

**Blackhall
Breeding Bird Survey
2014**

1.0 Introduction

This report details the results of breeding bird surveys undertaken during April 2014 to July 2014 at Blackhall Durham. The site situated at grid reference NZ 466392 (approximate central point), exists mainly as a Durham County Council – Countryside Estate nature reserve with tertiary and improving magnesium limestone grassland along cliff and regenerating arable field system with an extensive informal footpath network a few linear hedgerows and small woodland blocks with stock fencing. There is small amount of cattle grazing as part of the grassland management regime.

2.0 Legislation and policy background

Birds are afforded various levels of protection and levels of conservation status on a species by species basis, with the inclusion of a number of species on the following legislation or lists of conservation concern:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) [Department of the Environment (1981)].
- EC Birds Directive 1979 (79/409/EEC).
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1995) lists of globally threatened or declining species
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Red and Amber Lists of species of conservation concern (RSPB, 2002).

The most significant general legislation for British birds lies within Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built.
- Take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

In addition to the above protection for breeding birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, Schedule 1 of the Act lists a number of species which are protected by special penalties at all times.

Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive also lists rare and vulnerable species of wild birds that are

subject to special conservation measures.

The RSPB (2002) has published Red and Amber Lists of species of conservation concern. Red List species are those whose breeding population or range is rapidly declining (50% or more in the last 25 years), recently or historically, and those of global conservation concern. Amber List species are those whose breeding population is in moderate decline (25 – 49% in the last 25 years), rare breeders, internationally important and localised species and those of unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (2007) lists 32 bird species as priority species requiring conservation action, and consequently action plans have been developed for the conservation of these species.

[Local] Action Plan

The Durham Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (1999) lists 37 bird species as priority species requiring conservation action.

3.0 Methods

Survey design, methodology, fieldwork and assessment have been carried out in accordance with standard guidance Bibby *et al.* 1992¹ and Gilbert *et al.* 1998²

Data Search

A data search was carried out for all faunal/ floral groups and statutory and non-statutory protected sites. This included the following contacts with respect to birds:

- Durham Bird Club

Information from the Survey Area and the surrounding area (up to 500m distance from the survey boundary) was requested.

Walkover Surveys

During survey visits, a predetermined transect route, was walked at a slow pace so that all birds can be located, identified and recorded using standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) notation. Binoculars and telescopes were used throughout to scan the open for the presence of birds. All species are identified by their common name followed by their Latin

¹ Bibby, C.J., N.D. Burgess & D.A. Hill (1992): Bird Census Techniques. London: Academic Press.

² Gilbert *et al.* (1998) *Bird Monitoring Methods*. RSPB. Sandy.

equivalent. Bird species are listed with their BTO Code and their Conservation Status³, if they have red or amber status they are listed as species of conservation concern (SCC). UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (LBAP) are also identified. All birds that were observed during the surveys were recorded including passing individuals and species on migration.

One survey per month was undertaken over the breeding season April 2014 to July 2014 for terrestrial habitats. Information obtained from the surveys will help towards building a picture of the general use of the site and its surroundings by all bird species during the breeding and non-breeding season.

4.0 Results

Desk Study

Durham Bird Club records available when requested.

Habitats

The site is dominated by grassland with primary limestone assemblages on the beach banks, with a recovering large arable field system forming secondary neutral grassland, sections are fenced to provide a grazing regime. Small areas of scrub exist with an informal footpath network, and adjacent to the railway, linear woodland and hedges.

Breeding Bird Survey 2014

Breeding bird surveys were undertaken over one season April to July 2014, Details of dates, times and weather conditions, are given below in table 2. The number of hours detailed below is listed per surveyor, for example four hours x two surveyors = total of eight hours survey undertaken.

³ The UK's birds can be split in to three categories of conservation importance - red, amber and green. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green.

Table 1: Walkover Survey Details

Date	Start Time	End Time	Hours	Surveyors	Weather Conditions
15-04-2014	08.00	12.00	4	1	Dry/sunny 15 °C
15-05-2014	08:00	12:00	4	1	Overcast /dry 15 °C
05-06-2014	08:00	12:00	4	1	Dry/sunny spells 20 °C
02.07.2014	10.00	13.00	3	3	Dry/sunny 21 °C

During the 2014 breeding bird survey period, 52 bird species were recorded 13 red listed 15 amber listed and 24 green listed. See Table 3 below for details

