

**RISLEY
MOSS
BIRD
REPORT**

2010 & 2011



Compiled
By
Rob
Smith

Better late than never a belated update of bird data collected from bird surveys and observations on Risley Moss LNR during the period 2010 – 2011.

As in previous years, two surveys are carried out annually by the author and have been since the 1980s these include the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and a winter bird count.

In order to standardise results the BBS is carried out in mid-May and follows a standardised transect across the mossland and a defined route through all sections of woodland on the reserve. The survey is based on the singing male and/or breeding evidence (nest and eggs, sitting bird, feeding young) and details are entered on a map and assessed as per BTO guidelines.

The winter count follows the same transect across the mossland but is primarily about recording the presence/absence of wildfowl and waders, raptors and owls which are then complimented by evening counts.

Risley Moss provides an important habitat for a wide range of birds whether they are breeding, overwintering or on passage. Although the general assemblage of birds using the reserve has altered considerably from the earlier years the current range of bird life is, in some ways, more important now than it ever has been especially with the decline of so many of our once common species.

This problem is of course reflected nationally and has led to several leading ornithological organisations - BTO, RSPB and Birdlife, creating a quantifiable review of the status of birds in the UK and classifying them as Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC). A total of 246 birds have been assessed against a set of criteria and placed in one of three categories – Green, Amber and Red, indicating an increasing level of concern. Currently the BoCC 3 listing stands at 52 species on the Red list, 126 on the Amber list and 68 on the Green list.

For reference purposes and where relevant I have included the BoCC status of birds breeding on the reserve or those that use it frequently.

Apart from an important range of breeding species found on the reserve, Risley Moss is also a key location for raptors throughout the year including both resident and migratory species.

Resident species include Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and Common Buzzard and in summer the speciality of the reserve, the Hobby, with up to 6 birds feeding over the mossland on many occasions during the breeding season.

The reserve is also important for birds on passage such as Marsh and Hen Harrier, Red Kite, Osprey and on rare occasions Montagues Harrier, Honey Buzzard and Goshawk with Merlin regularly noted in winter and Peregrine Falcon throughout the year.

Five species of owl also frequent the reserve at different times during the year. The Tawny Owl is a resident whilst the Long Eared Owl breeds on occasions. The Barn Owl frequently hunts over the mossland with the Little Owl being generally confined to the southern boundary and local farm land. Of greatest interest is the Short Eared Owl which not only hunts over the reserve and the local farm land but frequently roosts on the mossland itself during daylight hours and where up to 8 birds have been recorded in recent years.

During the period of this report a minimum of 46 species bred on the reserve. This included Red listed species (7), Amber listed (13) and Green listed (26).

Rob Smith
September 2012

Mute Swan

The mossland scrapes and pools are not usually suited to this species. Nonetheless an adult and immature bird landed on the Observation Tower (OT) pool 25 January 2011 and again on the mud on 12 April 2012.

Bewick's Swan

Confined to rare movements of birds overflying the reserve such as the 4 seen heading north west on 26 November and 2 on 17 December 2011.

Whooper Swan

Four flew west on 22 November 2010 and an even larger group of 35 on 28 March 2011.

Pink-Footed Goose

In 2010, flocks of 200-400 were regularly seen throughout the winter period. Exceptionally over 3000 birds in several skeins were recorded on 25 October 2011.

White Fronted Goose

Four birds noted over the reserve on 31 December 2011 was an interesting but rare occurrence.

Greylag Goose

Normally, usually noted with other geese as they overfly the reserve or occasionally dropping onto it at dusk to roost. Two were noted on a scrape on 7 April 2010 otherwise birds are seen flying over the reserve such as the 11 on 6 January 2011 and several other individuals during the year.

Canada Goose

Breeding in 2010 and 2011 was limited to 3 pairs with goslings noted briefly around the mossland. Canada Geese roost on the mossland scrapes in good numbers throughout the year but especially during August/September whilst moulting. On these occasions up to 300 birds in various noisy groups start to arrive from different directions as dusk falls. Although numbers reduce significantly outside this period small groups continue to use the mossland scrapes at night during the winter period.

Bar-Headed Goose

Has been recorded a few times over the years with the most recent being the individual seen amongst a flock of Canada Geese around the area in October 2010.

Wigeon

Uncommon inland but 20 passed over the reserve on 1 December 2010 and 30 the following month on 2 January 2011.

