

RAF Wyton Bomb Dump



Ringling Report 2018

Ringling Activities at the Bomb Dump.

Weather permitting; ringing will generally take place mainly on either Saturday or Sunday each week, with occasional weekday visits through the breeding season. Activities are carried out by qualified BTO, (British Trust for Ornithology), licenced bird ringers. The licence covers the holder to trap & handle wild birds under the WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 as amended by the ENVIROMENTAL PROTECTION ACT 1990 & the WILDLIFE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985. These licences are always available to see should you wish to confirm. The lead ringer for the site is Mr David Culham, (who also holds a MOD ringing permit), with occasional help from Mrs Margaret Phillips-Jones. The main method of capture used is mist nets; they vary in length from 30ft to 60ft. Fine mesh polyester netting erected between two poles & standing @9ft high. These nets are checked every 15-20 minutes, (depending on the weather), any birds are safely extracted, bagged & processed before release.

To date; `standard` ringing activities have consisted of a total of 420ft of net being erected. These are broken down into 6 net lanes, (2x60ft, 1x100ft, 1x120ft & 2x40ft). Additional occasional nets are used if required. Nets are erected @1 hour before dawn. Out of the breeding season several mp3 players are used, playing various calls to encourage various species on to the site. A selection of feeders is used from January-April as the natural food diminishes. 3 mixed seed & 2 Niger seed feeders, plus loose feed scattered for ground feeding species, covers the needs of most species on site.



Juv. Long-Tailed Tit



Adult Garden Warbler

Ringling totals 2018

Species	New Birds Ringed	Retraps/Controls	TOTAL
SPARROWHAWK	1		1
STOCK DOVE	1		1
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	1		1
BLUE TIT	37	31	68
GREAT TIT	38	10	48
SWALLOW	5		5
LONG-TAILED TIT	16	8	24
WILLOW WARBLER	67	28	95
CHIFFCHAFF	17		17
REED WARBLER	10		10
GRASSHOPPER WARBLER	5	5	10
BLACKCAP	123	3	126
GARDEN WARBLER	8		8
LESSER WHITETHROAT	73	20	93
WHITETHROAT	154	13	167
GOLDCREST		5	5
WREN	21	3	24
TREECREEPER	1		1
STARLING	4		4
BLACKBIRD	25	4	29
REDWING	33		33
FIELDFARE	2		2
SONG THRUSH	4		4
ROBIN	19	5	24
STONECHAT	2		2
DUNNOCK	39	16	55
PIED WAGTAIL	22		22
MEADOW PIPIT	121		121
CHAFFINCH	14	8	22
BULLFINCH	7	2	9
GREENFINCH	88	1	89
LINNET	126	5	131
GOLDFINCH	162	25	187
YELLOWHAMMER	46	3	49
REED BUNTING	148	9	157
35 SPECIES	1440	204	1644

