

Winter Bird Survey 2023-24

Courtyard Farm, Ringstead



Fieldfares

John R. Williamson

Winter Bird Survey 2023-24

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The Courtyard Farm Winter Bird Survey 2023-24 was conducted by John Williamson between November 2023 and February 2024 using the same methodology as previous Winter Bird Surveys.

The farm was surveyed on two separate visits during each of the months November 2023 to February 2024 by walking transects. During those visits the numbers of birds using each field were recorded. Those bird species recorded in any number on a regular basis form the bulk of the results, as presented later in this report, but for completeness a full list of all species recorded during the survey work is also included.

The field usage was also recorded for each of the clearly defined fields on the farm and the results as presented to determine any correlation between field content, and bird species and numbers utilising those fields. Flocks of passerines using feeding stations were also recorded.

A total of five suspended tube feeders are provided on the farm for passerines. Various finches and tits benefit from these. The tube feeders are located mainly just within the woodland edge, where it adjoins field crops, though seed provision is often erratic with just the feeder nearest the farm buildings constantly stocked. Also, two extensive areas of wild-bird seed are sown on the farm to benefit small seed-eating birds and Grey Partridges throughout the winter. Occasionally supplementary winter feeding within the wild-bird seed-strips is undertaken. This is intended to fill the 'hungry gap' of late-winter and early-spring.

November opened with overcast skies and spells of prolonged and heavy rain from the south-west on a deep low moving across southern England causing localised flooding throughout the county. The first frosts occurred around mid-month but generally changeable conditions continued into the third week with a few bright days but plenty of showers and periods of heavier rain arrived on the often blustery south-westerly airflow. Daytime temperatures reached 10-11°C on several days. A return to a northerly dominated airflow by the end of the month saw the onset of a colder spell but daytime temperatures remained at c.6°C.

December commenced with a sharp drop in temperatures, light but bitterly cold north-easterly winds and the first snow showers. Overnight temperatures plummeted to -5°C. However, airflow soon returned to a south-westerly with blustery winds and continued spells of heavy rain causing localised flooding. By mid-month daytime temperatures had risen to 10-11°C, with overnight temperatures remaining well above freezing preventing any serious frosts. Blustery south-westerly winds prevailed with frequent spells of rain.

The New Year dawned mild, bright and sunny, but with a brisk westerly wind keeping temperatures down to 8°C. By mid-January a high pressure was dominating with variable, but often brisk, north-westerly to north-easterly winds. Subsequently temperatures plummeted to -5°C overnight as the first real snow flurries of the winter fell. The cold spell was short-lived and a return to blustery south-westerly winds brought milder and more settled weather with daytime temperature reaching 10-11°C by month end.

February continued with mild, settled conditions and daytime temperatures reaching 14 early in the month with a predominantly moderate south-westerly airflow. Precipitation increased during the first week with heavy rainfall causing more local flooding as temperatures remained in the mid-teens °C and airflow was once again dominated by blustery south-westerlies.

John Williamson, February 2024



Full Systematic List

All bird species recorded on Winter Bird Survey 2023-24

Grey Partridge: all birds recorded – see tabulated results.

Red-legged Partridge: all birds recorded – see tabulated results.

Common Pheasant: all birds recorded – see tabulated results.

Moorhen: two adults and at least one immature were present on the Paddock Pond on November 4th and 19th but with Paddock Pond fully frozen on December 2nd there was no sign of any of these birds. Despite the Paddock Pond being frozen on January 16th at least one adult Moorhen remained nearby.

Pink-footed Goose: up to 1500 birds were recorded arriving from the north-west early on November 4th, alighting to feed to the south of the farm. On November 19th several flocks totalling 3750 flew north-east over the farm heading towards the Scolt Head Island roost. On December 21st flocks totalling c.1250 headed low south-west over the southern section of the farm. On February 3rd a wave of birds was noted heading north-east over the farm early morning, perhaps totalling c.2500 birds.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose: a flock of 28 flew low and purposefully south-west over Bush Breck on January 1st.

Greylag Goose: two flew low west over Barn Breck on November 19th.

Mallard: for the most part remains elusive during the winter period. Two males and 2 females were seen on Paddock Pond on November 4th. A pair was on Paddock Pond on February 3rd, when 4 males and a female were seen in flight low to the west over Fourteen Acres. On February 19th a group of 6 males and a female remained on Paddock Pond

Red Kite: now an apparently ever-present feature of North-west Norfolk farmland; up to 3 were circling low over the farm on November 4th and 4 were overhead on November 19th. On December 21st one was over Cherry Trees at first light with another over Two Fourteen Acres later the same morning. On January 1st one was drifting over Smith's Piece and another was perched in a tree in the hedgerow between Bell's Charity and Upper Whins. On January 16th one was over Bottom Breck. One was drifting slowly south over the farm on February 3rd when it joined a second bird over Landing Strip before continuing south.

Marsh Harrier: again relatively scarce in the survey area this winter: a female flew low south over Cherry Trees on November 19th and a male flew south over Barn Breck on December 21st. A female was hunting over Barn Breck on January 1st and was likely the same bird seen heading east over Lower Whins a little later the same morning. On February 3rd a female was hunting over Hatchet Breck early morning.

Sparrowhawk: relatively scarce throughout the period. A female was hunting hedgerows alongside Black Hean on November 19th. A female was hunting amongst the hawthorns on Ringstead Common on December 2nd. A male was hunting along the green lane to the east of Upper Whins on January 1st. A male and female were soaring high over Black Hean on February 3rd before drifting south.

Common Buzzard: recorded in small numbers on each visit during the survey period. This species remains the most commonly recorded raptor on the farm during winter, though Red Kite is fast approaching the same frequency. A minimum of 4 birds were soaring overhead on November 4th, with the same number noted on November 19th. On the warm, breezy morning of February 3rd at least 6 were soaring over the farm, with 3 together over North Wood.

Kestrel: a female was hunting over Bottom Breck on November 4th. On November 19th a male was perched in the trees on the south side of Ringstead Common, and presumably the same male was around the north side of Ringstead Common on December 2nd. A male was hunting over the headland on the western edge of Bush Breck on December 21st. On January 1st a female was perched in the hedgerow on the north side of Jay's Field, and was presumably the same female seen flying into Ringstead Common later the same morning. On February 3rd a female was perched in the hedgerow between Fourteen Acres and Lambert Hill Breck.

Golden Plover: all birds recorded – see tabulated results.

Lapwing: all birds recorded - see tabulated results. In addition to those recorded in the tables a flock of 125 flew west over Bell's Charity on November 19th, and 40 flew north-west over Hatchet Breck on February 3rd.