Table 2: Species recorded during the Breeding season 2014

Species	Latin name	BTO Code	No. Of Birds Recorded					Conservation Status
			April	May	June	July	Totals	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	PE				2	2	Green
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	K				5	5	Amber
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	SN	1				1	Red, UK BAP
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	WM				3	3	Red, UK BAP
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	BO		1	1		2	Red ,UK BAP
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	LO		1			1	Green
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	P	2				2	Red, UK BAP
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	PH	2	2	1	1	6	Green
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	WP	6	2	3	1	12	Green
Collard Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>					1	1	Green
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	S	47	34	84	11	175	Red, UK BAP
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	SL	5	4	16	20	45	Amber
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	SM	4	4	34	36	78	Amber
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pretensis</i>	MP	26	31	32	60	139	Amber
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	WR	3	6	7	14	29	Green
Dunnoek	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	D	4	2	3	8	13	Amber
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	R	3	2	3	5	13	Green
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	SC			3	1	4	Green
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	WC		1			1	Amber
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	W		2			2	Amber
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	RT		1			1	Amber
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	SF		1			1	Red UK BAP
Red Breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	RR		1			1	Red
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	ST	2	3	1	5	11	Red, UK BAP
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	B	4	3	2	12	21	Green
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	BC		2	1	6	9	Green
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	WH	1	10	11	44	66	Amber
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	LW		3	3	1	7	Green
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	WW	1	4	5	18	28	Amber
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	CC	3	2	4	6	17	Green
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Lucestella luscinioides</i>	GH		5	2	1	8	Amber
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus</i>	SW		1			1	Green

	<i>schoenobaenus</i>							
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	G		1		1	2	Amber
Long Tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	LT	2	7			9	Green
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	GT	2	4	6	1	13	Green
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	BT		1	2		3	Green
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	WT				1	1	Red, UK BAP
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	MG	4	6	8	4	20	Green
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Si		1	6	4	11	Amber
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	JD	4	2	6	20	32	Green
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	C	4	4	2	6	16	Green
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	J		2			2	Green
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	SG	1	36	2	30	59	Red, UK BAP
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	PW		1		1	2	Green
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinaria</i>	GL				1	1	Green
Linnet	<i>Carduelis</i>	Li	22	38	19	300	379	Red, UK BAP
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	HS	2		6	2	10	Red, UK BAP
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	CH	6	8	4	18	36	Green
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	BF	2				2	Amber
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	GO	7	10	6	120	143	Green
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Y	2	1	2	3	8	Red, UK BAP
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	RB	18	22	38	14	90	Amber,UK BAP

Durham Bird Club Reports (DBC)

Passage species non breeding

1st May 2 Wheatear noted between Blackhall Rocks and Crimdon

13th May and 26th July Peregrine Flew south along the cliffs

24th May Whinchat, Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and

Red Breasted Flycatcher an extremely rare passage migrant only 1-2 noted annually in the county.

26th July 3 Whimbrel South

Breeding species accounts 2014

See plan 1 for breeding walkover map.

See plan 2 breeding distribution maps.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*): noted on two occasions DBC sightings; coastal / upland / quarries; moderate site value; two sightings of birds heading along the coast both south no other details noted one or two aerie's are occupied to the north.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*): noted on one occasion; *farmland / upland / coastal*; high site value; unusually no sighting were had of birds across the grassland area during the breeding season except a sighting of five birds together on the edge of Alice's Meadow by DBC during late July. This would certainly be a family group no nest locality was identified.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*): noted on one occasion disturbed; *wetland / coastal / upland*; **(UKBAP, SCC)** moderate site value; a single bird was disturbed from a wet area of grassland flying up then landing close to the pond area.

Whimbrel; (*Numenius phaeopus*): noted on one occasion; *wetland / coastal / upland*; low site value; three birds flew south a typical late summer sighting for this high arctic to northern Scotland breeding species.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*): breeding close to the site; *grassland / farmland*; **(UKBAP, SCC)** high site value; a single bird flew out of the box onto the site during the May visit with a bird regularly noted sitting asleep at the entrance hole of the box. DBC also provided records that birds were noted hunting the site on during early evenings. Breeding took place but no details of fledging success.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*): non breeder; *hedgerow / farmland / woodland*; low site value; a single bird was recorded close to Blackhall North farm no breeding confirmed.

Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*): possible breeder; *grassland / farmland*; **(UKBAP, SCC)** high site value; a pair of birds flew up from the large meadow to the south of Blue House Gill this is a regular locality for the species no breeding was confirmed it would be difficult for a pair to succeed in this area due to the high dog walking volume usage of the site, however the meadows to the north would be more suitable due to less disturbance.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*): noted on all visits; *grassland / farmland / woodland*; low site value: a regular species noted across the site however only in small numbers breeding not proven.

Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*): noted on all visits flying over; *farmland / woodland*; moderate site value; small numbers of birds were mainly restricted to the small blocks of conifers bordering the western edge, the scrubby areas at Alice's meadow or flying over the site.

Collard Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*): noted on one occasion flying over the site; *urban / farmland*; low site value; a single bird flew south close to the allotments at Alice's meadow obviously from the urban population.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*): noted during all visits; *farmland / grassland / heathland*; (**UK BAP, SCC**) high site value; an important population exists across the site up to forty one singing males noted during May. The weather was very settled throughout the breeding season which provided ideal conditions to raise young. This was very much the case with many adults noted taking food to nests and feeding fledged juveniles.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*): noted on all visits; *farmland*; high site value; good numbers frequented the allotment area and across the site in general by July there was a very good number of juveniles with adults feeding right across the site.

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Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*): noted on two occasions: *wetland / farmland / quarries*; high site value. Good numbers were noted on passage north, by July there were high numbers of juveniles and adults foraging across the meadows thus the cliff colonies have had high young productivity.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*): noted on all visits; *grassland / heathland / farmland*; high site value; in important site for the species with up to forty territories noted. This was an improvement on the previous survey. As with skylark lots of adults were noted taking caterpillars to nests and fledged young by June into July.

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*): noted on two occasions; *woodland / farmland*; moderate site value; a much improved status for the species with good numbers noted across the survey area, calling juveniles were noted along the wooded areas on the western boundary.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*): noted on two occasions; *farmland / woodland / urban*; moderate site value; up to four pairs were located, which was up one from the 2012 survey across the site typically utilising the gorse on Alice's Meadow and the western boundary hedgerows and scrub with breeding confirmed.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*): noted on both visits; *woodland / urban*; moderate site value; birds were noted singing within the wooded and scrub areas of the site breeding was proven at Alice's meadow with up to two juveniles noted.

Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*): noted on two occasions; *grassland / heathland*; high site value; a pair of birds successfully bred in a small dene at NZ 468392. At least one juvenile was noted further south the species can have up to three broods in a season thus more juveniles could be noted.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*): noted on one occasion DBC sighting; *grassland / heathland*; high site value; a regular passage species during the autumn was a regular breeder on the north tees marshes a single bird was noted during May a typical coastal migrant.

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*): noted on one occasion DBC sighting; *woodland*; moderate site value; a typical passage species normally noted during autumn passage thus a spring bird is a slight surprise.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*): noted on one occasion DBC sighting; *woodland*; moderate site value; again a surprise spring migrant typically an autumn passage bird.

Red Breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*): noted on one occasion DBC sighting; *woodland*; moderate site value; a very rare passage migrant normally an autumn bird with only one or two noted each season across the north east region.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*): noted on one occasion; *woodland / farmland*; **(UKBAP, SCC)**; moderate site value; a single was noted within the small linear woodland to the south west of the site and two around the scrub area of Alice's meadow. No breeding was confirmed but possible as the species can be very difficult to locate late in the season.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*): noted on all site visits; *woodland / farmland / urban*; moderate site value; typically found within the scrub and woodland bordering the site. Good numbers of juveniles were located by July down the wooded western edge of the site and at Alice's meadow thus a good breeding season.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*): noted on one occasion; *woodland*; low site value; adults and juveniles were located at NZ 460394 on the western boundary of the site where breeding was likely to have taken place.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*): noted during June and July visits; *scrub / mature hedgerow*; up to three of these scarce warblers were singing in a particular thick block of mature scrub and hedgerow, typically found along the western boundary of the site. No breeding was confirmed but as they are a very secretive species and juveniles very similar to the common whitethroat it is very likely they have been missed and to have bred successfully.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*): noted on all site visits; *scrub / thicket*; high site value; well recorded across the site with territories noted within the scrubby areas over the site. Breeding was proven to be very successful with many juveniles fledged by June into early July with juvenile birds located in the car park area.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*): noted on all site visits; *woodland / scrub*; moderate site value; three territorial birds sang within the scrubby wooded areas bordering the site. Breeding took place within the conifer block at NZ 461394 this species seems to be declining across much of its UK range many factors contribute however breeding productivity will have been high in their strongholds due to the settled weather.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*): noted on one occasion; *woodland*; moderate site value; a similar pattern to the 2102 survey where three birds were noted singing within the mature woodland areas to the northwest of the site where fledged juveniles could be noted.

