (GG)
- 10 on 21.10.19 (GG)
- 25 on 22.12.19 (GG)
- 41 on 19.01.20 (GG)

- 30+ on 16.08.20 (GG, VS and DS)
- 9 on 26.08.20 (GG)

None were found during the summer months. The first returning lapwing in the autumn was a juvenile on 02.08.20.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

An uncommon autumn and winter visitor.

The low tide mud around the Pond occasionally attracted small flocks of dunlin, for example 20 seen on 17.09.19 (GG *et al*).

JACK SNIBE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

A scarce but regular winter visitor, whose presence is probably under recorded.

- One was seen on the western edge of the Pond on 24.11.19 (SK)
- One was present in the Marsh, along with 5 common snipe, on 02.12.19 (GG).

SNIBE *Gallinago gallinago*

A common winter visitor, but in much reduced numbers when compared with previous years.

During the previous bird survey in 2002-2003, 14 snipe were ringed and there were daily counts in winter of 20-30+. Efforts were made to ring snipe during this year's survey, but only one was caught. On several occasions incorrect weather forecasts led to windy and rainy conditions, which ruined any chance of mist netting snipe. On the few occasions when the weather was good enough, very few snipe arrived in the Marsh.

Observations at the nearby Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes during the same winter months showed that high numbers of snipe were often present. However, snipe did not use the Marsh at Sturt Pond in the numbers that they have in previous winters. The drop in numbers might be explained by the daily presence of one or more sparrowhawks.

During the autumn and first part of the winter, every morning a female sparrowhawk hunted the Scrub Copse and Marsh areas in front of the hide. On one occasion the hawk made a serious and narrowly unsuccessful attempt to take a teal. On another occasion the plucked remains of a snipe were found in the Scrubby Copse. It seems likely that the snipe were aware of the danger posed by the hawk, forcing them to move to other marshes that were less heavily predated.

The table on the next page shows the highest day counts made each month from the autumn of 2019, through the winter, into the spring of 2020. Observations were made at dawn, when the entire marsh was walked. There were no higher numbers reported in the logbook at the hide, therefore it is felt that these counts represent a true indication of the maximum numbers present.

MONTH	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Max COUNT	0	2	20	5	3	4	1	0

The first returning bird in the autumn of 2020 was seen on 31.08.20.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

A common visitor, mainly in winter.

This species uses the Pond to feed. Some impressive numbers were recorded during the main winter months. A list of the highest counts appears below:

- 6 on 17.09.19 (GG)
- 87 on 25.09.19 (UC)
- 163 on 28.09.19 (KM)
- 300+ on 04.10.19 (GG *et al*)
- 260+ on 10.10.19 (UC)
- 113 on 08.12.19 (KM)
- 4 on 23.03.20 (GG)
- 2 on 19.04.20 (GG)

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

A scarce winter visitor.

There were only a few sightings of this species and all sightings related to single birds seen during the winter and early spring.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

A scarce spring and autumn passage migrant.

There were only 2 records:

1 on 01.09.19 (GG) flying west.

1 on 12.04.20 (GG) landed briefly on the Pond.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

A common visitor.

The low tide mud attracted small numbers of redshank, mainly in winter. Up to 6 were present during the main part of the winter, dropping to just 2 in spring and often none during the summer months. From August 2020, 2 redshank were regularly feeding on the western edge of the Pond at low tide.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

A sporadic visitor, mainly in autumn and winter.

A wintering greenshank was regularly seen feeding in the stream around Cut Bridge, but sightings within the study area were limited to those listed below:

- 1 on the Pond on 15.09.19 (GG).

- 1 regularly throughout most of September and October (GG and CB) feeding on the Scrape and Marsh.
- 2 were on the Pond on 19.04.20 (MM).
- 1 on the Pond on 02.08.20 (GG).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

A rare autumn passage migrant.

There were only 2 records:

- 1 on the Scrape on 29.09.19 (CB).
- 1 came off the Pond and flew west on 16.08.20 (GG).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

An uncommon passage migrant.

There were 4 records, all from the Pond:

- 1 on 19.04.20 (GG)
- 1 on 16.08.20 (MM)
- 1 on 23.08.20 (GG)
- 1 on 27.08.20 (GG)

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

A common winter visitor.