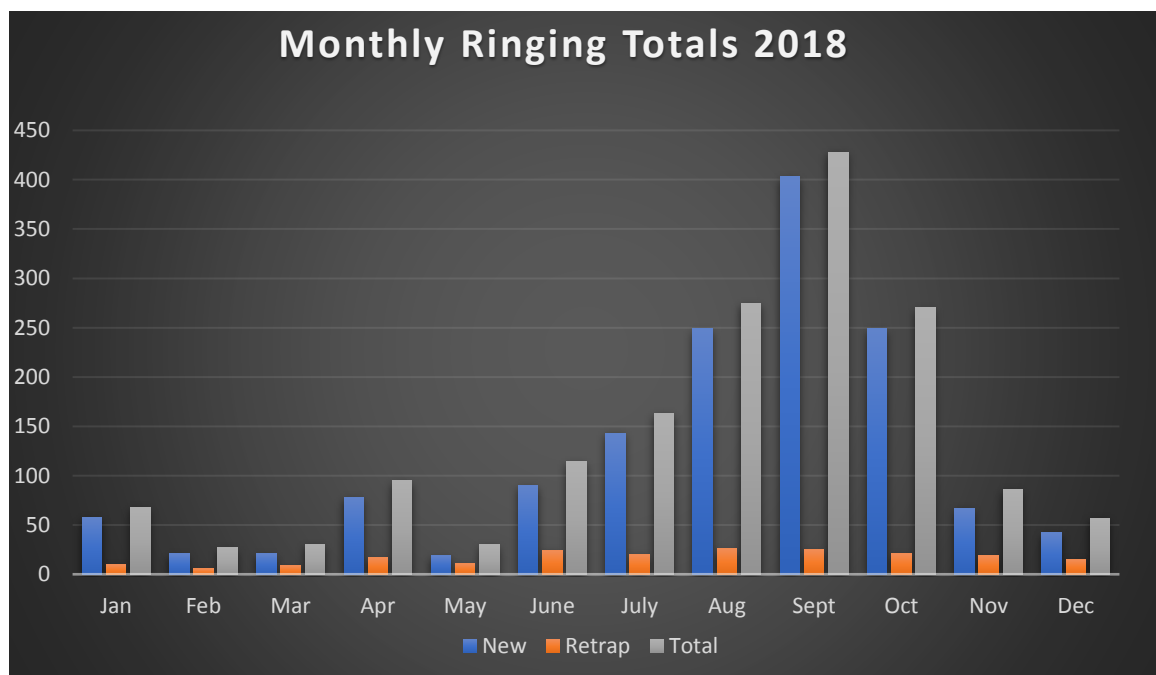
Ringling during 2018

2018 was the first full years ringing on the Bomb Dump. A total of 33 visits were made averaging 50 captures per visit, a very healthy return for a scrub/farmland site. 35 species were trapped lifting the grand total to 37, (Green Woodpecker & Lesser Redpoll in 2017). As would be expected the site really `came alive` from late June as numerous juveniles fledged, then from August through to October the Autumn migration occurred as juvenile migrants moved through the site along with young resident species as they dispersed. Of the 1643 birds caught only 204 were retraps, suggesting that the site is used mainly as a feeding station.

The hot, settled weather during the summer of 2018 certainly helped create a successful breeding season, with many species managing more than one brood. Especially the Warbler species as the weather resulted in a high insect population to feed young. Resident species seemed to fair well too, however the `beast from the east` influenced the earlier breeders. But after a slow start, with many failed attempts they had a decent breeding season.

Breeding migrants, the site & adjacent area hosted 4 pairs Swallow, 7-9 pairs of Willow Warblers, 10+ pairs of Lesser Whitethroat, 9+ pairs Whitethroat, 5 pairs of Blackcap, 1-2 pairs Garden Warbler & most surprising was a pair of Grasshopper Warblers, which fledged at least 3 young.

Breeding resident species on or adjacent to the site included small numbers of: Little Owl, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Robin, Dunnock, Blackbird, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting & Wren. Without doubt the largest population belongs to the Finches, with Linnet & Goldfinch breeding in excellent numbers. Small numbers of Greenfinch & Chaffinch also bred. Although a small population of Bullfinch are present, breeding was not confirmed.



The Autumn migration was slightly different this year with a mass movement of Meadow Pipit & Reed Bunting occurring over a 3-day period of 21-23 September! This was echoed across the country by other ringers who reported large catches. For the Bomb Dump it was the 22nd September, when 1000's of birds moved over. I did manage the best session total of 143 birds, these 'big days' often produce something special in our case it came in the form of a first-year female Stonechat! To top that a second bird was trapped a month later, this time a first-year male.

Large numbers of Linnet gathered from around the site daily to roost in the Hawthorn within the 'ringing area', of the 131 caught over 90% were netted at dawn as they left to forage. As observed in 2017, they formed large mixed flocks with Goldfinches, feeding on the many wild seeds, (mainly Thistles).

The Winter was, as expected, a lot quieter. Once the Hawthorn crop had been consumed by the numerous Redwings & Fieldfares, (early January), the site was left to the occasional Tit flocks & Goldfinches using the feeding station. A bonus bird did appear in January in the form of a Treecreeper that joined a Tit flock. As the BD was quiet we concentrated on the large Pied Wagtail roost which gathered in the filter bed at the entrance to the main carpark. At its peak over 500 birds were present. Without access to the reeds we put up 2x 60ft nets on the derelict area next to it, (now a building site!!). We only managed to catch a total of 22 birds & now the building work has begun the birds have moved on. Hopefully we can relocate them.



