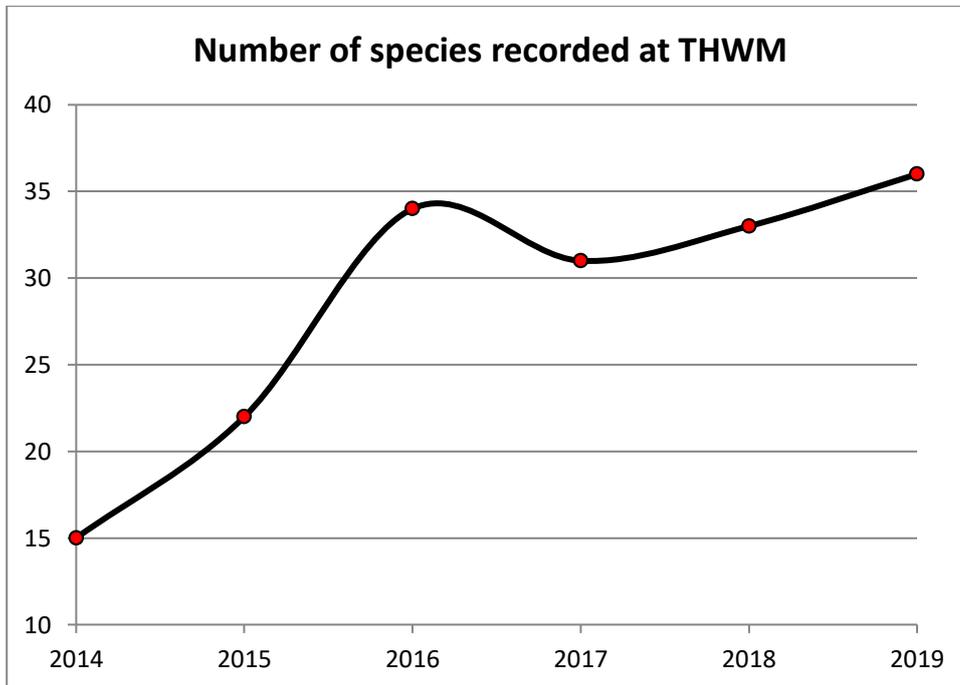


Three Hagges Wood-Meadow Bird Report 2019

Introduction

The 6th annual bird report for Three Hagges Wood-Meadow (THWM) includes the records from 36 surveys as well as some sightings forwarded by other observers. The survey methodology, described in the 2014 report, remains unchanged. Thirty six species were encountered during the year which is the highest annual total recorded since surveying began:



Four new species were encountered, namely: Sparrowhawk, Long-tailed Tit, Garden Warbler and Yellowhammer and the site total now stands at 51.

The most frequently encountered species during 2019 were, in descending order, Kestrel, Woodpigeon, Goldfinch, Pheasant and Carrion Crow (see Excel spreadsheet). The same species filled the top five places in 2018. Flock sizes were generally lower than in 2018 though a charm of 55 Goldfinches seen during July was noteworthy.

Three extended early morning surveys took place in June with the aim of detecting breeding territories and the results are included in the species accounts. So far evidence of successful breeding at THWM has been very limited though it seems likely that colonisation will take place in the near future.

Species accounts:

Although adult Mallards were not encountered a brood of 9 almost fully fledged

young dashed from the pond to the eastern boundary ditch on 22nd August. It is unlikely that they had travelled far and were maybe responding to a calling adult.

Pheasants occurred regularly. Most sightings were of males and breeding was not proven. Red-legged Partridges appeared during the spring and summer. On 22nd August a pair was present close to the southern boundary and called to unseen young which may have hatched close to 3HWM.

Voles continue to thrive amongst the saplings and they are predated by many species including Grey Heron, Buzzard, Barn Owl and Kestrel. There were fewer sightings of Herons compared with previous years though two were present on 24th January and a single appeared in August. The number of records of hunting Buzzards was similar to that of 2018. Individual birds were seen scanning the site from the main pylon and perimeter posts, and were occasionally chased off by Carrion Crows. Barn Owls did not breed in nearby nest boxes and as a result reports were limited to two summer evening sightings. On the other hand Kestrels successfully bred at Glade Farm where a brood of five was ringed in June. There is little doubt that birds from this site led to most of the numerous THWM records. On 15th July an adult and juvenile were seen hunting together.

Previous sightings of Sparrowhawks were restricted to fly-overs and therefore the species was not included in the annual totals. In 2019 the remains of a recently deceased bird was seen 10m in from the western boundary fence and so the unfortunate individual, which had probably dashed itself against a house window, become the first record for the site.

Single Stock Doves, and occasionally a pair, were present on the electricity wires which cross the meadow from April through to August. The number of Woodpigeons showed an increase on 2018, especially during May and June. Several nest platforms were built though, as in 2018, none appeared to hold eggs or young. The remains of nine predated eggs by Carrion Crow were present at the edge of the pond on 24th June.

