



## Walberton Parish Bird Survey 2008

Walberton Action Group (WAG) decided to find out which birds were typically present in the parish of Walberton, which includes Binsted and Fontwell. The information will complement other surveys carried out in recent years, including a habitat survey, a hedgerows survey and a survey of flowering plants associated with the richest hedgerows.

The Bird Survey was carried out by some 40 volunteers all drawn from the local community; most of the parish was divided into 21 survey compartments which were visited by the volunteers between March and July 2008. WAG is grateful to all the volunteers and to the landowners who kindly gave their permission for access.

WAG is particularly grateful to David Hart, chairman of the local branch of the RSPB and a local resident, who helped to set up the survey, trained and enthused the volunteers and who collated the results as summarised in this, his report.



Photographs were not included in the original report. Acknowledgements **Lapwing, Snipe** [www.everythingexmoor.org.uk](http://www.everythingexmoor.org.uk) **Tree Sparrow** - Southwell, May 5th 2005 © Pete Saunders ([www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk](http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk)) added by the Webmaster

**WALBERTON ACTION GROUP**  
**WALBERTON & BINSTED BIRD SURVEY 2008**

The Parish of Walberton and Binsted is blessed with a very diverse habitat for birds. Ancient oak woodland with ample water supplies, large arable fields, with wide grass headlands and a superb network of hedges, so important for bird movement when moving between areas of woodland. A golf course with maturing habitat, and again, plenty of water. Large areas of water meadows, sub divided by ancient hedgerows of unusually generous width and height surrounded by the rife. A small area of disused sandpits, bordered by conifer woodland. These habitats combined with live stock, cattle and sheep, mixed cropping, cereals, maize and oil-seed rape makes for a very exciting area to survey.

The Parish was sub-divided into twenty one areas, each area having at least two recorders. It was suggested that five monthly surveys, March through to July, be made to record all birds positively identified by sight or sound. Out of the twenty one areas, nineteen were completed. Each team of recorders were supplied with five maps, one for each monthly survey and asked to record using a specie code where each bird was seen or heard. The importance of such data being that any species (yellow hammer for example) recorded in or very near the same area would strongly indicate a breeding pair. This is particularly true of early March, April and May recordings.

It was suggested that early a.m. is always the most rewarding time to record birds. This fact was clearly borne out in the survey results. Those surveys recorded during afternoon and evenings were generally less rewarding. A total of 86 species were recorded, some of these were passage migrants, fieldfare, redwing, pied flycatcher, Red kite, osprey, siskin. Others were likely to be non-breeding juveniles, swan, raven, peregrine, little egret, cormorant etc.. By far the most important statistic being that no less than seventeen red listed birds (high conservation concern) ,and eighteen amber listed birds (medium conservation concern).

Only four species were recorded in all nineteen areas (blackbird, blue tit, magpie and robin) which was disappointing. Even allowing for the different habitats, noise levels, time of day and experience of recorders, many of the common birds that we all know and recognise were missing, which follows the consensus of opinion of recent surveys carried out by the RSPB and the BTO that numbers of some song birds continue to decline. Also noticeably down were swifts, swallows and martins. On a more positive note yellow hammers, house sparrows, linnet, song thrush, mistle thrush, skylark and starlings were seen in higher than usual numbers along with sightings of some interesting migrants and the recording of four special species, so it is not all bad news.

Recorded were five special species:

1. Lapwings nested at Lower Farm in the maize crop, this being a relatively late sown crop and could be encouraged to return next year if it was possible to leave small fallow areas in this years arable crops. This would also encourage sky larks. During the 2007 Southdowns Lapwing Breeding Survey, only 132 nest sites were recorded.



2. Snipe were seen at Marsh Farm during March, April and May, always recorded in the same small area of one field. If perhaps grazing could be delayed on, say, one acre of this water meadow until late in July, the birds would be more likely to stay and nest. They clearly favoured this one piece of ground. Only two drumming males were heard on Amberley Brooks this year and only fifteen nest sites in the whole of Sussex.

3. Tree Sparrows (\*to be validated) were seen on all five surveys and clearly indicates nesting. If we can prove these sightings beyond doubt, then perhaps nest boxes and a feeding programme could be put in place at very little cost, tree sparrows are becoming very rare.



\*please do not be offended by the word 'validate'. If a rare nesting bird is recorded during surveys carried out on behalf of the RSPB and SOS it is standard practice to substantiate the sighting by a second recorder. Only four tree sparrow nest sites have been recorded in Sussex this year and they were all in the Brede Valley.

4. Barn Owls were recorded and perhaps it would be possible to survey suitable barns within our parish in which nest boxes could be placed as Barn Owls need all the help we can possibly give them.
5. Wryneck. Fascinating little bird – this is a shy relative of the woodpecker (slightly larger than a house sparrow) but much more like a small thrush in the way it behaves. Feeds mainly on the ground and has the same stance as the green woodpecker when hunting for ants and other small insects. There is a tiny breeding population in Scotland and most of those seen in the UK are passage migrants heading from Scandinavia (their main breeding area) to Africa where they winter. The average number of sightings in the UK over the last ten years is 280. Sadly the bird found at North Choller Farm had been hit by a vehicle and died. It is interesting to note that a wryneck was recorded at Pagham the day after the dead bird was found. I wonder if these two birds were migrating together!

**WALBERTON & BINSTED BIRD SURVEY 2008  
SPECIES RECORDED**

**Red List – high conservation concern. Birds that have declined in numbers by more than 50% in the last 25 years.**

Marsh Tit	Reed Bunting	Sky Lark
Song Thrush	Spotted Flycatcher	Starling
Tree Sparrow	House Sparrow	Turtle Dove
Yellow Hammer	Grey Partridge	Bullfinch
Corn Bunting	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Linnet
Nightjar	Wryneck	

**Amber List – medium conservation group. Birds that have declined in numbers by more than 25% in the last 25 years.**

Barn Owl	Cuckoo	Field Fare
Goldcrest	House Martin	Lapwing
Meadow Pipit	Mistle Thrush	Nightingale
Swallow	Little Egret	Cormorant
Osprey	Redwing	Snipe
Peregrine	Wood Warbler	Red Kite

**Other Species**

Blackbird	Blackcap	Blue Tit
Buzzard	Crow	Chaffinch
Chiffchaff	Coal Tit	Collar Dove
Duncock	Garden Warbler	Goldfinch
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Green Woodpecker	Great Tit
Greenfinch	Hobby	Jackdaw
Jay	Kestrel	Little Owl
Long-tailed Tit	Magpie	Nuthatch
Pheasant	Pied Flycatcher	French Partridge
Reed Warbler	Robin	Rook
Sedge Warbler	Sparrow Hawk	Swift
Tawny Owl	Tree Creeper	White Throat
Willow Warbler	Wren	Coot
Mallard	Heron	Moorhen
Swan	Siskin	Raven
Pied Wagtail	Wood Pigeon	Rock Dove
Stock Dove	Herring Gull	Black-headed Gull