Gadwall

BoCC Amber List

Has bred on site in the past but is currently an infrequent visitor, with the 2 noted on the mossland on 2 February 2010 and 5 there on 18 July 2011 being the most recent records.

Teal

BoCC Amber List

Breeding remains steady at 2 pairs (cf 3 pairs, 2008). Depending on weather conditions the local population increases significantly in early spring and late autumn as birds move onto the reserve to roost at which time up to 150 birds have been recorded on occasions. Although numbers were down on previous year's peak counts included 90+ in February 2010, 48 in September 2010, 81 in October 2010 and 44 in November 2011.



Mallard**BoCC Amber List**

A total of 5 pairs bred in 2010 and 3 pairs in 2011 (cf 8 pairs, 2009).

The mossland is an important roosting area for this species with up to 100 birds noted during the post breeding period and especially flighting in most nights throughout the year in winter.

Pintail

Not often seen in this area but 3 birds passed over the reserve on 20 October 2011.

Shoveler**BoCC Amber List**

A sporadic breeder which often begins with presence of a pair in early spring as it did in 2010 and 2011. In 2010, 2 adults and 7 ducklings were noted in June with 9 birds present again in October. Birds occasionally appear in late autumn/early winter when up to 10 birds have been noted.

Pochard

A single female was noted briefly on the OT scrape on 12 August 2011.

Tufted Duck**BoCC Amber List**

The routine of this species has remained unchanged for many years. A pair first appears on the mossland in February with numbers slowly increasing to between 4-6 pairs by mid-May before settling out at 2-3 breeding pairs. A total of 11 ducklings were noted in 2010 and 5 in 2011. Once broods have been raised the species is generally absent from the mossland until the following spring.

Scaup

A single bird was seen overflying the reserve in December 2010.

Red Breasted Merganser

A male flew over the reserve on 5 February 2010.

Grey Partridge

Birds occasionally come in from the adjacent farmland to roost at dusk. A pair were seen and heard on 9 February 2010 and again in the autumn of 2011.

Corncrake

A bird was heard calling out on the mossland on 15 September 2011 by the regular birdwatchers at the Observation Tower. This is only the second record of this species for the reserve (cf 12 April 2001).

Pheasant

Males and females noted on and around the reserve on a few occasions each year but mostly outside the breeding season.

Little Grebe**BoCC Amber List**

Normally a frequent visitor and breeder but apart from occasional records has been absent during this report period.

Black-Necked Grebe**BoCC Amber List**

With birds being seen in local areas it was only a matter of time before they were noted at Risley Moss. Two were noted over the reserve on 22 May followed by two immature birds noted there on 12 August 2011 which circled low over the mossland before heading out north.

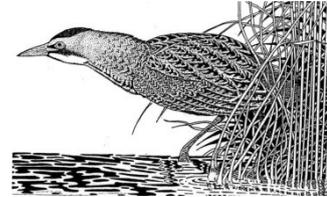
Cormorant

Seen flying over the reserve on occasions with 8 on 6 February 2010 being the most seen in recent times.

Bittern

BoCC Red List

A rare visitor observed on 3 occasions in consecutive years. A bird was disturbed by a visiting group on the unusual date of 16 June 2009. This was followed by the presence of a bird skulking in reeds during the very cold winter of December and January 2010/2011.



Little Egret

Although an uncommon visitor 1 was noted on the reserve on 21 July 2010.

Grey Heron

The reserve is a regular feeding ground for this species especially in the post breeding period. Up to 3 were noted on many dates in 2010 and 2011.

Honey Buzzard

A rarity for the area but a single bird was noted flying south over the reserve on 31 August 2010.

Red Kite

A bird was over the south edge of the mossland on 11 February and again on 29 March 2010 and flying over on 29 April 2010. Single sightings were also noted over the reserve in June and July 2011.

Marsh Harrier

BoCC Amber List

A regular migrant and a frequent visitor on the reserve. Birds are mostly but not exclusively noted between February and late May and again between June and October. On these occasions a number of different birds – males, females and immatures, are recorded with some passing through and others remaining briefly to hunt over the mossland or perch on it. Typically birds were recorded on 25 dates in 2010 and over 29 dates in 2011.

Hen Harrier

BoCC Red List

In 2010 birds were noted on at least 10 occasions starting with an adult female roosting on the reserve between 23 and 28 January and again on 21 February with a male on 12 March being the last spring record. Returning birds included a female on 17 September and a male on 11 October and of particular note a male followed by a female on 27 November 2010.

