

## Fairfield Nature Reserve: Breeding Bird Survey 2023

Three morning visits were carried out; one each in April, May and June.

The results are as ever, a mixed bag. A summary of each of 2023's breeding birds is given in the species accounts below. In addition, a series of figures illustrating how and where each of these species use the site to breed is presented.

As would be expected in a bird study like this, the focus is on what has been seen and heard, but where appropriate, key species notable by their absence are also mentioned within the accounts.

It was a good breeding season for the some of the reserve's finch species; with exceptionally high pair counts of Greenfinch and Goldfinch, but Chaffinches were at a worrying low.

Good tallies of species like Wren and Woodpigeon might well have gone unmentioned in the recent past. That both these formerly abundant species would be on the amber list of conservation concern in the 2020s would have been unthinkable to many, including this surveyor.

We can see from Figure 2 (a composite image of all the breeding territories) that the majority of territories and nests are in the copses and hedgerows that skirt and criss-cross the reserve. Note however the paucity of territories along 'Long Pads' where a combination of thin hedges and high footfall continues to make this hedge-line unviable for nesting. Compare with the adjoining hedgerow which runs east-west which has a much higher density of breeding birds.

The open ground no longer hosts Lapwing (last breeding seven years ago) and Grey Partridge (last seen on site around 2006) is now no longer an annual breeder in the whole of North Lancashire. With this in mind, it is perhaps worth a reappraisal of the management of the open areas within the site.

The three 'new' species confirmed as breeding on the reserve this year are songbirds associated with well vegetated wetlands, so expansion of these habitats could be a fruitful avenue to explore. Mallard and Moorhen (both amber-listed) could also stand to benefit although both species were seen to suffer losses to predation this year.

*Dan Haywood Ecology, Autumn 2023.*



## Species Accounts

Headed using vernacular name, latin name, BTO code (where used in figures) and UK conservation status.

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**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* not assessed

A pair of this increasing and range-expanding non-native species was seen in suitable habitat during the April visit but there were no subsequent observations.

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**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* Amber

No proof of breeding this year but the site was seen to be used for courting (two males and a female) in the May visit. This species is known to have nested close to the site's eastern boundary (in a garden outhouse) historically and is seen annually, during the breeding season only. However, no cast-iron proof of successful breeding (e.g. young seen) has ever been noted by the surveyor.

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**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera* Amber

A drake seen on a wet section of West Field during the April visit was considered to be an off-passage migrant. However, this species is on the increase as a breeder in N. Lancs, with a significant stronghold at Leighton Moss.

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**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* MA Amber

Three nesting pairs was a good showing for the reserve and although two of these (including a sitting female) were seen to be predated by mammals early season, replacement clutches yielded some success in June.

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**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* PH Green

One pair of this non-native species this year, appearing to nest in the arable crop.

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**Swift** *Apus apus* Red

This declining species was seen to be nesting in houses on the abutting street of Cromwell Rd and up to six individuals were 'hawking' over the reserve during the May and June visits. Observations of this and other key summering species are kept to illustrate the local importance of the reserve and its insect life.

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**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* SD Amber

Two pairs in 2023; one in the traditional spot in the south of the study area (Pony Wood) and another in the north. See Figure 3.26.

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**Woodpigeon** *Columba oenas* WP Amber

Twelve pairs in 2023 was a good showing for this now amber-listed species, nesting mainly in the thicker hedgerows. See Figure 3.24.

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**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* CD Green

A broadly typical two pairs nested within the study area this year. As ever with this human habitation-loving species, the nest sites abutted gardens! See Figure 3.1.

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**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* MH Amber

Three pairs nested but predation by mammals (at the clutch stage) appeared to be an ongoing problem, probably not helped by a very dry late spring. See Figure 3.16.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* OC not assessed

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Once an occasional former breeder, just one sighting of a singleton on the arable field in April.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco* Amber

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An adult of this occasional breeding species was encountered (in daylight hours) on the June visit. A programme of additional nocturnal and crepuscular survey visits could yield interesting data on this and other species.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* GS Green

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As in most years, a pair nested in the south of the study area. *See Figure 3.2.*

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* Green

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A foraging pair seen during the May visit were likely nesting just outside of the study area.