Snipe: unusually, one was flushed from the centre of Lower Whins on January 1st and continued strongly north until out of sight and another was flushed from Lambert Hill Breck on February 3rd before flying off strongly south.

Woodcock: first birds recorded on November 4th when 2 were flushed from the scrub on the west end of Dark Wood. On November 19th one was flushed from Ringstead Common and another was flushed from Jessica's Wood. An apparent influx was noted with the advent of colder weather when a total of 9 were flushed on December 2nd, including 4 from Jessica's Wood, 2 from Bush Breck and 2 from the hedgerow between Landing Strip and Black Hean. On December 21st a total of 6 were seen: 3 were flushed from stubble and clover on Home Twenty, with 3 others located on Ringstead Common, in the headland on Bush Breck at the base of hedgerow between landing Strip and Black Hean. On January 1st singles were flushed from Jessica's Wood and beneath the hedgerow between Landing Strip and High Dual. An apparent influx ahead of the hard weather mid-January saw a total of 9 flushed from stubble, hedgerows bases and woodland on January 16th. On February 3rd a total of 7 were flushed with 4 of those flushed from the weedy growth on Home Twenty.

Curlew: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Black-headed Gull: see tabulated results – groups of over 5 recorded.

Common Gull: see tabulated results – groups of over 5 recorded.

Herring Gull: see tabulated results – all birds recorded.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: remains very scarce since the departure of the pig-rearing units. Single immatures were noted on Upper Whins of January 16th and on Lower Whins on February 17th.

Great Black-backed Gull: as always, this species remains scarce: a single immature was on Upper Whins on November 19th.

Feral Pigeon: Numbers apparently reduced with just 4-5 birds present during the early part of the winter period.

Stock Dove: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Woodpigeon: all birds recorded – see tabulated results.

Collared Dove: all birds recorded – see tabulated results.

Barn Owl: a single record of one in flight over Home Piece on the morning of February 3rd.

Tawny Owl: a daytime calling bird heard in the vicinity of the cattle barn north of the Burnham Road on November 19th. On December 2nd one was calling from the oaks in Dark Wood at dawn.

Green Woodpecker: quite scarce throughout the winter period. One was calling from Wharton's Belt on November 19th and one was seen in flight across Home Piece on January 1st.

Great Spotted Woodpecker: remains generally unobtrusive during winter: one was calling on flight as it flew east over North Wood on November 19th. On February 3rd one was drumming from the west end of Wharton's Belt.

Skylark: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Meadow Pipit: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Pied Wagtail: fair numbers recorded in autumn. A total of 13 were seen on November 4th when birds were recorded on Cherry Trees (5), Black Hean (2), Landing Strip (2), Smith's Piece (2) and around the farm buildings (2). Up to 7 were feeding in the silage store north of the cattle barn near the Burnham Road on November 19th, when 2 were also around the farm buildings. On December 2nd numbers were much reduced with just 2 seen around the farm buildings. Just 3 were noted on January 1st with all 3 feeding on plough on Ten Acres. A pair was feeding around the farm buildings on February 3rd.

Wren: encountered in small numbers during each visit, predominantly recorded in woodland, hedgerow and deciduous scrub.

Dunnock: again there was no evidence of any obvious interruption to the long-term decline. It was encountered on all visits, predominantly in woodland edges, hedgerow and scrub, often favouring the area around the gardens of the farm building complex and on Ringstead Common.

Robin: recorded on all visits in small numbers but with a clear increase recorded in mid-November following an arrival of Continental immigrants. It was recorded mainly in woodland, scrub and hedgerows. As usual song was recorded for throughout the entire winter period, continuing into early spring.

Blackbird: a sharp rise in numbers early-November following a strong immigration of Continental birds. Around 110 were recorded in hedgerows, scrub and woodland edge on 4th. By mid-November numbers had stabilised somewhat with c.100 present on 19th. Numbers remained high into early December, with perhaps another wave of Continental immigrants swelling the local population when 130 were noted. Subsequently numbers were lower as birds dissipated throughout the local area. The first birds were singing on the morning of February 3rd.

Fieldfare: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Song Thrush: good numbers present in hedgerows, scrub and woodland during early November when c.35 present on 4th, with another 17 noted flying south during the day. One was in sub-song in North Wood on January 1st. At least 3 birds were noted singing on the warm, breezy morning of February 3rd with songsters in Wharton's Belt, The hedgerow between Ten Acres and Barn Breck and in woodland abutting the western edge of Eighteen Acres.

Redwing: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Mistle Thrush: remains quite scarce. Maximum recorded was just 2 on Upper Whins on January 1st. One was in full song from the east end of Wharton's Belt on January 16th, with perhaps the same male in song from the Green Lane bisecting Wharton's Belt on February 3rd.

Goldcrest: again scarce throughout the survey period: two were noted in scrub on Ringstead Common on November 19th, and one was seen in North Wood on January 1st.

Long-tailed Tit: encountered on most visits. The largest flock in early winter numbered 8 birds and was seen on December 2nd in the hedgerow on the west side of Bush Breck. Two flocks were noted on January 1st when 10 were in the hedgerow west of the cow barn, and 8 were with a mixed tit flock in the hedgerow on the east side of Lower Whins.

Coal Tit: small numbers remain on the farm. It is noted on most visits, most often in conifers and deciduous evergreens. Maximum recorded was 2 on January 1st in Dark Wood, and on January 16th when 2 were visiting the suspended feeder adjacent to the farm buildings.

Blue Tit: recorded on all visits in small numbers; largest group was 14 noted amidst a mixed tit flock feeding on a suspended feeder adjacent to the farm buildings on January 16th. This species remains the most numerous small woodland bird species on the farm.

Great Tit: remaining less abundant than the above species but still present on all visits. Maximum of 7 recorded on the in and around the farm building complex on February 19th.

Jay: recorded in small numbers on all visits. A flock of 4 was noted on Ringstead Common on January 1st with 2-3 recorded on most visits. Usually most visible during late autumn when the practice of burying acorns on open land reveals its presence, this species was also noted regularly in hedgerows in late-winter and early spring.

Magpie: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Jackdaw: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Rook: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Carrion Crow: relatively small numbers seen on each visit, usually in low single figures and less numerous with the cessation of pig rearing on the farm; largest count 4 on Black Hean on February 17th.

Starling: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Chaffinch: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Greenfinch: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Goldfinch: a small flock of 8 was feeding on the edge of Ringstead Common and Smith's Piece on November 4th. On January 16th a small flock of 6 were feeding in the hedgerow trees on the west side of Horse Breck, and 2 were visiting the suspended feeder adjacent to the farm buildings. A flock of 8 were with Chaffinches on the east side of Hatchet Breck on February 3rd.

