

## **Fairfield Nature Reserve Breeding Birds 2020: an Overview**

Please read this with reference to the spreadsheet and field maps for best results!

Three early morning visits were made; one in April, one in May and one in June.

As usual, no great surprises with the breeding birds this year. A good diversity of species for a site of its size was seen across the visits. However, a cursory glance of the spreadsheet reveals predominately an avifauna typical of garden and woodland habitats and that 'tweaking' the site for wetland and farmland species might add value.

With this in mind, perhaps it is worth highlighting that the Lapwing, a wetland / farmland species in local and national decline again failed to breed or even pair up. As in 2019 a lone male was present briefly during visit 1. The other wader to have bred on site in previous years-- Oystercatcher – was not recorded at all.

Two amber-listed ducks (Mallard and Shelduck) used the site in broadly suitable habitat but neither seemed to breed successfully. A pair of the latter species was seen behaving in an agitated manner during the May visit which indicated breeding interest, but seemingly Mallard didn't attempt nesting at all. By June dry weather rendered almost all 'wet patches' very dry which will not have benefitted either species.

A pair of Reed Bunting was present (as is usually the case) but it was gratifying for the surveyor to find an active nest in this year in the patch of phragmites. Perhaps another stand of reeds somewhere on site might be of use to this amber-lister.

Unsurprisingly in light of local and national trends Grey Partridge was absent for the third consecutive year. The lack of breeding Mistle Thrush (another red-listed species was a little deflating).

Somewhat disappointingly, Linnet was absent. In other finch news, Greenfinch numbers seem to be recovering well following their trichomonis-linked slump, with a healthy population of four to five pairs. Bullfinch remained stable at one pair-- which successfully raised young.

Other 'success stories' include a record year for Blackbirds and a good season for migrant warblers on site with Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler all breeding in small numbers.

Dan Haywood, Lancaster.