

Central Oxford Ringing Group Report

2023

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This year marked the first full year of monitoring conducted by the Central Oxford Ringing Group. The group was officially established in September 2022, however many of the core members were already ringing at locations in Oxford as early as 2020. While we are a small ringing group, comprising three permit holders in Oxford (an additional two now live further afield and visit occasionally) and a number of trainees, we are continuing to go from strength to strength, with this year seeing us process a total of 1547 birds compared to 1087 in 2022.

One of the highlights from this year, was increased focus on targeting winter thrushes from October to December, which led to 124 redwing and 23 fieldfare being ringed. These were the first fieldfare that we have caught in Oxford since 2020, and so it was exciting to see that improved net rides and technique have paid off. We also began trialling a waterbird monitoring project in January and February, which saw us ring four Canada geese and one mallard, which were also firsts for the group. Long-term, we hope to be able to colour-ring waterbirds in Oxford, to enable individuals to be resighted without the need for recapture.

Although we did not have any long-distance recoveries this year (previous years have seen a blackbird recovered in Finland, and a redwing recovered in Portugal!), a garden warbler ringed by us in August 2022 and retrapped in Milton Keynes in May 2023 was a nice surprise. We are continuing to catch blue tits at Burgess Field and Park Farm & New Marston Meadows, which were originally ringed at Wytham Wood (total of eight in 2023), with the majority of these individuals being first year birds dispersing from the woods.

Totals for the year and ringing recoveries across all sites are provided below, with the remainder of the report giving site specific summaries.

Table 1 Number of new (N) and retrapped (R) individuals of each species caught in 2020 (September-December only), 2021, 2022, and 2023. T is the total number of new and retrapped birds. In 2020 and 2021 infrequent visits were made to three ringing sites (Music Meadows, Bagley Woods, and Walk Farm) which were not visited in 2023, and so are not discussed in the rest of this report. Numbers in green indicate an increase relative to the previous year, with species names also in green being new species caught for the group. Numbers in red show a decrease relative to the previous year.

ALL SITES	2020			2021			2022			2023		
Species	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T
Blackbird	20	2	22	22	3	25	18	1	19	10	1	11
Blackcap	5	0	5	73	3	76	47	1	48	103	0	103
Blue Tit	106	28	134	217	84	301	173	72	245	265	102	367
Brambling	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	13	0	0	0
Bullfinch	0	0	0	3	0	3	2	1	3	5	0	5
Canada Goose	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
Cetti's warbler	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	0	0	0

Chaffinch	8	0	8	11	2	13	3	1	4	11	1	12
Chiffchaff	4	0	4	56	3	59	74	3	77	124	5	129
Chiffchaff (Siberian - tristis)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Coal Tit	4	0	4	1	0	1	3	0	3	2	1	3
Collared Dove	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Dunnock	14	3	17	47	12	59	32	14	46	44	8	52
Fieldfare	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	23
Garden Warbler	0	0	0	11	0	11	5	0	5	2	0	2
Goldcrest	20	3	23	36	3	39	38	0	38	50	13	63
Goldfinch	67	1	68	56	2	58	42	1	43	43	3	46
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	0	3	1	4	4	1	5	2	0	2
Great Tit	77	26	103	120	66	186	122	76	198	141	75	216
Green Woodpecker	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	2
Greenfinch	9	1	10	152	9	161	60	6	66	83	6	89
House Sparrow	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	2
Jay	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lesser Redpoll	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	6	0	6
Lesser Whitethroat	0	0	0	7	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Linnet	29	0	29	38	1	39	2	0	2	46	0	46
Long-tailed Tit	32	6	38	47	35	82	60	19	79	59	27	86
Magpie	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	5	0	5
Mallard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Meadow Pipit	1	0	1	7	0	7	0	0	0	13	0	13
Nuthatch	3	0	3	0	0	0	2	1	3	2	1	3
Redstart	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Redwing	57	0	57	30	0	30	31	0	31	124	0	124
Redwing (iliacus)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	0	0	0	5	0	5	5	0	5	1	1	2
Reed Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Robin	10	5	15	54	8	62	49	10	59	32	6	38
Sedge Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	3
Song Thrush	4	0	4	12	0	12	11	0	11	8	0	8
Sparrowhawk	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	0	1	2	0	2
Starling	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	4
Stock Dove	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0
Treecreeper	4	0	4	2	0	2	5	2	7	6	2	8
Whitethroat	0	0	0	20	0	20	4	0	4	6	0	6
Willow Warbler	0	0	0	3	2	5	6	1	7	8	0	8
Woodpigeon	1	0	1	3	0	3	7	2	9	2	1	3
Wren	9	0	9	19	1	20	16	4	20	39	6	45
Yellowhammer	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	490	75	565	1072	236	1308	887	218	1105	1288	259	1547