Grasshopper Warbler (*Lucestella luscinioides*): noted on one occasion; *grassland / scrub*; moderate site value; Durham bird club records saw three bird reeling to the south and centre of the site in thick grass and scrub. By July only a single bird was heard. This could mean a number of scenarios - one or two pairs have settled to breed or moved on with the presence of the third male perhaps indicating an inability to find a mate. Whatever the outcome, it has been a very successful year for the species, on other DCC sites and across the county.

Sedge warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*): noted on one occasion; *wetland / grassland*; moderate site value; a single bird was heard singing within the rough vegetation close to the footpath at NZ 472388 no subsequent sightings or calls were had thus it could be construed that it moved on or held territory close to the site due to the path being very busy for dog walkers.

Long Tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*): noted on one occasion; *woodland / scrub*; moderate site value; a pair was noted within the same woodland edge to the north of the site there was no evidence of breeding but highly likely.

Great Tit (*Parus major*): noted on one occasion; *woodland*; low site value; fledged juveniles and adults foraged across the woodland areas more than likely to be birds from the urban areas.

Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*): noted on two occasions; *woodland / urban*; low site value; two birds were noted along the woodland strip between the car park and Rocksville House.

Willow Tit (*Poecile montanus*): noted on one occasion; *woodland / scrub*; a single bird called then flew into the willow scrub at the main car park. The species has been noted in the past within the conifer and scrub area to the north thus possible breeding takes place close by.

Magpie (*Pica pica*): noted on two occasions; *woodland / urban*; moderate site value; birds were noted spread across the survey area breeding was likely within the woodland blocks to the western boundary of the site although not proven.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*): noted on two occasions flying over the site; *urban / woodland*; moderate site value; a regular bird seen flying over and feeding on site. A very good population breeds within the cliffs and within the urban area of Blackhall.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*): noted on all visits flying and foraging over the site; *woodland / farmland*; moderate site value; birds regularly crossed and foraged on the grassland across the site during the survey period adults and four juveniles were noted at Alice's Meadow during July the nest was located within the small copse.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*): noted on one occasion; *woodland*; low site value; two birds were located on the far northern boundary at Alice's meadow most certainly from Castle Eden Dene.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*): noted on two occasions; *urban / woodland*; **(UKBAP, SCC)**; moderate site value; birds were noted in two main groups during May 26 adults birds and July 30 birds mostly juveniles thus a good breeding season across the urban areas. Diverse grassland is crucial for the species for foraging for invertebrate prey.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*): noted on one occasion; *grassland / upland*; moderate site value; a single bird was noted flying north over Blue House Gill and close to the allotments.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinaria*): noted on one occasion; *river valley's*; a single bird flew across Alice's Meadow north down to Castle Eden Dene mouth where suitable habitat is available.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*): noted on all occasions; *urban / farmland*; **(UKBAP, SCC)**; moderate site value; a small number of this declining urban to suburban species was noted, particularly foraging in the grassland and thickets two were was in Issues at NZ 471389, close to Blue House Gill and around the car park and hedges close to Rockville House.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*): noted on all occasions; *woodland / farmland / urban*; moderate site value; a good population is found within the wooded and scrub areas bordering the site breeding took place within these areas with a good number of juveniles being noted.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*): noted on one occasion; *woodland / scrub*; moderate site value; a pair of birds were found within the scrub area of Alice's meadow. The outcome of any breeding was not confirmed but highly likely within dene area close by. It is likely that birds migrated into this area with any fledged young.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*): noted on two occasions; *scrub / farmland*; moderate site value; a pair was located to the north of the site close to the allotments. There was no proof of breeding on or close to the site.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citronella*): noted on all occasions; *farmland / heathland*; moderate site value; **(UKBAP)** three territories were located this is rather low; again the inclement weather over the spring may have affected males setting up territories.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*): noted on all occasions; *wetland / farmland*; moderate site value; **(UKBAP, SCC)**; four territories were located - two close to the centre of the site and two the south. It is likely that other territories exist close to the site within the lower cliff areas and local dene's.

5.0 Discussion

Durham County Council countryside department was contracted by the Limestone Landscapes project to undertake a breeding bird survey at Blackhall Rocks. This report is the third documenting the distribution, movements, breeding and wintering birds. The site is linear in nature at approximately 3 km in length to 1km in width altitude is from 30 to 60m above sea level, managed for its regenerating neutral grassland which covers the majority of the site. There is a good informal footpath network which made monitoring of the site easy. The birdlife across the area has been well documented by Durham Bird Club for a number of years and is regularly utilised by amateur ornithologists especially during peak migration periods. However, a targeted longer term survey has not been carried out since the development of the Turning The Tide project which facilitated an extensive transition from arable farmland to managed meadow grassland.

