

Bird Survey Results: Cumnor Hurst, Oxon

Surveyor: Emma Gardner
(emma@elgardner.demon.co.uk)

Three dawn bird surveys were carried out at Cumnor Hurst in April/May 2016, as part of a project comparing avian community composition across sixteen Oxfordshire woodlands. Table 1 details the dates and weather conditions of each survey, while the species encountered are listed in Table 2. Birds flying over the wood were not recorded.

A total of **34 species** were recorded across the three surveys. This includes three amber listed species currently of moderate conservation concern (dunnock, willow warbler and bullfinch) and four red listed species (song thrush, mistle thrush, wood warbler and linnet). The red lists contains species for which there is currently a high level of conservation concern for their population levels. Four was the maximum number of red listed species found in any one woodland within the project. Only two other woodlands recorded this number of red listed species: Youldbury Wood and Bagley Wood. The fact that both of these woodlands are more than three times the size of Cumnor Hurst is a testament to the variety of good quality habitats the Hurst provides within a relatively small area.

The wood warbler was recorded in the West Wood, not far north of the pines. Of the sixteen woodlands within the project, wood warbler was only recorded at Youldbury Wood and Cumnor Hurst. Wood warbler prefer mature oak woods with very little ground vegetation. Maintaining some wooded areas where the ground cover is predominantly leaf litter will continue to provide attractive habitat for them.

The linnets were recorded in the gorse bushes along the south and east side of the clearing. This is typical linnet habitat. Other species benefitting from the combination of gorse and open areas are greenfinch and goldfinch.

The willow warblers were recorded in the shrubs around the north and western side of the clearing, while the shrubs/coppice beneath the canopy towards the northern end of the wood were more favoured by blackcap and chiffchaff. Other species benefiting from areas of thicker vegetation are wren, dunnock, robin and bullfinch, with wren and dunnock in particular associated with dense bramble patches.

Four species of tit were recorded — great, blue, coal and long-tailed. Goldcrests were also recorded; these are conifer specialists, being consistently recorded close to the circle of pines. One of the pairs of treecreepers was also frequently recorded using the mixed pines.

The combination of mature woodland and grassy clearings makes Cumnor Hurst particularly attractive to thrushes, which require trees or shrubs for nesting but forage on the ground. Based on observations of singing males, there are potentially three breeding pairs of song thrushes. A pair of mistle thrushes was observed, although they appeared to be commuting in specifically to forage in the clearing and probably breeding nearby.

Table 1: Dates and weather conditions of bird surveys at Cumnor Hurst.

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
Date	9/4/2016	26/4/2016	26/5/2016
Dawn	06:21	05:45	04:57
Start	06:22	05:47	04:58
End	08:09	07:30	06:46
Duration (min)	107	103	108
Temp. (Celsius)	5	2	10
Wind	Still	Still	Still
Precipitation	Light Rain/None	None	None
Cloud Cover	Partial	Partial	Full
Total No. Species	28	28	24

Table 2: Bird species recorded at Cumnor Hurst during April/May 2016. Species of conservation concern are indicated by asterisks (* = amber list, ** = red list; according to the latest review by Eaton 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).

Common Name	Scientific Name
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Dunnock*	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Song Thrush**	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Mistle Thrush**	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Wood Warbler**	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Willow Warbler*	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Long Tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Linnet**	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Bullfinch*	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>