

**Knepp Castle Estate**

**Breeding Bird Survey**

**2017**

**By**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Repeat surveys of the breeding bird communities present within two discrete areas of the Knepp Castle Estate were carried out in spring/summer 2017 following similar surveys in 2005 and 2007 – 16. The aims of the surveys were to:

- Identify the bird species breeding on site and to estimate the number of territories,
- Highlight the conservation status of the bird species recorded.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Surveyor

The surveys were again conducted by Paul James who carried out the previous surveys.

### 2.2 Field methods

The same two transects were surveyed as in previous years: the first north of the A272 and east of Shipley Road (transect A) and the second south of Countryman Lane and west of New Barn Farm (transect B). Ten visits were made to each transect between March and June. The dates on which visits were made were as follows:

Transect A	27 <sup>th</sup> March, 7 <sup>th</sup> April, 11 <sup>th</sup> April, 16 <sup>th</sup> April, 22 <sup>nd</sup> April, 5 <sup>th</sup> May, 19 <sup>th</sup> May, 24 <sup>th</sup> May, 2 <sup>nd</sup> June, 15 <sup>th</sup> June
Transect B	27 <sup>th</sup> March, 7 <sup>th</sup> April, 11 <sup>th</sup> April, 16 <sup>th</sup> April, 22 <sup>nd</sup> April, 5 <sup>th</sup> May, 22 <sup>nd</sup> May, 24 <sup>th</sup> May, 2 <sup>nd</sup> June, 15 <sup>th</sup> June

Each visit was made in good weather, details of which were recorded on the field maps. The surveys were conducted by slowly walking the pre-established transects and recording the species encountered (by sight or sound) on large scale maps using the standard Common Birds Census species and activity codes (Marchant 1983). On completion of the surveys, the registrations were copied across onto species maps which were then used to estimate the number of territories for each species (Bibby *et al* 2000, Marchant 1983), a technique known as territory analysis. For this survey, a territory was defined by the presence of a singing

male on two or more dates, a bird (or pair) behaving territorially on two or more dates, alarm calls from adults or food/nesting material being carried by adults.

### **3.0 SURVEY RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Weather summary**

This was a warm and rather dry spring. It was generally warmer than average during March and early April, but the second half of April was cooler, with some cold nights and numerous late frosts. May was predominantly warm, especially early and late in the month. April was much drier than average for most areas, but parts of north-west Scotland were wet. May was somewhat wetter than average in some south-eastern parts, but quite dry in much of the north and west. Sunshine was above average for Spring in most areas.

March 2017 was warmer than average in all areas, by well over 2 °C over parts of East Anglia and south-east England, and the UK monthly mean temperature was +1.8 °C above the long-term average. April continued warmer than average for the first half, but cooler weather later in the month meant that the overall mean temperature for the month was just +0.6 °C above average. May was another warm month, with only short cooler spells, with an overall mean temperature +1.7 °C above average.

March was somewhat wetter than average over Wales, much of northern England and south-east Scotland, but slightly drier for north-west Scotland and also drier than average in south-east England. Overall the UK had 104% of average rainfall. April was drier than average in most areas, with less than a third of the average rainfall in many places. The UK overall had 48% of average rainfall in April. In May the overall figure was 83%, but southern and eastern parts of England did have a rather wet month.

Most areas were sunnier than average during each of the three spring months. The exceptions were south-west England and south Wales in March, Northern Ireland and western and northern Scotland in April, and much of southern England in May. Sunshine totals for the UK overall were 121% of average in March, 109% of average in April, and 115% in May (Met Office 2017).

### **3.2 Species recorded**

A total of 58 species was recorded in 2017 (see Appendices 1 – 4). Three ‘new’ species was noted (gadwall, cormorant & feral pigeon) bringing the total for the two transects since 2005 to 93 (see Appendix 5). Included in this overall total are 22 Red List Species of High Conservation Concern and a further 19 Amber List Species of Medium Conservation Concern as identified by the latest assessment of the conservation status of all the UK’s 247 regularly occurring birds (Eaton *et al* 2015).