Table 2 List of ringing recoveries – these are birds ringed by the Central Oxford Ringing Group and retrapped by another ringer, or ringed by another ringer and retrapped by the Central Oxford Ringing Group.

Species	Event	Lat	Lon	Distance	Ring	Date	Site
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	AJY2073	25/05/2022	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.75	-1.23	7.1km	AJY2073	17/11/2023	Park Farm/New Marston Meadows
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	AJY4058	26/05/2023	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.6km	AJY4058	15/09/2023	Burgess Field
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	AJY4111	27/05/2023	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.6km	AJY4111	06/12/2023	Burgess Field
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	AJY4722	22/05/2023	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.6km	AJY4722	23/09/2023	Burgess Field
Goldfinch	Ringed	51.80	-1.30	0km	ARB9122	22/09/2019	Yarnton, Oxfordshire
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.4km	ARB9122	06/12/2023	Burgess Field
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	ARZ4017	11/10/2022	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	ARZ4017	21/02/2023	Hinksey Park
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	ARZ4018	11/10/2022	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.72	-1.25	1.9km	ARZ4018	26/11/2022	Hinksey Park
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	ATR9837	24/05/2023	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.6km	ATR9837	29/11/2023	Burgess Field
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	ATR9839	24/05/2023	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.6km	ATR9839	12/10/2023	Burgess Field
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	ATR9918	20/05/2022	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.75	-1.23	7.1km	ATR9918	14/02/2023	New Marston
Robin	Ringed	51.75	-1.23	0km	AZX5706	30/04/2022	New Marston
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.22	2.2km	AZX5706	17/04/2023	Holywell, Oxford NOTE: Found dead – taken by a cat
Garden Warbler	Ringed	51.77	-1.23	0km	AZX5782	12/08/2022	Park Farm & New Marston Meadows
	Retrapped	52.07	-0.77	46.3km	AZX5782	06/05/2023	Hanson Environmental Study Centre, Milton Keynes
Blue Tit	Ringed	51.77	-1.33	0km	BVA5385	28/05/2023	Wytham Great Wood
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.27	4.6km	BVA5385	29/11/2023	Burgess Field
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	LN72008	30/03/2021	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.72	-1.25	1.9km	LN72008	26/11/2022	Hinksey Park
Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBE850	21/02/2023	Hinksey Park
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBE850	22/11/2023	Hogacre Common
Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBE852	21/02/2023	Hinksey Park
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBE852	22/11/2023	Hogacre Common
Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX318	29/11/2020	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX318	02/03/2023	Hinksey Park
Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX320	02/12/2020	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX320	21/02/2023	Hinksey Park

Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX322	02/12/2020	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX322	02/03/2023	Hinksey Park
Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX325	02/12/2020	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX325	02/03/2023	Hinksey Park
Long-tailed Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX328	02/12/2020	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	NBX328	02/03/2023	Hinksey Park
Chiffchaff	Ringed	51.77	-1.23	0km	NLA717	29/07/2022	Park Farm & New Marston Meadows
	Retrapped	51.77	-1.23	0km	NLA717	05/04/2023	Marston, Oxford NOTE: Found dead – hit a window
Great Tit	Ringed	51.73	-1.25	0km	PF57303	11/12/2021	Hogacre Common
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	0km	PF57303	02/03/2023	Hinksey Park
Great Tit	Ringed	51.72	-1.25	0km	TV83571	26/11/2022	Hinksey Park
	Retrapped	51.73	-1.25	1.9km	TV83571	21/02/2023	Hogacre Common

Burgess Field

Burgess continues to be our most productive ringing site with a combination of excellent passage and winter feeding stations providing a large number of birds all year round. We have a number of sites where we conduct ringing within Burgess – this year, we have specifically used rides around the bird feeders and on “Burgess West”, an area of scrub and low bushes popular with migrant birds.

