

Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Birds 2018

This year I made three early morning visits during the peak breeding period (29/4, 19/5 and 11/6) in good survey conditions.

As ever, the time-intensive listening and observing yielded a good variety of bird species across the site.

Particular attention was given to singing, displaying, nest building and food-carrying individuals and a good selection of recently-fledged young was noted, indicating that the very dry later part of the season wasn't injurious to local breeding success.

While locating breeding activity was the main thrust of the walk-overs, all species were registered on the field maps in the interests of completeness. Therefore the accompanying spreadsheet also contains passage-only species (e.g. Sand Martin) and presumed local breeders with large territories (e.g. Raven) and more closely linked off-site breeders using the site for feeding throughout (e.g. Swallow and House Sparrow).

37 species were demonstrated to be breeding on-site, as well as three or four 'possibles'.

A familiar fluctuation of the most common species (e.g. Wren: 10 pairs instead of last year's 6) was noted as well as those less numerous species with a toehold on site (e.g. Mistle Thrush 'back' after a 2017 absence).

In the short term perhaps little can be read into these losses and gains but of course the positive habitat management of the site must be kept up in order to provide for all of these species.

In terms of once very common species in decline (both locally and nationally) perhaps Greenfinch (increasing to 3 pairs this year), Tree Sparrow and Linnet (one pair each) warrant note here for 'bucking the trend'.

Another nationally dwindling farmland species, Stock Dove, seems to have settled down to a healthy two pairs in recent survey years. In contrast, the apparent absence of the more steeply declining Grey Partridge was noted with regret after presence in 2016 and 2017.

Lapwing did not breed on the site in 2018 (and indeed was not encountered on any of the three visits) and on a personal note I hope that we'll see them displaying next spring.

Dan Haywood
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