

RISLEY MOSS

BIRD REPORT

1982

Introduction

The Reserve was opened to the public in September 1980, and an observation book was started in 1981 so that visitors could record their sightings. In the event there were not a lot of recordings in the first year. However, in 1982, as a result of more interest the number of records increased.

This was to such an extent that a suggestion was put forward in August 1982 that a Risley Moss Bird Report should be prepared. The feasibility of this was actively considered and by October it was clear that enough information was available to make it a reality.

The records contained in this Report have come from the staff and visitors – they have been obtained from the observation book, casual visits, guided walks, the birdwatching course, and from a few dedicated birdwatchers who have made the Reserve very much their own observatory.

Their efforts are greatly appreciated, and it will be likely that when they read this report, they will be pleasantly surprised at the amount of information that it has been possible to put together.

The status of the birds at Risley Moss has been well documented in the past. This report is Intended to be a start in taking this a stage further and make it possible for the incidence of migrations and dispersals, and the expectant possibilities of watching from the Observation Tower and the Hides.

It is hoped that everybody will continue to record their sightings In the Observation Book which is always available at the Visitor Centre. Every record is important and should be entered in the book – the apparent most ordinary of records may be an important link, for example, as part of a migration pattern.

Finally, as Editor of the Report, I would like to extend my thanks to all those who have helped, so un- sparingly, to

make this first publication a possibility; to Kenn Watt, the Head Ranger, who has tolerated our idiosyncrasies, and to the staff who have always given the best possible help.

Peter Barlow

NOTES ON THE STATUS OF BIRDS

The total number of species recorded to December 31st 1981 is 112, as listed in "Bird Watching at Risley Moss" (Barlow).

During 1982 five more species have been added, making the total at December 31st, 1982 - 117.

Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis
Goshawk	Accipiter gentilis
Hobby	Falco subbuteo
Coot	Fulica atra
Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos

The recorded total in the year of 1982 is 104. This reflects the dedicated observing that has been apparent throughout the year, and it will be some consolation that 11 out of the 13 not seen were species of which there has only ever been one record.

The Nightjar has deserted us for the second year, and Golden Plovers have been elusive. The Golden Plover is a species with known local wintering haunts, and none of these are too far away from Risley Moss. Nonetheless, as they frequently consort with Lapwings, it is not impossible for them to be observed in flight and there may be a case to answer that the species is under recorded.

There are still many gaps in our knowledge, as any discerning reader will observe. In particular there is a need for information on gulls (species, numbers, and direction of flight in relation to time of day.) Swift and hirundine records could be much improved. Autumn and winter movements of Rooks, Lapwings and Starlings seen from the Observation Tower.

Lastly, House Sparrow records, - yes, House Sparrows. There used to be flocks in the winter, but they are rarely

seen now. Or is it that we take them for granted? It would be interesting to see what effect the nearby housing has in bringing them back to notice.

Abbreviations used in this report include:

VC	Visitor Centre	OH	Octagonal Hide
T	Observation Tower	MH	Moss land Hide
WH	Woodland Hide	MU	Maintenance Unit

The status of birds at Risley Moss as at December 31st, 1981 is documented in a booklet entitled "Bird Watching at Risley Moss" by Peter Barlow. ~~It is available at the shop in the Visitor Centre — Price 95p.~~

Little Grebe

Two birds seen in the southern fire-ditch on May 14th were the first confirmed reports of the species, although a presence had been suspected.

Cormorant

It is two years ago since it was first established that the species has a flight line between Rostherne/Tatton Park and Pennington Flash, Leigh.

This has continued in 1982 and there have been regular sightings along the eastern boundary. Most of the records have been in the late afternoon and evening. Early day time records are uncommon, largely due to the fact that the birds move before the Reserve is open to the public.

There were few records in January, February and March the maximum being 15 birds on March 15th — the last spring record.

The first autumn birds were a party of 3 on August 29th.

Thereafter small parties were seen regularly up to the end of the year, with peaks of 8 on November 7th, and 11 on December 12th and 21st.

A few records were in a west or south-west direction and this opens up the possibility of birds returning to a locality other than Rostherne.

Grey Heron

This is the first year that there have been any appreciable records. Clearly, the raised water levels in

the eastern areas of the mossland have created a habitat with a better food supply (e. g. frogs and newts) and this has been the attraction.