The Pond at low tide offers good feeding opportunities for this species. The winter flocks numbered 20-30 birds. In spring a single male in full summer plumage was present on 27.04.20 (GG). A colour-ringed turnstone from Norway returned for the 7th time in autumn 2019 and for the 8th time in autumn 2020 to winter in the area (for details see the Ringing Report on Page 28).

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A rare passage migrant.

3 flew east over the Pond on 26.04.20 (MM).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL (*Larus*) *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

A common winter visitor in small numbers and a common passage migrant, sometimes in large numbers.

Typically between 1 and 6 Mediterranean gulls were often present on the Pond throughout the winter months, but in the autumn of 2019 and, to a lesser extent, in the spring of 2020 some much larger numbers were seen. These sightings relate to the migrant population that moves between southern Europe and breeding sites in north east France, Belgium and Poland. During these times 2 colour-ringed birds were seen by KB, one originating from France and the other from Belgium (for details, see the Ringing Report on Page 28). A list of the highest counts appears below:

- 50+ on 11.10.19 (SK)

- 170 on 19.10.19 (KB)
- 154 on 20.10.19 (SK)
- 87 on 30.10.19 (KM)
- 50+ on 12 and 19.04.19 (GG)

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*

A scarce passage migrant.

At least 3 were definitely seen, a few others were reported, but the full details could not be pinned down. The details of the known sightings are listed below:

- 1 in October 2019 (MM), exact date not known.
- 1 in early November (MM), exact date not known.
- 1 on 19.04.20 (GG), an adult flying over.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus*) *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

A common visitor, which bred in large numbers not far away.

Black headed gulls come onto the Pond at dawn each day and then disperse. Throughout the day varying numbers then use the Pond and the Marsh to feed and roost. Some high counts were recorded and are listed below:

- 212 on 03.10.19 (KM)
- 229 on 04.11.19 (GG)
- 750 (estimate) on 14.01.20 (SK)
- 446 on 23.03.19 (GG)
- 30 on 27.04.20 (GG)

The first fledged juveniles were seen on 10.07.20, when 4 were on the Pond. It is presumed that these all came from nests out on the nearby Keyhaven Marshes.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

A regular winter visitor in small numbers.

2 adults were regularly present during the main winter months and, on occasion, 1 or 2 juveniles were also present.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

A common visitor in small numbers. A pair raised 3 young on a roof in Milford Village.

A pair of adult great black-backed gulls were present daily throughout the year.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

A common visitor, which bred nearby.

An adult pair and several juveniles and sub-adults were regularly present on the Pond.

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

A rare visitor.

A first-winter Caspian Gull was seen and photographed on the Pond on 17.10.19 (SK).

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

A rare visitor.

An adult was on the Pond on 27.04.20 (GG)

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

A scarce visitor.

There were only 4 records, all of which are listed below:

- 1 on 03.01.20 (UC)
- 1 on 10.01.20 (KM)
- 1 adult on 25.02.20 (GG *et al*)
- 1 adult on 16.07.20 (GG, Vs & DS)

YELLOW-LEGGED x LESSER BLACK-BACKED Hybrid

A rare visitor.

A 2nd or 3rd year hybrid was seen and photographed on the Pond on 22.06.20 (GG). The identification was verified by MM. It was driven off by an adult Herring Gull and subsequently it took up residence in Keyhaven Harbour, where it was photographed (CB). The same bird was seen back on the pond on 16.07.20

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

A reasonably common summer visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.

The first of the spring flew over the Pond on 05.04.20 (E & TR). Most sightings were of one or two flying along Hurst Spit, but occasional birds also flew over the southern end of the Pond.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

A reasonably common summer visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.

During the summer up to 4 adults were regularly present, fishing the Pond and indulging in courtship feeding.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

An occasional summer visitor and passage migrant.

Single little terns were seen throughout the summer, but only once or twice a month.

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Common at the northern end of the site and around Milford Village.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

A reasonably regular visitor to the Marsh in small numbers, and often seen flying over.

2 were feeding on the Marsh on 01.09.19. 1 was feeding on the Marsh on 17.05.20. 1 was feeding on the Marsh on 16.08.20. 3 were feeding on the Marsh on 27.08.20. 4 were feeding there on 31.08.20.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

A common resident and visitor. 7+ pairs.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

A reasonably common visitor in small numbers at the northern end of the site and sometimes also on the Marsh.

Single adults were seen feeding around the Scrape on 08.05.20, 07.06.20 and 27.08.20.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Resident in small numbers, 1 territory.