1st year Female Stonechat

Controls & Recoveries & Returning Migrants.

A small return this year with 1 `control`, (ringed elsewhere), 3 `recoveries`, (caught/found elsewhere) & 2 returning migrants. These numbers are sure to rise as the data set grows.

The returning migrants were very nice records. Both birds ringed as juveniles in 2017, migrating to Sub Saharan Africa to winter then returning to Wyton to breed in 2018. Mighty impressive for birds weighing 10-13g!!

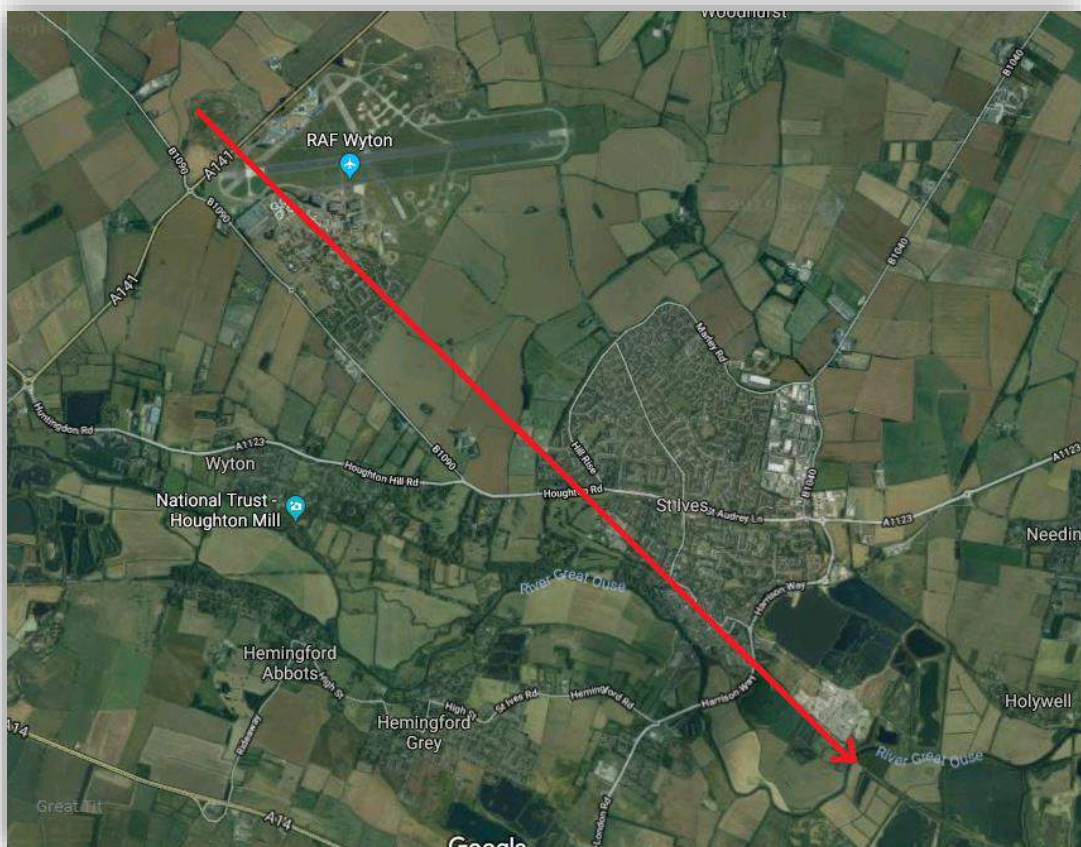
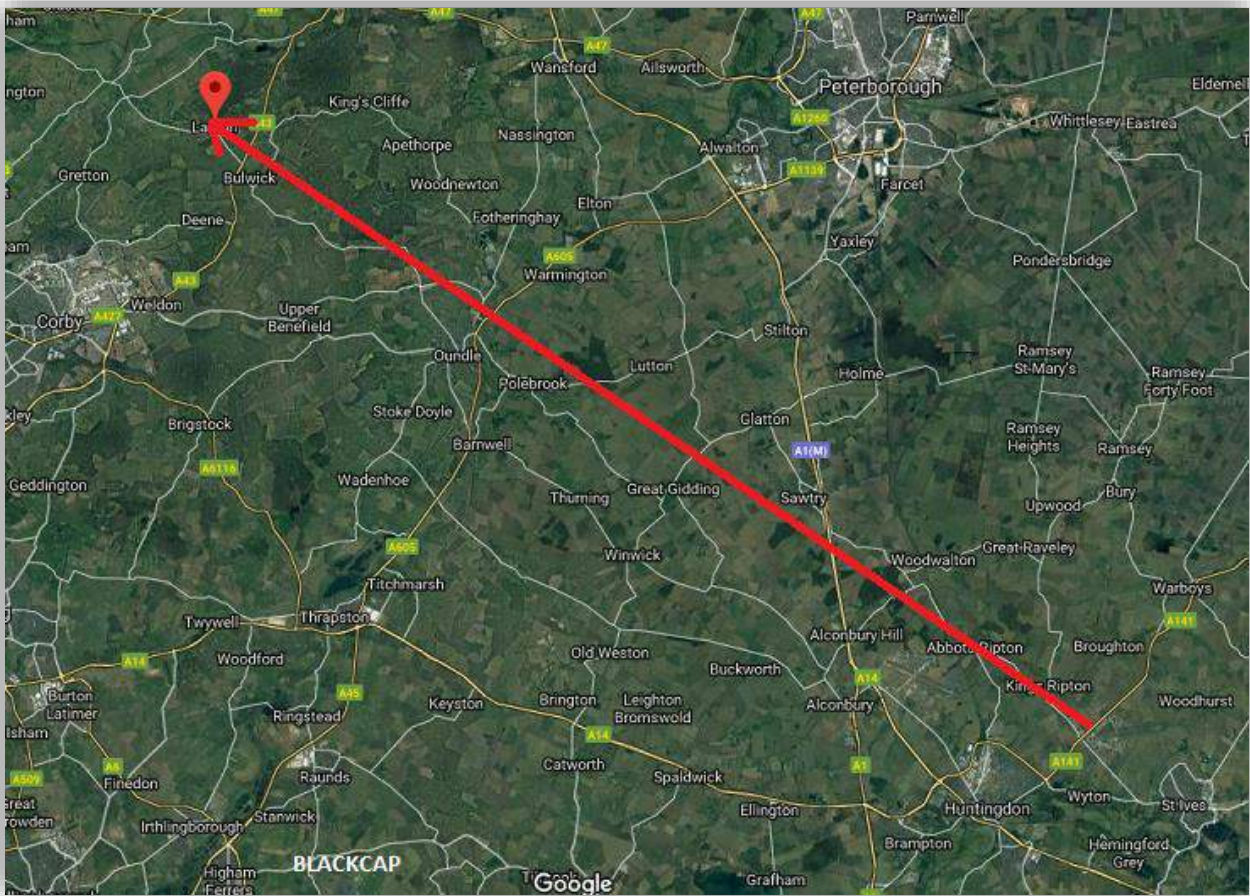
Species	Age	Date Ringed	Dates Retrapped	Notes
Lessr Whitethroat	Juvenile	26/08/2017	5,18/05 & 6/07/18	Breeding 2018
Whitethroat	Juvenile	13/08/2017	01/06/2018	Breeding 2018



