

# THORNE MOORS VERTEBRATES REPORT 2006

Compiled by Martin Limbert

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## VERTEBRATES RECORDING

**1. Parameters of conservation.** Thorne Moors lies within the Humberhead Levels Natural Area, and the peatland and contiguous wetlands comprise the Thorne Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest. The moorland forms a component of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve, managed by Natural England and (in the North Lincolnshire section *q.v.*) the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The NNR has international designations to recognize its conservation importance.

**2. Recording area.** For vertebrates documentation, the Thorne Moors recording area is deliberately interpreted somewhat loosely. It comprises the whole of the peatland, contiguous unfarmed areas, the Thorne Colliery curtilage, and peripheral farmland and drains. The limit to the north is defined as the line of the old Axholme Joint Railway. Otherwise, a field width or so is a practical rule-of-thumb.

**3. Place-names.** In broad terms, the name Thorne Moors is used to embrace both the peatland and the other areas under study. The surviving peat is divided by parish limits, the parish names being Thorne Waste, Snaith & Cowick Moor, Rawcliffe Moor, Goole Moor and Crowle Moor. Thorne Waste (except now the Yorkshire Triangle) lies in South Yorkshire, and the other parishes lie in East Yorkshire, except Crowle Moor and the Yorkshire Triangle, which are in North Lincolnshire. That part of Goole Moor situated north of Rawcliffe Moor is designated as 'Northern Goole Moor' for recording purposes. Within the parish framework, numerous place-names are employed for vertebrates recording. These names were included on the place-names map issued with the *Thorne Moors Vertebrates Report 2005*.

**4. Current sources of nomenclature and species sequence.** In this report, English and scientific names and sequence of species accord (where appropriate) with the following:  
Beebee, T.J.C. and R.A. Griffiths (2000) *Amphibians and Reptiles. A Natural History of the British Herpetofauna*. The New Naturalist No. **87**. London: HarperCollins Publishers.  
*The British Birds List of Birds of the Western Palearctic*; see [www.britishtobirds.co.uk/bblast.htm](http://www.britishtobirds.co.uk/bblast.htm) (accessed 10th February 2007).

Arnold, H.R. (1993) *Atlas of mammals in Britain*. Institute of Terrestrial Ecology Research Publication No. **6**. London: HMSO.

In addition, botanical nomenclature and sequence follow:

Stace, *c.* (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**5. Descriptions.** For nationally rare avian taxa, descriptions and visual evidence should be made available in accordance with the requirements of the British Birds Rarities Committee. At county level, material should be prepared in compliance with the lists issued by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Ornithological Section Reports Committee or the Lincolnshire Bird Club, as appropriate. Advice and blank forms can be made available upon request.

**6. Rare breeding birds.** In addition to Natural England, records of rare breeding birds are made available to the county organizations, and *via* them to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Records may also be accessed by *bona fide* specialist study groups.

**7. Daily counts.** In the species accounts which follow, there are references to "daily counts" and "counts". It is emphasized that these are not full site counts, but counts made by an individual

observer or group on a particular date. It is possible to have more than one count on a single date, when the highest will be used if they cannot be united. The recording area is very large, and site totals are difficult to establish with certainty, except for the scarcer species. However, for some wetland birds, it is possible to visit the most likely places to count these species, thus attaining a relatively accurate moorland total for them. It is acknowledged that such reported daily counts may sometimes be regarded as vague, but they are broadly comparable over a period of years.

## VERTEBRATES RECORDING IN 2006

1. **Number of records submitted.** The number of records of vertebrates communicated for 2006 was relatively low, preventing the production of a full annual summary. Therefore, only significant records are detailed here and not all species are mentioned.

2. **Statistics for 2006.** During the year, three species of reptile, 127 species of bird and 10 species of mammal were reliably reported from Thorne Moors. Because of the low level of record submission, there were few notified birds of major significance. However, Little Egret was an addition to the site list. Other birds of note included Common Goldeneye, Common Quail, Black-necked Grebe, Red Kite, Little Gull and Snow Bunting. Conversely, several summer migrants were in very poor numbers. Interesting breeding records were obtained, including Tufted Duck, Common Stonechat and Eurasian Treecreeper. There were no especially noteworthy records amongst the other vertebrates, though 12 Adders were counted on 18th April.