The following year a ringtail was over the reserve on 14 January, 27 November and 17 December with a male noted on 2 March and 27 October.

Montagues Harrier

A bird of this description was noted on 30 April 2011.

Goshawk

On 3 October 2011 a female was noted perched on low tree in front of the mossland hide. A short while later several magpies began harassing and forcing it to move on to the next tree, this was repeated twice more until the female eventually and suddenly turned back on itself and took one unlucky individual to the ground and out of sight. A bird was seen again on 22 and 23 October and finally on 2 November.

Sparrowhawk

One of the reserves most common raptors and recorded most days in most parts of the reserve. Two pairs breed around the reserve with family parties of up to 5 noted in late summer.

Common Buzzard

Can be seen soaring over the reserve most days and occasionally perched on it throughout the year. Depending on season, numbers vary considerably with most birds being seen together in early spring and post breeding with family parties in late summer. On these occasions up to 20 birds have been noted in the air at any one time.

Up to 3 pairs breed in the woodland areas around the reserve.

Honey Buzzard

A bird of this description was noted in the area on 20 September 2011.

Osprey

In 2010 birds were seen on passage on 1 and 2 April and again on 8 August. The following year birds were recorded on 31 March, 20 April, 28 August and 6 October 2011.

Kestrel

BoCC Amber List

A regular visitor to the reserve which is an important feeding ground for the species and where up to 3 birds have been noted hunting on many occasions throughout the year and taking a variety of prey including insects, frogs and small lizards.

Merlin

BoCC Amber List

A species recorded frequently on or over the reserve during the winter period but also on occasions in late summer. In 2010, a pair was noted on 17 March with over 30 sightings during the rest of the year including one on 28 July. In 2011, single birds were noted on at least 28 occasions with 2 birds noted 8 further dates. Again early returning birds were noted on 25 and 26 July 2011.

Hobby



Risley Moss is an important site for this elegant migrant with birds being seen almost daily throughout the breeding season but particularly active and obvious between late July and September. On many occasions up to 6 birds can be seen hawking over the reserve for dragonflies and sometimes swallows and house martins.

In 2010 a bird was noted on 20 April followed by 2 there on 28 April with up to 5 birds noted in July, August and 6 there in September with the last being seen on 6 October.

A similar situation in 2011 saw an early arrival on 6 April and 6 present on 19 May and up to 5 birds on occasions in July and August. Last birds noted on 4 October.

Peregrine Falcon

An occasional bird is seen moving around the area during the breeding season otherwise most records are of adults or immature bird's pre or post breeding season. Birds are often drawn to the reserve and surrounding area by the large numbers of woodpigeons found there.

Water Rail

Two to four pairs breed annually with at least 1 pair being seen on many occasions in front of the OT during the 2010-2011 breeding season.

Moorhen

Occasionally seen on pools and scrapes on the mossland as well as the pond near the visitor centre. The breeding population has fallen to 4 pairs during this recording period following the intrusion of mink and the exceptionally cold winter of 2010/2011.

Coot

An unusual species for the reserve but 2 were noted on a mossland scrape on 18 March 2011.

Common Crane

The bird recorded flying over the reserve on 9 April 2010 is a first for the reserve.

Oystercatcher

The unmistakable call of this species is heard long before appears and was recorded on a several dates throughout the year and much in evidence prior to the breeding season and sometimes during it. The OT scrape is often used for loafing, displaying and occasionally feeding with pairs being frequently recorded such as the 4 noted on 10 May 2010 and 5 on 3 June 2010 and a pair on several dates in June and July 2011.

Little Ringer Plover

A pair was present and noted displaying on several dates in 2010 and 2011, but without success. Conditions have become generally unfavourable for this species due to the scrapes become increasingly vegetated or flooded as well as predation from large numbers of crows that frequent the reserve well into the breeding season.

Ringed Plover

Not a regular species but has been recorded on a few occasions as it was on 19 August and 25 September 2010. In 2011, 10 were noted passing over the reserve on 16 May with singles present in February 2011 and September 2011.

Golden Plover

Small flocks were noted moving around the area in 2010. This included 50 on 11 January, 100+ on 25 February and 20 on 9 November 2010 and a flock of over 200 on 27 January 2011.

Grey Plover

In 2010 singles were recorded briefly on 7 May, 19 August, 25 and 27 September and 6 October and in the following year 2 over on 17 May with singles reported on 19 May and 11 September.

