

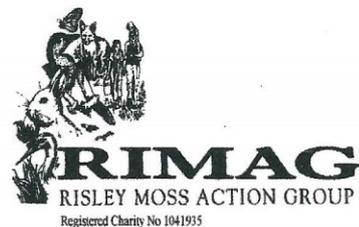
Risley Moss Nature Reserve

Bird Report

1998



Compiled by Rob Smith



Introduction

The following is a summary of birds seen at Risley Moss during 1998.

The Reserve continues to provide gems of interest. Highlights included the first record of Cormorant actually landing on the reserve and large numbers of post breeding Canada Geese dropping into the lagoons after dark.

Among other wildfowl, Gadwall and Goldeneye were noted for the first time whilst Tufted Duck bred successfully for only the second time since records began.

Waders also provided interest, Lapwing and Little Ringed Plover bred, whilst late summer/early autumn passage produced Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Dunlin and a pair of Oystercatchers.

There was a good representation of raptors with Peregrine Falcon and Hobby putting in brief appearances and Buzzard being noted on the reserve and around the area on several occasions in early winter. An escaped Saker Falcon also livened up proceedings for a while.

In the woodland areas, warblers had mixed success, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler breeding numbers increased whilst the Willow Warbler population suffered a decline of over 20⁰.

The results of the Common Bird Census and Warbler survey appear at end of report.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*
overflying/vagrant

Records normally refer to birds overflying the reserve, but on 13/5 a bird was noted being driven off the Flashes by a group of Lapwing. This is the first record of a bird actually 'landing' on the reserve. Overflying maxima include 34 flying north on 28/1 and 10 flying south on 4/9.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*
casual

Not as frequent as previous years. Birds seen in most months with 5 noted near the Centre Coppice on 9/3, with 2 on 19/6 & 24/7 and 3 near the Moorhen Patch on 10/8.

MUTE SWAN *Cynus olor*
vagrant

An unusual visitor which seems to be taking a liking to the increased areas of water in recent times.

Two adults and a juvenile were present on 13/1 with singles present on 26/3 & 27/3 and 7/4. Overflying birds included 2 flying north on 20/2 and 1 moving south on 14/10.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*
casual

Occasionally seen in winter, otherwise records refer to pre & post breeding birds. Four were present on most days during May, but breeding did not take place. During September, birds began using the mossland as a roosting area with most flying in from Pennington Flash after dark. A flock of 86 birds on 4/9 was typical of the roost during the month. Outside this period, 29 circled the moss on 29/7, 20 flew north east on 3/8, a flock of 45 & 70 flew south east on 27/8 & 1/9 respectively.

PINK FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*
overflying

The only record received was of 80 flying south on 8/10.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*
resident

The mossland held only 3 pairs (cf. 4 pairs, 1987), brood sizes were also down with 3 juveniles noted on 10/5 & 1 on 10/8. Outside the breeding season maxima included 9 on 20/2, 30 on 27/8, 8 on 4/9 and 5 on most remaining months.

TEAL *Anas crecca*
resident

One pair bred with 10 young seen on 10/8. Monthly maxima included 30 on 13/2, 15 on 3/8, 22 on 21/9, 50 on 17/10, 11 on 6/11.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*
vagrant

Following occasional sightings in recent years, a female with 8 young were observed near the Moorhen Patch on 10/8. The pair was first noted nearby on 20/4 and on occasional dates during May but then they seemingly 'disappeared' from the area. This was only the second time the species has bred on the reserve (cf 1987).

GADWALL *Anas strepera*
vagrant

A pair was seen prospecting the mossland on 1/5 with 2 males and 1 female present on 8/5 and a single male on 13/5. This is the first record of the species for the reserve.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*
vagrant

A female was noted repeatedly diving on one of the flooded lagoons on the evening of the 13/11, This is the first and only record of the species for the reserve.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*
vagrant

An adult female hawking over the mossland and being harassed by various other birds on 29/7, was the only record for the year.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*
vagrant

A ringtail was seen hawking over the southern edge of the mossland on the rather late date of 3/5.