The approximate locations of the territories identified for each species are shown in fig. 1 - 4. Note that territories for some species such as bullfinch may cover a large area so the registrations on the maps may only indicate the approximate location of a territory.

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

A comparison of the results for 2017 with those for 2016 shows little or no change in most species though although the calamitous decline in chaffinch along both transects continues. The reasons for this decline are unclear but may be linked to trichomoniasis. This is a disease caused by the protozoan parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*. It has been recorded in a number of garden bird species, especially greenfinch and chaffinch which are the species most frequently affected (British Trust for Ornithology 2017).

Nineteen species of conservation concern and one additional Schedule 1 species were recorded in 2017, some of which are dealt with below:

### **Turtle dove** (BoCC red list)

The trend towards earlier arrival continues with the first bird noted on 5<sup>th</sup> May. Once again there were a number of sightings of turtle dove during the survey with two territories identified along transect B. On 5<sup>th</sup> May a 'purring' male was seen displaying over a wide area covering Brookhouse 6 & 7 with presumably the same bird still present on 19<sup>th</sup> May and another 'purring' just outside the survey area at Oakwood Farm. On 24<sup>th</sup> May, one was displaying from the overhead cables in Brookhouse 4. Surprisingly none was seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> June but on 15<sup>th</sup> June there were purring males near Brookhouse Farm and in the NE corner of Brookhouse 6 by the pond.

### **Cuckoo** (BoCC red list)

This is always a difficult bird to survey as singing birds are very mobile and may be encountered almost anywhere in the southern block. The first record for transect B was of a male along the western edge of Brookhouse 11 on 11<sup>th</sup> April, an early date. Subsequent records, all of singing males, were from Brookhouse 4 on 16<sup>th</sup> April, Brookhouse 11 on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, Brookhouse 6 on 5<sup>th</sup> May and Brookhouse 4 on 22<sup>nd</sup> May and 5<sup>th</sup> June. None was recorded along transect A.

### **Peregrine** (BoCC green list, Schedule 1)

A pair of adult Peregrines was observed along transect A for the third year running. On most visits, they were observed sitting on the electricity pylon near Keeper's Cottage (grid ref TQ 16123 23500) but, despite a careful search of the pylon with binoculars, neither a nest nor

young were observed. On 24<sup>th</sup> May and 15<sup>th</sup> June, both birds were behaving aggressively circling overhead and giving their 'shrieking' alarm call as I walked along the public right of way between Coate's Furzefield and Bar Furzefield (grid ref TQ 16282 23637). This behaviour was strongly indicative of an active nest, presumably in a nearby tree.

**Nightingale** (BoCC red list)

There was only one confirmed territory along transect B in 2017, along the northern edge of Brookhouse 4. A singing male at Blonks on 11<sup>th</sup> April (but not subsequently) may have been the same bird though a singing male in the SE corner of Brookhouse 6 on 19<sup>th</sup> May was different as it and the Brookhouse 4 bird were heard singing simultaneously. Numbers have fallen from a high of five territories in 2007 and 2009 though the reasons for this decline and the absence from former traditional territories (e.g. by Lower Barn pond) remain unclear.



## 5.0 REFERENCES

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# Appendix 1 – List of species recorded, spring 2017

Species	BTO species code	Bird of Conservation Concern (BoCC status)
Canada goose	CG	Not assessed
Greylag goose	GJ	Not assessed
Gadwall	GA	Amber
Teal	T.	Amber
Mallard	MA	Amber
Tufted duck	TU	Amber
Pheasant	PH	Not assessed
Cormorant	CA	Green
Grey heron	H.	Green
Little grebe	LG	Green
Sparrowhawk	SH	Green
Buzzard	BZ	Green
Peregrine	PE	Green
Moorhen	MH	Green
Coot	CO	Green
Lesser black-backed gull	LB	Amber
Herring gull	HG	Red
Feral pigeon	RD	Not assessed
Stock dove	SD	Amber
Woodpigeon	WP	Green
Collared dove	CD	Green
Turtle dove	TD	Red
Cuckoo	CU	Red
Green woodpecker	G.	Green
Great spotted woodpecker	GS	Green
Magpie	MG	Green
Jay	J.	Green
Jackdaw	JD	Green
Rook	RO	Green
Carrion crow	C.	Green
Goldcrest	GC	Green
Great tit	GT	Green
Blue tit	BT	Green
Coal tit	CT	Green
Swallow	SL	Green
Long-tailed tit	LT	Green
Chiffchaff	CC	Green
Willow warbler	WW	Amber
Blackcap	BC	Green
Garden warbler	GW	Green
Lesser whitethroat	LW	Green
Whitethroat	WH	Green
Nuthatch	NH	Green
Treecreeper	TC	Green
Wren	WR	Green
Blackbird	B.	Green