Linnet: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.

Bullfinch: again, generally rather scarce during the survey period when just 2 were noted: a male on Ringstead Common on January 1st and a male again in scrub adjacent to Cherry Trees on February 3rd.

Yellowhammer: all birds recorded - see tabulated results.



Results

To complement the full list of species recorded in the previous section the results of selected species from the Courtyard Farm Winter Bird Survey 2023-24 are presented in this section in tabulated format. The dates of the eight visits, spaced as evenly throughout the survey period as weather and availability would allow, are indicated below:

Visit 1	4 th November 2023
Visit 2	19 th November 2023
Visit 3	2 nd December 2023
Visit 4	21 st December 2023
Visit 5	1 st January 2024
Visit 6	16 th January 2024
Visit 7	3 rd February 2024
Visit 8	19 th February 2024

The criteria for the minimum size flock or loose gathering of each species is highlighted in the full species list in the previous section. For example, due to the increased scarcity of species such as Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Yellowhammer, all individuals of these species are now recorded.

In a few cases, particularly towards the end of the survey with the onset of spring, zero counts do not necessarily mean a lack of presence for a species but may relate more to that species having abandoned its winter flocking habit to form small groups or potential breeding pairs.

Some selected results are also presented later in this section in block chart format to illustrate changing numbers within certain species on the farm as autumn arrival and spring departures progress.

In association with the selected results referred to above, the content of each field on the farm during the survey period is also presented in tabulated form, whether this is standing stubble, nitrogen replacement fertiliser crops, permanent grassland, livestock or a combination of any of these.

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 1 - 4th November 2023

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings			2								34		
Bells Charity													
Ten Acres													2
Barn Breck							121	38					
Lambert Hill Breck			2										2
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck			2								12		
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit													7
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees			3								17		8
Black Hean	6		3										2
High Dual													2
Landing Strip											15		62
Horse Breck		5											
Clapper Hills	6		3								21		
Two Fourteen Acres			2								17		
Home Piece	2												
Home Twenty													3
Middle Twenty													
Top Twenty	4												
Common South			3										
Common North													5
Jays Field											10		
Courtyard													20
Hatchet Breck			4					32					
Lower Whins								8					
Upper Whins							112	62					
Totals	18	5	24	0	0	0	233	140	0	0	126	0	113

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 1 - 4th November 2023 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings			11		22				6				
Bells Charity									3			12	
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck									8				
Lambert Hill Breck													
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck	8	9	8						8				
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck		7											
Chalk Pit													
Six Acres					9		11						
Cherry Trees	5	78	32		11		77				110		
Black Hean													
High Dual													
Landing Strip	6												
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills													
Two Fourteen Acres				2					4				
Home Piece													
Home Twenty	17												
Middle Twenty		9	18										
Top Twenty	5												
Common South													
Common North													
Jays Field				8									
Courtyard	11												
Hatchet Breck	3												
Lower Whins													
Upper Whins				2									
Totals (Continued)	55	103	69	12	42	0	88	0	29	0	110	12	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 2 - 19th November 2023

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings			3								55		
Bells Charity								7					2
Ten Acres								5			11		3
Barn Breck			1	56	112	5	140	65					
Lambert Hill Breck													3
Fourteen Acres	4												
Eighteen Acres			2										
Common Breck													2
Smith's Piece	3		1										1
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit			2										5
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees						23					41		25
Black Hean	6		3										
High Dual													2
Landing Strip											21		57
Horse Breck		6											
Clapper Hills	9		3								21		
Two Fourteen Acres											17		
Home Piece			2										
Home Twenty													6
Middle Twenty													
Top Twenty													
Common South			1										
Common North													8
Jays Field											10		
Courtyard													31
Hatchet Breck			3				21	14					
Lower Whins							41	14					
Upper Whins							52	110					
Totals	22	6	21	56	112	28	254	215	0	0	176	0	145

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 2 - 19th November 2023 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings					34		12		5				
Bells Charity										4		15	
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck									10		12		
Lambert Hill Breck	7												
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck	11	22	14		11	7	52		8				
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit													
Six Acres					9		22						
Cherry Trees	22	114	65		11		95				131		
Black Hean													
High Dual													
Landing Strip	14		6	2									
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills											13	8	
Two Fourteen Acres							32		18				
Home Piece									4				
Home Twenty	14												
Middle Twenty		12	13										
Top Twenty													
Common South				4									
Common North													
Jays Field				2									
Courtyard	21						54						
Hatchet Breck													
Lower Whins													
Upper Whins													
Totals (Continued)	89	148	98	8	65	7	267	0	45	4	156	23	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species												
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Visit 3 - 2nd December 2023

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings	4		1							2	18		
Bells Charity													
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck													
Lambert Hill Breck		2	1										
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres	1												
Common Breck													
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck									3	11			3
Bottom Breck													2
Chalk Pit	8		1								82		
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees											41		3
Black Hean													4
High Dual			1										4
Landing Strip													7
Horse Breck			3										
Clapper Hills													6
Two Fourteen Acres			2										
Home Piece													
Home Twenty													4
Middle Twenty	6												21
Top Twenty		6											40
Common South				32		9	11	21	4				2
Common North							9	13					
Jays Field													
Courtyard													3
Hatchet Breck													
Lower Whins					64		22	35			23		2
Upper Whins	4							14					3
Totals	23	8	9	32	64	9	42	83	4	5	175	0	104

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 3 - 2nd December 2023 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings			6	2	32				5				
Bells Charity		14	7										
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck													
Lambert Hill Breck									5			12	
Fourteen Acres				4									
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck													
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck											33		
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit		7	31										
Six Acres					12		22		3				
Cherry Trees													
Black Hean													
High Dual			17										
Landing Strip													
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills													
Two Fourteen Acres													
Home Piece													
Home Twenty	3												
Middle Twenty	8												
Top Twenty	12												
Common South													
Common North													
Jays Field													
Courtyard													
Hatchet Breck													
Lower Whins									4				
Upper Whins													
Totals (Continued)	23	21	61	6	44	0	22	0	17	0	33	12	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species											
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Visit 4 - 21st December 2023