The ringing effort was rather sporadic in 2023 due to the availability of key members of the ringing group. In particular, very little ringing was carried out in spring and summer, meaning that some species that we would expect to catch with some regularity are either missing from this year’s totals or were caught in very low numbers – for example garden warbler, common whitethroat and lesser whitethroat.

Ringing in January to March mainly consisted of catching birds at the feeders, including finches and tits. Our feeding station helps support an important urban population of greenfinches, a red-listed species of conservation concern due to nationwide population declines. Our total of 81 birds hasn’t been as high as previous years but encouragingly included 6 retraps, including some ringed last year indicating that birds are returning to the site. Sadly this year we didn’t get the brambling passage at the feeders which we recorded in 2022 – numbers of this Scandinavian visitor are highly variable year-on-year and this reflected a low number of birds wintering in the county.

A fantastic record for Burgess Field was a singing male wood warbler in late April. This scarce migrant was one of three seen around Oxford this spring and frequented an area of trees at the southern end of the site. This first record for the patch was admired by many birders and was not captured. With most ringers absent over the summer Burgess was quiet, with the only standout records being redstart and cuckoo seen.

Ringing recommenced in September with a couple of days with good autumn passage, where over 100 birds were ringed in a single session, including large numbers of chiffchaffs and blackcaps with a supporting cast of meadow pipits, a charismatic species often heard calling on as they migrate through Port Meadow. On one occasion we caught two redpolls including a fantastic adult male, which were

the first that we have ringed on Burgess. During this period, we began filling the feeders again which quickly attracted roving tit flocks comprising lots of this year's juvenile birds. This led to the capture of the first coal tit ringed at the site, a surprisingly overdue addition given the proximity of suitable habitat nearby.

As autumn turned to winter, we began shifting our focus from general ringing to targeting specific species which are of importance to the site. As well as continuing to monitor our finch population at the feeders, we made a special effort to catch migrating thrushes and the wintering linnnet population which feed out on Port Meadow and roost in bushes on Burgess. This was successful with record numbers of redwing (118) and fieldfare (23) caught. The fieldfares were particularly interesting as they are a species which are traditionally regarded as being difficult to mist-net – our total for 2023 far eclipses the single bird caught previously in 2020. Clearly, the berry bushes on Burgess provide an excellent source of food for these winter visitors. The 46 linnets caught were also our highest ever total and are still only a small proportion of the flock, estimated to be at least 500 birds. With increased effort in 2024 we will be able to survey more of these birds and hopefully get some interesting recoveries indicating where they might go to breed, which will aid in the conservation of this declining farmland species.

An oddity of the winter bird scene on Burgess is the presence of a healthy population of wintering chiffchaffs. Whilst common chiffchaffs breed on Burgess in the summer and migrate through in spring and autumn, the winter visitors are potentially of European origin and are unlikely to be the same individuals that sing away in the bushes during the summer. Chiffchaffs are usually associated with sewage works in the winter, where insectivorous birds tend to congregate due to the increased source of food as the weather gets colder and fewer insects are on the wing. On Burgess, the perimeter ditches lined with willows provide a similar habitat and it is not uncommon for one to see as many as 20 chiffchaffs feeding on detritus around the ditch near the Burgess entrance gate from Port Meadow. It is therefore a very important site for these increasingly regular wintering warblers, and in the past two years birdwatchers have been lucky enough to see the Siberian subspecies of chiffchaff (*P. c. tristis*) amongst the usual common chiffchaffs (*P. c. colybitta*) in late winter. It was therefore no surprise when in November we captured a Siberian chiffchaff amongst 9 common chiffchaffs – our first ringed on Burgess and one of very few ever ringed in Oxfordshire. It is amazing to think that birds born east of the Urals in Russia are coming to Burgess Field to spend the winter. It will be very interesting to see if this bird returns to winter next year – in the past, we have speculated that it is the same Siberian chiffchaff singing by the gate – now that it is ringed we will be able to see whether this is true. To top it off, one of us saw a second, unringed Siberian chiffchaff on Burgess West in December which was not captured. We also managed to ring around 30 common chiffchaffs since October, which has far exceeded our expectations.

