

# **Knepp Castle Estate**

## **Breeding Bird Survey**

**2016**



**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 2016 following similar surveys in 2005 and 2007 – 15. 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 utilising the site.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Surveyor**

The surveys were conducted by Paul James who also 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: 24<sup>th</sup> March, 31<sup>st</sup> March, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 28<sup>th</sup> April, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 25<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 12<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 the purpose of 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**

Following on from a wet and notably mild winter, this spring was overall mostly unremarkable, with temperature and rainfall overall very close to the seasonal average, though there were some variations worthy of comment. Mid-March brought two weeks of fine settled weather. A rather cool April, with some late snowfalls and frosts in some northern and eastern areas, was offset by a rather warm May. March was wet in the south and east, whereas May was rather dry for most areas. Sunshine was generally above average. During the Spring there was a mixture of weather types, and no type was dominant.

Spring 2016 temperatures averaged out to be equal to the long-term average for the season. Temperatures were slightly below average over southern areas in March, and rather below average for the whole country in April (although the Aprils of 2012 and 2013 were colder), but May was roughly a degree above average for all parts of the UK.

Rainfall in Spring 2016 was unexceptional overall. However, March was a wet month in southern and eastern parts with over 150% of average in many areas, whereas Scotland had a rather dry month. April was wetter than average in most areas, the exceptions being the far south and south-west of England and south Wales. May was drier than average for most of the country. Overall UK totals were 91% of average in March, 115% in April, and 92% in May.

All three spring months brought above-average sunshine totals to the UK. Despite a slight deficiency in sunshine along many eastern coasts, the UK overall had 115% of average sunshine in March. April was near or above average for most, with 108% overall. May was again sunnier than average for all but some eastern coasts, giving 115% of average for the UK.

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2016/spring>

#### **3.2 Species recorded**

A total of 61 species was recorded in 2016 (see Appendices 1 – 4), the highest since 2009 when the species total was also 61. Two ‘new’ species were noted (shoveler & spotted flycatcher) bringing the total for the two transects since 2005 to 90 (see Appendix 5). Included in this overall total are 22 Red List Species of High Conservation Concern and a further 18 Amber List Species of Medium Conservation Concern as identified by the latest assessment of the conservation status of all of the UK’s 247 regularly occurring birds (Eaton *et al* 2015). Greylag goose bred for the first time since the surveys commenced (transect B).

The approximate locations of the territories identified for each species are shown in fig. 1 - 4. Territories for some species such as mistle thrush 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 transect A in 2016 with those for 2015 shows little or no change in most species though numbers of some of the more common birds such as chaffinch, robin and wren continue to be well down compared with the previous decade. The results for transect B also show little change though the upward trend in the red listed song thrush continues.

Twenty-two species of conservation concern and three additional Schedule 1 species were recorded in 2016, some of which are dealt with below:

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

Despite a downturn in numbers on the whole Estate, there were numerous sightings of turtle dove during the survey with the number of territories along transect B up one compared with 2015. The first 'purring' males were noted to the west of both Brookhouse 7 and Wild Flower Meadow on 15<sup>th</sup> May (over a week earlier than 2015) with probably a different bird west of Brookhouse 6 the following day and another along the treeline between Brookhouse 8 & 9. On 25<sup>th</sup> May, there were 'purring' males at Lower Barn and west of Brookhouse 7 and on 3<sup>rd</sup> June west of both Brookhouse 6 & 7 with another seen in flight over Brookhouse 5. On the final day of the survey (12<sup>th</sup> June) there were 'purring' males in the southeast corner of Brookhouse 6 and at Brookhouse Farm, the latter having flown over Brookhouse 6.

### **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 one heard on 8<sup>th</sup> April, a very early date. On 19<sup>th</sup> April, there was a singing male along the north edge of Brookhouse 4 while on 28<sup>th</sup> April a male was heard at Shooting Ground. On 15<sup>th</sup> May, there was a male by the viewing platform in Brookhouse 8 and another in Brookhouse 6. The remaining records were of a male along the northern edge of Brookhouse 4 on 25<sup>th</sup> May and one in flight over Wild Flower Meadow on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. None was recorded along transect A.



**Barn owl** (BoCC green list, Schedule 1)

The only record this year was of a single bird seen in flight along transect B near Blonks on 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

**Hobby** (BoCC green list, Schedule 1)

One flew out of Bar Furze field (transect A) on 28<sup>th</sup> April. On 12<sup>th</sup> June, an agitated bird circling overhead there giving alarm calls was strongly suggestive of nesting. This is a traditional site for this often unobtrusive species with breeding suspected in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2014.

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

A pair of adult Peregrines was observed along transect A on the electricity pylon near Keeper's Cottage (grid ref TQ 16123 23500) on and off throughout the survey period. Despite a careful search of the pylon with binoculars, neither a nest nor young were observed though the territorial behaviour of the pair was strongly suggestive of nesting.