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings										41			
Bells Charity													
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck													
Lambert Hill Breck			1							10			
Fourteen Acres	4						4	4	1				
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck													
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck												2	
Bottom Breck										230		2	
Chalk Pit										145			
Six Acres										11			
Cherry Trees								8					
Black Hean	4							7		11			
High Dual												6	
Landing Strip							8			15		3	
Horse Breck							10	31		177			
Clapper Hills			1				22					5	
Two Fourteen Acres												9	
Home Piece													
Home Twenty		5	17									6	
Middle Twenty	8											5	
Top Twenty												4	
Common South							7	16	2			2	
Common North							5	8					
Jays Field													
Courtyard												3	
Hatchet Breck													
Lower Whins										23		2	
Upper Whins	4							14				3	
Totals	20	5	19	0	0	0	56	88	3	0	663	0	52

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 4 - 21st December 2023 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings				3	28				8				
Bells Charity		10	7										
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck													
Lambert Hill Breck									8			10	
Fourteen Acres			16										
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck													
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck	8	5	8										
Chalk Pit					6		22						
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees					15				4				
Black Hean													
High Dual	4												
Landing Strip							3						
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills	3											6	
Two Fourteen Acres	4		9						7			4	
Home Piece			5										
Home Twenty	5												
Middle Twenty	2												
Top Twenty	2												
Common South													
Common North													
Jays Field													
Courtyard													
Hatchet Breck				2	5		13		4			4	
Lower Whins									7				
Upper Whins													
Totals (Continued)	28	15	45	5	54	0	38	0	38	0	0	24	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 5 - 1st January 2024

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings										2	44		
Bells Charity											53		
Ten Acres			2			21							
Barn Breck			1	67	14		26	53			11		5
Lambert Hill Breck							6	33					
Fourteen Acres							2	13					
Eighteen Acres								11					
Common Breck													
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck											245		2
Chalk Pit											150		
Six Acres											38		
Cherry Trees								11					
Black Hean								8			11		
High Dual			2										8
Landing Strip											30		
Horse Breck							31	52	4	8	125		
Clapper Hills							27	9					7
Two Fourteen Acres													11
Home Piece							4						
Home Twenty			8										5
Middle Twenty			3										3
Top Twenty													8
Common South							5	21					
Common North							11	13					
Jays Field											8		
Courtyard	6												8
Hatchet Breck	18	5									82		7
Lower Whins													
Upper Whins													1
Totals	24	5	16	67	14	21	112	224	4	10	797	0	65

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 5 - 1st January 2024 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings			8	2	31				5				
Bells Charity													
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck					32	18			3				
Lambert Hill Breck													
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck													
Smith's Piece			21						2				
Bush Breck											15		
Bottom Breck	18												
Chalk Pit					6		52						
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees					15				4				
Black Hean													
High Dual	7												
Landing Strip													
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills												12	
Two Fourteen Acres		3	20						11				
Home Piece													
Home Twenty	11												
Middle Twenty	5												
Top Twenty													
Common South													
Common North													
Jays Field							11				52	4	
Courtyard													
Hatchet Breck	14			3			5				24		
Lower Whins		14	28		2		21					4	
Upper Whins		12			12								
Totals (Continued)	55	29	77	5	98	18	89	0	25	0	91	20	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 6 - 16th January 2024

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings										6	22		
Bells Charity											25		
Ten Acres						30							
Barn Breck			1				18	32					7
Lambert Hill Breck							9	20					
Fourteen Acres							5	8					
Eighteen Acres								16					
Common Breck											9		
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck				65	183		41	66					7
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit							18	41					
Six Acres											13		
Cherry Trees				22			185	310	16				
Black Hean			1										
High Dual													9
Landing Strip	16												7
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills													
Two Fourteen Acres			1										13
Home Piece													
Home Twenty			2								83		2
Middle Twenty										2			19
Top Twenty			1					8					2
Common South													2
Common North											22		
Jays Field								8					
Courtyard		5		23				46					3
Hatchet Breck							82	144					11
Lower Whins								9					
Upper Whins								5					1
Totals	16	5	6	110	183	30	358	713	16	8	174	0	83

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species												
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Visit 6 - 16th January 2024 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings			10	2	48		13		4				
Bells Charity													
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck					20	32							
Lambert Hill Breck													
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres													
Common Breck					4				5		12		
Smith's Piece			18	1					5				
Bush Breck							141						
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit					8		145						
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees													
Black Hean	11	45	53						18		2		
High Dual	16												
Landing Strip		77	21										
Horse Breck													
Clapper Hills									22			15	
Two Fourteen Acres									6				
Home Piece													
Home Twenty													
Middle Twenty			24									3	
Top Twenty	18								7				
Common South													
Common North													
Jays Field													
Courtyard				1	8								
Hatchet Breck					31								
Lower Whins		20	18									4	
Upper Whins		9											
Totals (Continued)	45	151	144	4	119	32	299	0	67	0	14	22	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species											
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Visit 7 - 3rd February 2024

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings			2										
Bells Charity	3	2											
Ten Acres	1						5	2					3
Barn Breck					11			15			14		3
Lambert Hill Breck			1				85	75			31		4
Fourteen Acres								6		3			
Eighteen Acres	3							21					2
Common Breck								22					3
Smith's Piece								13					
Bush Breck							5	11					
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit							9	16					
Six Acres											44		
Cherry Trees							31	60					
Black Hean			1										
High Dual													2
Landing Strip	4												
Horse Breck								32					4
Clapper Hills			2					9					
Two Fourteen Acres													
Home Piece								4					
Home Twenty											36		5
Middle Twenty										4	118		14
Top Twenty			1								12		4
Common South													2
Common North													4
Jays Field	4							11					
Courtyard							18	26			13		6
Hatchet Breck	6										11		7
Lower Whins													5
Upper Whins											43		17
Totals	21	2	7	0	11	0	153	323	0	7	322	0	85

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 7 - 3rd February 2024 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings			4				6		6				
Bells Charity													
Ten Acres													
Barn Breck													
Lambert Hill Breck					14								
Fourteen Acres													
Eighteen Acres									2				
Common Breck				13					4				
Smith's Piece		11	4										
Bush Breck													
Bottom Breck													
Chalk Pit					8								
Six Acres					22								
Cherry Trees						22							
Black Hean	7								21		11		
High Dual					13								
Landing Strip													
Horse Breck					9								
Clapper Hills					11				10			9	
Two Fourteen Acres							20		11				
Home Piece													
Home Twenty													
Middle Twenty	6												
Top Twenty													
Common South													
Common North													
Jays Field		8											
Courtyard												6	
Hatchet Breck									12		17		
Lower Whins													
Upper Whins					2							10	
Totals (Continued)	13	19	8	13	79	22	26	0	66	0	28	25	0

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species											
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Visit 8 - 19th February 2024