Adults were heard calling at night and at dawn on the western side of the site. It is likely that a pair exists on that side of Milford-on-Sea.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

An occasional summer visitor, flying high over the site in small numbers.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

A common winter visitor in small numbers.

The Danes Stream, Sturt Pond and the Cut all offer good feeding habitat for this species. However, there is no suitable nesting site, therefore all sightings were outside the breeding season. During the autumn and winter 3 individuals were identified and the relevant sightings are listed below:

- An adult female seen throughout September and October (CB *et al*)
- A male was seen on 16.10.19 (UC)
- A first-winter female was ringed on 22.10.19 (GG)
- An adult female was seen on 22.12.19 (GG)
- A kingfisher was seen and heard around the Pond on 03.08.20 – the first of the autumn (GG, VS and DS).

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

A rare autumn passage migrant.

A superb find, 1 was seen from the hide on 16.10.19 (TB).

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

A regular visitor in small numbers.

1 or 2 were heard throughout the year at the northern end of the site.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopus major*

An occasional visitor in small numbers.

There were occasional sightings of this species at the northern end and the north western side of the site. 1 was seen from the hide on 14.10.19 (UC). 1 flew north over the Marsh on 31.08.20 (GG, DS and VS).

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

A reasonably common wintering and resident species, which bred nearby.

Individuals and small flocks often flew over the site in autumn and winter. Similar small numbers regularly fed in the fields to the east of the Pond and there were 2 singing males there in spring, but both held territories to the east of New Lane, outside of the survey area.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

A reasonably common passage migrant and summer visitor in small numbers.

During the summer small numbers were seen flying over the site. These are likely to have been birds from the Barton-on-Sea breeding colony. A few were also seen among the migrant flocks of swallows that flew over in the autumn.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

A reasonably common passage migrant, particularly in autumn.

The reeds were only used once by roosting swallows. A flock of 30+ swallows was seen exiting the reeds at dawn on 15.09.19. In September and October larger flocks flew over the site, and again in spring small numbers of returning migrants were seen.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

A passage migrant and summer visitor, which occasionally appeared in large numbers in autumn.

A few pairs bred just to the west of the site, therefore small numbers were frequently hawking for insects high above the Grazing Field. The largest counts occurred in the autumn and on 15.09.19 a flock of 500+ was feeding over the site (GG, VS & DS).

TREE PIPIT *Anthis trivialis*

A scarce autumn passage migrant.

2 juveniles were ringed on 27.08.20, the first to ever be ringed at the site. 1 briefly landed on the Scrub Copse on 31.08.20.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

A common resident in small numbers and passage migrant, sometimes in large numbers.

Some large flocks of migrant meadow pipits arrived in the autumn. It is difficult to know exactly how many birds were present, but on both 15.09.19 and 22.10.19 flocks of several hundred birds were attracted to the Grazing Field and to the Marsh. On these 2 days a total of 44 meadow pipits were ringed. It is likely that many of these originated from the north of the UK and Iceland. In March and April 2020 a male was regularly displaying around the Scrape, but no breeding took place.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

A common resident in small numbers, more common in winter, 1 pair probably bred nearby.

1 or 2 rock pipits were often seen in winter on the eastern and southern edges of the Pond. In spring and summer a male held a territory on Hurst Spit.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

An occasional autumn and winter visitor.

Single grey wagtails were heard flying over in autumn and winter. 1 was on the Scrape on 15.09.20 (GG). 3 flew east on 31.08.20 (GG, DS and VS).

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima*

An uncommon but regular autumn passage migrant.

All records are listed below:

- 2 flew over on 01.09.19 (GG)
- 2 were feeding on the mud by the Danes Stream on 15.09.19 (GG)
- 3 were feeding among the sheep in the field east of the pond on 17.09.19 (GG *et al*)
- 3 were feeding among the sheep in the field east of the Pond on 19.09.19 (GG *et al*)
- 1 flew over on 05.10.19 (GG)
- 7 flew over on 27.08.20 (GG, DS & VS)
- 4 flew over on 31.08.20 (GG, DS & VS)
- 16 flew over later on 31.08.20 (GG)

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

A common resident and occasional passage migrant, 1 pair bred.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba*

A scarce spring passage migrant.