We were fortunate in December that the weather remained relatively calm, allowing us to ring multiple times per week and provide good survey coverage for the site. Hopefully this continues in 2024. One of the last records for the year was a woodcock seen but not caught near the bird feeders in late December.

Table 3 Number of new (N) and retrapped (R) individuals of each species caught in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 across 22, 50, 20, and 34 sessions respectively at Burgess Field. T is the total number of new and retrapped birds. Numbers in green indicate an increase relative to the previous year, with species names also in green being new species caught for the site. Numbers in red show a decrease relative to the previous year. Ringing occurred in October to December only in 2020.

Burgess Field	2020			2021			2022			2023		
Species	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T
Blackbird	19	2	21	14	2	16	7	1	8	2	0	2
Blackcap	3	0	3	63	3	66	19	0	19	63	0	63
Blue Tit	49	22	71	137	66	203	68	50	118	123	84	207
Brambling	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	13	0	0	0
Bullfinch	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Chaffinch	8	0	8	9	2	11	3	1	4	10	1	11
Chiffchaff	4	0	4	42	1	43	33	1	34	73	0	73
Chiffchaff (Siberian - tristis)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Coal tit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Dunnock	12	3	15	24	7	31	16	9	25	15	1	16
Fieldfare	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	23
Garden Warbler	0	0	0	10	0	10	3	0	3	0	0	0
Goldcrest	8	2	10	14	3	17	19	0	19	25	9	34
Goldfinch	59	1	60	50	2	52	37	1	38	36	3	39
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	1	5	2	0	2
Great Tit	47	15	62	75	53	128	40	49	89	76	57	133
Green Woodpecker	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Greenfinch	9	1	10	151	9	160	56	6	62	75	6	81
House Sparrow	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jay	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lesser Redpoll	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Lesser Whitethroat	0	0	0	7	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Linnet	29	0	29	38	1	39	2	0	2	46	0	46
Long-tailed Tit	11	4	15	31	13	44	4	4	8	20	11	31
Magpie	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Meadow Pipit	1	0	1	7	0	7	0	0	0	13	0	13
Redstart	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Redwing	50	0	50	26	0	26	24	0	24	118	0	118
Redwing (iliacus)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Reed Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robin	5	3	8	36	4	40	19	7	26	9	5	14
Song Thrush	4	0	4	8	0	8	5	0	5	1	0	1
Sparrowhawk	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Treecreeper	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
Whitethroat	0	0	0	16	0	16	1	0	1	2	0	2
Willow Warbler	0	0	0	3	2	5	1	1	2	2	0	2
Woodpigeon	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0

Wren	4	0	4	9	1	10	4	2	6	11	0	11
Total	329	53	382	785	170	955	382	134	516	751	177	928



Figure 1 Fieldfare (left), linnet (middle), and Siberian chiffchaff (right) caught at Burgess Field.

Hogacre Common

Hogacre is one of our longest standing ringing sites and continued yearly efforts are helping us learn more about how the different habitats here provide an important site for birds within the Central Oxford area. This year saw a decrease in the number of ringing sessions carried out at Hogacre (something we hope to reverse in 2024!), but an increase in the total number of birds processed across the year, and therefore an increase in the number of birds caught per session. This likely reflects how continually improved knowledge about the site and thus improved catching techniques have enabled us to survey a larger proportion of the birds present here per session.