**Maggie** *Pica pica* MG Green

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Two nesting pairs within the study area this year was an increase on the usual one. *See Figure 3.1.*

**Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula* JD Green

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One pair nested in a tree hole in the south of the study area. *See Figure 3.1.* Further casual records indicate chimney pot nesters in nearby Cromwell Rd and Aldcliffe Rd.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone* C. Green

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The long-serving nest in the west of the reserve was occupied once more and was seen to produce young. *See Figure 3.1.*

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* CT Green

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The paucity of coniferous trees in the study area once again brings a typically low territory count of one. *See Figure 3.9.*

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus* BT Green

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Circa nine pairs on site this year, mostly associated with nest boxes. A programme of nest box monitoring would yield more and more precise data for this and other box using species. *See Figure 3.16.*

**Great Tit** *Parus major* GT Green

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Eight pairs this year, mostly using nest boxes. *See Figure 3.14.*

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*, & House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

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As in most spring / summers, the reserve provided feeding opportunities for these insectivorous migrants, with up to eight of the former (green-listed) and three of the latter (red-listed) seen during the May and June visits.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* LT Green

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Two pairs nested in scrub near the brook in 2023, with seven recently-fledged birds seen there in June. *See Figure 3.2.*

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* CC Green

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Four pairs on site represents an above-average year for this small migrant warbler. *See Figure 3.7.*

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* SW Amber

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A new addition to the reserve's breeding avifauna. Two pairs nested with at least some success in the vicinity of the *phragmites* bed by the brook. *See Figure 3.22.*

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* RW Green

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After the 'pioneering male' in 2022, two pairs raised young in and around the *phragmites* in the centre-east of the study area. *See Figure 3.19.*

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* GH Red

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Another welcome development in the wetter areas- the first breeding record in the study area. A male using the rushes for song-posts (as in 2022) in May was followed by sightings of an adult or adults carrying food to nestlings in the *phragmites* in June. *See Figure 3.11.*

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* BC Green

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Six pairs of this warbler species held territory in spring / summer 2023, the same figure as in the previous two seasons. *See Figure 3.4.*

**Common Whitethroat** *Curruca communis* WH Amber

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Two pairs in 2023 was down on 2022's record three territories. *See Figure 3.23. There were no observations of Lesser Whitethroat (which bred in the previous three seasons) this year.*

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* GC Green

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Just one territory was located; not a surprising return for a study area with relatively few conifers. *See Figure 3.2.*

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* WR Amber

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Sixteen pairs was gladly up on 2022's disappointing eleven and indeed represents a record high for what is now an amber-listed species. *See Figure 3.25.*

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* NH Green

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Two pairs was an above-average showing for this arboreal species. *See Figure 3.2.*

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* TC Green

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As usual, one pair nested in the mature trees in the south of the reserve. *See Figure 3.2.*

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* SG Red

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One pair was seen to nest in a tree cavity within the study area. Several casual observations of nesting in adjacent housing. A feeding flock of 36 noted in the pasture in June contained 28 juveniles, indicating a reasonably productive breeding season locally. *See Figure 3.19.*

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* ST Amber

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Four pairs was above average, suggesting that this species is 'bouncing back' locally and that the site's habitats and invertebrate life are proving attractive. *See Figure 3.21.*

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* Red

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One adult in April was the sole sighting this spring, and as such no breeding was thought to have taken place this season- the first 'blank' year since 2020.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula* B. Green

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An on-average thirteen pairs of this sonically-conspicuous thrush this season, indicating a stable breeding population. Recently-fledged young were seen in both May and June. *See Figure 3.3.*

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* R. Green

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Nine breeding pairs in 2023 was a little above-average. Two broods of recently-fledged young were observed in June. *See Figure 3.17.*

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Amber

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Of course, no breeding- but an off-passage party of three (of Iceland or Greenland form) in the arable field indicates the reserve's continued usefulness to this and other long-distance migrant bird species during 'our' breeding season.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* Red

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As ever no breeding on the site proper, but seen to nest in several adjacent houses. A post-breeding flock of 21 was using the northern pasture in June, a lesser number than in some years. *Again, no Tree Sparrow (Passer montanus); a target species oddly reluctant to visit / use what would seem to be entirely suitable habitats in any season!*