A pair of pied wagtails was present throughout the year around the Depot, the Hide, the Scrape and the Marsh. This pair bred in the Depot. In autumn and winter varying numbers of other pied wagtails used other areas of the site, particularly the fields east of the Pond, the northern edge of Hurst Spit and the edges of the Pond. These would have been a mixture of wintering and passage migrants.

2 male white wagtails (the continental race of pied wagtail) were feeding on the field east of the Pond on 19.04.20 (GG).

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A common resident, 7 territories.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

A common resident, 7 territories.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

A common resident, 5 territories.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

A rare autumn passage migrant.

A female or first-winter common redstart was present from 02 to 04.11.19 (GG, KM, MM *et al*). This bird used the Depot and areas around the Hide much in the same way as the 2 black redstarts that were also present. It was a first record for the site.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

A scarce autumn visitor.

2 were present for a few days from the end of October to the beginning of November. The details of each sighting are listed below:

- 1 female/first-winter was feeding in the Caravan Park and eastern boundary of Sturt Pond on 28.10.19 (GG).
- 2 female/first winters were seen on the Greek restaurant and Depot buildings on 01.11.19 (SK).
- 2 females/first-winters were present around the Depot and Hide from 02 to 04.11.19 (GG, KM, MM *et al*). At the same time there was a female/first-winter common redstart also present.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

A scarce passage migrant.

A few were seen in the autumn. All records are listed below:

- 2 were seen from the hide on 01.09.19 (UC).
- 1 juvenile was with a flock of 8 stonechats, using the fence of the field to the east of the Pond on 19.09.19 (GG *et al*).

STONECHAT *Saxicola rubicola* (formerly *Saicola torquata*)

A reasonably common winter visitor and passage migrant.

During September and October 2019 there was evidence of juvenile dispersal and migrants passing through the site. At this time flocks of stonechats were observed feeding together and exhibiting no aggression For example:

- 3 seen together on 17.09.19 (GG *et al*)
- 5 seen together on 17.09.19 (GG *et al*)
- 8 seen together, along with a whinchat, on 19.09.19 (GG *et al*)
- 3 seen on 22.10.19 (CB)

From early November into 2020 a pair wintered, and were seen using the areas around the Hide and the Scrub Copse, along with the fence lines and gorse on the eastern side of the Pond. However, in early April only a single male remained. On 12.04.20 he was singing around the Hide, but no female was seen.

During the spring, evidence of returning migrants passing through the site came when flocks of stonechats were seen. For example:

- 6 seen together on 25.02.20 (GG *et al*) moving as a flock.

- 4 seen on 28.02.20 (UC)

No breeding took place at the site, but on 16.07.20 a fully grown juvenile was ringed. This bird was probably dispersing from the New Forest, Barton Cliffs or the Keyhaven Marshes, where pairs regularly breed. A month later it was re-caught at Keyhaven Marshes (see the Ringing Report on Page 28).

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

A reasonably common passage migrant, particularly in autumn.

There was a number of sightings, all of which are listed below:

- 5 on 01.09.19 (UC).
- 2 on 17.09.19 (GG *et al*) both in autumn/first-winter plumage.
- 1 on 19.09.19 (GG *et al*) in autumn/first-winter plumage.
- 1 on 24.10.19 (SK).
- 1 on 19.04.20 (GG) an adult female.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

A common resident, 8 territories.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

A rare winter visitor.

2 were in the trees at the north west end of the site on 21.10.19

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

A reasonably common resident, 2 territories, and a scarce autumn passage migrant.

Evidence of a possible Continental migrant came on 21.10.19, when a song thrush was seen arriving in off the sea, high up and calling. It flew north over the site and then dropped into a garden near Grebe Close, Milford-on-Sea.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

A common resident in small numbers, 2 territories, and uncommon autumn visitor.

There were 2 singing males present throughout the year (GG and KM), one of which was very mobile, covering a wide area from south of the footbridge, up to the northern end, including the edge of Milford Village. In the autumns of 2019 and 2020, 4 fully grown juveniles were ringed. These are thought to be either offspring from the resident pairs or birds dispersing from other sites. The details are listed below:

- 3 on 15.09.19, 2 first-winter females and 1 first-winter male
- 1 on 05.10.19, a first-winter female
- 1 on 27.08.20, a first-winter female
- 1 on 31.08.20, a first-winter female

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

A scarce autumn passage migrant.

4 were ringed, all were fully grown juveniles.

- 1 on 15.09.19
- 2 on 27.08.20
- 1 on 31.08.20

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

A common passage migrant, particularly in autumn.

