

Notes on the Wadhurst Park Estate 2023 Bird Surveys

Weather

Weather conditions for the 2023 surveys were for the most part less than optimum due to a persistent north-east wind throughout most of the survey period. Sheltered areas were not unduly affected but it was cool and breezy in exposed parts of the Estate. Because of the wind there were no frosts on any survey visits. Temperatures ranged from 1°C to 16°C as the season progressed. The weather throughout the pre survey weeks had seen a dry period through February, then wet and windy into mid-March. Cool, damp, and breezy weather persisted into mid-April, holding up migration. It stayed relatively cool all April and remained miserable into May, with the north-easterlies persisting until the end of the month, although with higher temperatures recorded.

Peak Registrations

Peak registrations over five years of point count survey are shown below. As always, results are based solely on the highest number of registrations of a species on a single point count visit, so should not be taken as statistically accurate. However, they do indicate general trends over the six seasons.

The Wadhurst Park surveys cover different sets of points in alternate years (Wadhurst Park South and Wadhurst Park Central), but the six points represented here (43; 40; 26; 20; 33 & 23) are included in both survey areas, so are visited annually, as is Batt's Wood.

Selected Species Notes

In the 2022 report it was noted that there were low numbers of **great spotted woodpecker**, **great tit**, and **coal tit** at Batt's Wood. Fortunately, numbers had increased slightly in 2023, but have yet to return to the peaks recorded in 2019. In contrast, great spotted woodpecker was recorded only once from the 6 points used for the Wadhurst Park figures, and again there was only one further registration from the rest of the point count set there. Point counts only record for ten-minute periods twice a season and birds can certainly go undetected, but this is still a significant decrease on the current data set. **Song thrush** numbers were at their lowest since 2018.

Another species in low numbers across both recording areas was **marsh tit**, with just one registration each, a disappointing count especially across the park where 5 registrations were recorded in 2022. The only other marsh tit record for Batt's Wood was from the far eastern end, during a butterfly transect on 24th May. The spread of birds for Wadhurst Park (Rolf's Farm Central) was more encouraging with marsh tit heard at five locations (see scanned summary maps).

A **cuckoo** was heard calling at the eastern side of Batt's Wood, and then southwest of the cottage, on 25 May. The only **bullfinch** record was also at Batt's Cottage on 27 April. There was a welcome new species for the data set with a male **linnet** singing close by point 22 on the park on 25 April.

There were three priority species recorded in 2023. **Lesser spotted woodpecker** was found at point 26, White's Wood, where it was calling in the canopy above the post on 25 April. I believe birds were also seen by other observers in the general area through this period. Causing even more excitement was a calling **hawfinch** in the oaks at point 23, Dog Leg Wood on 25 April. This was surely a bird on

or near a territory? The bird flew west but then was heard again briefly. It is recommended that visits through July are the best time to seek these birds, when the young are more confiding (Mark Mallalieu). A **spotted flycatcher** also sang in this woodland on 23 May, whilst a second bird was singing well at point 36 in Batt's Wood on 25 May. From personal observation across sites in East Sussex this spring, it appears the species had arrived in good numbers.

Chaffinch numbers are still relatively low across the Estate, reflecting the National trend.

Wadhurst Park Peak Registrations 2018 – 2023 (six points only)

Species	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blackbird	19	22	20	22	18	21
Blackcap	7	7	9	9	10	10
Blue Tit	12	14	18	15	17	11
Bullfinch	3	-	-	1	2	-
Buzzard	-	-	1	-		-
Carrion Crow	7	7	12	9	9	10
Chaffinch	1	3	4	5	5	3
Chiffchaff	8	9	9	11	11	12
Coal Tit	3	2	2	1	1	3
Cuckoo	-	-	3	2	-	-
Dunnock	3	1	2	4	3	3
Garden Warbler	1	1	1	1	2	3
Goldcrest	1	2	1	1	3	2
Goldfinch	-	-	1	1	2	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	7	6	5	8	6	1
Great Tit	9	7	9	11	12	4
Green Woodpecker	1	3	1	1	-	-
Hawfinch	-	-	-	-	-	1
Jackdaw	7	5	7	10	10	7
Jay	1	2	2	1	4	1
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	-	-	-	-	-	1
Linnet	-	-	-	-	-	1
Long-tailed Tit	1	-	1	1	1	1
Magpie	2	3	4	-	4	1
Marsh Tit	2	2	1	1	5	1
Mistle Thrush	1	-	2	1	5	1
Nuthatch	4	1	2	3	4	4
Pheasant	14	13	12	13	8	7
Raven	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robin	15	15	15	13	11	14
Rook	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siskin	3	-	-	-	-	-
Song Thrush	4	7	7	10	6	4

Spotted Flycatcher	-	1	-	1	-	1
Stock Dove	1	3	-	2	-	3
Tawny Owl	-	-	-	-	-	-
Treecreeper	4	3	3	3	4	4
Willow Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woodpigeon	14	12	17	18	14	16
Wren	15	20	21	15	19	16

Batt's Wood Peak Registrations 2018 – 2023 (no data for 2021)

Species	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023
Blackbird	24	26	22	20	27
Blackcap	20	19	18	20	15
Blue Tit	17	14	16	15	18
Bullfinch	2	2	2	-	-
Buzzard	-	-	5	1	-
Carrion Crow	9	11	17	11	7
Chaffinch	4	1	3	-	3
Chiffchaff	20	16	22	15	17
Coal Tit	9	10	8	3	6
Cuckoo	-	2	3	-	1
Duncock	3	2	1	-	1
Garden Warbler	4	4	5	3	3
Goldcrest	5	3	3	2	2
Goldfinch	1	-	1	-	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	10	11	9	4	7
Great Tit	8	16	10	5	9
Green Woodpecker	4	1	5	2	1
Jackdaw	6	4	1	3	1
Jay	5	3	5	3	1
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	-	-	1	-	-
Long-tailed Tit	3	3	2	3	4
Magpie	2	-	1	1	-
Marsh Tit	2	3	3	2	1
Mistle Thrush	6	6	4	-	4
Nuthatch	1	2	3	1	1
Pheasant	13	9	8	8	11
Raven	2	-	-	2	-
Robin	29	28	36	29	37
Rook	-	-	2	-	-
Siskin	-	1	-	-	-
Song Thrush	4	11	20	16	8
Spotted Flycatcher	-	-	1	-	1
Stock Dove	5	4	2	2	3

Tawny Owl	2	-	-	1	-
Treecreeper	3	2	5	2	5
Willow Warbler	3	-	-	-	-
Woodpigeon	32	27	22	24	25
Wren	37	43	44	50	37

Mayfield College Transects 2023

The college transects were rather disappointing this season. The early visit was hampered by the moderate, cold north-easterly, and low cloud, so bird song was subdued. The one species that did show well was **marsh tit** on the early visit with birds recorded from sections 8, 9, 12 and 13, the latter producing four birds from woodland along the stream. **Yellowhammers** were singing on the early transect on sections 11 and 15, but not seen or heard on the late visit. A **hobby** flew low over section 12 on the early visit. **Whitethroat** was conspicuous by its absence; the only record was of a calling bird heard in the middle distance from section 1 on the late visit. A male **bullfinch** was found on the late transect, along section 16. This is a scarce bird across all survey areas within the Wadhurst Park Estate. **Dunnock** fared well and was recorded from five sections on the late visit.

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