1st year male Stonechat

Recoveries:

A Blackcap ringed as a juvenile on 20/08/17, found freshly dead on 10/07/18 at Laxton, Corby, Northamptonshire. A movement WNW of 39km over 324 days. As Blackcaps are known to overwinter it is hard to know whether this is a returning migrant or an overwintering bird.



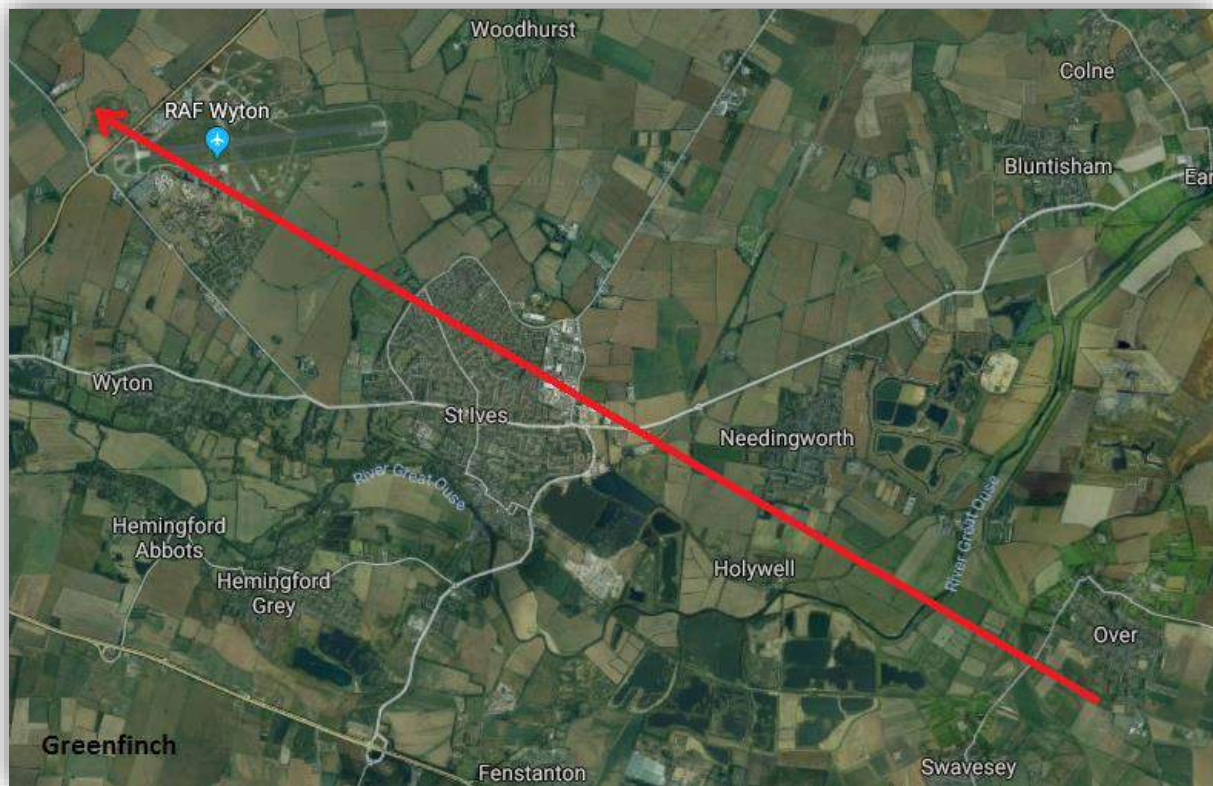
A typical example of juvenile dispersal. A 1st year male Great Tit, ringed on 05/10/18 & subsequently trapped by another ringer on the Great Ouse, south of St Ives 69 days later & 6km SE of the BD. (it has been trapped at the new location several times during early 2019, suggesting it has set up a new territory by the river).



This 1st year female Reed Bunting was ringed at the BD on the 22/09/18, (during the large movement mentioned previously), it was trapped by another ringer on 11/12/18 at Litlington, nr Seaford, East Sussex. A movement S of 177km over 80 days. This bird could have been heading for the continent to see out the winter or relocating to the south coast.

Controls:

Just the one `control`, another example of juvenile dispersal. A 1st year female Greenfinch, ringed nr Over, Cambridgeshire on the 16/09/18 & trapped at the BD on 05/10/18. A movement WNW of 6km over 19 days. It was trapped among a flock of @30 Greenfinch on site that day.

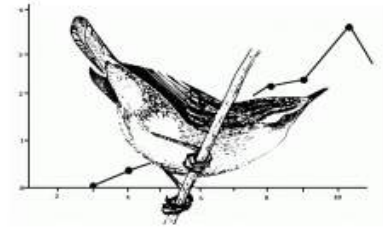


1st year male Yellowhammer

The Constant Effort Sites Scheme (CES)

The Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme is the first national standardised ringing programme within the [BTO Ringing Scheme](#) and has been running since 1983. Ringers operate the same nets in the same locations over the same time period at regular intervals through the breeding season at over 140 sites throughout Britain and Ireland.