The first record was on March 25th with a single flying east. Three flying records in April and then, on May 1st the first record of one actually feeding in a ditch. From then on ones and twos were seen on several days up to June 6th. There was a lull until the 17th when 3 were seen flying east. Four were noted feeding on the 30th.

July 18th saw a peak of 11, with juveniles in the party. Thereafter, through July, August and September there were regular sightings, with a maximum of 8 on September 20th.

From October until the end of November the numbers diminished and only occasional records of one or two were noted.

There were no records In January, February and December.

Mallard

The first paired birds were noted on January 30th, there being 6 pairs altogether. There was evidence of a local movement on February 18th and 19th with 60 on the latter date. By March 12th a pair were seen displaying and eventually 5 pairs were known to have bred. It is not unlikely that up to 5 more pairs also bred.

The first sign of an autumn increase started on August 19th with 90 birds seen. This movement continued until September 7th with an exceptional count of c 300 on September 1st.

There was then a clear cut IUII until October 20th when a second build up lasted until the 27th, the peak being 100 on the 20th.

Thereafter, Into November and December, the numbers were small, 14 being the maximum.

Teal

The winter records In January and February were sparse, the best being on February 2nd when over 100 were noted. There was some evidence of a passage In March but numbers, and records, were few.

By May at least 5 pairs were settled on territories and a female with 9 young were seen from O. H. on June 19th. is difficult to count breeding

pairs because much of the area is inaccessible, but it is likely that at least 8 pairs may have bred.

The first autumn arrival of passage birds was on August 19th when a party of 80 were seen. There were fluctuating numbers up to mid-September and then a lull until October 11th when the main passage began. This lasted until November 13th with fluctuating numbers again as different groups passed through. The peak counts were 200 on October 24th and 272 on November 4th.

From November 13th numbers began to dwindle until the end of the year.

Tufted Duck

On May 29th a male and female were seen on the moss from O. T. A pair landed on a mossland pool on June 3rd.

The only other record was of 2 males flying west on June 19th.

Shoveler

A male was seen flying with Mallard and Teal on several days in April. A male, though not necessarily the same bird, was recorded on most days between May 14th and 31st. A female seen on June 19th gave a thought to possible breeding, but no young birds were seen.

Two males and a female seen in flight on May 1st and 2nd were independent of other records and were likely passage birds.

A female on August 19th and 22nd was the only autumn record.

Pintail

- February 5th - Two males landed on a moss
land pool in heavy rain.
- February 19th - Two females seen from MH
- September 7th - Two flying SW were an early
autumn record.
- November 9th - Three flying S.
- November 21st - Four females flying S.

Shelduck

- March 17th - One flying W.
- April 11th - Two landed on the moss
land.
- May 30th - Two flying s.
- July 27th - One flying E.

Pink Footed Goose

The severe weather in January produced the
following records: -

- January 10th - Two separate parties -
80 flying NE; 20 flying NE.
- January 19th - 25 flying NE.
- January 21st - 30 (direction not recorded)

Thereafter: -

- February 27th - 8 flying W.

The first winter record did not occur until after
a spell of several days of severe weather in December.

- December 3rd - 80 flying W.
- December 18th - 30 flying
NE.

Canada Goose

The maximum records were In January (31 NW on the 27th) and February (20 SW on the 4th) .

There were occasional records in March and April, and then nothing until May 30th when 15 were seen flying NE.

An early rising observer saw 11 flying N at 0500 on June 7th.

The only autumn record was 2 seen on nearby farm land on November 19th, having arrived from the south, were thought to be of the species.

Mute Swan

Prior to 1982 there had been only one previous record. This year saw a change and 7 records were logged in the late summer and autumn.

August	21 st ;			
September	9 th ;			
September	27th			
October	21st	1	s	
November	11th	1	s	
November	19th	3	over	the clay pits.
December	10th	3	over	the clay pits.

Sparrowhawk

The species has been well recorded to the extent that it has been possible to clearly define the activities of the one pair in the district.

During the hard weather in January a male frequented the oak/ash wood and was often seen attacking small birds in front of WY. A female was seen during February, and in late March male and female were seen from OT soaring together over the south west wood. There were regular sightings of singles in April and early May, and then, In early June, male and female were seen together again over the moss land.