Fieldfare	FF	Red
Song thrush	ST	Red
Mistle thrush	M.	Red
Robin	R.	Green
Spotted flycatcher	SF	Red
Nightingale	N.	Red
Dunnock	D.	Amber
House sparrow	HS	Red
Pied wagtail	PW	Green
Chaffinch	CH	Green
Bullfinch	BF	Amber
Yellowhammer	Y.	Red

### Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)

- Red list species are those that are globally threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; or those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery.
- Amber list species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a significant recent recovery; rare breeders; or those with internationally important or localised populations.
- Species that fulfil none of the criteria are green listed while non-native species are not assessed (Eaton *et al* 2015).

## Appendix 2: Number of territories - Transect A

Species	Species code	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Canada goose	CG	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mandarin	MN	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mallard	MA	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	1
Pheasant	PH	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Buzzard	BZ	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Kestrel	K.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hobby	HY	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	-
Peregrine	PE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Stock dove	SD	1	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Woodpigeon	WP	3	-	2	2	-	1	-	-	2	-	-
Cuckoo	CU	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Little owl	LO	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Green woodpecker	G.	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Great spotted woodpecker	GS	3	3	4	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
Magpie	MG	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jay	J.	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jackdaw	JD	-	-	1	2	-	4	2	2	-	1	1
Carrion crow	C.	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
Goldcrest	GC	1	4	4	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	3
Blue tit	BT	2	8	7	7	4	5	4	3	6	6	5
Great tit	GT	3	8	10	4	5	6	6	5	6	3	5
Coal tit	CT	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	2
Marsh tit	MT	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Skylark	S.	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-
Long-tailed tit	LT	2	2	4	1	2	-	-	1	1	-	1
Chiffchaff	CC	4	7	8	7	7	6	4	5	6	6	7
Willow warbler	WW	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blackcap	BC	5	3	5	6	6	6	5	5	4	5	3
Garden warbler	GW	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-

Whitethroat	WH	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Nuthatch	NH	1	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	1	-
Treecreeper	TC	1	2	3	1	3	1	2	3	1	1	-
Wren	WR	12	21	17	10	11	10	7	8	11	11	12
Starling	SG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Blackbird	B.	5	2	4	1	-	2	1	3	2	2	2
Song thrush	ST	3	2	3	1	-	3	1	1	2	2	3
Mistle thrush	M.	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robin	R.	8	23	20	15	13	10	16	11	14	14	13
Dunnock	D.	3	2	4	4	1	2	2	1	2	2	3
Chaffinch	CH	9	13	15	9	9	10	7	1	3	3	2
Goldfinch	GO	1	1		2	1	1	1	-	-	-	1
Bullfinch	BF	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Yellowhammer	Y.	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

### Appendix 3: Number of territories - Transect B

Species	Species code	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Greylag goose	GJ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Canada goose	CG	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mandarin	MN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Mallard	MA	2	1	-	-	2	1	1	5	3	1	2
Tufted duck	TU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Grey partridge	P.	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Little grebe	LG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Common buzzard	BZ	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moorhen	MH	2	2	4	3	2	2	1	3	4	3	1
Coot	CO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	1
Stock dove	SD	1	3	-	2	2	3	1	2	2	1	1
Woodpigeon	WP	2	4	-	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
Collared dove	CD	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turtle dove	TD	2	2	2	2	2	1	-	4	2	3	2
Cuckoo	CU	2	2	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	1
Barn owl	BO	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Tawny owl	TO	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Green woodpecker	G.	4	2	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Great Spotted Woodpecker	GS	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2
Jay	J.	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Magpie	MG	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Jackdaw	JD	1	1	1	1	2	3	7	4	3	2	2
Rook	RO	-	-	8	10	12	9	4	6	8	7	9
Carrion crow	C.	-	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	1
Goldcrest	GC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
Great tit	GT	3	10	8	7	9	6	6	2	4	5	5
Blue tit	BT	5	9	8	6	7	5	5	7	8	6	6
Woodlark	WL	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Skylark	S.	4	9	11	9	4	3	-	-	-	-	-