3. **Publications, reports, etc.** The following references appeared during 2006, using vertebrates data concerning Thorne Moors, but not necessarily relevant to that year. Published references to noteworthy species as news items are not detailed (unless accompanied by an image), nor are those references in which the site allusion is merely incidental or very minor:

- Anon. (2006) *Breeding Nightjar Survey - 2006 - Humberhead Peatlands NNR, SAC, SSSI, SPA (Thorne, Goole and Crowle Moors)*. Unpublished report by Middleton Consultancy, Barnsley.
- Carroll, D. (2006) *Site Checklists of Birds*. Doncaster: privately published.  
[Site checklists 1950-2006; they include Thorne Moors, amounting to 217 spp. since 1950, one published with the escape proviso].
- Hiner, S. [2006] *Reptiles on the Humberhead Peatlands. Report - 2005*. Unpublished report to English Nature.
- Limbert, M. (2006) *Thorne Moors Vertebrates Report 2005*. Doncaster: Privately published.
- Skidmore, P. (2006) An Inventory of the Invertebrates of Thorne and Hatfield Moors. *Thorne & Hatfield Moors Monograph No. 2*. Doncaster: Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum.  
[This compilation lists *inter alia* external parasites of vertebrates: flat-flies Hippoboscidae, fleas Siphonaptera, mites Acaridida and ticks Ixodida. Details of fleas and the arachnids are already given in *THMCF Technical Reports* Nos **10** and **15**. However, the above Inventory records an additional species of flea, *Hystrichopsylla talpae* (Curtis), without host, dated 2000. Although commonly found on Moles *Talpa europaeus* in Britain, this flea is also reported from other small mammals].

## REPTILES

**Viviparous or Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara*.** Reported from 4th April-20th September, the latter involving a family party of 5 east of Woodpecker Wood. All other records were of singles, in the Creykes area, along Shoulder o' Mutton Tram, in the Will Pits-Will Pits Scrape area and along Middle Moor Tram.

**Grass or Ringed Snake *Natrix natrix*.** There were three records, the first being 1 near the NNR entrance bridge at Whaley Balk on 2nd April. This was followed by 1 which emerged from under scrap railway lines at Bank Top on 10th July. A young animal (c.30cm, not hatched 2006), also near the NNR entrance bridge at Whaley Balk, was seen on 20th September.

**Adder *Vipera berus*.** The first was a female along Pony Bridge Tram on 22nd March. Eight males were recorded next day, 7 along a balk south of Green Belt Scrape and the eighth at Green Belt. On 2nd April, 2 females were near the NNR entrance bridge at Whaley Balk, one being described as "very dark" (RJS). On 12th April, 7 males were in the same location as on 23rd March. The maximum during the year was 12 on 18th April: 3 males on Goole Moor (SE7317, SE7318), 2 males and 2 females in the Pony Bridge Wood area, and 5 males along Angle Drain (SH). A sloughed skin (64.5cm) was found along Paraffin Tram on 26th April. The last record of April involved single male and female on 28th at Pony Bridge Marsh. May records numbered three: a male along Shoulder o' Mutton Tram on 5th, 3 females along Angle Drain Track on 11th, and a female at Green Belt on 25th. There were July records on 9th (3, including 1 close to Whaley Balk) and 26th (1 female on the northern edge of Goole Moor in SE7417). In September, up to 2 males were at Green Belt to 20th, on which date a female was on Goole Moor (SE7417). The 2 Adders seen in SE7318 on 18th April are the first ever reported from that 1km square.

## BIRDS

**Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*.** The first of two records involved 2 grounded at the flooded workings on 7th October, followed by an immature at Will Pits Scrape on 17th December.

**Whooper Swan *C. cygnus*.** At the flooded workings, 33 landed on 23rd March. On 23rd October, 7 were at the Shoulder o' Mutton and later flew east.

**Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*.** On 1st January, 5 arrived from the north-west and landed at Will Pits Scrape. Next day, 4 were with Greylag Geese at the flooded workings. On 14th February, skeins of 150+ and 220+ headed west.