There were no further sightings until August 19th juvenile was seen. There were regular sightings in September and as many as 4 birds were seen soaring together on warm sunny days. October and November records were usually of a male seen from O.T. Later in November 4 birds moved into the moss land just before dusk. In early December this habit continued on many days, and on the 4th no less than 5 birds were seen together.

An immature bird was brought into VC on October 25th having been found in a nearby house after over- night fog. It was examined and found to be alright, and then set free into the wood to the consternation of the small birds.

Goshawk

A male was reported on November 8th. A bird noted on November 28th had characteristics of the species.

Hen Harrier

It has been a good year for the species.

A ringtail was recorded between February 1st and 15th. What was probably a different bird (another ringtail) was seen on March 24th and this visited the Reserve regularly until May 8th. A keen observer noted on this date that he could see evidence of its transition to a male. Watchers at OT saw it fly within

30 yards, swoop on its prey, take off to land some 60 yards farther on and then proceed to eat its capture.

On April 12th* there was the suspicion of a second 1 ringtail present, and a much darker bird was seen twice.

The first autumn bird, a ringtail, was present between October 9th and 13th.

Another ringtail, again a much darker bird, was present almost every day from November 11th. It disappeared for several days during a spell of frosty weather but returned again on December 5th. A gap of a week and then a bird appearance for 3 hours between 0920 and 1220 on the 12th. Further brief sightings on the 17th, 19th, 21st, 26th and 29th, with two birds

(1 adult, 1 ringtail on the 26th)

Hobby

Two were reported near OH on July 29th.

Peregrine

Two records of singles on September 29th and October 1st.

Merlin

January 4th -	1 female over mossland.
February 3rd -	1
February 16th -	
October 19th -	1 male near OT.
November 9th -	1 male being mobbed by a Carrion Crow.
November 19th -	1 male seen from OT .
November 22nd	3 males seen from OT at the same time.
November 25th -	One was perched on the tree in front
November 26th	of OH and was readily Identifiable
November 28th -	through a telescope.
December 1st -	1 male.
December 2nd -	1 male .
December 3rd -	3 males and 1 female together - an
December 5th -	exceptional record.
December 18th - 2 seen	1 male from OH being attacked by a Carrion
Crow.	1 male.
1	
female	1 male.
near OT.	1 male.

The parties seen on November 25th and December 1st were probably immigrants. The single male, which had been present since November 9th was regarded as a resident autumn bird.

Kestrel

During the cold weather in January one bird, a juvenile, visited the area in front of WH. It harassed the small birds and on the 23rd was seen to attack and kill a Blue T it.

One pair frequented the mossland between March and June and were seen displaying on April 8th.

They did not breed inside the Reserve but used the area for feeding.

The male, last seen on July 4th, returned on October 4th and was seen at intervals until the end of the year.

A second pair occasionally extended their feeding territory over the south west boundary.

A female frequented the wood in front of WH and was seen chasing small birds on December 18th and 20th.

Partridge

Rarely seen within the Reserve boundaries.

A pair were flushed by the perimeter fence on March 2nd. The species was noted on June 3rd but no details were given, and an undated September record referred to a covey seen on nearby farmland.

Birds in a covey were heard calling on October 27th on land by the railway.

Pheasant

During January, February and March a male was seen and heard in and near the oak/ash wood, and on one occasion was seen from WH.

A female was seen on March 24th and had joined with the male by the 27th. They stayed together until April 23rd, from which there were no further spring or summer records.

A female was about between September 6th and 12th.

A noticeable influx in October from the 11th to the 28th with at least 3 different males widely distributed on the 27th.

A male was seen from on December 17th and 20th.

Water Rail

A bird with the characteristics of the species was seen briefly on the bank of a fire ditch near OH on July 26th.

Moorhen

The breeding status has increased this year due to the raised water levels on the mossland providing additional suitable habitat.

The successful breeding records have doubled at least to 6 or more pairs. The first young birds were seen on July 3rd and thereafter there were sightings of juveniles on the scrape in front of MH, on the pool near VC, and in the fire ditch in front of OT.

Wanderers in the autumn were seen in unusual places, including the small pond in front of WH, and the main car park.