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Farm and outbuildings									4	22	6		
Bells Charity	2	2											2
Ten Acres						15							2
Barn Breck						5							
Lambert Hill Breck			3			22	31						2
Fourteen Acres						12							
Eighteen Acres	3												2
Common Breck													3
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck	4					3	8						4
Bottom Breck													2
Chalk Pit			2						14	165			2
Six Acres									2				
Cherry Trees		2				96				66			4
Black Hean	4					19	20						3
High Dual						11	38			32			4
Landing Strip	2		2			80	14						4
Horse Breck			1			15	11			46			2
Clapper Hills	2		3			55							2
Two Fourteen Acres			6			21	40			53			2
Home Piece			1										
Home Twenty			2							260			2
Middle Twenty			2							65			
Top Twenty			2										2
Common South													2
Common North													2
Jays Field													2
Courtyard	4												14
Hatchet Breck		2	5							115			8
Lower Whins													2
Upper Whins													2
Totals	21	6	29	0	0	0	354	162	0	20	824	6	76

Courtyard Farm - winter bird survey 2023-24

Location	Species
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Visit 8 - 19th February 2024 (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Farm and outbuildings			12		36				6				
Bells Charity			13									2	
Ten Acres									2				
Barn Breck													
Lambert Hill Breck					9				4				
Fourteen Acres												2	
Eighteen Acres									2				
Common Breck				8					4				
Smith's Piece													
Bush Breck		6											
Bottom Breck									2				
Chalk Pit				2	31	16							
Six Acres													
Cherry Trees					13								
Black Hean					10								
High Dual		32					28						
Landing Strip						14							
Horse Breck				2	15				2				
Clapper Hills						22			6				
Two Fourteen Acres									12				
Home Piece													
Home Twenty												2	
Middle Twenty												2	
Top Twenty		18							4			2	
Common South									2				
Common North													
Jays Field		7											
Courtyard												2	
Hatchet Breck					21							2	
Lower Whins													
Upper Whins							19					6	
Totals (Continued)	0	63	25	12	135	52	47	0	46	0	0	20	0

Courtyard Farm - Winter bird survey 2023-24

Visit	Species											
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Species totals - All visits

	Red-legged Partridge	Grey Partridge	Common Pheasant	Lapwing	Golden Plover	Curlew	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull	Stock Dove	Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Skylark
Visit 1 4th November 2023	18	5	24	0	0	0	233	140	0	0	126	0	113
Visit 2 19th November 2023	22	6	21	56	112	28	254	215	0	0	176	0	145
Visit 3 2nd December 2023	23	8	9	32	64	9	42	83	4	5	175	0	104
Visit 4 21st December 2023	20	5	19	0	0	0	56	88	3	0	663	0	52
Visit 5 1st January 2024	24	5	16	67	14	21	112	224	4	10	797	0	65
Visit 6 16th January 2024	16	5	6	110	183	30	358	713	16	8	174	0	83
Visit 7 3rd February 2024	21	2	7	0	11	0	153	323	0	7	322	0	85
Visit 8 19th February 2024	21	6	29	0	0	0	354	162	0	20	824	6	76
Average per visit to nearest whole number	21	5	16	33	48	11	195	244	3	6	407	1	90

Courtyard Farm - Winter bird survey 2023-24

Visit	Species												
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Species totals - All visits (Continued)

	Meadow Pipit	Fieldfare	Redwing	Magpie	Jackdaw	Rook	Starling	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Linnet	Yellowhammer	Corn Bunting
Visit 1 4th November 2023	55	103	69	12	42	0	88	0	29	0	110	12	0
Visit 2 19th November 2023	89	148	98	8	65	7	267	0	45	4	156	23	0
Visit 3 2nd December 2023	23	21	61	6	44	0	22	0	17	0	33	12	0
Visit 4 21st December 2023	28	15	45	5	54	0	38	0	38	0	0	24	0
Visit 5 1st January 2024	55	29	77	5	98	18	89	0	25	0	91	20	0
Visit 6 16th January 2024	45	151	144	4	119	32	299	0	67	0	14	22	0
Visit 7 3rd February 2024	13	19	8	13	79	22	26	0	66	0	28	25	0
Visit 8 19th February 2024	0	63	25	12	135	52	47	0	46	0	0	20	0
Average per visit to nearest whole number	39	69	66	8	80	16	110	0	42	1	54	20	0

Courtyard Farm - Winter Cropping 2023-24

Field Name	Crop	Livestock/Grazing
Bells Charity	Mustard	
Ten Acres	Wheat	
Barn Breck	Wheat	
Lambert Hill Breck	Wheat	
Fourteen Acres	Wheat	
Eighteen Acres	Wheat	
Common Breck	Stewardship grassland	Sheep until mid-December
Smith's Piece	Stewardship grassland	Sheep until mid-December
Bush Breck	Clover	
Bottom Breck	Clover	
Chalk Pit **	Clover	
Six Acres	Stewardship grassland	
Cherry Trees	Cultivated	
Black Hurn	Cultivated	
High Dual	Mustard	
Landing Strip	Cultivated	
Horse Breck *	Mustard	
Clapper Hills *	Mustard	
Two Fourteen Acres	Clover	
Home Piece	Stewardship grassland	
Home Twenty	Clover	
Middle Twenty	Clover	
Top Twenty	Clover	
Common South	Fallow/Wildflowers	
Common North	Stewardship grassland	Sheep until mid-December
Jays Field	Stewardship grassland	Cattle until mid-December
Courtyard *	Stewardship grassland	Sheep until mid-December
Hatchet Breck	Fallow	
Lower Whins	Mustard	
Upper Whins **	Mustard	

* *Wild bird feed strip*

** *Wader plots*

Chart 1 – Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge and Common Pheasant

Grey Partridge were present throughout the winter period, but only in low numbers. Both cereal stubble and young sprouting cereal crops remain the preferred habitat. Red-legged Partridge and Common Pheasant were recorded in quite similar numbers to the previous winter period with perhaps a slight increase in the former and a slight decrease in the latter. The effect of the cessation of game-bird releases has now apparently levelled out.