SPARROWHAWK Accipiter nisus

resident

Male or female birds were seen on most days throughout the year with a pair soaring over the mossland on the 30/10. A male was also noted attacking a crow on 1/5 and mobbing a Hobby over the mossland on 17/5.

BUZZARD Buteo buteo vagrant

An increase in sightings began when an adult was noted soaring over the south west woodland on 18/9. Thereafter brief glimpses of a bird - usually arriving at dusk, were noted on the mossland on 21/9, 6/11, 13/11, 17/11 & 28/11, with a single bird flying south west on 8/11.

SAKER FALCON Falco cherrug

escapee

A bird of this description was seen over the south of the reserve on 12 & 13/9 and was known to have escaped from a local falconer operating over the adjacent tip.

PEREGRINE FALCON Falco peregrinus

vagrant

On 5/2, two males (lad/ljuv) flew low and slow across the mossland to the west. A short while later the juvenile returned to the east along the same line, climbed and went into a shallow stoop to the south.

HOBBY Falco subbuteo

vagrant

A male seen taking dragonflies on 17/5 & 9/8 were the only reported sightings of this species during the year and proved to be a bit of an anti-climax compared to events of last year.

KESTREL Falco tinnunculus

casual

Continues to be a frequent visit over the mossland, with 2 present on 16/5. Thereafter single birds were noted on occasions during the summer months. On separate occasions birds were noted tussling with crows, mobbing the Hobby and attempting to take a thrush.

GREY PARTRIDGE Perdix perdix

casual

A bird was heard calling from the Flashes on 8/5.

PHEASANT Phasianus colchicus

casual

A bird was heard calling from the edge of the Flashes on 8/5. Two males were heard calling from the South West Wood and the NE Corner on 6/11.

WATER RAIL Rallus aquatica

vagrant

An over wintering bird seen briefly on 20/2 near the Centre Ridge, may have been the same bird reported there in the winter of 1997.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

common

The CBC revealed that a total of 9 pairs bred on the mossland (cf. 10 pairs, 1997). Elsewhere, a bird regularly frequented the feeding area of the Woodland Hide in winter.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

casual

Most records usually refer to overflying birds, so the two birds resting on the mud on one of the bunds on 25/6 was an unusual occurrence. The pair took off a short while later and headed north. A single bird flew south the following day.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

casual

Conditions on the mossland in recent years have clearly suited this species. Two pairs bred with a minimum of 4 young noted. A post breeding group of up to 16 birds remained on the mossland well into September.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

casual

An interesting season with the first adult being seen on 1/5 and the last two on 27/8. In between these dates, two pairs reared a total of 5 young and several birds used the mossland as a stopover. Passage peaks included 5 on 25/6, 7 on 10 & 14/7.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

casual

A bird flying south on 29/1 & 10/3 were the only two records for the year.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus* passage

A steady autumn passage began with the arrival of three birds on the 25/6 and continued into September with singles noted on several dates. In between these dates' numbers varied widely with maxima of 7 on 10/7, 6 on 10/8 & 5 on 27/8. A single bird heard at dusk on the late date of 6/11 is the latest the species has been recorded on the reserve.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* vagrant

A single bird was observed in the contrasting company of the Green Sandpipers between 10/8 & 13/8. This is only the third time that the species has been noted on the reserve since records began.

COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

resident

Sadly, breeding was not confirmed. Outside the breeding season birds were heard or seen in most months, particularly at dusk when birds flew in/out of the mossland. Post breeding numbers were of particular interest and an improvement in recent years. Monthly maximas were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	5	3	22	12	10	4	4

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes sored*

vagrant

A bird was disturbed near the Centre Ridge on 29/1 & again 20/2 and a late sighting on 11/4.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

resident

General status of this bird is unclear and usually relies on it being accidentally disturbed, as a result only two records were received with birds being flushed on 10/2 & 29/9.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

rare

A juvenile bird landed in front of the observer on the muddy edges of a bund on 4/9, a short while later it took off and dropped into the central area of the mossland. This is the first record of the species for the reserve.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

resident

Present throughout the year and breeds in good numbers in the woodland areas. During winter birds gather on trees around the mossland before moving in groups of 50 - 200, to the main roosting area in the south west wood.