Coot

A sighting on March 7th was thought to have been a bird of the species.

Later, on March 25th, 3 were flushed out of a peat ditch from under the feet of the observer. The first records for the Reserve.

Oystercatcher

The spring passage gave good records.

1 landed briefly on the edge of a mossland pool on May 6th. 1 overhead on May 9th; 2 flying NE on May 21st; 1 flying NE on June 3rd.

One seen flying near the railway line on June 19th was either a late passage bird, or one from a reported breeding site in the Mersey Valley area.

The early autumn record was of 2 flying SW on August 21st.

Lapwing

During the hard weather in January and February there were several small parties crossing the Reserve. Unfortunately, no directions were recorded.

From April 21st a pair were noted prospecting over the mossland, and on May 5th two birds on the dry edge of a peat flood chased away a Heron. Display flights were seen and the birds were present until late May. Breeding was suspected, but not confirmed.

The first returning birds were a party of 24 flying west on June 30th. July records were sparse, but August and September were excellent months.

August 2nd	-	31
August 9th	-	40
August 10th	-	c. 300 seen from OT
August 19th	-	c. 1,000 flying N
September 11th-		c. 1,000 (no direction)
September 18th-		30
September 19th-		100 flying NW

There was a lull and then further records between October 15th and 26th with a peak of 160 on the 22nd.

During November and December, a flock of c. 350 birds flew up on occasions from neighbouring farmland.

Little Ringed Plover

The first record was of one on the scrape in front of on May 16th. Further singles were seen here again on June 5th and 19th.

Two adults and 3 young were seen at a site adjacent to the Reserve on June 2 5th. Thereafter there were several July records with 4 birds seen on the edge of a peat flood on July 29th.

The last record was one which was heard calling as it flew over the moss on August 4th.

Common Snipe

Five pairs bred on the mossland.

The autumn passage was well documented, starting with 23 on August 2nd. Thereafter there were fluctuating numbers daily with peaks as follows:-

August 19th	-	40
September 7th	-	152 (maximum)
September 12th	-	50
September 20th	-	39

1

From then on into October the numbers reduced drastically; ones and twos being seen in November.

A week of heavy rain raised the water levels and this accounted for hardly any records in December, except for 2 flushed on the 20th.

Jack Snipe

Spring

March 25th	-	1 flushed out of a peat flood.
March 30th	-	1 put up by the Hen Harrier.

Autumn

October 26th	-	1 set up from a wet area near a fire-ditch.
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Woodcock

The first roding bird was seen on March 8th.
The last record was on May 22nd.

There was a noticeable Influx between January 27th and March 2nd when singles were flushed out of suitable habitats all over the Reserve.

There were few records in autumn and these were confined to a few days at the end of November.

November 25th	1 flushed out of bracken along the eastern boundary.
November 28th)	1 flew low in fron of OT
29th)	at dusk.
December 31st	1 seen at rear of MH.

Curlew

One was heard calling on March 14th.

Two were noted on April 16th and were seen daily thereafter. They were seen displaying between the 25th and 28th.

There were single records on days throughout May, with 2 seen on the mossland on the 23rd. Three were seen on June 6th and 7th, with a single on the 15th.

The only other record was of 1 flying South on July 4th.

As in a previous year a breeding pair used the mossland as part of their territory, but they did not breed within the boundaries.

Green Sandpiper

No spring records.

A good autumn passage which came through in two distinct periods.

Between June 15th and July 7th there were singles on 5 dates, with 2 on the 7th.

A lone record of 3 on the 18th, and then a gap of 13 days before the main passage began on July 31st.

This lasted throughout August with a peak between the 2nd (11 birds) and the 7th (7 birds).

After this there were records of ones and twos, with an increase to 3 on August 25th and 4 on September 1st. The last record was 2 on September 2nd.

A wintering bird was present between December 22nd and 26th. A Hen Harrier set it up on the 26th.

Common Sandpiper

Recorded on the Reserve for the first time.

An indication of an autumn passage between August 4th and 16th with a peak of 5 on the 13th.

Redshank

One heard calling on May 1st was the only record.

Greenshank

One flying N on April 28th was the first spring record for the Reserve.

A good autumn passage from August 4th to 25th with a peak of 6 on the 4th. Calling birds were heard frequently by observers in OT.