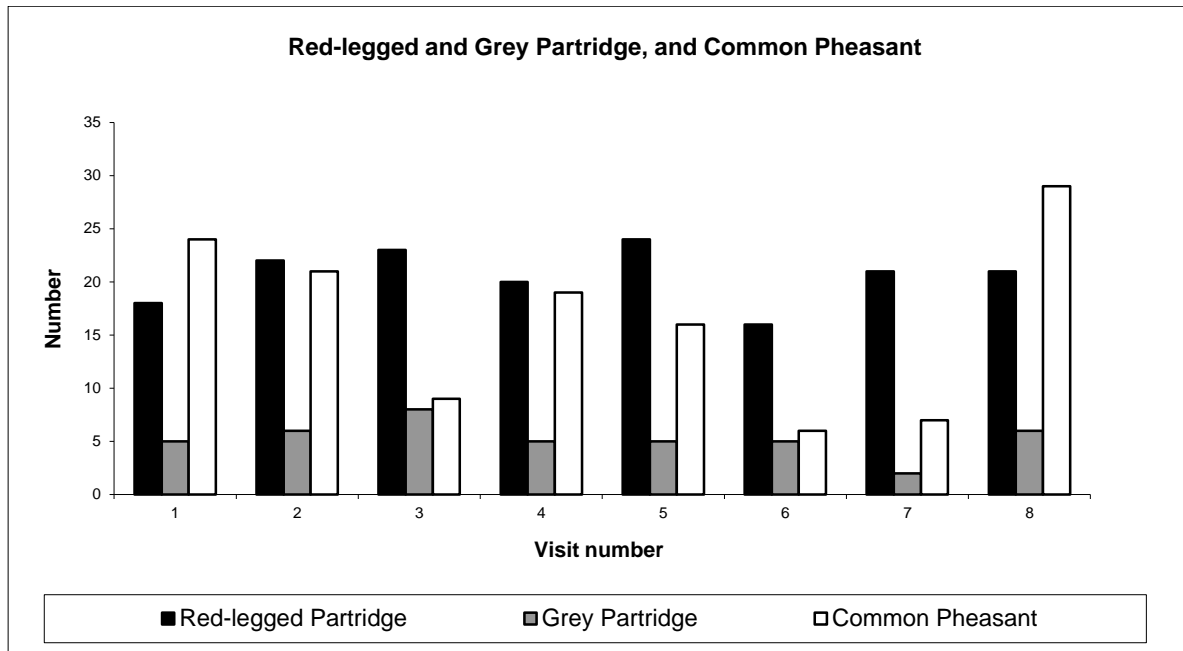


Chart 2 – Lapwing, Golden Plover and Curlew

Both Lapwing and Golden Plover remain somewhat erratic in appearance but once again a late-autumn/early-winter peak was evident. A second mid-winter peak indicated an arrival of Continental birds into the county as a result of a short cold snap. Curlew numbers remain low. Given the counts of Lapwing and Golden Plover, this is most likely as a result of milder winters providing ample feeding opportunities on coastal grazing marshes and saltmarshes.

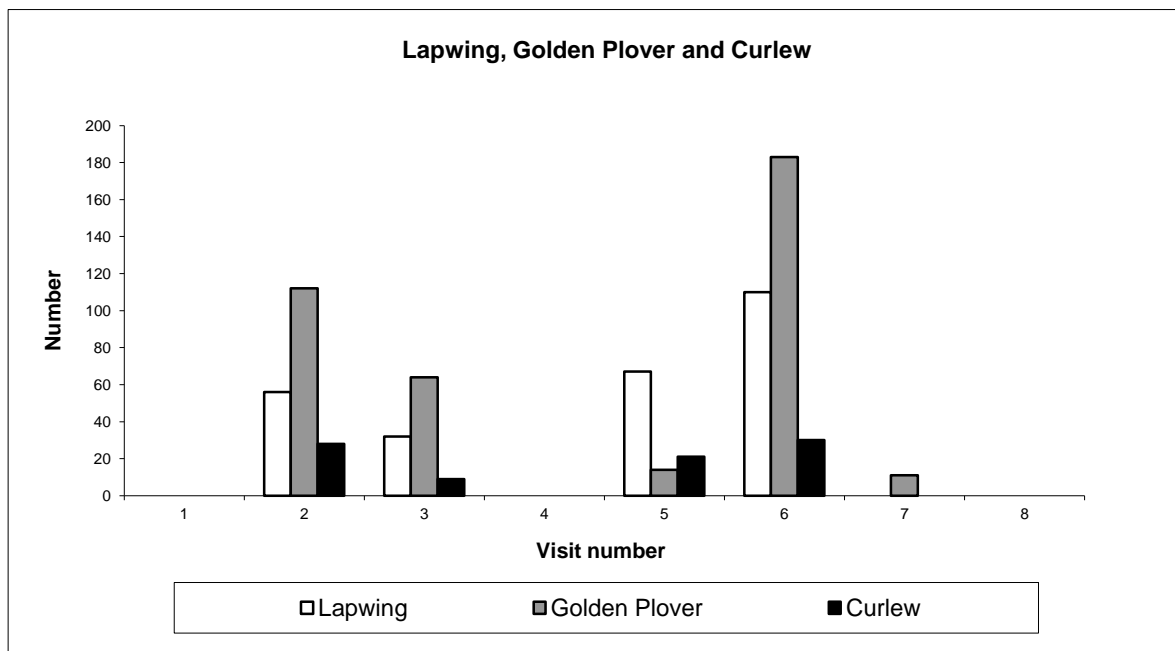


Chart 3 – Black-headed Gull, Common Gull and Herring Gull

Overall, both Black-headed Gull and Common Gull numbers were notably up on the previous winter period, with the former peaking at 358 and the latter at 713. A notable mid-winter arrival of Common Gulls was the result of the short, cold snap in mid-January. Herring Gull numbers remain both low and erratic without the attraction of the pig-rearing units.

