

Fairfield Winter Bird Survey 2022-2023

Three dedicated visits were carried out in this period (in December, January and February) with all habitats checked thoroughly in fine conditions. Note however that snipe flush counts in the wettest rushy parts of the study area were conducted by another team so these areas weren't walked systematically.

In addition to the data collected during these three four-hour sessions, note that the spreadsheet refers to peak counts of some key species monitored as part of the supplementary feeding scheme.

The survey revealed 49 species using the reserve. It was quite a poor season for wildfowl and gulls due in part to a reduction of standing water in West Field. This may also account for the 'no-show' of Redshank which would often benefit from the seasonal floods of yesteryear.

Six Lapwing in the arable field during the frosty December visit were likely part of a local cold weather movement. In icy conditions Lapwings often move inland away from the mud and saltmarsh of their core winter territories. However occasional, it's good to see that the reserve is sometimes still of use to this former breeder. A Woodcock was also seen in December- a largely nocturnal species seemingly present in most winters but surely under-recorded.

A record count of Song Thrushes (21 during the December visit) was (like the welcome Lapwing sighting) also probably attributable to the cold snap. It was however not a vintage year for those classic winter thrushes Fieldfare and Redwing, with just single-figure counts of these nomadic Fennoscandian migrants. Blackbirds, many of which are also likely to be of continental origin during these months peaked (alongside Song Thrushes) in December with a record day count of 43 (mostly male) birds on that visit.

Stonechat is a species most seen commonly on site on northward passage in early spring, however a male and female found the margins of the arable field (particularly by the *newt ponds*) to their liking in late November and on several days in December including the survey date. The arable field was also attractive to what appeared to be the same Kestrel, with a female seen hunting for rodents there on all three visits.

Transects walked in this field were necessary to detect Meadow Pipits (present during each visit) and also Skylark, which was present during the first two visits. Both of these species of open ground are sadly only found here outside of the breeding season.

The sparrow family was represented solely by House Sparrow. Slightly below-average counts of this resident red-lister this winter, and as ever far more commonly found in the northern half of the study area.

Of the finch species only Greenfinch and Bullfinch had a similar site distribution to House Sparrow, with the others favouring the arable field and often clustered around the feeding station. The supplementary food of the latter area was responsible for the high counts of Chaffinch (71 in January, among the biggest recent counts in N. Lancashire). Linnets, flocking around the wildflower strips from early autumn 2022 also took advantage of the feeding station in winter, with up to 32 at a time noted during the main survey visits and 47 at other times.

Reed Bunting numbers, though higher than in pre-feeding station years, were less impressive- and for reasons unclear, didn't climb in late winter and early spring as in the previous two winter seasons. It was however a good season for another amber-listed beneficiary of the feeding station, Stock Dove- with up to eleven at a time noted here.



One of 21 Song Thrushes on site during the December 2022 visit

Counts

Species	code	status	Dec Visit	Jan visit	Feb visit	Species Notes
Blackbird	B.		43	15	11	
Black-headed Gull	BH	Amber			4	
Blue Tit	BT		23	27	29	
Brambling	BL					no records this period
Bullfinch	BF	Amber	4	2	3	
Carrion Crow	C.		3	4	10	
Chaffinch	CH		46 (53)	55 (71)	31 (55)	highest feeding station count by month in brackets
Coal Tit	CT		2	2	4	
Collared Dove	CD		6	2	3	
Common Gull	CM	Amber			5	feeding in West Field
Dunnock	D.	Amber	10	16	13	
Fieldfare	FF	Red	1		4	
Goldcrest	GC		1	1		
Goldfinch	GO		10	8	22	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	GS		1	1		
Great Tit	GT		6	5	5	
Greenfinch	GR	Red	3	5	3	
Grey Heron	H.			1		
Grey Wagtail	GL	Amber		1		School Pond
House Sparrow	HS	Red	60	69	56	
Jack Snipe	JS					no records this period but cf. dedicated snipe counts by CG et al.
Jackdaw	JD		35	53	20	
Jay	J.		1	2	1	
Kestrel	K.	Amber	1	1	1	
Lapwing	L.	Red	6			in arable field
Linnet	LI	Red	8 (32)	12 (26)	32 (47)	highest feeding station count by month in brackets

Long-tailed Tit	LT		5	7	9	
Magpie	MG		5	7	6	
Mallard	MA	Amber	2	5	3	
Meadow Pipit	MP	Amber	10	7	8	all recorded in the arable field
Mistle Thrush	M.	Red	1	2	2	
Moorhen	MH		3	2	5	
Nuthatch	NH			2	1	
Pheasant	PH		8	4	3	
Pied Wagtail	PW			1	2	
Redshank	RK					
Redwing	RE	Red	6	1	3	
Reed Bunting	RB	Amber	5 (4)	7 (7)	3 (6)	highest feeding station count by month in brackets
Robin	R.		12	9	7	
Rook	RO			5		arable field
Skylark	S.	Red	2	1		arable field
Snipe	SN	Amber	6	6	2	cf. the additional snipe flush counts carried out by CG et al.
Song Thrush	ST	Red	21	6	4	
Sparrowhawk	SH		1	1	2	
Starling	SG	Red	15	9	23	
Stock Dove	SD	Amber	9 (11)	7 (8)	4 (7)	highest feeding station count by month in brackets
Stonechat	SC		2			
Tawny Owl	TO	Amber				no records this period
Teal	T.	Amber		1	4	School Pond
Treecreeper	TC		3	2	1	
Water Rail	WA					no records this period
Woodcock	WK	Red	1			
Woodpigeon	WP	Amber	16	9	13	
Wren	WR	Amber	14	9	17	