Herring Gull

The species is seen regularly from OTC, However, most records have been spasmodic to date and there is a need for more specific recording.

There was evidence in the autumn of a westerly movement towards the coast in the evenings. There never seem to be any large groups, rather a succession of small parties, but a recorded party of c. 60 on November 11th was larger than any other group or party.

Great Black Backed Gull

There was a record of a single bird on April 1st.

An Immature bird was seen flying SE on October 24th. Whilst the species is not often noted inland, it is felt that the species is probably under recorded.

Common Gull

April 28th	15 seen from OT.
August 7th	1 seen near the main

gate.

Black Headed Gull

Several birds were prospecting over the moss land area between April 6th and May 21st but they did not settle.

Apart from occasional singles, the only record of note was of 25 flying W on October 25th. The species is under recorded.

Lesser Black Backed Gull

Regularly seen flying over the mossland in March, April and early May.

Unfortunately, a lack of numbers and flight direction makes it impossible to obtain a clear pattern.

In the autumn the picture was the same with the species being noted from August 7th (fair numbers") to October 29th.

There is scope for future work on this ~~speci~~

Stock Dove

Although it is present throughout the year it is rarely recorded.

Invariably seen in flight over the mossland, usually singles, although on November 7th two separate flights of 6 and 4 birds were seen.

Wood Pigeon

The wintering flocks reached peaks of 440 on January 20th and 500 on February 2nd.

The breeding status is uncertain but probably reached 15 pairs.

Autumn flocks of small numbers, never exceeding 40 birds were seen from OT from September 7th onwards.

The first sizeable autumn flock was of c. 600 seen from OT as they settled at dusk over Rlxton

Turtle Dove

The first arrival was on May 8th with several passing through on succeeding days.

A pair settled in the vicinity of the oak/ash wood and were seen or heard on most days up to the 26th June. There were no further records until August 9th and 10th when one was heard from OT.

Collared Dove

One pair were seen regularly in the woodland during spring and summer. There was no evidence of breeding, but, as in previous years, this probably took place just outside the Reserve boundaries.

Cuckoo

The earliest record was April 26th.

The latest record was June 27th. Three territories were identified inside the reserve. An observer on an all-night vigil near the Reserve heard one calling inside the boundary at 03. 39 on June 7th.

Little Owl

One pair continue to have part of their territory within the Reserve.

Barn Owl

The territory of one pair cuts across a small area of the Reserve.

Tawny Owl

A bird was heard calling at 13.23 on the evening of March 8th.

One pair bred within the Reserve, the first young being seen on June 13th.

There was an Interesting record on November 23rd when 2 birds were heard calling to one another at 16.45 one from the woodland, the other from a group of trees on the edge of the woodland.

One was heard calling in the bushes near OT at 16.15 on December 10th.

Short Eared Owl

<u>Winter:</u>	January 2nd	1
	February 15-18th	1
<u>Autumn:</u>	Ones and twos flushed and seen on several dates between October 18th and November 29th. One bird during this period was noted as arriving regularly about half an hour before dusk.	

Swift

The earliest record was of three birds on May 5th. Thereafter there were regular sightings to the end of May.

There was a lull until June 30th when a party were seen feeding over the moss land.

The return passage was not notable and the record on August 19th when c. 300 were seen feeding low over

peat floods was the only one, and as it turned out, the last. The movement of the species are under recorded.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Two pairs bred in the Reserve. One pair frequented the oak/ash wood and provided a great interest for observers in WH.

Young birds were seen for the first time on June 5th.

During the cold weather in January a stoat harassed a male on a branch. The bird was chased to the very end of the branch and then flew off because it had nowhere else to go!

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

A female was seen from WH on March 14th and 15th.

Skylark

The decline as a breeding species was final this year with no records.

A change of farming practice on nearby fields reduced the numbers there to 1 singing bird.

Considering that in 1978 there were 12 breeding species within the Reserve, the decline has been dramatic. It is due to the increase of flooded and wet areas as a result of planned sluicing. The growth of birch trees did not help, but clearances in the autumn may open up dry areas for the future.

There was no noticeable autumn passage but on October 27th five birds were seen flying over from an adjacent field which had been recently ploughed.