Most of our ringing efforts are concentrated in the northwest of Hogacre, in the hazel coppice, silver birch stand, and scrub habitat adjacent to the stream. The scrub habitat notably contains breeding whitethroat in the summer, as well as breeding chiffchaff, blackcap, and potentially garden warbler. Numbers of recorded willow warbler at Hogacre have been very low (one in 2022), suggesting they are unlikely to be breeding here, but are instead passing through on migration. Small numbers of lesser redpoll (one to four individuals) have been seen in the silver birch stand and hazel coppice every winter so far, with one to two individuals caught per year. The tall stands of trees surrounding the scrub regularly contain flocks of redwing and fieldfare (20-30 individuals) during winter, and the site is also an important location for wintering chiffchaff. We were particularly excited this year to retrap a chiffchaff (nicknamed 'Cliff the Chiff') for the third winter running, having been caught in February 2021, December 2021, and February 2023. Given that Hogacre is surrounded by running water on three sides, the site likely provides a reliable source of insects during the winter months, making it an important feeding site for wintering chiffchaff.

This year, we ringed the first bullfinch, chaffinch, and nuthatch at Hogacre, giving a total of 18 species ringed in 2023 and 26 species ringed since 2020. There was a notable increase in the number of birds ringed at Hogacre and retrapped elsewhere, due to members of the Edward Grey Institute (University of Oxford) beginning bird ringing surveys on Pembroke Sports Field, just next to Hogacre. Of these, it was especially nice to see that they retrapped a female great spotted woodpecker ringed at Hogacre in 2020.

Table 4 Number of new (N) and retrapped (R) individuals of each species caught from 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, across 6, 12, 10, and 5 sessions respectively, at Hogacre Common. T is the total number of new and retrapped birds. Numbers in green indicate an increase relative to the previous year, with species names also in green being new species caught for the site. Numbers in red show a decrease relative to the previous year. Ringing occurred in November and December only in 2020.

Hogacre Common	2020			2021			2022			2023		
Species	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T
Blackbird	1	0	1	3	1	4	1	0	1	1	0	1
Blackcap	0	0	0	10	0	10	13	1	14	16	0	16
Blue Tit	27	5	32	33	15	48	15	7	22	43	7	50
Bullfinch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Chaffinch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Chiffchaff	0	0	0	14	2	16	16	1	17	14	1	15
Chiffchaff (Siberian - tristis)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Dunnock	1	0	1	8	2	10	1	5	6	4	1	5
Garden Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	2
Goldcrest	4	1	5	4	0	4	2	0	2	8	4	12
Goldfinch	8	0	8	6	0	6	2	0	2	0	0	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Tit	18	7	25	23	13	36	12	13	25	23	11	34
Green Woodpecker	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Lesser Redpoll	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	2
Long-tailed Tit	17	2	19	8	22	30	12	4	16	9	8	17
Nuthatch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Redwing	7	0	7	1	0	1	2	0	2	6	0	6
Reed Bunting	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robin	3	1	4	10	3	13	5	1	6	7	0	7
Sedge Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Song Thrush	0	0	0	4	0	4	3	0	3	2	0	2
Treecreeper	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Whitethroat	0	0	0	4	0	4	3	0	3	3	0	3
Willow Warbler	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Woodpigeon	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Wren	2	0	2	9	0	9	4	0	4	4	1	5
TOTAL	88	16	104	144	59	203	99	32	131	149	34	183



Figure 2 'Cliff' the chiffchaff (left), lesser redpoll (middle), and bullfinch (right) caught at Hogacre Common.

Marston

We have two ringing sites in Marston. Our primary site is Park Farm & New Marston Meadows, which is owned by the University of Oxford, and contains both private fields (Park Farm) and public access fields (New Marston Meadows). The second, is one of our permit holder's gardens, which, while ringed at fairly infrequently, provides opportunities to monitor species either not caught or infrequently caught at our other sites, including starling, woodpigeon, collared dove, stock dove, magpie, and coal tit.

