

Wild Warwickshire

# Saxon Mill Bird Tree Survey

August 2009



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Saxon Mill Carr is managed for the Heber-Percy Estate by **Wild Warwickshire**



# SAXON MILL CARR BIRD SURVEY

## SUMMARY

Saxon Mill Carr has a species list of 40 species of which 27 are resident species. It is hoped that over time this list will become more complete and representative of the list derived by Mr Stubbs across the river. The provision of nest boxes was met with mixed results with two of the seven erected successfully providing a safe nest location. In future it is hoped to supplement these and perhaps add a few more specialist boxes depending on stocking densities.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the small size of the site there are a range of habitats present ranging from Scrub, Woodland, Hedgerow and River bank these results in a diversity of bird life. The site supports a number of rare species, as to their status whether resident or visitor has yet to be ascertained.

## METHODOLOGY

### SPECIES COUNTS

As part of ongoing survey work of the Saxon Mill area the survey route has been increased to include the meadow section of the Carr site. All birds seen on the site as part of this survey have been recorded. These records along with those made on any other visits have been used to compile a species list. This list is not comprehensive as thus far a full year has not been recorded however it does give a good indication of the range of species present on the site.

### NEST BOXES

In the winter of 2008/9 seven bird boxes were erected across the site. These boxes were of a range of styles. A variety of heights and hole sizes were used to encourage a broad range of species. 7 standard multi species boxes were selected

as suitable for the site size as too many nest site choices can actually reduce breeding success.

## RESULTS

### SPECIES LIST

#### Phasianidae

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchius*

#### Anatidae

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

#### Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

#### Ardeidae

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

#### Accipitridae

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

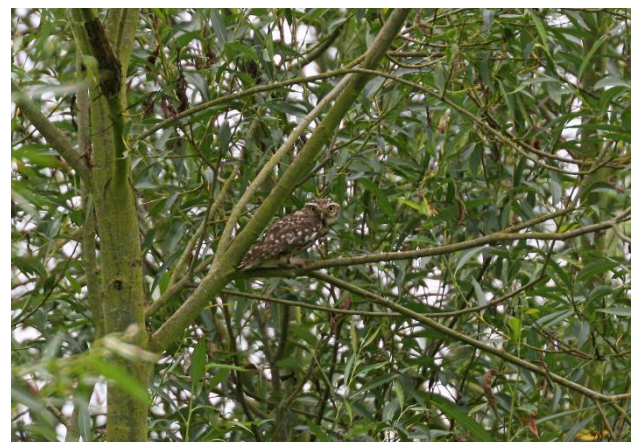


Figure 1 Little Owl

**Rallidae**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***Columbidae**Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus***Strigidae**Little Owl *Athene noctua***Alcedinidae**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***Picidae**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus minor*Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis***Corvidae**Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*Magpie *Pica pica*Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***Aegithalidae**Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus***Figure 2 Long-tailed Tit****Paridae**Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*Great Tit *Parus major***Hirundinidae**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***Sylviidae**Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*Goldcrest *Regulus regulus***Troglodytidae**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***Sittidae**Nuthatch *Sitta europaea***Certhiidae**Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris***Tudidae**Blackbird *Turdus merula*Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*European Robin *Erithacus rubecula***Prunellidae**Dunnock *Prunella modularis***Fringillidae**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*Siskin *Carduelis spinus*Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*Linnet *Carduelis cannabina***NEST BOXES**

Of the seven nest boxes erected only 2 were successfully used. Both the open fronted boxes were unused and no interest was shown in them. The Marsh/Willow Tit box did have some interest with some of the chippings being excavated indicating use but not habitation. Nest Box 4 became very difficult to observe due to vegetation growth but Blue Tits and Great Tits were both recorded entering and leaving the tree to which it was nailed, however, no direct evidence was garnered to its actual use.

Lastly nest box 2 which originally looked to be unused after strong winds twisted its

	NB 01	NB 02	NB 03	NB 04	NB 05	NB 06	NB 07
Hole Size	Small/Filled	30mm	25mm	30mm	32mm	Open Front	Open Front
Location	SP429213 267202	SP429194 267103	SP429215 267218	SP429217 267344	SP429265 267189	SP429220 267450	SP429267 267158
Height	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Species Aimed for	Marsh Tit Willow Tit	Blue Tit Great Tit Nuthatch	Blue Tit Coal Tit	Blue Tit Great Tit Nuthatch	Blue Tit Great Tit Nuthatch	Blackbird Song Thrush Robin	Blackbird Song Thrush Robin
Date Erected	01/01/09	21/02/09	31/01/09	31/01/09	21/02/09	21/02/09	21/02/09
Notes:							
2009	Signs of interest but Unused	Blue Tit occupation but predated	Blue Tit occupation Successful	Some Blue Tit interest	Blue Tit occupation Successful	Unused	Unused

**Figure 3 Nest Box Analysis**

cable causing it to hang precariously was in fact occupied by a pair of Blue Tits. A successful brood was not raised as half way through the breeding season the box was predated. The hole was enlarged and no further activity was recorded. It is suspected that the nest was predated by Great Spotted Woodpecker.



**Figure 4 Nest Box 1 in occupation**

## DISCUSSION

The species list for the site currently stands at 40 species. This is a reasonable species number but is not complete as a full account of winter birds has yet to be made and so species such as Fieldfare and Redwing are not represented. It is suspected that the actual species is somewhat larger. Over the river at Heron House Mr Stubbs has recorded over 80 different species many of which however are passing vagrants such as Firecrest and Pied Flycatcher ,

nevertheless it is clear that the list is far from comprehensive.

The site has always been a strong site for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. This species does in fact thrive in wet woodland and has been recorded over several years at this location. It is unclear as to whether the species is resident. The species is highly elusive and has only been recorded on the site by myself on one occasion. It is hoped that this rare species can be encouraged to prosper.



**Figure 5 Nest Box 1 after predation**

Another key species of interest is the Water Rail. Water Rail are known to winter along this stretch of the Avon each year but in January and February whilst the meadow scrub was flooded Saxon Mill Carr was recorded regularly and is likely to be a winter resident.

The thick nettle scrub provides suitable habitat for pairs of Dunnock and Whitethroat and it is believed at least two pairs of each occur on the site. Blue Tit, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Great Tit are also all abundant year round.

The site is especially good for Jays. This species is often recorded in the ribbon of alder running along the backwater and towards the end of summer a family group of three could be seen.

Evidence of breeding as a result of nest box occupation was more mixed. It seems the open fronted boxes were completely disregarded and it may be necessary to return them to a holed state. The filled box for Willow and Marsh Tits was also unused although some interest was taken as some of the sawdust interior was excavated. Of the remaining boxes all were given interest by Tit species. It was observed on one occasion of Blue Tits enlarging one of the smaller holes to accommodate them. Interestingly Nest Box 1 actually became occupied after the nest box had been knocked sideways by strong winds. Unfortunately it was this box that was predated by a Woodpecker.

In the future it is hoped to improve the species list and make a better accounting of breeding activity on the site with perhaps territory mapping of Dunnock, Song Thrush and Common Whitethroat. With regards to the nest boxes a further breeding season will be made without changes to distribution or hole size. It is also hoped that specialist Owl boxes could be introduced.