CUCKOO *Cuculu canorus*

summer

A better year for the species, with the first bird heard calling on 29/4 & on several occasions during May. On 16/5, two calling males flew across the mossland together whilst on the 17/5 a male was noted being being mobbed there by a Willow Warbler.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

vagrant

A bird was heard calling from the Bottom Coppice on 14/10. An unusual record and only the second time it had been recorded during the 90s.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

resident

The status of this species seems to have improved in 1998 with single birds calling from the Moorhen Patch on 10/8, Main Gate on 24/8 and the Visitor Centre on 23/12. Of interest were three birds heard calling on the 1/9 - 1 from near the Observation Tower and 2 near the Main gate. Two birds were also heard calling from the Maintenance Unit and Central Coppice on 6/11.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

summer

First birds appeared over the mossland on 10/5 with 6 -10 noted there on occasions to mid-June. By 25/6, post breeding numbers had increased to 40+ birds and then to c100 birds on occasions during July. Thereafter numbers declined steadily with 10 on 8/9 being the last seen.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

vagrant

This species continues to put in an occasional appearance, being recorded on the 15/8, 17/11 and 23/11.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

casual

Small numbers usually refer to overflying birds with light passage flying north on 5/3 and south east on 18/9.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

summer

Two birds over the mossland on 1/5 were the first noted. Small numbers were seen occasionally in summer with 4 on 25/6, 6 on 24/7 and 1 on 18/9.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

summer

First noted on 14/4, with small groups being seen over the mossland on occasion during the breeding season. By mid-July, numbers increased slowly to a maximum of 25 with the last birds - a flock of 20 seen on 18/9. An interesting discovery in recent years has been of post breeding birds roosting occasionally in parts of the mossland. In this respect, 20 birds were noted in reeds near the Bottom Coppice on 24/7 and 20+ juveniles near the Observation Tower on 4/9.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

summer

A flock of 11 hawking over the mossland on 25/4 were the first recorded for the year. Absent from the mossland during the breeding season, a group of 30-40 birds were present on 25/6 with numbers increasing to ca 100 by late July, early August. Thereafter numbers declined steadily until 21/9, when 10 birds were seen flying south.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

resident

The CBC indicated five pairs held territory during the breeding season (cf. 7 pairs, 1997) with the bund walls forming the core areas. During winter, birds continued to roost on the mossland in small numbers, with maxima of 6-10.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

casual

A single bird flying north east on 18/9 was the only record.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

casual

The mossland is used occasionally by juveniles with 1 on 25/6, 10/7 & 18/9 and two there on 14/7.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

resident

Present throughout the woodland area and parts of the mossland. Up to five birds noted at the Woodland hide on most days during winter.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

resident

Breeds throughout the woodland areas. Up to 15 birds were seen at the Woodland hide and the roost area near the Observation Tower on most days during winter.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilarus*

winter

Thirty birds flying south on 20/2 were the last seen at winters end. First autumn birds reappeared on the 6/11, when 60 flew into the South West Wood at dusk. Flock size varied for the remainder of the month with ca100 on 8/11, 50 on 13/11, ca200 on 27/11. Thereafter numbers dropped dramatically with only 10 birds being seen on dead willow near the Moorhen Patch on 19/12.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

resident

Confined to the main woodland area with 4 singing males noted there on 4/4.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

winter

Smaller numbers recorded than previous years. Outward bound, two birds were seen heading south on 26/3 and the species recorded back in the area on 5/10. Thereafter small groups were occasionally seen during the remainder of the calendar year.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

resident

Breeds in the main woodland area with three males noted singing there on 1/5. A bird was also heard singing on the rather early date of 19/12.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

summer

Three pairs bred with the first bird being heard on 23/5. Birds were noted in several parts of the mossland in May, but territories never formed.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

summer

The warbler survey carried out in May, revealed the presence of five pairs (cf 3 pairs, 1997) with the species being first recorded on the 1/5. Of note was three birds seen in a tit flock on 10/8.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