Lapwing

Up to 3 pairs were present during the breeding seasons with one pair producing a single young in 2010. This species also suffers from increased predation and raised water levels.

Outside the breeding season the mossland serves as a casual roost for up to 100 birds on occasions.

BoCC Red List



Little Stint

A scarce migrant but a single was noted on a flooded scrape on 17 October 2010.

Curlew Sandpiper

Three birds were noted feeding briefly on the OT scrape 21 August with singles noted on 26 August 2010.

Dunlin

Another scarce species this far inland with a single noted on 23 August and 23 September 2010 with two there on 29 August 2011 and singles on 3 other dates.

Ruff

Singles noted flying over in February, March and August 2010 with 3 seen on 8 April 2010. Birds were also noted in March and July.

Jack Snipe

A regular winter visitor with between 2 – 4 birds noted frequently on several dates in the winter of 2009 / 2010 and again in the following year before the big freeze of 2010 and 2011 set in and the mossland froze over.

Common Snipe

BoCC Amber List

Breeding remains at 2 pairs for 2010 and 2011 with 'tocking' and display flight noted on several dates in both years.

The mossland is also an important winter roost for this species which is only abandoned if it freezes over. The winter monthly survey produced peak counts of up to 72 in 2009/2010 and 56 in 2010/2011. In the latter period the mossland was ice bound from late November 2010 through to late January 2011.

Woodcock

A difficult species to assess and there was no evidence of breeding despite the level of abundance prior to the breeding season. The reserve is an important roosting area for this species in winter with good number of birds flying out to the north east most nights at dusk and onto local fields to feed. Nightly counts varied between 5 – 10 birds but on occasions increased to 12+ as on 21 December 2010 and even better with 16 on 1 February and 23 February 2011. Potentially this figure could be much higher with similar movements occurring across the remainder of the reserve around the same time each evening.

Black-Tailed Godwit

An uncommon visitor but 4 were noted flying south on 15 March 2011.

Whimbrel

A casual migrant seen on passage as were the 2 seen on the 20 and 22 April 2010 and again on 16 August when a flock of 12 were recorded. In 2011, 8 landed on the mossland on 8 May with birds noted on 2 further dates in May and August.

Curlew

Birds occasionally and briefly land on the mossland but most records refer to a few birds over flying the reserve with the most seen being 5 on 25 June 2011.

Redshank

BoCC Amber List

Bred for the first time in 2006 repeated in 2007 and 2008 but has not bred since despite the presence of a pair for a short period in 2010. In 2011 birds were seen on only two dates.

Greenshank

Singles were recorded on 12 July, 14 August 2010 and 14 August 2011 with 2 there on 12 August 2011.

Green Sandpiper

A regular passage migrant and visitor to the reserve although the number of birds present at any one time has declined in recent years. Singles noted frequently most months outside the breeding season with 2 recorded on occasions and 3 there on 10 July 2010 and 29 September 2011.

Wood Sandpiper

One was noted on the mossland on 9 and 27 July and 6 August 2010 with 2 present on 28 July 2011.

Common Sandpiper

Singles recorded in April and July 2010 and again on 28 March and July 2011.

Mediterranean Gull

A single bird was noted overhead on 28 July 2010.

Little Gull

A bird briefly landed on the OT scrape on 21 March 2009 and seen flying over on 28 July 2010.

Kittiwake

A single was noted over the reserve on 20 September 2010.

Common Tern

With birds known to be breeding on 2 locations around the area it was no surprise that 2 were seen passing over the reserve on several dates between 25 May and 25 June 2010 and again in May 2011.

Arctic Tern

Unusually 2 were seen circling the reserve before heading out north on 26 April 2010.



Woodpigeon

Breeds and roosts in the woodland areas in good numbers. Winter roosts vary in size depending on local shooting and disturbance but up to 600 birds were regularly counted in the winters of 2010/2011 and 2011/2012.

Turtle Dove

Two birds were seen crossing the mossland on 13 June and again on 6 August with singles noted on 27 May and several other dates in July 2010 and were known to have bred in the area.

Cuckoo

BoCC Red List

Despite its decline nationally the Cuckoo still manages to be seen and/or heard regularly around the reserve most breeding seasons.

Principal host for many years was Meadow Pipit but with a general decline of this species the Cuckoo has switched to Dunnock which is abundant in both mossland and wooded habitat and more recently Reed Warbler which is a relatively new species to the reserve.