**Nightingale** (BoCC red list)

There were two territories along transect B in 2016, one in the southwest corner of Wild Flower Meadow (a traditional site) and the other in Brookhouse 4. Numbers have fallen from a high of five territories in 2007 and 2009 though the reasons for this decline are unclear.

## 5.0 REFERENCES

Bibby, C.J., Burgess, N.D., Hill, D.A. & Mustoe, S. H. (2000). *Bird Census Techniques* (2nd. ed.). Academic Press, London.

Eaton MA *et al* (2015). Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. *British Birds* 108, 708–746. Available online at [britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BoCC4.pdf](http://britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BoCC4.pdf)

Marchant J 1983. *BTO Common Birds Census Instructions*. Maund & Irvine, Tring.

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## Appendix 1 – List of species recorded, spring 2016

Species	BTO species code	Bird of Conservation Concern (BoCC status)
Canada goose	CG	Not assessed
Greylag goose	GJ	Not assessed
Teal	T.	Amber
Mallard	MA	Amber
Shoveler	SV	Amber
Pheasant	PH	Not assessed
Grey heron	H.	Green
Little grebe	LG	Green
Sparrowhawk	SH	Green
Buzzard	BZ	Green
Hobby	HY	Green
Peregrine	PE	Green
Moorhen	MH	Green
Coot	CO	Green
Woodcock	WK	Red
Herring gull	HG	Red
Stock dove	SD	Amber
Woodpigeon	WP	Green
Collared dove	CD	Green
Turtle dove	TD	Red
Cuckoo	CU	Red
Barn owl	BO	Green
Green woodpecker	G.	Green
Great spotted woodpecker	GS	Green
Jay	J.	Green
Jackdaw	JD	Green
Rook	RO	Green
Carrion crow	C.	Green
Raven	RN	Green
Goldcrest	GC	Green
Great tit	GT	Green
Blue tit	BT	Green
Coal tit	CT	Green
Skylark	S.	Red
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



Song thrush	ST	Red
Redwing	RE	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
Linnet	LI	Red
Lesser redpoll	LR	Red
Bullfinch	BF	Amber
Yellowhammer	Y.	Red
Reed bunting	RB	Amber

### 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
Canada goose	CG	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Mandarin	MN	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Mallard	MA	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	2	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
Stock dove	SD	1	2	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	2	-	-	-	-	1	-
Great spotted woodpecker	GS	3	3	4	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Magpie	MG	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jay	J.	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jackdaw	JD	-	-	1	2	-	4	2	2	-	1
Carrion crow	C.	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Goldcrest	GC	1	4	4	1	3	2	2	3	3	2
Blue tit	BT	2	8	7	7	4	5	4	3	6	6
Great tit	GT	3	8	10	4	5	6	6	5	6	3
Coal tit	CT	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	1
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	-
Chiffchaff	CC	4	7	8	7	7	6	4	5	6	6
Willow warbler	WW	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blackcap	BC	5	3	5	6	6	6	5	5	4	5
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
Starling	SG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Blackbird	B.	5	2	4	1	-	2	1	3	2	2
Song thrush	ST	3	2	3	1	-	3	1	1	2	2
Mistle thrush	M.	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robin	R.	8	23	20	15	13	10	16	11	14	14
Dunnock	D.	3	2	4	4	1	2	2	1	2	2
Chaffinch	CH	9	13	15	9	9	10	7	1	3	3
Goldfinch	GO	1	1		2	1	1	1	-	-	-
Bullfinch	BF	-	-	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
Greylag goose	GJ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Canada goose	CG	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mandarin	MN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Mallard	MA	2	1	-	-	2	1	1	5	3	1
Grey partridge	P.	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Little grebe	LG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Common buzzard	BZ	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moorhen	MH	2	2	4	3	2	2	1	3	4	3
Coot	CO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
Stock dove	SD	1	3	-	2	2	3	1	2	2	1
Woodpigeon	WP	2	4	-	1	3	2	1	1	1	1
Collared dove	CD	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turtle dove	TD	2	2	2	2	2	1	-	4	2	3
Cuckoo	CU	2	2	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	2
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
Jay	J.	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Magpie	MG	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Jackdaw	JD	1	1	1	1	2	3	7	4	3	2
Rook	RO	-	-	8	10	12	9	4	6	8	7
Carrion crow	C.	-	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-
Goldcrest	GC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Great tit	GT	3	10	8	7	9	6	6	2	4	5
Blue tit	BT	5	9	8	6	7	5	5	7	8	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
Chiffchaff	CC	8	14	13	13	12	10	6	16	13	15
Willow warbler	WW	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Blackcap	BC	7	9	8	9	11	7	7	8	8	6
Garden warbler	GW	5	6	6	3	7	4	4	3	4	3
Lesser whitethroat	LW	-	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	4
Whitethroat	WH	5	7	19	16	16	7	5	4	5	4
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
Wren	WR	13	16	16	12	14	11	12	20	16	23
Blackbird	B.	4	6	7	7	2	5	6	6	8	9
Song thrush	ST	4	4	3	4	6	5	6	7	7	8
Mistle thrush	MT	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	2	1
Robin	R.	5	21	16	14	18	19	17	20	17	18
Nightingale	N.	5	4	5	4	4	4	3	1	2	2
Dunnock	D.	6	12	13	5	7	7	9	6	7	9
House sparrow	HS	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Chaffinch	CH	12	18	14	21	13	9	8	6	5	6
Goldfinch	GO	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1
Linnet	LI	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bullfinch	BF	1	5	3	2	1	-	-	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, 2016