summer/winter

The breeding population of this species increased to 19 pairs (cf 15 pairs, 1997). Outside this period an overwintering male was seen at the Woodland Hide feeders on several dates in March.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

summer

The survey revealed 8 breeding territories in the main woodland (cf 6, 1997). First heard calling on 17/3 in Jay Wood, with the last being heard from bushes on the mossland on 4/9.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

summer

Numbers were down with only 46 pairs recorded (cf 59 pairs, 1997) on the mossland which continues to be the stronghold of the species. Two birds were heard singing along the mossland edge on 8/4 and the last was seen in the same area on 18/9.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

resident

Most records refer to single wintering birds seen around the woodland area and occasionally among wandering tit flocks.

LONG TAILED TIT *Aegithalus caudatus*

resident

The breeding population is unclear but estimated at 2 pairs. Frequently seen in mixed flocks in most parts of the reserve in winter, containing on average 15 birds with exceptionally 20+ on 18/12. Birds continue to be seen at the Woodland Hide feeding station on many days in winter.

WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*

resident

Breeding status unclear but estimated at 2 pairs. Most observations refer to birds seen around the Main woodland and the Woodland Hide feeding station, where up to three birds were seen.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*

resident

Similar status and distribution as previous species but with a maximum of two at the feeding station.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

resident

Up to 15 birds seen at the Woodland Hide in winter with smaller numbers amongst the mixed flocks that roamed the reserve.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

resident

Breeding was not confirmed, although up to 2 birds were seen or heard around the main woods and in particular at the Woodland Hide in winter.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

resident

Most records refer to single birds seen in and around the Main or Jay Woods and occasionally at the Woodland Hide. Breeding estimated at 1-2 pairs.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

resident

Upto 4 pairs breed on the reserve with 10 birds frequenting various areas in winter and in particular the Woodland Hide.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

resident

The winter roost near Peters Hide continues to hold significant numbers with monthly peaks of 90 on 2/1, 58 on 5/2, 45 on 6/11 and massive 143 on 19/12.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

overflying

Birds overfly the reserve as part of the diurnal movement of corvidae which flight north/south and vice versa daily. Maxima of 350+ were typical counts during the winter period.

ROOK *Corvus frugelegus*

overflying

Part of the same movement as the previous species although fewer in number. Flocks of c1 10 on 6/11 were typical.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone corone*

resident

Upto 6 birds frequent the reserve and roost in the main woodland in winter. A bird with pale primaries has been part of the group since September.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

resident

A common bird on the reserve with up to 20 birds at the Woodland Hide and the roost near the Observation Tower in winter.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

casual

The only record was of a female noted in a finch flock near Jay Wood on 2/1.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris* resident

A flock of c40 were noted over the mossland on 5/2, with 20 dropping into roost near the Observation Tower shortly afterwards.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

casual

The unusual sight of 3 birds at the Woodland Hide feeders on 19/12 was enjoyed by all in the hide at the time.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

winter

Sightings were down on previous years. A small group of 8 were noted near the Football Pitch on 31/3 and a single bird at the Woodland Hide on 4/12.

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

resident

Somewhat scarcer than previous years. Two pairs bred on the mossland with 10 noted there on 1/5 and singles occasionally afterwards.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

resident

Mostly seen or heard in the main woodland areas. Birds continue to use the Woodland Hide feeding area on many occasions with two there on 17/1, 6/12 & 19/12 with 2 males & 1 female there on 4/12.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

resident

The CBC indicated that 14 pairs held territories (cf 19 pairs, 1997). Outside the breeding season, two to nine birds continued to use the mossland as a roosting area during the winter period.



Results of Breeding Bird Survey (R Smith):

	Common Bird Census (CBC) (mossland only)	Warbler survey (whole reserve)
Mallard	3	
Teal	1	
Moorhen	9	
Meadow Pipit	5	
Reed Bunting	14	
Redpoll	2	
Willow Warbler	22	59
Blackcap		15
Garden Warbler		3
Whitethroat		1
Chiffchaff		6

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