Between July and August, 25 were ringed.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

A common summer visitor, 8 territories, and common passage migrant.

Reed warblers nested across the whole of the reedbed, including one pair at the northern end, close to Milford Village. Local juveniles were seen and ringed, along with a reasonable number of passage migrants.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

An uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant, 1 pair bred.

A pair nested in the scrub on the edge of the Grazing Field. A few passage migrants were ringed in the Scrub Copse.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

A common summer visitor and a common passage migrant in small numbers, 1 territory.

A male held a territory along the north west edge of the site and was singing there from the 12.04.20 to 07.06.20. It is not known if he attracted a mate, but the habitat seemed good for nesting.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

A common passage migrant, 1 territory.

During the autumn of 2019, 13 migrant chiffchaffs were ringed. In the spring a male held a territory at the north west end of the site from 03.04.20. It is not known if breeding took place, but the habitat seemed good for nesting.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

A reasonably common passage migrant, mainly present in the early autumn.

In early September 2019, 7 willow warblers were ringed, all were juveniles.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

A scarce passage migrant.

There were only 2 records, both in autumn:

- 1 feeding in the Scrub Copse on 05.10.19

- 1 feeding with a mixed tit flock in the hedges on the north east side of the site on 21.10.19.

BEARDED REEDLING *Panurus biarmicus*

A scarce visitor.

Twice in the autumn small flocks were heard and briefly seen dropping into the reeds around the Danes Stream. It was difficult to confirm the numbers involved, but the dates were 15.09.19 and 22.10.19.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistus caeruleus* (formelry *Parus cearuleus*)

A common resident in small numbers, 1 territory.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

A common resident in small numbers, 1 territory.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

An uncommon resident, 1 territory.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

A common visitor in small numbers.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

A common resident and visitor, 1 pair bred.

A pair successfully nested on the western side, fledging 4 chicks.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

A common but sporadic visitor, usually seen flying over.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

A common visitor, mainly in winter, 1 pair bred nearby.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

A common but sporadic visitor, seen flying over in ones and twos throughout the year.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

A common resident and visitor in small numbers, 1 pair bred and others bred nearby.

A pair nested in a gap under the roof of the Council Depot. In the second half of the summer and into the autumn flocks of starlings fed on the Grazing Field and on the Marsh. Numbers ranged from 50 to 200+ birds.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

A very common resident, 2 pairs bred in the nest boxes on the Hide.

Colonies exist in the hedges and gardens along the eastern side of the site. Sparrows fed around the Marsh and the Grazing Field.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

A common resident in small numbers, 3 territories.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

A common resident in small numbers, 2 territories.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

A common resident in small numbers, 2 territories, and a common autumn passage migrant

In the summer 2 pairs held territories in likely nesting habitat. In winter flocks of 20-30 roamed the fields to the east of the Pond, often in the company of linnets, feeding on seeds in the rough grassland and on the edge of the Spit.

LINNET *Linaria cannabina* (formerly *Carduelis cannabina*)

A regular visitor and a breeding species in small numbers, 4 pairs bred, and also a common autumn passage migrant.

In the autumn of 2019 some large and mobile flocks were observed on several dates. These are likely to have been juveniles dispersing from nearby breeding sites, but also migrants from much further north, on their way to winter in Spain. Evidence of the latter came on 22.10.19, when 17 linnets were ringed. Several of these had a frosted, paler appearance than Hampshire linnets, together with longer wing lengths than our local birds.

During the main winter months only small flocks were seen, along the edge of Hurst Spit and in the fields to the east of the Pond. However, just beyond the study area, beside New Lane, a Cover Crop attracted flocks of 100+ linnets in autumn and winter. In the spring singing males and pairs were observed around the Grazing Field and just east of the Pond. 3 pairs nested in the clumps of gorse in the Grazing Field and 1 pair nested in the gorse hedge east of the Pond.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

A scarce, but probably under recorded, autumn visitor, only seen flying over.

A flock of 6 flew east over the northern end on the site on 26.08.20 (GG). Several small flocks of 3 and 4 flew over on 31.08.20 (GG, DS & VS).

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

A common resident and winter visitor in small numbers, 2 pairs bred.