Swallow

The earliest record was on April 12th when a single was seen flying N.

There was a noticeable and steady daily passage between April 21st and 28th.

The first returning bird was one seen from OT on August 8th.

From the 19th onwards there was a distinct southerly passage with dwindling numbers in September and early October.

The last record was on October 28th.

House Martin

No spring records.

The first returning bird was seen going south on July 18th. Thereafter there were small numbers in the hirundine groups that fed over the moss throughout August.

One or two in early September with the last record on the 25th. The passage of the species is under recorded.

Sand Martin

The earliest record was April 25th.

The species has never been noted in any numbers in the spring, but it may be under recorded.

Three going S on July 15th were the first returning birds.

A steady autumn passage with an exceptional high of c. 300 on August 25th.

Singles into September, with the last record on the 22nd.

Carrion Crow

Two pairs used the Reserve area as part of their 1 territories and could be seen frequently from OT.

Observers at OT saw tussles between the species. and Hen Harriers and Short Eared Owls on several occasions.

A party of 10 perched together on a tree on the mossland on November 10th.

Rook

The species is undoubtedly under recorded.

During the hard weather in January a party of c. 70 were seen flying overhead.

Other records referred to small parties moving about in the autumn, with a maximum of 20 flying W on October 26th.

Jackdaw

A scarce visitor.

Two flew over MU on April 28th and one was seen the next day near OT.

One was heard calling over OT on October 27th.

One noted among a small party of Rooks flying S on November 27th.

Four flying S with a party of 12 Rooks on December 4th.

Magpie

After the influxes of previous years, the breeding population has reduced to 2 pairs.

The first autumn gatherings were noted with 9 birds on September 22nd.

Thereafter there were frequent sightings with a maximum of 11 being seen in front of OT on October 2nd. There were 6 on November 14th.

Jay

Three pairs frequented the reserve and heard and could be seen regularly from OT and WH, and in and around the woodland paths.

The first raucous calls of the breeding season were heard on March 13th.

Great Tit

The first song was heard on March 22nd.

Keen observers of nest boxes in the woodland had good views of breeding pairs.

Five pairs bred, and the first young birds were seen on June 5th.

Blue Tit

The placing of nest boxes has enabled the species to increase its breeding status and this year a minimum of 10 pairs bred.

The usual post breeding parties were seen in the autumn, with some parties having as many as 20 birds.

An assessment of numbers in the woodland on December 17th showed there to be at least 40 birds present.

Coal Tit

The first song was heard on March 22nd.

An elusive species, the more so because only one pair breeds within the reserve.

Willow Tit

The breeding status remains steady at 7 pairs.

In the woodland it is more often heard than seen.

It is more visible in autumn, and single birds have been seen in and around the mossland searching for food.

One bird often made quick forays to pick up nuts which had fallen to the ground from the feeders at WH.

Long Tailed Tit

The breeding status remains steady at 3 pairs, with 2 pairs frequenting the woodland.

A pair were seen nest building as early as March 23rd.

Judging by the numbers about in the woodland from August onwards it would appear to have been a successful breeding season. The maximum in any party was 14.

Treecreeper

An elusive species, and rarely seen, with only one pair in the wood.

Nest building was noted in a hawthorn as early as March 23rd.

After the absence of any autumn records, one bird was seen near the feeders at WH on November 26th.

Wren

The old ditches throughout the Reserve are ideal habitats and sustain the high breeding status.

As may be expected the breeding number reduced after the hard winter, the figures being 1981 - 58 , 1982 41.

On February 4th one of the rangers found 9 dead birds huddled together in a crevice in an ash tree.

Mistle Thrush

Three pairs bred.

In the woodland one pair built at a location which made observation easy without any disturbance. Regular notes were made of progress.

March 7th	Nest building started	
"		
23rd	2 eggs	
24th	3 eggs	"
"		
27th	4 eggs fledged and away.	
April 15th	4 young	

An early autumn influx was noted on October 2nd.

Fieldfare

The cold weather in January tempted one bird onto the path outside VC.

The first autumn record was of 4 birds on October 12th. There was a noticeable passage until the end of the month with a peak of 55 on October 19th.

Records in November referred to moderate parties (maximum 40) moving S.

Song Thrush

The first song was heard on March 22nd.

