

SURVEY OF THE BIRDS OF EYNHAM FISHPONDS

2004

At least one visit per calendar month was made during the year.

Thirty three species were recorded with certain evidence of one other species not observed during these visits, ie two tunnels typical of Kingfisher nesting burrows were found late in the year with signs of successful use. A further five species were observed overflying with no particular connection with the site.

The number of species present peaked in April and May which are the peak breeding months for birds. In May a Chiffchaff was observed carrying food, strongly indicating a nearby nest and/or young.

Nine species could be considered as breeding residents and five more as summer immigrants which probably took up breeding territories.

In past years a male Cuckoo made himself very evident with prolonged calling from the trees in the Fishponds. This year only two nearby calls were heard. This observation is in keeping with a catastrophic national decline.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED MANAGEMENT REPORT

In the main I find the proposals excellent but I do have some reservations.

Phase I - points 2 and 9. I would make a plea to retain some dead timber. Dead wood, both horizontal and vertical, provides a rich habitat for both micro flora and fauna which in turn support macro fauna. For example the fairly rare Lesser Spotted Woodpecker often frequents standing dead timber and we are privileged to already have a pair in the village.

Phase II - I am not entirely happy about the northern section of a circular path. An easy to follow formalised path will inevitably create more disturbance particularly from dogs being exercised. With regard to the views the relatively high bank of the Chil Brook affords an excellent platform, with lighting from behind, over most of the site. The creation of a board walk is an excellent idea which I will expand on later.

Phase III - I fully endorse the creation of an area of open water by re initiating one of the ponds. In my view the pond to the west of the feeder spring stream would be ideal with the creation of a wet area to the east. The re-creation of the reed bed which existed in the 1960s would give the opportunity for the return of Reed Warblers to breed and could provide a stop over for migrating hirundines and wagtails.

In General

A board walk across the eastern area would both protect the marsh and channel visitors to a closely prescribed route affording a close view of plants and birds present. The board walk would also provide a route to the northern part of the site where it is not very difficult to pick a way through.

The Fishponds area already has a fairly rich avifauna. There is abundant evidence that areas of open water and wetlands such as mud scrapes, marsh and reed beds, are particularly attractive to birds and other animals.