Survey periods were carried out monthly over the pre-determined transect route (plan 1) to achieve best results. However, the weather conditions can often have a negative impact. This year proved to be an excellent year compared to 2012 with settled warm conditions from April to July high pressure systems with warm temperatures from 15 to 25C dominating thus allowing birds to settle quickly and fledge a good number of young. Passage was also well documented with Durham Bird Club (DBC) sightings of uncommon to very rare spring migrant passage species.

Blackhall Rocks is now an important grassland habitat developing a diverse community of birds, with many species's numbers higher when compared to the 2012 survey (52 species 2014 - compared to 32 in 2012). 2014 saw good settled warm weather throughout, and most species reacted to this by settling down on territory quickly. Four species dominated sightings during the survey work (skylark, meadow pipit, reed bunting and linnet), and as the two former species rely heavily on grassland to breed, and were seen in high densities across the site. The linnet relies on a mixture of scrub, (especially gorse), which is abundant within Alice's Meadow and other smaller areas providing ideal conditions. The reed bunting population has tripled compared to 2012, and this may have been due to the mild winter with good juvenile survival allowing an increased breeding population.

Other species such as yellowhammer, blackbird, whitethroat, willow warbler, swallow and starling were found in good numbers although their requirements are very different, e.g. the swallow mainly foraging for insect prey. Starlings were mostly visiting the site feeding in the

short grass sward early in the season, whereas whitethroat, willow warbler and blackbird are breeding within the woodland and scrub areas.

Notably, the Jackdaw (another species regularly noted in good numbers which breeds within the cliff and urban areas close to the site) was recorded spending a lot of time foraging and flying across the site. Blackhall rocks has been noted for many years as a good passage site DBC data provided some very important sightings of scarce passage species such as Wheatear, Spotted Flycatcher, Redstart, Whinchat, Whimbrel, single fly through by Peregrines, and a very rare Red Breasted Flycatcher throughout the survey period. Another important grassland indicator species - the barn owl breeds in a provisioned nest box adjacent to the site. A breeding pair has been present on site for a number of years and the Blackhall grassland area is a very important foraging area for the species (DBC). Another regular visitor was the house sparrow. It was noted feeding within the grassland and short scrubby areas. The return of breeding Stonechat, is good news, as this is a species which suffers during very cold winters of (e.g. 2010-2011), but increasing once again along the coast which is a very important stronghold for the species.

The survey was to establish species diversity and distribution and to give an indication of the breeding population of all species. Breeding productivity can be measured however this needs to be specifically targeted to given species which would be outside this survey remit. It can be said however, that productivity for example of the three dominant species was high (profusion of insect prey available) compared to 2012 with good numbers of juveniles noted from June through to July. It would also be very difficult to give accurate breeding figures for all breeding species utilising the site, however table 1 below (appendices 2012 and 2104) gives us an indication of selected species.

This survey was only be a snapshot of the birdlife that utilises the site and species diversity will inevitably change over the longer period. However, it is likely that the keystone breeding species such as skylark and meadow pipit will remain dominant due to the key grassland habitat now under appropriate management. Blackhall has now become a very important site for some of our fast declining bird's, grassland such as this is very scarce across the lowland half of the county and it is hugely important that the site continues to be managed in a way that supports a rich and diverse community of birds and other wildlife.

Plan 1 Walkover map

Transect Route —



Plan 2 Distribution maps

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Appendices

Table 3

Commoner Species; approximate breeding pairs and fledging

Species	Pairs		Fledged Young	
	2012	2014	2012	2014
Skylark	30-32	42	20	70
Meadow Pipit	21-25	31	14	80
Linnet	20-25	40	16	120
Whitethroat	10	11	7	30
Willow Warbler	5	5	10	18
Reed Bunting	4	18	-	30
Blackbird	4-5	10	6	18
Yellowhammer	5	2	-	4
Duncock	3	5	2	8

April 2014 North

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

Durham County Council - IntraMAP



April 2014 south

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

Durham County Council - IntraMAP



May 2014 north

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

Durham County Council - IntraMAP



May 2014 south

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation



June 2014 north

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

Durham County Council - IntraMAP



June 2014 south

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

Durham County Council - IntraMAP



July 2014 north

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

Durham County Council - IntraMAP



July 2014 south

Plan for identification purposes only; not to be used for scaling or formal documentation