**Greylag Goose *A. anser*.** On 1st January, 52 were at Will Pits Scrape. On 24th April, 2 were at Casson's Marsh and 20 in a field east of the Pony Bridge. During the year, high counts were c.120 at the flooded workings on three dates in January, c.200 on 14th September (including c.190 at Will Pits Scrape), c.120 over Will Pits Scrape on 14th November, and c.200 at Will Pits Scrape on 2nd December.

**Greater Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*.** On 24th April, 4 were in a field east of the Pony Bridge. On 1st August, c.50 were at Will Pits Scrape.

**Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*.** Records from 20th March. Four pairs were at the flooded workings along Fisons' Road North on 12th April.

**Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*.** The first were 2 males and 1 female at Will Pits Scrape on 1st January. At the flooded workings, there were 3 males and 1 female on 28th January and 3 on 5th February.

**Gadwall *A. strepera*.** Recorded throughout much of the year, but the only double-figure counts were 10 on 5th February and 5th/9th May.

**Eurasian Teal *A. crecca*.** The maximum was 270+ on 19th September, but 100+ on 3rd September and 2nd December were also notable. Despite frequent sightings of pairs there was no proof of breeding.

**Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*.** The year opened with 158 on 1st January, with totals occasionally reaching 200+ during October-December. Breeding proved.

**Shoveler *A. clypeata*.** The highest count was 20 at Will Pits Scrape on 5th February. There were totals of 10+ on 4th February, in May and on 2nd December. Locations included the Paraffin Cuttings.

**Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*.** Spring counts at Will Pits Scrape did not exceed 6. At the flooded workings, totals reached 8 males and 4 females on 11th May, and eight pairs a few days later on 16th. A pair was at Green Belt Scrape on 25th May. There was some evidence of breeding. At the flooded workings, a female had nesting material on 2nd April (RJS). Will Pits Scrape held 1 female and 3 juveniles on 14th June (RB). The only record in the later months was 3 at the flooded workings on 30th November.

**Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*.** A good year for this species. The first was a male at Will Pits Scrape on 8th January (RW). Subsequently, there were 2 females/immatures at the flooded workings along Fisons' Road on 31st October and 14th November, followed by a pair at Will Pits Scrape on 17th December (RW, CW).

**Goosander *Mergus merganser*.** At Will Pits Scrape, there were 4 males and 4 females on 5th February and a male next day. The same water attracted 1 male and 2 females on 22nd March.

**Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*.** Sightings at the flooded workings were restricted to May, with up to 5 males and 3 females (11th), plus 10 (including 3+ females) on 25th. At Will Pits Scrape, first seen on 22nd March (7, including 5+ males), with a maximum later in the season of 4 males and 2 females in July and on 1st August.

**Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*.** One was on Snaith & Cowick Moor on 19th May, and 4 were along Fisons' Road North on 1st August.

**Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*.** Few records, but distributed throughout the year. The maxima were 6 in a field adjacent to Jones' Cable on 28th January and 3 along Goole Moor Tram on 2nd December.

**Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*.** One called on an unrecorded date close to Moorfield Farm (*per* JJ).

**Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*.** All records were from Will Pits Scrape. The first of the year was 1 on 2nd April (RJS), followed by 3 (including a pair) on 21st (RW). There were two pairs on 23rd-24th, one of them displaying (RB, SH, ML, CW). By 26th April there were 6 birds, the year's maximum (PH). Subsequent records to 23rd June peaked at 3 on several scattered dates (PH, ML, RW).

**Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*.** On 1st January, 1 over 'Middle Moor' headed north. A second passed east over Green Belt Scrape on 2nd April. At Will Pits Scrape, 1 landed on a branch or stick in the water on 30th September.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*.** One was at Will Pits Scrape on 26th April (AP, FO), and 3 flew south over Fisons' Road on 5th June (CCT). An addition to the Thorne Moors list.

**Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.** One was attacked by a Hobby over the centre of the moors on 13th July, and another was seen south of the Blue Bridge site on 26th October (both RA).