The Scheme provides valuable trend information on abundance of adults and juveniles, productivity and also adult survival rates for 24 species of common songbird.



The Partners

The Constant Effort Sites Scheme is supported by a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (on behalf of: The Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage). It is also part of the BTO Ringing Scheme which is funded by the BTO/JNCC Partnership, The National Parks and Wildlife Service (Ireland) and the ringers themselves.

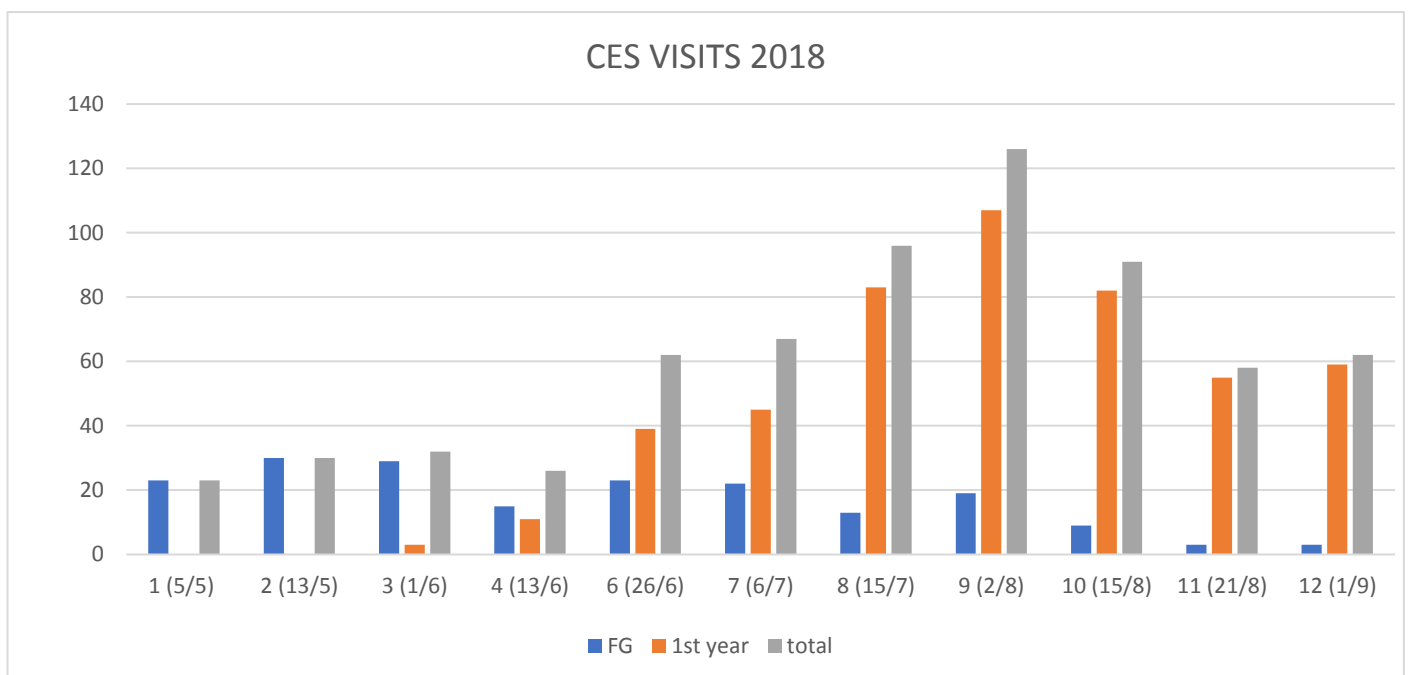
(taken from the bto website)



Adult Grasshopper Warbler

As mentioned in the 2017 report, 2018 was the first year we attempted a CES study during the breeding season. The study was set up with 8 set net sites, consisting of 5x 60ft & 3x 40ft. Nets were set from 05:30-12:00 on each of the official visits. 11 of the 12 visits were completed. With an impressive 668 birds of 26 species being processed. The table below illustrates that generally it was a successful breeding season, with a large proportion of 1st year being caught. Early nesters were hampered by the 'Beast from the East', while ground feeders such as Thrushes, struggled with the sun-baked ground caused by the heatwave.