Breeding status unchanged at 4 pairs in the woodland. One observer noted an influx with the arrival of Redwings and Fieldfares on October 12th.

Redwing

There were only 2 records in the early part of the year. One was seen from WH during hard weather on January 9th. There was a record the following day but no numbers were given.

The first autumn birds were a party of 30 flying S on October 12th. From then onwards parties were seen regularly until the end of the year.

Many birds roosted in the oak/ash wood.

The main autumn passage was keen October 19th and 27th with a peak of 70 birds on the 20th.

Blackbird

The breeding status is unchanged at 14 pairs.

On April 25th a pair started nest building under the eaves of VC and succeeded in rearing young.

Influxes were noted on February 5th and between October 22nd and 29th.

These influxes are difficult to note accurately in the woodland area, but concentrated watching in future should be rewarding.

Wheatear

A female on May 14th was the only record.

Whinchat

The earliest record was on May 9th. By the 14th five pairs were settled on territories, one less than the maximum of 6 in 1979.

One pair was seen frequently in the vicinity of OH and provided an attraction for visitors on guided walks.

Robin

The breeding status is virtually unchanged at 40 pairs.

A count of 20 singing birds were noted on winter territories in the woodland.

Grasshopper Warbler

This year 2 different singing males were heard, both within earshot of OT.

The first record was on April 24th when a bird was heard and also seen, albeit briefly. It stayed on until May 5th. The second record was of a bird close to OT. This was present from May 16th to 26th. Neither attracted a mate and presumably moved on.

Blackcap

There was an interesting record on February 15th and 16th of a male at WH. The species is known to overwinter in this country, but such a record is very infrequent in this area.

The first summer record was of 3 on April 21st. Singing males built up steadily into May and eventually 10 pairs bred in the woodland area. Some males were still singing in July.

Garden Warbler

The first record was on April 27th.

A singing male in the area of the small pond, and near the main gate, was obliging to visitors and gave some excellent displays.

The species is on the increase in the Reserve and the 5 identical breeding pairs were the highest since records were kept.

Whitethroat

The earliest record was on April 28th. As usual they frequented the thickets along the western boundary fence and 5 pairs bred in the woodland area. The last record was on August 29th.

Willow Warbler

The first arrivals were heard on April 6th, and thereafter the numbers built up rapidly throughout the Reserve.

It is still a prolific breeder and once again the breeding pairs exceeded 70 pairs.

The last record was on September 11th.

Chiff Chaff

The earliest record was a singing bird near OT on March 24th. It established itself in this area and was last heard on July 6th.

Three singing birds in widely different areas between March 25th and April 6th were evidence of a spring passage.

A late bird was seen near WE on November 29th.

Goldcrest

In the past it has been a scarce visitor to the Reserve. However, the severe weather in January altered all that and large numbers came into the woodland, with peaks of 20 on the 15th and 28th.

From then on ones and twos were noted between February 11th and April 9th, with an isolated peak of 20 on March 23rd.

There were no further records until an influx which lasted from October 10th to the 30th, with a peak of 6 on the 17th. It is interesting to record that between October 9th and 12th there were massive numbers of the species reported arriving along the east coast and it seems reasonable to suppose that their eastward advance ment extended to the west coast.

Ones and twos were reported on several days in November.

Spotted Flycatcher

Earliest

May 22nd

Latest

September 9th

A pair bred in the oak/ash wood and were seen regularly from WH.

Dunnock

The breeding status remains steady at 19 pairs.

Meadow Pipit

There was ample evidence of a good spring passage between April 6th and 28th.

The autumn passage was not well documented, but a southerly movement was evident all day on September 20th.

The first returning birds were seen on territory on March 2 3rd. The moss land Cormon Bird Census revealed 13 breeding pairs.

Up to 6 scattered Individual birds seen on October 27th were the nucleus of a small wintering population.

Tree Pipit

The earliest record was on May 3rd when a singing male was heard in the area between OH and OT.

There were other records between May 9th and 23rd, but none became established. The records of the past 5 years show that it is not a regular annual breeder.

Pied Wagtail

A small influx between October 30th and November 7th, with a maximum of 3 on the 30th.

Two flew west just inside the northern boundary on December 8th, and one flew over VC on December 22nd.