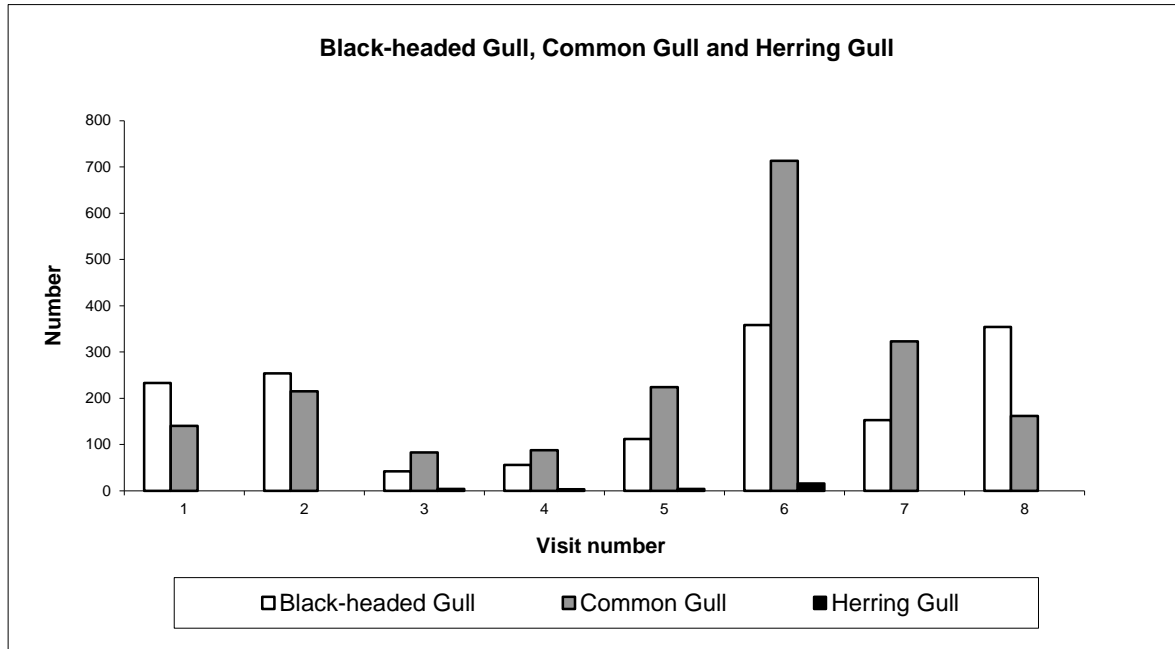


Chart 4 – Stock Dove, Woodpigeon and Collared Dove

On three occasions during the survey period (twice in early-winter) counts of Woodpigeon exceeded 650, peaking at 824 in early-spring. Numbers had generally recovered to levels similar to those in the winter of 2021-22. Stubble undersown with clover remains a favoured habitat, as does spring plough. Stock Doves remain scarce; recorded on five out of eight visits they peaked at 20 in early-spring. Collared Doves are only normally recorded around the farm buildings and were absent until early-January when a single count of 6 was made.

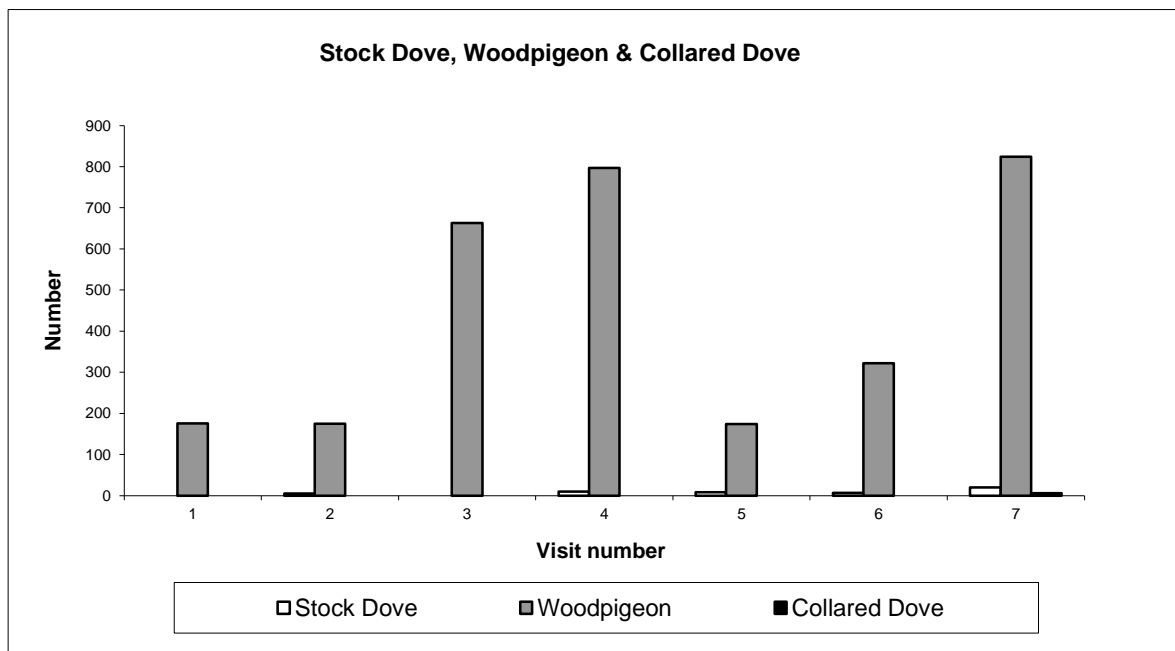


Chart 5 – Jackdaw and Rook

The pattern of occurrence of Jackdaws remains similar to previous winter periods, though numbers appear to be in continued slow decline, usually peaking in late-winter/early-spring. Late-autumn numbers were once again particularly low. Rooks remain somewhat erratic in appearance on the farm, though the suggestion remains that they may be increasing in numbers. They were surprisingly absent in late-autumn, but present in good numbers in early-spring when a peak of 52 was recorded on plough.

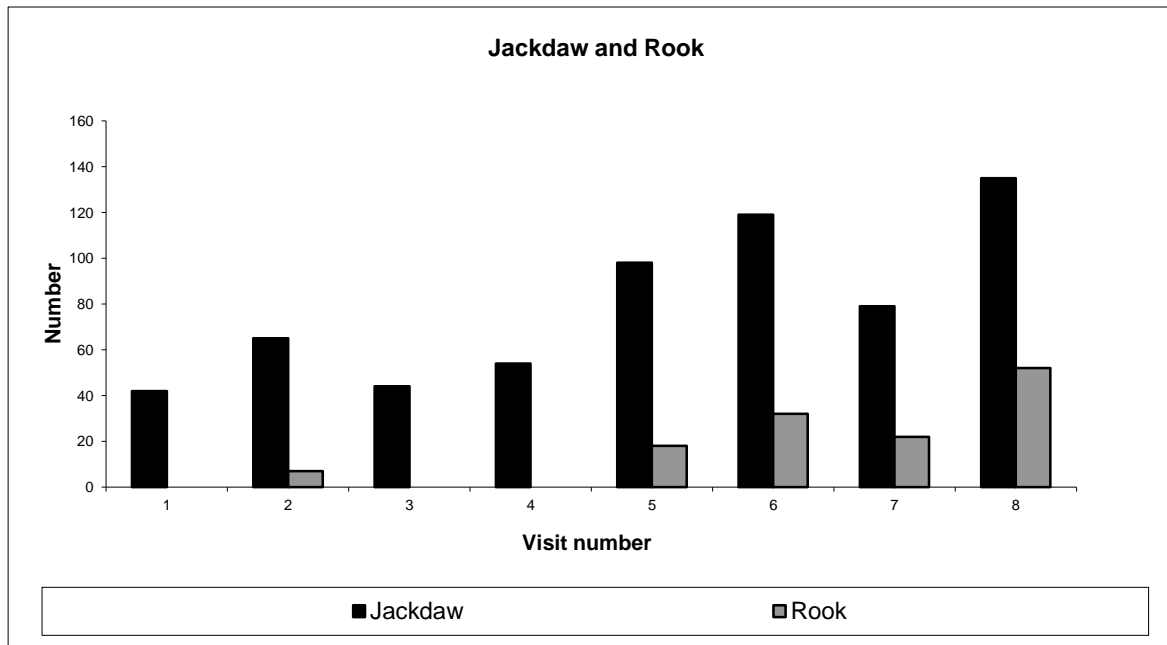


Chart 6 – Yellowhammer and Skylark

Yellowhammer numbers were further reduced on the previous winter period, peaking at just 25 in mid-winter. Overall, Skylark numbers were quite similar to the previous winter period, but with a larger peak of 145 recorded in late-autumn. Whilst milder winter periods may be contributing to this decline, the lack of winter food for granivores is doubtless the major contributing factor in these continued disappointing results.