Activity in 2010 and 2011 proved successful breeding seasons with up to 2 birds operating over the reserve on many dates during the summer with young noted in both Dunnock and Reed Warbler nests. Early 18 April latest 18 August with juveniles being seen as late as 3 September.

Barn Owl

BoCC Amber List

A pair was actively recorded hunting over the reserve on regular occasions during 2010 and again on several dates in 2011 with single records on a further 12 occasions during the year. The species is

often seen hunting for small mammals over the mossland and occasionally perched on the owl box in the centre coppice or roosting in the shrubs on the north east corner of the reserve.

Little Owl

A sporadic visitor which tends to restricts itself to the tree line along the southern boundary.

Tawny Owl

In both years 3 pairs bred on the reserve with young being seen and heard roosting in various locations around the reserve including the SW Wood area.

Long-Eared Owl

One to two birds occasionally roost and hunt over the mossland as they did in 2010 but the surprising discovery of 8 birds in October 2011 was the most seen on the reserve at any one time.

Short-Eared Owl

BoCC Amber List

The mossland is an important roosting and feeding area for this species especially during the winter period. Up to 3 birds were in residence during the winter of 2010/2011 but moved on once the freeze set in. This was surpassed during the winter of 2011 / 2012 when up to 6 birds were present on the reserve during the winter period with 3 remaining on the mossland well into April. On these occasions birds were noted hunting over the mossland after dark or heading out south and west of the reserve.



Nightjar

BoCC Red List

A bird was heard 'churring' over the mossland on 15 May 2010 and seen there again 2 days later. A bird was again present on 3 consecutive dates in May 2011.

Swift [S]

The mossland and woodlands serve as important feeding area for this species as they hawk over them for insects. Although a few birds remain feeding over the reserve during the breeding season numbers are noticeably higher on spring and autumn passage when 200 – 400 being typical. Arrival and departure dates were 29 April 2010 / 21 August 2010 and 1 May 2011 / 12 August 2011.

Kingfisher

A casual visitor to the pools and ditches in both woodland and mossland zones present on 12 August 2010 and 21 January 2011.

Green Woodpecker

A casual visitor to the reserve with a bird present on 17 March, 6 November and 12 December 2010 and on 17 January, 11 February and 19 December 2011.

Great-Spotted Woodpecker

The reserves most common woodpecker seen and heard in most wooded areas throughout the year and especially at the Woodland Hide in winter. A total of 3 pairs bred on the reserve.

Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker

BoCC Red List

Although recorded on occasions in previous years an increase in activity in 2010 had birds calling and drumming on several occasions between 17 and 28 January, 21 February and 7 and 17 March, 1 and 29 July and again in November and 30 December.

Skylark

Small numbers noted moving around the area or on passage.

Sand Martin

One of the earliest migrants but not noted in any numbers during 2010 - 2011. Arrival dates were 25 March 2010 and 18 March 2011.

Swallow

Numbers were down on previous years. A few pairs remain locally and feed over the reserve during the breeding season with up to 150 being the peak passage movement.

A regular feature of this species is the nightly roosts which form on the mossland in late summer. Consisting mostly of immature birds the impending roost of up to 60 birds begins with gradual fly around by a few birds with others joining in towards dusk before suddenly dropping into favoured reeds or waterside willows as dusk falls.

Arrival / departure dates were 30 March / 7 October 2010 and 7 April / 20 October 2011.



House Martin

A similar situation to the previous species with a few pairs remaining in the area and occasionally noted feeding over the reserve but generally numbers were down in 2010 and 2011.

Tree Pipit

Nowadays an uncommon species restricted to brief stop overs with birds noted on 21 April, 12 August and 12 September (2 heading south) and again on 13 and 17 September 2010. A similar story for 2011 with birds recorded briefly on 30 April and again on two dates in September.

Occasionally birds attempt to set up territory and attract a mate with the usual territorial display but without success and move on within days.

Meadow Pipit

One pair bred in 2010 (cf 3 pairs in 2008) and attempted to do again in 2011 but without success. During autumn migration a steady stream of birds can be seen heading south some days with 110+ over the reserve on 23 September being typical.

The mossland is a regular roosting area at dusk but numbers are down on previous years with 10 – 20 being the most recorded.

BoCC Amber List

Yellow Wagtail

Occasional singles dropped onto the mossland or briefly passed over it.