Grey Wagtail

One was heard in flight over OT on October 27th, and four in southerly flight over the moss land on November 23rd.

Yellow Wagtail

The earliest record was of 2 pairs found near together on April 28th on clearly established territory. They ' stayed and bred, with fledged young being seen in late July.

Two seen in a different locality on August 19th were passage birds.

Starling

The breeding colonies in the oak/ ash wood continue to prosper and up to 15 pairs bred.

There was evidence of autumn movement in sightings in October from OT with a maximum of 104 going SW on the 17th.

It is a speculative thought that a keen-eyed observer at OT might see something of the massive roosts coming into Rixton Firs. These roosts can be counted in thousands.

Greenfinch

One pair bred in the woodland. The build up of the usual winter roost was noticeable from early November. A maximum of 20 were seen from WH.

Goldfinch

Two birds recorded on different dates between February 4th and 16th may well have been the same bird. They were seen in the vicinity of VC, near OT, and along the northern boundary near the Main Gate.

An autumn influx in small numbers with a maximum of 6 on September 25th and 4 south on October 31st.

There seems to be no pattern in the records over the years. It is not under recorded, nor is it regularly recorded. Very spasmodic sums up its recorded status.

Siskin

Normally a scarce visitor, the severe January weather brought records on the 10th and 11th.

From February 20th a male and female were present until March 25th.

They were seen at WH, and at the feeders outside VC almost daily.

Linnet

One pair bred on the mossland. Small parties were seen flying over the moss land in October with a maximum of 10 on the 15th.

Nineteen were seen in flight on November 30th.

Lesser Redpoll

There were 4 breeding colonies, 2 on the mossland, and 2 on the fringes of the mossland/woodland.

The first winter parties were noted in November with 15 on the 7th.

Bullfinch

No change in the breeding status of 3 pairs.

Wintering groups were noted from November 20th onwards, with a party of 4 males and 1 female by OT on the 28th.

Chaffinch

The breeding status unchanged at 9 pairs. A party of 5 male on November 20th were the first influx of non-resident birds.

Non-resident birds were less in number than in previous years.

Brambling

There was a small influx seen at the feeders at WH in the severe weather between January 3rd and 10th.

Two separate records of a female in February and March. An influx between March 29th and April 4th with birds seen daily at the feeders.

Autumn records were scarce, there being 1 in the woods between October 22nd and 31st.

Yellowhammer

The earliest record of birds returning from their wintering habitats on local farmlands was on February 27th.

The first singing male was heard on March 23rd, and the Common Bird Census identified 8 breeding pairs.

There were occasional males seen inside the Reserve up to October 26th.

Corn Bunting

The southern boundary denotes the edge of the territory of 1 breeding pair. The male occasionally sang from a low bush and was seen and heard on April 19th and 27th.

Reed Bunting

The first birds to return to breeding territories were seen on February 27th and males were singing by March 25th. 1 The breeding status has dropped slightly to 13 pairs.

This is due to an area of flooding as a result of sluicing. A few Immature birds were seen on the moss land in October and November.

One immature was noted along the southern boundary on December 20th.

House Sparrow

A rare visitor. Only 3 separate records.

Tree Sparrow

The severe January weather drove numbers of birds into the wood between January 2nd and February 14th, with a peak of 20 on January 20th.

Two pairs bred under the eaves of VC. Several were seen from WH in the autumn, with a maximum of 7 on 7December 7th, and 14 on December 17th

MOSSLAND COMMON BIRD CENSUS 1982.

Species	No. of breeding territories
1. Willow Warbler	28
2. Reed Bunting	13
3. Meadow Pipit	13
4. Wren	8
5. Yellowhammer	8
6. Robin	8
7. Common Snipe	5
8. Whinchat	5
9. Mallard	5
10. Teal	5
11. Dunnock	4
12. Moorhen	3
13. Blackbird	3
14. Cuckoo	2
15. Willow Tit	2
16. Lesser Redpoll	2
17. Magpie	2
18. Carrion Crow	2
19. Jay	2
20. Great Tit	2
21. Yellow Wagtail	2
22. Linnet	1
23. Blackcap	1
24. Kestrel	1
25. Tawny Owl	1
26. Whitethroat	1
27. Corn Bunting	1
28. Woodcock	1