SPECIES	Fully Grown	1 ST Year	TOTAL
DUNNOCK	12	13	25
ROBIN	4	7	11
BLACKBIRD	6	5	11
SONG THRUSH	2	0	2
GARDEN WARBLER	3	6	9
REED WARBLER	1	7	8
GRASSHOPPER WARBLER	7	3	10
LESSER WHITETHROAT	22	50	72
BLACKCAP	4	37	41
WHITETHROAT	15	114	129
CHIFFCHAFF	0	2	2
WILLOW WARBLER	38	46	84
GOLDFINCH	24	42	66
CHAFFINCH	4	4	8
GREENFINCH	3	0	3
REED BUNTING	4	1	5
BULLFINCH	4	0	4
LINNET	28	102	130
BLUE TIT	4	15	19
GREAT TIT	0	20	20
YELLOWHAMMER	1	1	2
SWALLOW	2	3	5
WREN	0	11	11
STARLING	0	4	4
STOCK DOVE	1	0	1
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	0	1	1
TOTAL	184	484	668



Note: visit 5 was missed due to training exercise.

The above chart highlights how earlier nesters, (Robin, Dunnock, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Wren), struggled after the Arctic blast in late March/early April, with no juveniles being seen or caught until 3 freshly fledged Willow Warblers on 1st June. However, once the hot summer weather took hold from late June onwards the numbers of 1st year bird rises dramatically. Numbers in general tail off slightly through August/September because of adult birds moulting before migrating, (less active) & juveniles dispersing or migrating.



Juvenile male Blackcap, completing Post Juvenile Moults.



Stock Dove

Noteworthy Records during 2018

Date	Observation
20-Jan	2 Woodcock; 160+ Lapwing, East; 1 Treecreeper
30-Jan	200+ Pied Wagtail at roost; 80+ Reed Bunting at roost
24-Feb	1 1 st winter Peregrine; 27 East Lapwing
25-Mar	11, North, Black-Tailed Godwit; 1 1 st winter Peregrine
14-Apr	1, North, Greylag Goose; 1 female Common Redstart
11-May	Singing male Black Redstart on Pathfinder
13-May	3 NW Hobby; 2 Swift; 1 Turtle Dove;
18-Apr	Male Firecrest, singing behind the Pavilions, (A. Gardener)
01-Jun	2 Cuckoo; 10, East, Greylag Goose; 1, South, Grey Heron
15-Jul	Singing male Cettis Warbler
02-Aug	50+ Whitethroat; 100+ Linnet; 1 juv Great Spotted Woodpecker
15-Aug	4 Reed Warbler
21-Aug	Nuthatch, calling from the treeline; 3, SW, Tree Pipit
06-Sep	50+ Blackcap
13-Sep	Probable Wryneck, on base. (A Gardener)
22-Sep	2 Long Eared Owl; 1 st year female Stonechat; 1000+ Meadow Pipit; 200+ Reed Bunting
29-Sep	2 Long Eared Owl; 1 Little Owl; 2 Barn Owl; 30+ Yellowhammer; 1 Mistle Thrush
20-Oct	1, West, Mute Swan; 1 st year male Stonechat; 1, SE, Lesser Redpoll
25-Oct	4, NE, Lapwing; 17, NE, Golden Plover
02-Nov	5, NW, Lesser Redpoll
17-Nov	1 Long Eared Owl
25-Nov	80+ Fieldfare; 60+ Redwing; 2 Mistle Thrush
12-Dec	1 female Sparrowhawk
24-Dec	4, West, Brambling