Grey Wagtail

Noted as a casual visitor during the period 2010-2011, briefly on the mossland or flying over it.

Pied Wagtail

Up to 3 birds occasionally noted feeding on the mossland or flying over it, especially post breeding or when on passage.

Waxwing

On 28 October 2010 a group of 30 were recorded flying across the mossland as were 26 on 15 November. The only other records were of small numbers passing through in February, March and April 2011.

Wren

A good population exists in both woodland and scrubby mossland habitats most years. Of particular note is the presence of the species in the latter area in the depth of winter although the prolonged freeze of 2010/2011 was the exception when the species was hit hard and only noted as recovering by spring 2012.

Dunnock

BoCC Amber List

Of continuing interest is the movement and breeding of this species out on the relatively open mossland with some birds remaining there in all but the harshest of weather. Good numbers also continue to breed in the woodland areas.

Robin

Remains a common resident and breeding bird found in most parts of the reserve.

Common Redstart

A bird was noted near the OT on 19 September 2010 and 13 July 2011 and again in September 2011.

Whinchat

A male was noted on the mossland on 18 May, 23 August and 17 September 2010. In 2011, birds were noted on 5 May and again in July 2011.

Stonechat

After the successful breeding season of 2008, the species has suffered a decline and in particular after the long, cold winter of 2010/2011 with just single records in both years.

Wheatear

Normally the overgrown paths and scrapes on the mossland are unsuited to this transient species. But following a good deal of tree removal and disturbed ground, conditions changed enough to encourage 7 (4m/3f) to drop onto the mossland in full view of several bird watchers on 2 April 2011. In the previous year sightings were restricted to just 2 in September 2010.

Ring Ouzel

Rarely seen on the reserve but a male appeared on 27 April 2010 and stayed until the end of the month. Return passage included a bird on 20 October 2010. In the following year a male was recorded on 23 March and 2 were present on 28 March with 2 singles noted in September 2011.

Blackbird

A common breeding species found in most parts of the reserve throughout the year. The population remains steady year on year in the main and north woodlands areas.

Over the winter period up to 30 birds can be seen feeding at the Woodland Hide during the day with up to 50 birds entering the rhododendron roost near the OT most nights prior to the winter of 2011/2012 and removal of rhododendron. An influx of birds to the reserve is also noted most autumns and again in spring.

Fieldfare

BoCC Red List

A migrant noted in good numbers on passage and then in smaller groups during the winter period.

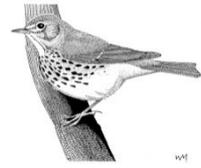
In 2010, autumn passage began on 17 October with numbers slowly increasing and resulting in impressive movements such as the 1000 passing over the reserve on 27 October 2010.

In 2011 first birds were noted again on 17 October 2011 with flocks of up to 300 noted on several dates during the rest of the month.

Song Thrush

BoCC Red List

A resident species that frequents the woodland edges around the reserve boundary and in particular those areas that border the surrounding houses and gardens along the west and north edges of the reserve. A total of 6 pairs in 2010 and 7 in 2011 (cf 12 pairs in 2009) were recorded on the BBS.



Redwing

BoCC Red List

Flock sizes vary but over 400 were noted passing overhead on 27 October 2010 and 200+ on 23 October 2011. Small groups of up to 100 regularly roost along the south edge of the reserve in winter. Arrival dates were 12 October 2010 and 23 October 2011.

Mistle Thrush

BoCC Amber List

A total of 1-2 pairs breed around the reserve most years, otherwise only seen in small numbers with the 7 birds noted on 17 October 2010 and again on 18 February 2011 being the largest group recorded recently.

Grasshopper Warbler

BoCC Red List

Has bred on occasions in previous years but over the current monitoring period was only heard reeling between 29 April and 1 May 2010 and again in August 2010. In 2011, a bird was heard reeling on 8 April but did not remain in the area for long.

Sedge Warbler

A casual breeding species with the BBS revealing 3 pairs present in 2010 and 2 pairs in 2011.

Reed Warbler

A bird previously noted as a passage migrant. All that changed in 2010 when a single pair bred on the reserve for the first time since records began. The following year the BBS revealed 2 pairs present in the expanding area of common reed with 1 pair falling host to cuckoo.

Lesser Whitethroat

Birds were noted on passage on several dates in May 2010. A single bird was present on 19 April 2011 and again in June and August.