Park Farm & New Marston Meadows

We were granted permission to conduct bird ringing surveys at Park Farm & New Marston Meadows in March 2022, and so 2023 was the first complete year of surveying at this site. Despite carrying out an additional two surveys in 2023 compared to 2022, the total number of birds processed was slightly reduced. This is most likely because we spent less time at Park Farm & New Marston Meadows over the winter, when the high number of tits caught typically leads to larger session totals, and instead concentrated our efforts in spring and the end of summer. The aim of this was to focus on summer migrants that could breed in the wet meadow and scrub habitat at Marston, such as whitethroat, blackcap, garden warbler, chiffchaff, and willow warbler. While we recorded more chiffchaff and willow warbler compared to 2022, blackcap, whitethroat, and garden warbler numbers were down, with notably no whitethroat or garden warbler being caught in 2023. Interestingly, one of the garden warblers we ringed in August 2022 was retrapped by another ringing group in Milton Keynes in May 2023! Sadly, a chiffchaff we ringed as a juvenile in July 2022 was reported dead on the 5th April at a house on Fane Road, Marston – it had managed to survive its first winter, and probable migration to Africa and back, only to have hit a window upon its return.

New species caught this year were house sparrow, green woodpecker, and a male and female sparrowhawk, which were caught on the same morning in January. As a result, we ringed 17 species in 2023 and have ringed 22 species total since 2021 at Park Farm & New Marston Meadows. Other

highlights this year, included running two ringing demonstrations in May for the Oxford Ornithological Student Society (OXOSS). We hope to be able to organise a demonstration for birders in Marston in 2024, and possibly one for the wider Marston community if time and resources allow.

Table 5 Number of new (N) and retrapped (R) individuals of each species caught in 2022 (March-December) and 2023 across 13 and 15 sessions respectively, at Park Farm. T is the total number of new and retrapped birds. Numbers in green indicate an increase relative to the previous year, with species names also in green being new species caught for the site. Numbers in red show a decrease relative to the previous year.

Park Farm & NMM	2022			2023		
Species	N	R	T	N	R	T
Blackbird	7	0	7	5	1	6
Blackcap	30	0	30	20	0	20
Blue Tit	57	2	59	28	6	34
Bullfinch	3	0	3	3	0	3
Chiffchaff	17	0	17	30	2	32
Dunnock	9	0	9	17	2	19
Garden Warbler	2	0	2	0	0	0
Goldcrest	11	0	11	17	0	17
Great Tit	54	10	64	16	3	19
Green Woodpecker	0	0	0	1	0	1
Greenfinch	5	0	5	6	0	6
House Sparrow	0	0	0	2	0	2
Long-tailed Tit	19	5	24	22	7	29
Redwing	4	0	4	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	1	0	1	0	0	0
Robin	15	2	17	12	1	13
Song Thrush	2	0	2	3	0	3
Sparrowhawk	0	0	0	2	0	2
Treecreeper	1	1	2	0	0	0
Whitethroat	1	0	1	0	0	0
Willow Warbler	4	0	4	6	0	6
Wren	6	0	6	22	3	25
TOTAL	248	20	268	218	27	245



Figure 3 Sparrowhawk (left) and willow warbler (right) caught at Park Farm & New Marston Meadows.

Marston garden

Ringing activities in the Marston garden were sporadic, but involved occasional mist netting, and more frequently, the setting of two potter traps while working from home. The potter traps were particularly successful at catching juvenile magpies in July this year, although were less successful at catching Columbidae species (woodpigeon, collared dove, stock dove) relative to 2022. Goldfinch was a new species caught in the garden in 2023.

Table 6 Number of new (N) and retrapped (R) individuals of each species caught in 2021 (August-December), 2022, and 2023 in a Marston garden. T is the total number of new and retrapped birds. Numbers in green indicate an increase relative to the previous year, with species names also in green being new species caught for the site. Numbers in red show a decrease relative to the previous year.