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*.** Females/'creamcrowns'/immatures were seen widely, often singly but sometimes up to 4. Single males were reported on 4th February, 2nd April, and from 21st April-14th June. On the latter date, the male took a young Black-headed Gull from a nest at Will Pits Scrape. Two males were seen on several September dates, with 1 also in the second half of November. An immature male was reported on 31st October and 12th November. Cumulatively, most records of Marsh Harriers were bounded by the dates 22nd March-30th November. There were occasional singles outside this period, except on 17th December when 4 were soaring together north-west of Will Pits.

**Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*.** After a male on 1st January, there were records in February from 4th, comprising 1 male and 2 'ringtails', apparently roosting at 'Middle Moor'. The male was observed until 23rd March, and a 'ringtail' was flushed from 'Middle Moor' on 2nd April. In the second half of the year, the single record involved a 'ringtail' on 14th November.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*.** On 2nd April, a pair and a second male were displaying over Green Belt Scrape. Occasional singles were seen soaring - especially over Will Pits - during April and on 2nd May. Also of interest was a total of 2 males and 2 females on 5th October.

**Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*.** The first were 2 west over Green Belt on 2nd April. One over Will Pits/Will Pits Scrape on 11th May was mobbed by a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, as was another over Crowle Moor on 19th July. One was over the western moor edge on 19th September, and on 26th October a further single passed over Rawcliffe Moor.

**Merlin *Falco columbarius*.** A female was seen several times during 1st January-5th February. On 3rd September a female/immature pursued a Meadow Pipit, and on 23rd November 1 chased a Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* on Goole Fields.

**Hobby *F. subbuteo*.** Recorded from 25th April (2), maximum 3 adults on 23rd June. In September, the last involved five sightings (including a juvenile) on 14th and 2 on 19th.

**Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*.** Relatively infrequent for much of the year, with a pair on 1st January, 1 on 24th January, a female from 23rd-25th April, and 1 high over the flooded workings on 16th May. The next was a male between 19th September-20th October, "sparring with a female Marsh Harrier" (RJS) on the first date. In November, there was 1 on 12th, 1+ on 14th and both a male and female on 17th. On 13th December a female captured a Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*.

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*.** Calling birds were heard on eight dates. One was at 'Middle Moor' on 1st January, with another along the canal towpath at the Canals on 4th February. In April, 1 was near the Viewing Platform on 2nd, and on 26th 1 was at flooded peat along Fisons' Road North. On 16th May, birds were located at the Paraffin Cuttings (2) and the flooded workings along Fisons' Road (1). Also heard at the latter location on 25th May and 19th September. Finally, 1 was at Will Pits Scrape on 14th November

**Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*.** In May, 2 flew over the Thorne Colliery area towards Green Belt on 6th, and 1 was over the flooded workings on 25th.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*.** A pair attempted to breed, being first reported on 18th April. A sitting bird was seen in May, but had disappeared by the month end. Singles were at the flooded workings on 16th May and 23rd June.

**Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*.** One was at the Thorne Colliery spoilheap on 2nd April, with that or another also at the flooded workings. Subsequently, at the latter location there were 3 on 16th May, and in September 1 on 3rd and 5 on 19th.

**European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.** On 16th May, 1 moulting into summer plumage flew off east from the flooded workings.

**Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*.** The maximum counts at the flooded workings were c.140 on 25th August, c.130 on 18th October and 300+ on 23rd November. Display was recorded from the flooded workings and Mill Drain Marsh.

**Little Stint *Calidris minuta*.** Seven were at flooded workings along Fisons' Road North on 19th September.

**Dunlin *C. alpina*.** At the flooded workings, 10 flew east on 16th May and 2 were present on 19th September.

**Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*.** One was at the flooded workings on 10th August. In September, the same location attracted 3 on 19th and 2 on 30th.

**Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*.** One was along Mill Drain on 18th September.

**Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*.** The only reports of a 'drumming' bird involved 1 over Mill Drain Marsh between 18th April-25th May. Passage and winter birds peaked at 5 on 2nd December.

**Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*.** During February-March 1-2 were reported on ten dates, with further singles on four dates between 31st October-6th November. Also present during the breeding season, locations not known except the Will Pits Scrape area.

**Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*.** Five passed over Will Pits Scrape on 1st August.

**Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*.** On 11th May, 3 (1+2) headed north-east over the flooded workings.

**Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata*.** Counts in April (from 12th) reached 3 on 19th.

**Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*.** Present in May at the flooded workings on 11th (3) and 16th (2+).

**Greenshank *T. nebularia*.** Apart from a single on 23rd June, all records were confined to August early September. These latter began with 4 on 1st August and peaked at 7 on 10th, with the last being 4 on 30th August and 2 on 3rd September. All were at the flooded workings.

**Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*.** One was at the Paraffin Cuttings on 1st August. Six were flushed from Leonard's Drain on 19th September. In the Shoulder o' Mutton area there were 2 on 26th September and 1 on 2nd December.

**Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*.** Two headed north-west over the flooded workings on 16th May.

**Little Gull *Hydrocoleus minutus*.** An adult in winter plumage was with Black-headed Gulls at the flooded workings along Fisons' Road on 6th May (BPW). In the same area later in the month, there were first-summer birds on 11th (6) and 16th (3) (RJS). On both these latter dates, one of the gulls exhibited an almost complete hood.

**Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*.** Bred at both Will Pits Scrape and the flooded workings along Fisons' Road. Counts at each colony reached c.200 during April-June, though at Will Pits Scrape estimates in mid-late May peaked at 820+ on 11th and 1000+ on 25th.

**Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*.** At the flooded workings, May counts reached 46 on 16th and 20 on 19th.

**Stock Dove *Columba oenas*.** Bred at Moorfield Farm.

**Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*.** A single on 6th September was long after the few other records in a poor year. There were no daily totals over 4 (on 31st May).

**Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*.** Extreme dates of song were 21st April and 5th July.

**Barn Owl *Tyto alba*.** In May, singles were at the disused Swinefleet Works on 14th and on Crowle Moor on 31st. Bred at Moorfield Farm. Additionally, 1 was heard during the breeding season, location not known.

**Little Owl *Athene noctua*.** Bred at Moorfield Farm.

**Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*.** Reported in the first half of the year at Will Pits, including 2 on 5th February. In April, singles roosted in a tree on the northern edge of Goole Moor on 18th and occurred in Limberlost Wood on 24th. One was flushed from 2 eggs in an oak *Quercus* near Limberlost on 16th May. At least 2 breeding pairs were proved by the presence of juveniles, locations not known.

**Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*.** Two were at Durham's Garden on 21st January, and singles were subsequently reported on the moors on four dates in April and November. Three pairs were proved by the presence of juveniles, locations not known.

**European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*.** "A total of 56 nightjar territories were located during the survey of Thorne Goole and Crowle Moors" (Middleton Consultancy).

**Common Swift *Apus apus*.** One was over Will Pits Scrape on 18th April, with others from 24th. The day's total on 19th May was estimated at c.600.

**Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*.** Two were along the Western Boundary Drain on 19th September.

**Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*.** Breeding proved.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*.** Following 'drumming' in April at Will Pits, breeding was proved here in May.

**Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*.** The only count of note was 30+ on 1st August, with none after 8 on 3rd September.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*.** There were 20+ around Top Moor Farm on 23rd June.

**House Martin *Delichon urbicum*.** As with Sand Martin, the only notable total (50+) was obtained on 1st August.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*.** After the first on 18th April, 6 males sang on Crowle Moor, where a nest was found on 8th June. Further males sang along Eastern Boundary Tram (1) and in the Green Belt/Green Belt Scrape area (c.2).

**Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*.** Maximum counts were 20+ on 26th April (including 8 singing/displaying) and 7th October.

**Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*.** Bred at Bank Top.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.** Breeding proved.

**Duncock *Prunella modularis*.** Breeding proved.

**Robin *Erithacus rubecula*.** Breeding proved.

**Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*.** The first date at Will Pits was 24th April (a pair listened to). Here, 3 or possibly 4 males sang through May. A male was also noted along the

Rhododendron Path in late May. The only other locality was Cassons, where a male was heard singing on five dates in May.