Surprisingly small numbers were found during the survey, certainly when compared with the previous survey of 2002-2003. 2-4 were often present in winter, but there were no large winter roosts. In the spring 2 males held territories and both males were paired. Breeding

was confirmed when 3 juveniles were seen on 10.07.20 and 3 juveniles were ringed on 16.07.20, including a very recently fledged juvenile.

ESCAPES

BLACK SWAN: 2 were present on 25.09.19 (UC), 1 on 10.03.20 (UC), 1 on 11.03.20 (KM) and 1 on 20.03.20 (GG).

RINGING REPORT

215 birds of 24 species were ringed. The birds were caught by setting mist nets in the Marsh, around the Scrub and in the reeds. During the winter several attempts were made to catch snipe by setting nets at night, but a mixture of poor weather and fewer snipe present resulted in low returns. Early morning sessions in the autumn proved more rewarding for ringing good numbers of resident and migrant passerines.

LIST OF BIRDS RINGED DURING THE SURVEY

SPECIES	TOTALS
Snipe	1
Kingfisher	1
Tree Pipit	2
Meadow Pipit	44
Wren	5
Dunnock	8
Robin	11
Stonechat	3
Blackbird	3
Cetti's Warbler	6
Grasshopper Warbler	4
Sedge Warbler	25
Reed Warbler	27
Whitethroat	2
Blackcap	3
Chiffchaff	14
Willow Warbler	11
Great Tit	4
Blue Tit	6
House Sparrow	3
Goldfinch	2
Greenfinch	1
Linnet	17
Reed Bunting	12
TOTAL	215

BIRD RINGING RESULTS

STONECHAT AYL3341: A juvenile male, which had been ringed at Sturt Pond on 16.07.20, was re-caught at Keyhaven Marshes on 27.08.20.

BLACKCAP ABF7039: A young male, which had been ringed as a recently fledged juvenile at Much Marcle in Herefordshire on 06.06.19, was re-caught at Sturt Pond on 01.09.19.

SEDGE WARBLER AKC9501: A juvenile, which had been ringed at Squire's Down in Dorset on 09.08.20, was re-caught at Sturt Pond on 16.08.20.

COLOUR-RING SIGHTINGS

MUTE SWAN: 4 swans which summered on Sturt Pond had been ringed at the following sites:

ZY9441 Orange U8B: Keyhaven 16.09.19 (ringed as a juvenile, hatched that year).

ZY9439 Orange U7Y: Keyhaven 16.09.19 (ringed as a juvenile, hatched that year).

ZY9438 Orange U7X: Keyhaven 16.09.19 (ringed as a juvenile, hatched that year).

ZY5781 Orange E3H: Christchurch, Dorset 29.07.12 (ringed as a second-year, therefore 10 years old when seen this summer).

HERRING GULL GV55172 Red MA5Z: An adult, seen at Sturt Pond on 19.09.19 by GG, had been ringed at Pitsea Landfill Site in Essex on 11.03.17. It had also been seen at Redbridge, Southampton on 23.04.19.

TURNSTONE: A colour-ringed adult, seen at Sturt Pond and at Cut Bridge throughout the autumn and winter of 2019-2020 and again in August 2020, had been ringed in Norway in 2012 (MM & GG).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL Green R1JK: A sub-adult, seen at Sturt Pond on 19.10.19 by KB, had been ringed as a chick at Polder Sebastopol, Vendée, FRANCE on 23.06.18. This bird was also seen wintering in Portugal on 02.01.19.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL White 3KP5: A first-year, seen at Sturt pond on 19.10.19 by KB, had been ringed as a chick at Knokke-Heist, West-Vlaanderen, BELGIUM on 02.07.19.

COMPARISONS WITH THE 2002-2003 SURVEY

Due to the government restrictions on access in the spring and early summer, it should be noted that fewer records were received from other observers this year, compared with the 2002-2003 survey.

The habitat has not changed a great deal in the years between the 2 surveys, but there have been 2 improvements; the construction of a bird hide in the south west corner and the creation of a scrape in front of the hide. There has been some grazing of the Marsh and the Grazing Field in recent autumns, but none took place during the survey year.

The western side of the site remains relatively undisturbed and now bird watchers are able to observe the birds there from the comfort of the bird hide. However, the public footpaths on the eastern and southern sides have become far more frequented. The negative effect of this has been a steep rise in the number of dogs running off the lead, resulting in daily attacks on the wildlife using the Pond. Most birds escape the attacks by fleeing to the western side, but in the autumn of 2019 a swan was killed by a dog and it known that this was not an isolated case.