Invertebrates rising off the saplings just before the arrival of rain attracted single grazing Swifts on 4th June and 7th July. Swallows also hunted throughout the summer. The maximum count was 3 on 15th July and the last recorded occurred on 7th August. A single House Martin was present on 27th July.

Both Magpies and Carrion Crows were regular visitors. Magpies were present outside the winter periods with a maximum of three recorded on 28th June. Most of the Carrion Crow records relate to single birds though a family party of

6 was seen at the main pylon on 24th June. A dead Crow was present below a pylon on 15th July.

The number of Blue and Great sightings has steadily increased since 2014 and the presence of juveniles in the summer is now a regular event. In 2019 3 young Great Tits fed amongst the southern Alders on 24th June. Long-tailed Tit became a new addition to the species list when a pair was seen amongst the southern Alders on 28th March whilst a flock of 8 was feeding on the same trees during late December.

Sightings of migrant warblers have also increased. Calling and singing Willow Warblers were heard amongst the southern Alders and Willows in June and a pair with 4 young drifted through the area on 26th July. A Garden Warbler, which is also a new species for the site, was seen taking food from Plasmor Copse to a nest site in Hurricane Wood on 17th June. On the same day a Whitethroat was singing on the same copse. This was followed by repeated sightings of a pair close to the A19 entrance. At the time it was thought that the nest site was in a bramble patch beyond the 3HWM perimeter. At least one adult accompanied by 2 juveniles were present on the Plasmor Copse saplings on 26th July.

Feeding Blackbirds were recorded on the grass strip alongside the western boundary and under the southern Alders, especially during June. Successful breeding was not proven and the maximum count of 3 (9th July) was below the recent average. Song Thrush sightings were restricted to March, probably because pairs did not breed close to 3HWM. A single bird was seen feeding below the southern Alders on 5th March and on the 11th one was in the same place with another present close to the A19 entrance. However, Mistle Thrushes were frequently recorded until late May. A pair bred west of 3HWM and they collected food for their young from the meadow. Two juveniles were hunting on the cut pathways close to Bodger's Den on 17th May but post breeding flocks did not appear in the late summer. After a blank 2018 a single Fieldfare was recorded on 4th February.

As usual Pied Wagtails were drawn to the shallow water which forms west of Bodger's Dens after heavy and prolonged rainfall. A maximum of 5 were present on 11th March. Wintering Meadow Pipits remained until mid-March and re-appeared in November. This year they fed amongst the saplings rather than on the meadow grass which had been the favoured area in the past. The maximum counts were 13 on 13th February and 7 on 8th November both of which are well below the corresponding totals for 2016-18.

Members of the finch family that visited 3HWM usually feed and breed at woodland edges or in hedgerows therefore it is not surprising that most of the sightings came from the maturing trees close to the southern boundary. A female Chaffinch was feeding under Alders on 15th January whilst a pair was at the same place on 30th December. A pair of Bullfinches was caught amongst the Alders (see ringing notes) in June and probably the same pair passed through the area towards the Hollicarrs on 15th July. A pair of Linnets, including a striking male, was present on 15th July whilst Siskin fed on the Alder cones during March and December. Goldfinches were present from January to late March and after the breeding season from July to the year end. Charms exceeding 10 birds were encountered during 5 surveys and several family parties flocked together to create the maximum total of 55 on 26th July. Previously, the Goldfinches fed almost exclusively on Knapweed seeds but in 2019 half the records came from birds feeding on Alder and Silver Birch seeds.

Two Bunting species were recorded. A very bright male Yellowhammer, a new species for 3HWM, was present from 24th-26th June. The bird favoured the area of saplings close to the A19 entrance and when flushed flew to the electricity wires. A male Reed Bunting appeared to be holding a territory at the centre of the western saplings on 24th June. The area was re-visited on the 28th when a pair flew off to the south from a patch which had been recently weeded. On 26th July a male carrying food arrived at the saplings on Plasmor Copse. Subsequent visits failed to establish the location of a nest site and a used nest was not discovered during winter searches. It is possible that a failed breeding attempt occurred in June with the same pair, or another, making a further effort during July. Food carrying is usually an indication of proven breeding but with only one sighting it may be best to record the second attempt as 'probable breeding'.

Finally there were sightings of a Wren on 8th November and on 4th June a Robin was collecting food for an offsite nest.

Ringing Report

The long term aim is to ring unfledged pulli (chicks) at monitored nest sites. As yet this has not been possible due to the lack of breeding birds.

In the meantime an attempt was made to further establish the number and identity of the birds moving through the maturing trees at Jubilee Copse. During the summer and early autumn of 2019 five evening ringing sessions took place amongst the trees. Three were unsuccessful whilst the other two led to just 4 captures:

24th June - A pair of Bullfinch. The female was not ringed due to a diseased leg. The photo below shows the male.

16th September - A juvenile Blue Tit and an adult male Great Tit.

Bullfinch ringed in Jubilee Copse on 24.06.19



David Tate 21.02.20