Whitethroat

BoCC Amber List

A regular summer migrant which breeds in the scrubby thickets of the mossland. The BBS included 3 pairs in 2010 and 5 pairs in 2011. Arrival dates were 26 April 2010 and 9 April 2011.

Garden Warbler

A pair bred on the mossland in 2010 and was a transient visitor in 2011.

Blackcap

A regular breeding species found in all woodland areas on the reserve. The annual BBS recorded 10 pairs in 2010 and an impressive 18 pairs in 2011.

Apart from the occasional over-wintering bird, most arrive on the reserve between mid-March and early April.

Wood Warbler

A scarce visitor recorded on 9, 12 and 23 May 2010 and several other dates that month and again on 14 May 2011 and 30 August 2011.

Chiffchaff

Another regular breeding species found in the more mature woodland/scrub areas. The species remains steady over the years with 4 pairs recorded in 2010 and 6 pairs in 2011.

Initially following a 'fall' of warblers – usually around mid-March, numerous Chiffchaffs can be heard in most wooded areas of the reserve but after a few days birds move on and the breeding population settles out to the above levels.

Arrival dates were 26 March 2010 and 18 March 2011.



Willow Warbler

BoCC Amber List

One of the reserves most abundant warblers with breeding territories confined primarily to the scrubby areas on the mossland and treeline around the edge of the reserve. The BBS recorded 48 pairs in 2010 and 50 pairs in 2011.

Birds appeared on the early date of 25 March 2010 and 22 March 2011.

Goldcrest

Present in small numbers and mostly seen in winter with the mixed tit flocks. As with last year a pair bred in 2010 and was again present in 2011 but breeding was unproven.

Up until the onset of the month long freeze in 2010/2011, birds were seen regularly around the main woodland areas but only a handful of times during the remainder of 2011.

Firecrest

A sporadic visitor to the reserve but noted with a mixed flock of tits in the Bottom Coppice on 15 February 2011.

Spotted Flycatcher

A bird was noted on 3 May 2010. Later in the year and viewed by several people 2 were frequently perched and feeding next to the OT on 30 August 2010 with the last seen on 18 September 2010.

Pied Flycatcher

A female was recorded on 22 April 2010.

Long-Tailed Tit

Up to 4 pairs breed on the reserve most years. Outside the breeding season various sized flocks can be seen in most parts of the reserve -including the relatively open mossland, where between 10 and 20 birds are noted. Small groups also gather at the Woodland Hide feeders most days.

Marsh Tit

BoCC Red List

A sporadic visitor which is occasionally noted among tit flocks on the reserve. A bird was seen among a tit flock on 14 October 2010 and noted on 7 January, 24 March, 25 March, and 10 October and near the Mossland Hide on 25 November 2011.

Willow Tit

BoCC Red List

Although a pair bred in 2010 up to 2 birds are now mostly seen at the WH feeders in winter or among the mixed tit flocks that roam the reserve.

Coal Tit

A total of 2-4 pairs breed on the reserve and are often noted at the WH feeders in winter or among the mixed tit flocks that move around the reserve.

Blue Tit

Is an under recorded species but the most common resident tit on the reserve and using the nest boxes.

Great Tit

Similar status to the previous species and also a frequent user of the larger diameter holed nest boxes.

Nuthatch

Although 2 pairs were noted on occasions during the period 2010 /2011, breeding remained at 1 pair in 2010 and 2011. There is considerably movement and aggression among birds and it is likely that a second pair will nest in future years. Birds are seen daily at the WH feeders and heard calling in most parts of the mature woodland area.

Treecreeper

A breeding species which is often overlooked as it forages in the mature woodland areas. A minimum of 2 pairs bred in 2010 and following the hard winter 1 pair in 2011. Birds are often seen among the mixed flocks that rove the woodlands and occasionally at the WH feeders.

BoCC Amber List



Jay

Can be seen and heard in most areas of woodland throughout the year. The Jay is especially noticeable in spring when up to 12 birds raucously challenge each other for territories in the main woodland. Birds are also very prominent in autumn as they gather acorns in the main woodland and then fly low over the mossland to the south side to store them.

Magpie

Compared with previous years the number of magpies nesting and resident on the reserve is at an all-time low. Between 2 and 4 breeding pairs were the maximum recorded.