Migrant arrival/departure dates

Species	Earliest Date `18 (2017)	Latest Date `18 (2017)
Chiffchaff	04/04/18	05/10/18 (08/10/17)
Swallow	07/04/18	29/09/18 (08/10/17)
House Martin	07/04/18	29/09/18 (02/09/17)
Willow Warbler	07/04/18	06/09/18 (19/08/17)
Blackcap	04/04/18	05/10/18 (15/10/17)
Grasshopper Warbler	14/04/18	15/07/18
Whitethroat	21/04/18	06/09/18 (23/09/17)
Lesser Whitethroat	14/04/18	29/09/18 (02/09/17)
Reed Warbler	21/04/18	06/09/18 (02/09/17)
Garden Warbler	05/05/18	21/08/18
Swift	13/05/18	27/08/18 (26/08/17)
Cuckoo	01/06/18	21/08/18
Redwing	09/10/18 (15/10/18)	21/03/18
Fieldfare	14/10/18 (03/11/17)	25/03/18

With just the departure dates to compare we can only see part of the picture. However, it does show that breeding species generally left later due to a combination of an extended breeding season due to the fine Summer weather & a later start due to the cold Spring. In general, the arrival of most Summer migrants across the UK during the Spring was protracted to say the least! With most birds on territory later than average due to the 'Beast from the East' & the accompanying bitter Northerly winds.

The first House Martins, which breed on Base around the Pavillions, arrived back on the 4th May, a fortnight later than normal. They then managed to fledge at least 2 broods during the hot summer, leaving 27 days later than 2017! Making the most of the abundant food supply created by the hot weather.



1ST year Grasshopper Warbler



Hawthorn blossom, early May



The 'ringing area', early May

Birds of Conservation Concern, (BoCC) 4

Birds of Conservation Concern 4: The Red List for Birds was published in December 2015.

Commonly referred to as the UK Red List for birds, this is the fourth review of the status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man, and updates the last assessment in 2009. Using standardised criteria, 244 species with breeding, passage or wintering populations in the UK were assessed by experts from a range of bird NGOs and assigned to the Red, Amber or Green lists of conservation concern. Further information is available at:

<https://www.bto.org/science/monitoring/psob>

The BD plays host to several species placed on the `Red` & `Amber` list. Again, highlighting the importance of the site. Below are lists of species, currently on the `red` & `amber` lists that were observed on the BD during 2018, breeding, (on or adjacent to the BD), species in **bold**.

LAPWING
BLACK-TAILED GODWIT
WOODCOCK
HERRING GULL
TURTLE DOVE
CUCKOO
SKYLARK
GRASSHOPPER WARBLER
STARLING
FIELDFARE
REDWING
SONG THRUSH
MISTLE THRUSH
BLACK REDSTART
HOUSE SPARROW
TREE PIPIT
LINNET
LESSER REDPOLL
YELLOWHAMMER

MUTE SWAN
GREYLAG GOOSE
MALLARD
BLACK HEADED GULL
COMMON GULL
LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL
GREAT BLACK BACKED GULL
STOCK DOVE
SWIFT
KESTREL
HOUSE MARTIN
WILLOW WARBLER
REDSTART
DUNNOCK
MEADOW PIPIT
BULLFINCH
REED BUNTING

Other Sightings

Other wildlife observed during 2018:

Mammals:

Roe Deer, Muntjac Deer, Fox, Badger, Weasel, Stoat, Brown Rat, Field Vole, Field Mouse, Pipistrelle Bat, Bat Sp. (poss. Long Eared).

Butterflies:

Marbled White, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Comma, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Large White, Cabbage White, Green Veined White, Common Blue, Orange-tip, and Skipper Sp.

Dragonflies:

Southern Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Hawker Sp. (poss. Brown), 4 Spotted Chaser, Ruddy Darter, Common Darter. Plus, many unidentified!!



1st year female Bullfinch

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to the 'Head of Establishment' for the permissions to access the site to complete the surveys. To the RAF Wyton Conservation Group for their continued financial support. Without which this work would not be possible, with a special mention for CPO Layton-Matthews & Caroline Hackworth, who ensure the speedy delivery of rings & equipment when it has been required. Finally, a big thank you to 'Bods' & the team in the Guardroom for ensuring easy access to the site & for disturbing them at 'silly o'clock', (03:00 during the Summer!!!)



Adult male Reed Bunting, Autumn



1st year Reed Warbler