The 2002-2003 survey found 112 bird species, 18 of which bred. This year 113 species were found and 26 of those bred. Therefore similar numbers were found during both surveys, but the numbers of breeding birds has increased. The most notable new breeding species is linnet, which has benefited from the increase of gorse scrub in and around the Grazing Field.

Despite the increase in breeding species, a few former nesting species failed to breed this year. Little grebe and mute swan were both present, but the adults were absent during the breeding season. A fox was regularly seen in the summer, hunting the reedy edge of the Danes Stream in exactly the spots where these birds like to nest. It is also possible that with the increase of otters in the region, (CB and KM have seen and photographed otters nearby at The Pans), otters may be visiting Sturt Pond at night, and they too would prevent the birds from nesting, because otters take the eggs of nesting water birds.

Several of the wintering wildfowl and waders have increased. The Russian dark-bellied Brent geese had a good breeding season in 2019 and there were regular winter counts of 200-400 Brents on the Pond, compared with counts of only around 100-200 during the winter of 2002-2003. Black-tailed godwits used the Pond in small numbers during the original survey, but this year they were often recorded in large numbers.

However, there was a noticeable drop in common snipe using the Marsh in winter. The 2002-2003 survey found a peak of 30+ common snipe and 14 were caught and ringed, but the peak count this year was only 20 and only 1 was ringed. If anything the habitat on the

Marsh, with the addition of the Scrape, has improved for snipe. It is thought that increased activity in that area by sparrowhawk could explain the decline in snipe numbers. Sparrowhawk was present in the past, but not so often. This winter a young female was present on most days, actively hunting low over the Marsh. On one occasion this individual almost caught a teal and the plucked remains of a snipe were found under its favourite plucking post in the nearby Scrub Copse.

Snipe numbers this recent winter were high at neighbouring sites. Plenty were seen at both the Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes (GG *et al*). Therefore it seems that the snipe were reticent to use the Marsh at Sturt Pond, due to the danger posed by the regular visits of the raptor.

During the autumn of 2002, small flocks of swallows regularly roosted in the reeds at Sturt Pond. That only happened on one occasion this year. The increase of more extensive reedbed habitat now available to the swallows at The Pans and Avon Water, where large roosts of up to 1000 hirundines can occur in autumn, might explain why the swallows no longer use the Sturt Pond reedbed.

Migrant warbler numbers appeared to be similar during both surveys, although the autumn passage this year was not as extensive as it was in the autumn of 2002, possibly due to poorer weather in the second half of August this year. The site now supports 2 Cetti's warbler territories and these territories were occupied throughout the survey year.

The influx of reed buntings that was witnessed in the autumn of 2002, when 59 were ringed, did not occur this year. In both survey years 2 pairs bred at the site, but there were no large autumn or winter gatherings this year. Since the 2002-2003 survey, farmers have been encouraged to plant seed-rich Cover Crops to provide winter food for larks, finches and buntings. Cover crops were planted in 2019 on farmland to the east and to the north of Sturt Pond, and it is known from observations during the winter that both of those areas were well used by reed buntings. Therefore the buntings that used to gather at Sturt Pond are now more dispersed in winter, having been attracted to rich feeding areas on nearby farmland.

Only 215 birds of 20 species were ringed this year, compared with 592 of 31 species in 2002-2003. The same amount of effort was put in during both surveys, but this year the weather windows for mist netting at key times did not work as well as they did during the original survey. Plus ringing activities had to be suspended during the C-19 LockDown. Therefore the lower number of birds ringed this year should not be seen as a reflection of fewer birds being present at the site.

This year snipe, kingfisher, tree pipit, 8 species of warbler, 4 species of finch and reed bunting were all ringed. Therefore detailed ringing data was gathered from a good mixture of species, including scarcer species such as tree pipit and grasshopper warbler.

OTHER WILDLIFE

The following mammals were seen: fox, roe deer, brown rat and hedgehog (KM & UC). A slow worm was seen (TR). Grey mullet, eel and sea trout were seen in the Pond and the Danes Stream.

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REFERENCES

- **Hampshire Ornithological Society** – *Bird Report 2018*, published in 2019, containing the most up to date data on the county's birds.
- **Graham Giddens** – *STURT POND BIRD SURVEY AND RINGING REPORT September 2002 to September 2003*, a report produced for MCV in 2003.

Graham Giddens
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