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* D. Amber

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It was a record year for territorial pairs, with twelve (10 in 2022 & 2021, 8 in 2020), and although evidence of breeding outcomes was scant, this is certainly not conclusive of failure for this often skulking species. *See Figure 3.10.*

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* CH Green

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Just two pairs was a particularly poor breeding presence for a formerly common species recently flagged by the BTO as a finch in significant decline nationally. This is perhaps evidence that the locally significant winter counts of this species at the LDBWS feeding station in the arable field are continental winter visitors. *See Figure 3.8.*

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* BF Amber

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One pair, which was later seen to be feeding recently-fledged young were in a densely vegetated area in June. *See Figure 3.5.*

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris* GR Red

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The BTO's latest data indicating something of a national population recovery was borne out on site by a record seven pairs, mostly closely associated with hawthorns. *See Figure 3.11.*

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* GO Green

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Fifteen pairs represents another finch record and a significant increase at that, being just over twice the five-year average. *See Figure 3.12.*


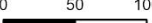
Two pairs in the rushy parts of the study area was down on 2022's high of three but still a respectable showing. One nest was located at the near the foot of a bramble bush by the brook. *See Figure 3.18.*



Figures showing breeding territories:




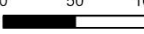
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<p><b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Conservation Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Red</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">●</span> Amber</li> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Green</li> <li><span style="border: 1px solid yellow; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> Survey Study Area</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Meters</p> <p>0      50      100</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Scale: 1:4,000 @A4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b></p> <hr/> <p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>
<p>Figure 3.1 Bird Observations <b>Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Pheasant, Collared Dove</b></p>			





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<p>Figure 3.2 Bird Observations <b>Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker Nuthatch, Treecreeper Long-tailed Tit</b></p>			

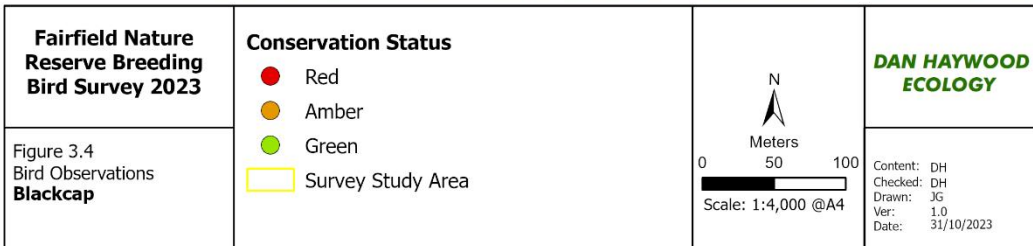
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<p>Figure 3.3 Bird Observations <b>Blackbird</b></p>			<p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>


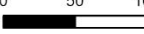


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<p>Figure 3.5 Bird Observations <b>Bullfinch</b></p>			<p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>



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<p>Figure 3.6 Bird Observations <b>Blue Tit</b></p>			

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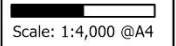


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<p>Figure 3.7 Bird Observations <b>Chiffchaff</b></p>			



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<p>Figure 3.8 Bird Observations <b>Chaffinch</b></p>	<p><span style="border: 1px solid yellow; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> Survey Study Area</p>		<p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>

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Figure 3.9 Bird Observations <b>Coal Tit</b>			



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<p>Figure 3.10 Bird Observations <b>Dunnock</b></p>	<p><span style="border: 1px solid yellow; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Survey Study Area</p>		<p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>

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Figure 3.11 Bird Observations <b>Grasshopper Warbler</b>			





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<p>Figure 3.12 Bird Observations <b>Goldfinch</b></p>	<p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>		

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<p>Figure 3.13 Bird Observations <b>Greenfinch</b></p>			



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Figure 3.14 Bird Observations <b>Great Tit</b>		Scale: 1:4,000 @A4	Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023

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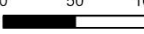


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Figure 3.15 Bird Observations <b>Mallard</b>			