Species	Observations
Canada goose	Transect B: Pair at Lower Barn pond on 24 <sup>th</sup> March and probably the same on Brookhouse 8 pond on 31 <sup>st</sup> March. Pair at Blonks on 8 <sup>th</sup> April and 16 <sup>th</sup> May.
Mandarin	Transect A: One flew from Alder Copse pond on 31 <sup>st</sup> March. Transect B: Male at Brookhouse 8 pond on 28 <sup>th</sup> April.
Teal	Transect B: Two pairs at Brookhouse 8 pond on 24 <sup>th</sup> March.
Shoveler	Transect B: Pair at Brookhouse 8 pond on 31 <sup>st</sup> March.
Pheasant	Transect A: Recorded on 5 visits, max 4 on 31 <sup>st</sup> March. Transect B: Recorded on 7 visits, max 11 on 8 <sup>th</sup> April.
Grey heron	Transect A: One in flight on 16 <sup>th</sup> May. Transect B: Singles in flight on 31 <sup>st</sup> March, 19 <sup>th</sup> April, 15 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> May and 3 <sup>rd</sup> June. One flew from Brookhouse 6 on 8 <sup>th</sup> April.
Sparrowhawk	Transect B: One soaring over Brookhouse 7 on 19 <sup>th</sup> April. Male near Hampshires Farm on 28 <sup>th</sup> April.
Buzzard	Transect B: Recorded on 7 visits, max. 3 on both 19 <sup>th</sup> April and 3 <sup>rd</sup> June.
Woodcock	Transect B: One flushed from Brookhouse 8 on 24 <sup>th</sup> March.
Herring gull	Transect A: Fourteen flew N on 3 <sup>rd</sup> June. Transect B: Single flew N on 31 <sup>st</sup> March, 8 circling over Brookhouse 7 on 19 <sup>th</sup> April, two flew S on 16 <sup>th</sup> May, three flew N on 3 <sup>rd</sup> June.
Collared dove	Transect B: Pair in flight over Brookhouse 4 on 31 <sup>st</sup> March, single in flight over Brookhouse 8 on 16 <sup>th</sup> May.
Barn owl	Transect B: One near Blonks on 3 <sup>rd</sup> June.
Green woodpecker	Transect A: Singles on 3 visits. Transect B: Singles on 6 visits.
Magpie	Transect B: Recorded on 6 visits, max 3 on 24 <sup>th</sup> March.
Jay	Transect A: Singles recorded on 3 visits. Transect B: Recorded on 7 visits, max 6 (including 2 pairs) on 24 <sup>th</sup> March.
Carrion crow	Transect A: Single pairs on 31 March & 8 <sup>th</sup> April. Transect B: Recorded on 6 visits, max 3 on 19 <sup>th</sup> April.
Raven	Transect B: Singles in flight on 8 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> April, 3 in flight on 3 <sup>rd</sup> June.
Marsh tit	Transect A: One on 31 <sup>st</sup> March.
Willow warbler	Transect B: Singing males in Brookhouse 8 & 6 on 8 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> April respectively were probably migrants.
Swallow	Transect A: One flew S on 8 <sup>th</sup> April. Transect B: One flew N on 15 <sup>th</sup> May
Pied wagtail	Transect B: One at Blonks on 19 <sup>th</sup> April and 25 <sup>th</sup> May.
Redwing	Transect B: Total of 72 on 24 <sup>th</sup> March including flock of 50 in Brookhouse 7.
Spotted flycatcher	Transect A: One along the western edge of Coate's Furzefield on 16 <sup>th</sup> May.
House sparrow	Transect B: One at Blonks on 8 <sup>th</sup> April, 16 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> May, three on 12 <sup>th</sup> June.

Linnet	Transect B: Two flew from Brookhouse 5 to 6 on 16 <sup>th</sup> May, three in Brookhouse 7 on 12 <sup>th</sup> June.
Lesser redpoll	Transect A: Flock of 60 on the edge of Hartsgravel Wood on 31 <sup>st</sup> March.

# Appendix 5: List of species recorded, 2005 - 16

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