Jackdaw

Until the Corvid roost began forming on the reserve in 2007 this species was only ever seen passing over as they headed north to an established roost in the Culcheth area. Since then, up to 250 birds have been recorded dropping into roost every night throughout the winter period. On these occasions birds arrive in small flocks towards dusk and gather along the south boundary before joining up with crows and moving into the woodland area behind the Mossland Hide as darkness falls. On rare occasions a group of Jackdaws put on the type of display akin to Starlings and begin wheeling, diving and soaring in unison over the mossland.

Rooks

Occasionally a few birds also join the nightly roost in winter. At these time up to 100 birds have been noted.

Carrion Crow

Since 2007 the reserve has become a major roosting site for this species. Initially the roost consisted of a few birds but increased slowly over the next few winters until it reached its current level in 2011 of between 500 – 800 birds most nights.

Birds begin arriving in various sized flocks at sunset and continue to do so until dark, most arrive from the north and gather on the trees along the south boundary. Gradually birds' tree hop to the south west wood before taking off as darkness falls to roost in the central woodland on the reserve. (Exceptionally and significantly over 1000 birds poured into the roost in February 2012).

Another problem with so many Crows being in the area is the impact they have on various other birds. Most significantly is the presence of crows during the breeding season and the impact they have on open nest species. With several crows perched on trees around the mossland very little escapes their attention resulting in the loss of eggs and young birds.

At other times of the year raptors such as marsh and hen harrier, as well as short eared owls are quickly driven off or harassed incessantly by several crows.

Hooded Crow

A bird of this description was recorded on 26 October 2010.

Raven

A sporadic visitor recorded outside the breeding season several times in 2010 and again in 2011.

Starling

Up to 2000 birds noted on the adjacent waste tip on occasions during the winter period with smaller flocks passing over the reserve at other times of the year.

House Sparrow

Usually confined to the boundaries of the reserve where flocks of 40 – 100 have been recorded.

Tree Sparrow

Once bred on the reserve now confined to rare occasions when birds pass overhead or around the boundaries of the reserve.

Chaffinch

A resident species recorded mostly in the wooded areas and in particular at the WH feeders in winter where up to 25 birds have been counted on some days.

Brambling

Small numbers recorded on occasions in winter and usually at the Woodland Hide feeders where up to 13 were recorded on a few dates in 2010 and sporadically up to 10 in 2011

Greenfinch

Although a pair bred on the mossland in 2010 the species is generally uncommon with a group of 8 on two dates in August 2010 and similar numbers for 2011.

Goldfinch

Small numbers are frequently recorded feeding on the birch and alders in the woodland with post breeding flocks of 10 – 30 noted frequently but up to 100 birds occasionally.

Siskin

Following sporadic influxes from the continent birds are usually seen feeding on alders and birch seedlings around the reserve. Numbers vary considerably between a few birds to flocks of up to 30 as recorded on 29 October 2010 and less in 2011.

Linnet

A minimum of 2 pairs bred on the reserve in 2010 and 2011. Outside the breeding season flocks of 10 - 20 birds regularly traverse the mossland in winter with a flock of 50 in August 2011 being the most noted.

BoCC Red List

Lesser Redpoll**BoCC Red List**

Up to 4 pairs breed on the reserve. Usually recorded in small numbers of up to 30 birds but up to 60 have been noted moving around the reserve prior to the breeding season. A total of 30 birds were noted on in January and February

Common Crossbill

An irregular species usually recorded on passage or during the winter period. Birds were recorded on 23 January (2), 27 December 2010(3) and more recently 5 flying south on 23 October 2011.

Bullfinch**BoCC Amber List**

Up to 3 pairs breeding on the reserve and up to 9 at the WH feeders in winter. Also very active in other parts of the reserve especially in early spring when 6 – 10 birds have been noted feeding together on emergent blossom in spring.

**Yellowhammer****BoCC Red List**

The breeding population of this species remained at 3 pairs in 2010 and 2011.

Reed Bunting**BoCC Amber List**

As a mossland indicator species, breeding remains relatively stable with the annual BBS recording of 20 pairs in 2010 and 22 in 2011 (cf 24 pairs, 2009).

In recent years the mossland reed bed nearest the mossland hide has become increasingly important for winter roosting with up to 20 birds noted dropping into it during the winter of 2010-2011 increasing to over 50 birds in the winter of 2011-2012.

Corn Bunting

A scarce visitor on the reserve and mostly confined to the farmland boundaries such as the 4 noted on 6 December 2011.

Sketches courtesy of W. Morton

Photos R. Smith

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