

Westbere Marsh Bird Monitoring Report 2011

A report on behalf of the Kent Stour Ringing Group



This document is a summary of bird monitoring carried out at Westbere, near Sturry, Kent during 2011.

Introduction

Ringing has been carried out at Westbere for over 25 years. The area to the north of the Boot Lake, which lies on the western edge of the Wild Spaces Site, was ringed under the BTO Constant Effort Scheme (CES) from 1984 until 2006. Marked declines in the numbers of birds being caught on the CES site lead to this ringing project being suspended. Drying out of the reedbed and establishment of willow scrub are factors considered to have led in part to these declines.

General incidental bird ringing has continued since in two areas at Westbere:

- around the lakes and reedbeds at Westbere (Reedbed site)
- to the north of the site close to the railway line (Railway site).

In 2008 part of the eastern end of the site was purchased by the Kent Wildfowling and Conservation Association (KWCA). They, in agreement with Natural England and supported by funding from The Wild Spaces Fund, have started management of the site in order to retain the reedbed habitat.

From 2009 onwards exploratory bird ringing has been undertaken on the Wild Spaces Site to the east of the former CES site. During this period extensive management has taken place, in particular:

- clearing of the existing ditches
- repair and maintenance of the sluices, enabling more effective control of the water levels
- creation of two pool areas at intersections of ditches
- removal of trees

The Kent Stour Ringing Group have been monitoring the birds using Westbere Marsh to contribute to local, national, and international population monitoring projects. All ringing sessions are led by fully licensed British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) trained bird ringers, qualified to safely trap, identify, ring, examine, measure, and release wild birds.

Ornithological Objectives

We plan to record bird species using the area, either by trapping and ringing or by sight/call recognition, with a focus on species of conservation concern, to determine long-term trends of bird activity on the marsh, reflecting the results of local management and national and international influences on bird populations. To do this we plan:

- to establish a basis for regular ringing at the site
- to provide baseline information for monitor the future bird populations breeding at and passing through the site.
- to provide information in respect of the breeding bird population
- to assess the potential for re-establishing CES ringing at a future date

Trapping the birds offers several advantages over sight records:

- A lightweight metal ring with a unique identification number can be attached to the leg so that, if the bird is caught again or found dead in later years, data can be

provided on its movement and longevity. Marking the birds as individuals also provides a good indication of abundance on site.

- Examining the bird in the hand provides data on age/sex ratios in the population that cannot be gathered in any other way, and informs the BTO and their European partners about general population trends and breeding success each year that can be compared with long-term data to monitor the status of the species.
- There is a possibility of catching birds that have been ringed elsewhere to inform us about their historical movements and behaviour, or retrapping birds in future years that have been ringed previously at Westbere Marsh, to provide data on how faithful they are to the site.

Ringling Data

The following table provides a record of the species and numbers of birds ringed at Westbere Marsh during 2011 or caught after ringling at the site in earlier years.

Sessions:

Three visits were made to the Railway site, at dawn on the 10th and 23rd of April and on the 7th May 2011, catching 145 birds in total, (a total of 28 birds were re-caught during these sessions that were ringed in 2011 and are not included in Table 3 below).

Table 1: Ringling sessions 2011 at the Railway site, Westbere.

Date	New birds	Westbere Retraps	Controls	Total
10-Apr	41	11		
23-Apr	39	15		
07-May	17	22		
Totals	97	48	0	145

Nine visits were made to the Reedbed site during the period late June to end of August. The details of the dates are included in Table 2. A total of 685 birds were caught of which 611 were new for the year. 64 were birds re-caught within the season, 10 were birds ringed in previous years and 4 birds were controls including a sedge warbler from Selkirk, a willow warbler from Northumberland and a reed warbler from the Gironde region in France.

Table 2: Ringling sessions 2011 at the Reedbed site, Westbere.

Date	New birds	Westbere Retraps	Controls	Total
19-Jun	31	2		
26-Jun	118	7		
02-Jul	73	16		
10-Jul	57	14	1	
23-Jul	26	4		
07-Aug	47	1		
14-Aug	129	10	2	
20-Aug	108	9	1	
27-Aug	22	7		
Totals	611	70	4	685

Birds caught:

The totals of birds caught at the Westbere site are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Species ringing totals 2011 - Westbere

Species	Ringed	Caught in 2011, ringed previous years at Westbere		
		2011	2010	2009
27 Species	2011	2010	2009	2005
Water Rail	1			
Kingfisher	2			
Green Woodpecker	1			
Wren	19	4		
Dunnock	16	1	1	
Robin	8	2		
Blackbird	7	3	1	
Song Thrush	4			
Cetti's Warbler	19			
Grasshopper Warbler	1			
Sedge Warbler	207	2		
Marsh Warbler	1			
Reed Warbler	186	4		
Whitethroat	59	3		
Garden Warbler	9			
Blackcap	18			
Chiffchaff	34	1		
Willow Warbler	14			
Long-tailed Tit	17	3		
Blue Tit	28			
Great Tit	13	1	1	
Tree creeper	3	1		
Jay				1
Chaffinch	2			
Linnet	2			
Bullfinch	5			
Reed Bunting	32			
Totals	708	25	3	1

Control Data

Birds ringed at Westbere and subsequently caught elsewhere:

Sedge Warbler

L245719	3J	02/07/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent)
	R	11/07/2011	Farlington Marsh, Portsmouth: 50°50'N 1°2'W (SU6804) (Portsmouth) 161km WSW 9 days

Whitethroat

L245776	3J	23/07/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent)
	R	05/08/2011	Firdown Wood, Bekesbourne: 51°16'N 1°7'E (TR1857) (Kent) 4km SSW 13 days

Chiffchaff

ARC405	3J	26/06/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent)
	R	19/08/2011	Hode Farm: 51°16'N 1°7'E (TR1856) (Kent) 4km SSW 54 days

Birds ringed elsewhere and subsequently caught at Westbere:

Sedge Warbler

L760018	1	28/06/2011	Whitmuir Hall, Selkirk, Sct Borders: 55°32'N 2°48'W (NT5027) (Scottish Borders)
	R	14/08/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent) 538km SSE 47 days

Reed Warbler

6382852	3	25/08/2010	Ile de Malprat, Biganos, Gironde, France: 44°18'N 0°58'W (Gironde) France
FRP	R	20/08/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent) 794km N 360 days

Willow Warbler

DEH459	3	01/08/2011	Whittle Farm, Northumberland: 54°59'N 1°53'W (NZ0765) (Northumberland)
	R	14/08/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent) 456km SSE 13 days

Reed Bunting

L557730	4M	09/05/2011	Sturry, Kent (Jan's site): 51°18'N 1°8'E (TR1860) (Kent)
	R	10/07/2011	Westbere 2: 51°18'N 1°9'E (TR2060) (Kent) 1km E 62 days

Note: R caught and released by ringer

Summary

Ringed surveys of Westbere Marsh have provided data on 27 species of bird, and contributed to the national monitoring of species of conservation concern.

Continuation of monitoring is important as this provides a useful comparison of species, numbers, breeding success and age structure within the population each year.

The sympathetic management of Westbere Marsh provides a greater range of opportunities than might be expected from a more intensively managed land holding, and is an important and valuable resource for wildlife.

The group would like to thank the KWCA for giving permission to monitor birds on Westbere Marsh and for their support and encouragement.