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*.** The only record was 3 along Shoulder o' Mutton Tram on 19th September.

**Common Stonechat *S. torquatus*.** There were occasional records of 1, sometimes 2 (male and female), on the moors and on Goole Fields in January-February. In addition, on 28th January there were two pairs along Fisons' Road, with a single male also along Fisons' Road on 13th March. On 2nd April a pair was near the Viewing Platform, and later in the month on 26th a pair occurred along the eastern part of Goole Moor Tram. A male was at the Shoulder o' Mutton on 5th May. On 11th, 4 were present, comprising 1 male at the Viewing Platform and a further male and 2 females at Mill Drain Marsh.

In the area of Fisons' Road and the adjacent flooded workings as far north as Shearburn & Pitts Drain, single males, sometimes pairs, were recorded during the year from 18th April to the end of November, plus two pairs on 24th April, and 3 (sexes not known) on 26th October and 14th November. Along Fisons' Road, records included evidence of breeding, with a pair proved to have 2 broods. The first of these was being fed from 24th April (with 2 juveniles still with the male on 25th May), and the second fed from 14th June (RB, RJS).

On 9th May, single pairs were seen at Pony Bridge Marsh and 'Middle Moor', but there were no subsequent summer records from these locations except a pair near the Viewing Platform on 23rd June. On 19th September, a female was along Shoulder o' Mutton Tram. In November, 2 males were in the Creyke's area on 2nd, followed by a pair at 'Middle Moor' on 12th and 1 near the Viewing Platform on 14th. A pair was intermittently seen from 13th-21st November in the canal towpath-Northern Canals area.

The year ended as it began, with records in December of single male and female, usually in the flooded workings-'Middle Moor' area, but including *inter alia* Goole Fields.

**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*.** A good spring passage, with most records between 7th April-9th May, including occasional birds on Goole Fields and at the Thorne Colliery spoilheap. The maxima were all in April, with 5 (Mill Drain) on 7th, 4 (Fisons' Road North) on 12th, 7 (Fisons' Road) on 19th and 6 (Goole Moor Tram and Shearburn & Pitts Drain) on 26th. The last of spring were 2 at Bank Top on 9th May and a female at Fillingham's Gate on 16th/23rd May. The only autumn record was 2 on 2nd October, also at Fillingham's Gate.

**Blackbird *Turdus merula*.** On 1st January, 30+ were along Jones' Cable. Breeding proved.

**Fieldfare *T. pilaris*.** Birds feeding and passing overhead totalled 300+ on 30th November.

**Song Thrush *T. philomelos*.** Two nests were found at Will Pits in April, on 18th and 24th respectively.

**Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*.** Recorded from 25th April (2), with 9+ 'reeling' males reported, but with minimal locational data.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*.** Breeding proved.

**Garden Warbler *S. borin*.** First heard on 24th April, with breeding proved at Will Pits (2+ pairs) and on Crowle Moor.

**Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*.** During May, singing birds were heard in the Thorne Colliery area (2nd-9th, 2 on 16th), along Jones' Cable (11th), at Green Belt/Green Belt Scrape (11th/31st), at Cassons (23rd), and along Fisons' Road (25th).

**Common Whitethroat *S. communis*.** Noted from 18th April, with breeding proved.

**Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*.** Breeding proved.



**Willow Warbler *Ph. trochilus*.** First recorded on 2nd April (2), and on 24th of the same month 51 sang. Breeding proved.

**Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*.** The only notable count was 49 on 15th March. Nests were seen at Will Pits Scrape, Will Pits and Woodpecker Wood.

**Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*.** On 9th May, a sitting bird was in the stump of a dead birch *Betula* at Cassons. Probably bred at Will Pits.

**Great Tit *Parus major*.** Singing males were reported in April from Durham's Garden (2 on 24th) and Will Pits (1 on 28th).

**Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*.** At Will Pits, a brood of young was seen being fed on 31st May (RB).

**Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*.** Singles flew north on 2nd January and 25th May, the latter over the flooded workings. Singles passed west over Jones' Cable on 2nd April and 11th May.

**Rook *C. frugilegus*.** On 1st August, 10+ were in a field north of Top Moor Farm and a "small group" was in a field near Fillingham's Gate.

**Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*.** Counts along Jones' Cable in January comprised 59+ on 1st and 37+ on 28th. On 2nd December, 30+ were in a field near Bank Top.

**Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*.** On 1st January, 141 flew to a roost at the eastern end of Jones' Cable. On 26th April, 30+ were singing. At Will Pits, nests were observed in both birch and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, and on Crowle Moor a nest was found low down in a young willow *Salix*. The latter was a late nest, with the young "close to fledging" (RB) on 19th July.

**Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*.** On 1st January, 125+ flew to a roost at the eastern end of Jones' Cable.

**Goldfinch *C. carduelis*.** Notable counts were obtained on 26th April (20+), 1st October (26) and 2nd December (20 at Top Moor Farm).

**Siskin *C. spinus*.** Two flew north on 2nd January. In February, there were 5 at Durham's Garden on 4th, and the Alder Woods attracted 30+ on 13th/15th. A small group flew over Crowle Moor on 18th April, calling as they did so.

**Linnet *C. cannabina*.** breeding proved.

**Lesser Redpoll *C. cabaret*.** The only double-figure counts were 12 on 28th January and 17 on 18th April.

**Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*.** From 1st-7th December, 1 was at bird feeding stations on Goole Fields. These were situated to the north of the disused Axholme Joint Railway, between Moorfields Farm and the edge of Goole Moor (JJ).

**Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*.** Bred on Crowle Moor.

**Corn Bunting *E. calandra*.** Three males sang in the Moorfields Farm area. On 2nd December, 6 were on wires at Top Moor Farm.

## MAMMALS

**Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*.** A dead individual was found at Limberlost Wood on 15th March.

**Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.** Spring counts along the road from Top Moor Farm to Will Pits Scrape occasionally reached 16, plus 20+ on 26th April.

**Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*.** Reported in April from Snaith & Cowick Moor and Goole Moor, singly except 2 on Snaith & Cowick Moor on 12th. The only other record was 1 along Will Pits Tram on 23rd June.

**Water Vole *Arvicola terrestris*.** On 18th April, 1 was in the drain at the base of the Thorne Colliery spoilheap, alongside the track to Whaley Balk.

**Stoat *Mustela erminea*.** One was in a flooded area at the western edge of Will Pits on 13th March. Another was encountered along Mervyn's Tram on 7th April. On 5th October, 1 carried a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* on the road alongside Swinefleet Warping Drain at Will Pits. Next day, 1 was in the Yorkshire Triangle.

**Weasel *M. nivalis*.** On the road alongside Swinefleet Warping Drain at Will Pits, singles were seen on 7th March and 23rd June, the latter carrying what was probably a Field Vole *Microtus agrestis*. Another occurred along Mervyn's Tram on 7th April, the same date as the Stoat there. Finally, 1 was hunting along Fisons' Road on 19th September.

**Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*.** All records are listed:

30th January: A stag at Will Pits and a hind at the Lonesome Pine.

12th May: A hind at Will Pits.

14th May: 3 hinds along Mervyn's Tram.

28th June: A stag (in velvet) at the Lonesome Pine.

1st August: A hind on the north-eastern edge of Goole Moor.

1st October: A hind at Will Pits.

2nd October: A stag was bellowing at Will Pits.

6th October: Stags (possibly 5) were heard at Will Pits and on Crowle Moor.

7th October: 2 stags (a 10 pointer and a 12 pointer) were at Will Pits: "much evidence of rut, with bellowing and clashing of antlers" (PH).

17th October: 2 hinds and 3 calves at Will Pits.

18th October: A stag (pricket) at Will Pits.

23rd October: A stag (a 16 pointer) at Will Pits.

12th November: A stag was seen scent-marking under a Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* on Crowle Moor.

13th November: A stag and 2 hinds at Will Pits.

14th November: A stag and a hind at Will Pits; also a stag north of Will Pits, "with full antlers" (CW).

15th November: 14 hinds at Will Pits.

17th November: 4 hinds at Will Pits.

21st November: A stag and 2 hinds at Will Pits.

22nd November: 4 hinds at Will Pits.