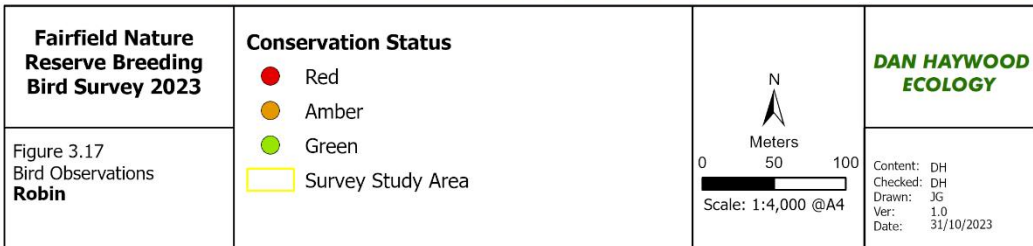


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<p>Figure 3.16 Bird Observations <b>Moorhen</b></p>			<p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>



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<p>Figure 3.18 Bird Observations <b>Reed Bunting</b></p>			

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<b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b>	<b>Conservation Status</b> ● Red ● Amber ● Green □ Survey Study Area	 Meters 0 50 100	<b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b>
Figure 3.19 Bird Observations <b>Reed Warbler</b>		Scale: 1:4,000 @A4	Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023

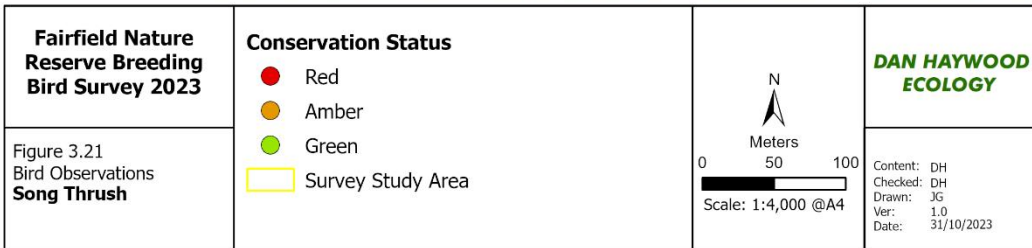


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<b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b>	<b>Conservation Status</b> ● Red ● Amber ● Green	 Meters 0 50 100 Scale: 1:4,000 @A4	<b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b>
Figure 3.20 Bird Observations <b>Starling</b>	□ Survey Study Area		Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023

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<b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b>	<b>Conservation Status</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Red</li><li>● Amber</li><li>● Green</li></ul>		<b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b>
Figure 3.22 Bird Observations <b>Sedge Warbler</b>	■ Survey Study Area		Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023

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<p><b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Conservation Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Red</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">●</span> Amber</li> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Green</li> </ul> <p><span style="border: 1px solid yellow; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> Survey Study Area</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Meters</p> <p>0      50      100</p>  <p>Scale: 1:4,000 @A4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b></p> <p>Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 31/10/2023</p>
<p>Figure 3.23 Bird Observations <b>Whitethroat</b></p>			

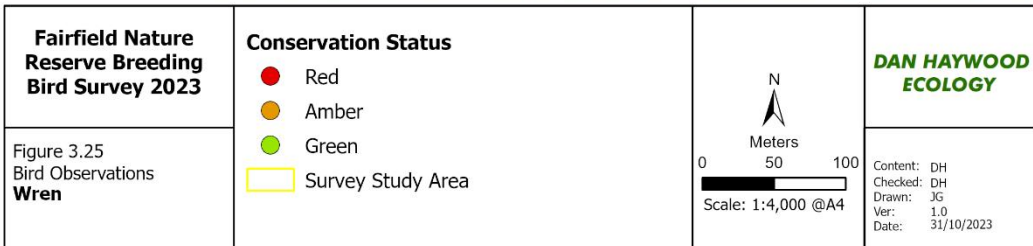


Produced by InTouch Geospatial Services Ltd.



<p><b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Conservation Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: red;">●</span> Red</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">●</span> Amber</li> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Green</li> </ul> <p><span style="border: 1px solid yellow; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> Survey Study Area</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Meters</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0      50      100</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Scale: 1:4,000 @A4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b></p>
<p>Figure 3.24 Bird Observations <b>Woodpigeon</b></p>			


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<b>Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Bird Survey 2023</b>	<b>Conservation Status</b> ● Red ● Amber ● Green □ Survey Study Area	 Meters 0 50 100	<b>DAN HAYWOOD ECOLOGY</b>
Figure 3.26 Bird Observations <b>Stock Dove</b>		Scale: 1:4,000 @A4	Content: DH Checked: DH Drawn: JG Ver: 1.0 Date: 01/11/2023