Swallow	SL	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pied wagtail	PW	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Long-tailed tit	LT	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	-	2	1	1
Chiffchaff	CC	8	14	13	13	12	10	6	16	13	15	14
Willow warbler	WW	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Blackcap	BC	7	9	8	9	11	7	7	8	8	6	9
Garden warbler	GW	5	6	6	3	7	4	4	3	4	3	2
Lesser whitethroat	LW	-	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	4	3
Whitethroat	WH	5	7	19	16	16	7	5	4	5	4	5
Reed warbler	RW	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Nuthatch	NH	2	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	-
Treecreeper	TC	-	1	2	-	-	1	1	2	1	1	4
Wren	WR	13	16	16	12	14	11	12	20	16	23	20
Blackbird	B.	4	6	7	7	2	5	6	6	8	9	10
Song thrush	ST	4	4	3	4	6	5	6	7	7	8	4
Mistle thrush	MT	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	2	1	-
Robin	R.	5	21	16	14	18	19	17	20	17	18	20
Nightingale	N.	5	4	5	4	4	4	3	1	2	2	1
Dunnock	D.	6	12	13	5	7	7	9	6	7	9	8
House sparrow	HS	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
Chaffinch	CH	12	18	14	21	13	9	8	6	5	6	3
Goldfinch	GO	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	1
Linnet	LI	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bullfinch	BF	1	5	3	2	1	-	-	2	-	-	2
Yellowhammer	Y.	3	8	6	4	2	3	1	1	1	1	-
Reed bunting	RB	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-



#### Appendix 4: Additional species recorded, 2017

Species	Observations
Greylag goose	Transect A: Pair in flight near Old Keepers Cottage on 19 <sup>th</sup> May. Transect B: One on Brookhouse 8 pond on 27 <sup>th</sup> March, 7 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> April. Three there on 22 <sup>nd</sup> April & 6 on 5 <sup>th</sup> May.
Canada goose	Transect A: Pair in flight over Hartsgravel Wood on 7 <sup>th</sup> April. Eight in fields south of Coate's Furzefield on 19 <sup>th</sup> May. Transect B: Pair in flight over Brookhouse 5 on 27 <sup>th</sup> March. One on pond in Brookhouse 8 on 22 <sup>nd</sup> April.
Gadwall	Transect B: Two pairs on Brookhouse 8 pond on 27 <sup>th</sup> March and a male there on 7 <sup>th</sup> April.
Teal	Transect B: Four in flight over Brookhouse 6 pond on 27 <sup>th</sup> March.
Pheasant	Transect A: Recorded on 8 visits, max 6 on 16 <sup>th</sup> April. Transect B: Recorded on 5 visits, max 3 on 7 <sup>th</sup> April.
Cormorant	Transect B: One flew N over Brookhouse 7 on 27 <sup>th</sup> March.
Grey heron	Transect B: Singles in flight on 27 <sup>th</sup> March, 16 <sup>th</sup> April & 19 <sup>th</sup> May.
Sparrowhawk	Transect A: One soaring over Hartsgravel Wood on 27 <sup>th</sup> March. Transect B: One in flight near Lower Barn on 15 <sup>th</sup> June.
Buzzard	Transect A: Recorded on 4 visits, max 2 on 24 <sup>th</sup> May. Transect B: Recorded on 6 visits, max. 2 on 27 <sup>th</sup> March.
Lesser black-backed gull	Transect B: Two flew W on 16 <sup>th</sup> April.
Herring gull	Transect A: Four flew NE on 27 <sup>th</sup> March & 5 <sup>th</sup> May. Transect B: Ten flew NW on 16 <sup>th</sup> April.
Feral rock dove	Transect A: One flew N on 24 <sup>th</sup> May.
Collared dove	Transect B: One in flight over Brookhouse 4 on 22 <sup>nd</sup> May.
Green woodpecker	Transect A: Singles on 2 visits. Transect B: Singles on 4 visits.
Kestrel	Transect A: One between Coate's Furzefield and Bar Furzefield on 15 <sup>th</sup> June.
Jay	Transect A: One on 11 <sup>th</sup> April. Transect B: Two on 11 <sup>th</sup> & 16 <sup>th</sup> April and 22 <sup>nd</sup> May.
Marsh tit	Transect A: One in Bar Furzefield on 24 <sup>th</sup> May.
Willow warbler	Transect B: One adjacent to Brookhouse 4 on 7 <sup>th</sup> April was not recorded subsequently and was most likely a migrant.
Swallow	Transect B: Singles flew N on 22 <sup>nd</sup> April and 22 <sup>nd</sup> May.
Fieldfare	Transect B: Twelve in Brookhouse 4 on 27 <sup>th</sup> March.
Mistle thrush	Transect B: One at Blonks on 5 <sup>th</sup> May. Two in Bulls Field on 19 <sup>th</sup> May.
Spotted flycatcher	Transect B: One along the northern edge of Brookhouse 4 on 19 <sup>th</sup> May.
Pied wagtail	Transect B: One at Blonks on 11 <sup>th</sup> April.
Yellowhammer	Transect A: One in flight at Old Keepers Cottage on 19 <sup>th</sup> May.

