

Steyping Downland Bird Surveys for 2018

Steyping Downland Scheme bird surveys started in 2014, and have been carried out monthly (weather permitting), usually on the second Sunday of the month. A volunteer team assembles at a pre-arranged time half or so after sunrise and then divides into teams to survey on two or three routes. Route 1 starts in Nightingale Lane and proceeds to the Rifle Range and Upper Ponds area. Depending on conditions, the team may view the Lower Pond area. Route 2 takes the footpath from Mill Lane to Steyping Coombe, proceeds up Steyping Coombe, then turns right onto the public Footpath and returns to the northwest corner of the rifle range. Route 3 proceeds around Steyping Coombe and then follows the path around the Lower Horseshoe area. This is covered less frequently.

In 2017 and 2018 surveys were conducted in the Pepperscoombe area in the late summer/autumn period to see if this area is frequented by birds on autumn passage.

All birds seen and heard are recorded, with numbers where practical. Records are entered into Birdtrack, the BTO/RSPB on-line database. Survey records are entered on Birdtrack as "Complete Lists", Birdtrack's preferred type of entry. In addition species of interest seen on other occasions are recorded and entered into Birdtrack as "Casual Records". Many of the more unusual sightings are recorded as Casuals.

The purpose of the surveys is to enable us to gain an understanding of the biodiversity of Steyping Downland Scheme.

We have now passed a total of 100 species, which is something of a surprise! It includes some species that have only been seen once and casual sightings of birds flying over. We expect those reporting species to have a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of their identification. 49 species have been recorded in every year of that surveys have been carried out. 19 species have only been sighted once.

Species which have shown an upward trend in numbers in 2018 compared with earlier years were Bullfinch, Buzzard, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Stonechat and Stock Dove. Those with a downward trend were Nuthatch, Tree Creeper, Chaffinch and Starling.

The surveys do not record proof of breeding, but it is likely that at least 35 of the recorded species do breed on Steyping Downland Scheme. The mix of species that have been recorded reflects the range of habitats available for breeding, cover, roosting and feeding. These include: woodland, scrub, grassland, ponds and a stream.