Marston garden Species	2021			2022			2023		
	N	R	T	N	R	T	N	R	T
Blackcap	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Blue Tit	15	1	16	24	5	29	54	5	59
Coal Tit	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2
Collared Dove	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Dunnock	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	3
Goldfinch	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
Great Tit	6	0	6	7	1	8	21	4	25
Greenfinch	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	0	0	0	5	0	5	3	0	3
Magpie	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	0	4
Robin	1	0	1	6	2	8	1	0	1
Starling	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	4

Stock Dove	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0
Woodpigeon	3	0	3	6	2	8	0	1	1
TOTAL	27	1	28	59	10	69	96	11	107

Iffley Meadows

Five ringing sessions were carried out at Iffley Meadows this year: two in May, two in April, and one in June. The proximity of the site to the River Thames and its wet meadow fields make Iffley an important site for migratory birds in spring, and hence our efforts were primarily targeted here in April and May. New species that we recorded for the site were reed warbler, sedge warbler, redpoll, and, perhaps the most unexpected, a beautiful male redstart on the 16th April.

We still need to establish an optimal strategy for ringing at Iffley Meadows, given that cattle graze here during the summer months, which prevents mist netting from July to September. We plan to try and visit the site at least a few times over the winter months and increase visitation from March to June to better understand the importance of the site for summer migrants, either on passage or breeding at the site. Another potential option is to discuss access to the main meadow during the summer. Currently, our surveys focus on the meadow just outside of the ring road to minimise potential disturbance, given the main meadow (inside the ring road) has a high footfall of people, including dog walkers. However, surveying the main meadow from July to September, while the other area contains cattle, might provide insight into the importance of Iffley Meadows as a whole for breeding birds.

We were disappointed to record no signs of Cetti's warbler in 2023, despite evidence of breeding in 2022, and so we intend to spend more time monitoring the site for evidence of breeding adults in 2024. Already, we have conducted one ringing session in January 2024, where we trapped a Cetti's warbler. Given that Cetti's warblers typically winter at or close to their breeding site, it is a promising sign that this species is still breeding here and highlights the importance of increasing ringing effort during the winter months.

Table 7 Number of new (N) and retrapped (R) individuals of each species caught across 6 and 5 sessions in 2022 (March-December) and 2023 respectively, at Iffley Meadows. T is the total number of new and retrapped birds. Numbers in green indicate an increase relative to the previous year, with species names also in green being new species caught for the site. Numbers in red show a decrease relative to the previous year.

Iffley Meadows	2022			2023		
Species	N	R	T	N	R	T
Blackbird	3	0	3	1	0	1
Blackcap	10	0	10	4	0	4
Blue Tit	4	1	5	17	0	17
Bullfinch	2	0	2	0	0	0
Cetti's Warbler	2	2	4	0	0	0
Chiffchaff	5	1	6	7	2	9
Cuckoo	1	0	1	0	0	0
Duncock	5	1	6	5	4	9
Goldfinch	4	0	4	3	0	3

Great Tit	5	0	5	4	0	4
Greenfinch	4	0	4	2	0	2
Lesser Redpoll	0	0	0	2	0	2
Long-tailed Tit	7	3	10	2	1	3
Redstart	0	0	0	1	0	1
Redwing	1	0	1	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	3	0	3	1	1	2
Reed Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	1
Robin	5	0	5	3	0	3
Sedge Warbler	0	0	0	3	0	3
Song Thrush	2	0	2	2	0	2
Sparrowhawk	1	0	1	0	0	0
Whitethroat	0	0	0	1	0	1
Wren	5	2	7	2	2	4
TOTAL	69	10	79	61	10	71



Figure 4 Sedge warbler (left), whitethroat (middle), and male redstart (right) caught at Iffley Meadows.

Other activities

We were able to catch a small number of birds at other locations, outside of our main ringing sites, which account for the remainder of the total number of birds processed this year. Most notably, we ringed four Canada geese and one mallard at University Parks, while trialling a waterbird ringing project, which we will continue to develop in 2024. We trapped two wood pigeons in one of our trainee's gardens using walk in traps. We also ringed one blackbird, one great tit, and three long-tailed tits as part of a ringing demonstration for a wildlife group at Ruskin College. Poor weather conditions precluded a larger catch, but nevertheless, we had a lovely time talking to the students and showing them the birds.



Figure 5 Left: One of our volunteers shows members of the public a great tit in the hand, at a bird ringing demonstration organised for a local wildlife group. Right: Canada goose successfully caught, fitted with a metal ring, and had measurements taken, in University Parks.

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