## Appendix 5: Species recorded, 2005 - 17

Species	BoCC status	Species	BoCC status
Greylag goose	No status	Carrion crow	Green
Canada goose	No status	Raven	Green
Mandarin duck	No status	Goldcrest	Green
Gadwall	Amber	Firecrest	Green
Teal	Amber	Great tit	Green
Mallard	Amber	Blue tit	Green
Shoveler	Amber	Coal tit	Green
Tufted duck	Green	Marsh tit	Red
Pheasant	No status	Woodlark	Red
Red-legged partridge	No status	Skylark	Red
Grey partridge	Red	Swallow	Green
Grey heron	Green	House martin	Amber
Cormorant	Green	Meadow pipit	Amber
Little grebe	Green	Grey wagtail	Red
Red kite	Green	Pied wagtail	Green
Sparrowhawk	Green	Long-tailed tit	Green
Buzzard	Green	Chiffchaff	Green
Kestrel	Amber	Willow warbler	Amber
Hobby	Green	Blackcap	Green
Peregrine	Green	Garden warbler	Green
Moorhen	Green	Lesser whitethroat	Green
Coot	Green	Whitethroat	Green
Lapwing	Red	Reed warbler	Green
Green sandpiper	Amber	Nuthatch	Green
Woodcock	Red	Treecreeper	Green
Snipe	Amber	Wren	Green
Lesser black-backed gull	Amber	Starling	Red
Herring gull	Red	Blackbird	Green
Great black-backed gull	Amber	Fieldfare	Red
Feral rock dove	No status	Song thrush	Red
Stock dove	Amber	Redwing	Red
Woodpigeon	Green	Mistle thrush	Red
Collared dove	Green	Spotted flycatcher	Red
Turtle dove	Red	Robin	Green
Cuckoo	Red	Nightingale	Red
Barn owl	Green	Dunnoek	Amber
Little owl	No status	House sparrow	Red
Tawny owl	Amber	Chaffinch	Green
Swift	Amber	Brambling	Green
Kingfisher	Amber	Greenfinch	Green
Green woodpecker	Green	Goldfinch	Green
Great spotted woodpecker	Green	Linnet	Red
Lesser spotted woodpecker	Red	Lesser redpoll	Red
Magpie	Green	Bullfinch	Amber
Jay	Green	Yellowhammer	Red
Jackdaw	Green	Reed bunting	Amber
Rook	Green		