18th December: 2 hinds at Will Pits.

**Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*.** Occasional records January-March involved 1-2 in the Will Pits area and in the Snaith & Cowick Moor-Rawcliffe Moor area. From April until June, singles, sometimes 2 or 3, were encountered widely. Locations included arable fields alongside the western and north-western moor edges, and even Moorends Recreation Ground, where a buck was seen on 25th May. In addition, there were counts of 7 on 12th April (4 on Inkle Moor and 3 at the Alder Woods), 18th April (including 5 on Goole Moor) and 14th May (including 5 at Will Pits). Evidence of breeding comprised a juvenile with an adult in a field east of Bank Top on 23rd June, a fawn at the Pony Bridge on 28th June, and a doe with twins (quite large) at Will Pits-Bank Top on 22nd

November and next day along Mervyn's Tram. There were several records of up to 3 during October-December, mostly in the Will Pits area.

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

The following is a list of observers who contributed to the systematic lists of species (with apologies for any omissions). Thanks are offered to all who have submitted 2006 records.

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## EFFECTS OF DEER ON EPIPHYTIC BRYOPHYTES

Colin Wall

The recent increase in epiphytic bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) in lowland South Yorkshire, possibly due to decreases in sulphur dioxide levels, is nowhere better reflected than on Thorne Moors, in particular Will Pits and Pony Bridge Wood. In a forthcoming paper (*Thorne & Hatfield Moors Papers 7*), I have documented the incidence of 12 new epiphytic bryophytes, some of them rare, in Will Pits and Pony Bridge Wood. In addition, since the paper was written, *Radula complanata* (L.) Dumort., a liverwort first found in vice-county 63 on Inkle Moor in 2005, now occurs at two stations in Will Pits on willow *Salix*. Almost invariably, the new epiphytes appear to colonise fairly recent willow growth, in particular horizontal or inclined branches of c.10cm in diameter. The boles of the older trees are avoided, either because they are already covered by common, mat-forming epiphytes, or possibly because of accumulated pollution already contained within their bark.

During a visit to Will Pits and Pony Bridge Wood in April 2006, I was concerned by the degree of damage to the bark of willow trees and shrubs by the deer population. Both Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* and Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* occur, and recently Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi* has been noted. On the visit, it soon became evident that, by a depressing coincidence, virtually all the fraying and ring-barking was confined to the same branches that were most receptive to bryophyte colonization *i.e.* outgrowths from the main bole. The situation had markedly worsened since 2005, and in some areas of Pony Bridge Wood it was difficult to find an undamaged tree.

The deer have no natural predators, and unless some control is exercised, it seems reasonable to suppose the population will continue to expand. Since Will Pits and Pony Bridge Wood are the main breeding sites and areas of greatest concentrations, the damage will certainly continue until only the older trees with densely fissured bark will survive, with all new growth either dead or dying. It is ironic that the deer ignore the birch *Betula*, and their preference for willows must inevitably lead to yet more birch-dominated woodland. These woods in mid-summer have a subtle 'jungle-like' feel to them. This is a quite magical quality produced by an established plant association on wet warpland in which willows dominate. If the willows are lost, the character of the woodlands must change for the worse and become birch or possibly even *Rhododendron Rhododendron ponticum* dominated.

\* \* \* \* \*

## REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

### **Black-necked Grebe**

Since 1998, Black-necked Grebes have occurred on Thorne Moors, with confirmed breeding from 2001. All records are requested of this species, giving as much information as possible, including behavioural data.

### **Red Deer**

In recent decades, Red Deer have been encountered on Thorne Moors since the 1960s, and there has been a continuous presence from 1994. The maximum count on and around Thorne Moors was obtained in 2004, when 35 head were seen on one date, presumably representing a large percentage of all Red Deer resident on that day. It is believed that the change in status of this species is largely allied to the regional growth of deer farming, with resultant deer at large in the countryside. In the Thorne Moors area, Red Deer may now be watched in fields, and on the moorland, especially in the Will Pits area. All records of Red Deer, past and present, are being collated for population monitoring and possible future analysis. Accordingly, as much detail as possible is required when documenting Red Deer.

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