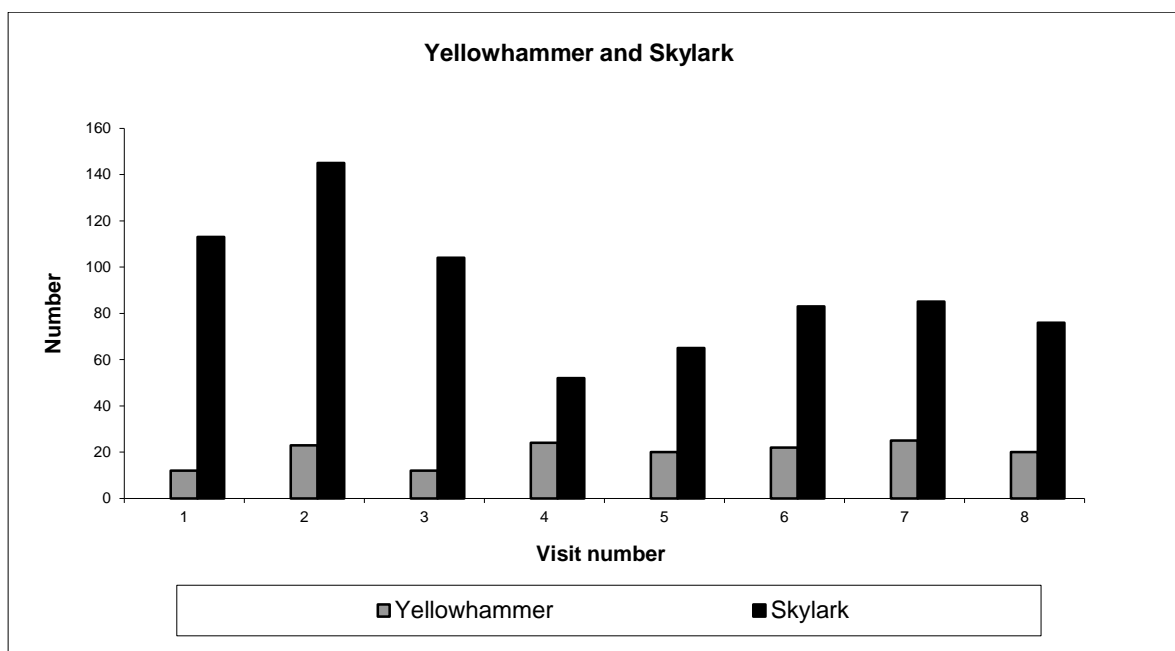


Chart 7 – Starling

A late autumn arrival, peaking at 267 in late-November, was up on the previous winter but still of very modest proportions. Numbers then fell away quite dramatically as incoming Continental immigrants moved on to wintering grounds. A second peak of 299 in mid-January was associated with the short, cold snap during that period.

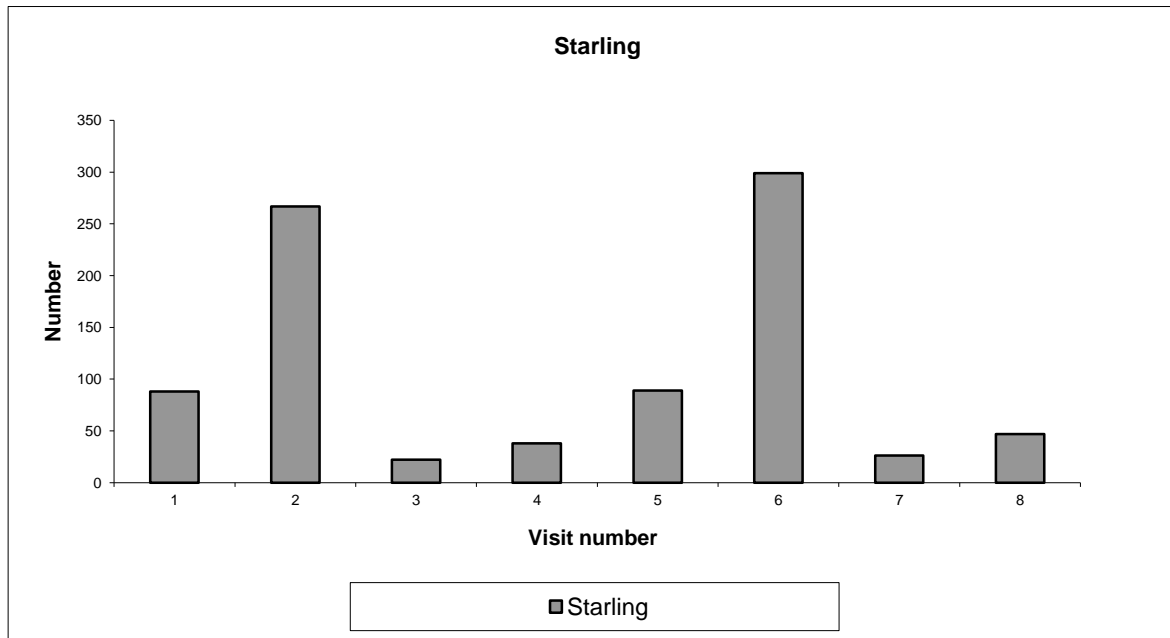


Chart 8 – Fieldfare and Redwing

Data suggested a rather better winter period for both Fieldfare and Redwing. Both species peaked first in late-autumn when 148 Fieldfares and 98 Redwing were recorded. As is often the case, numbers of both species fell as they moved inland and south-west through the UK, before a second peak in of 151 Fieldfare and 148 Redwing in response to the short, cold snap encountered in mid-January. A further small peak of Fieldfare in early-February suggested an early spring departure to the north-east as a result of the un-seasonally warm spring temperatures.

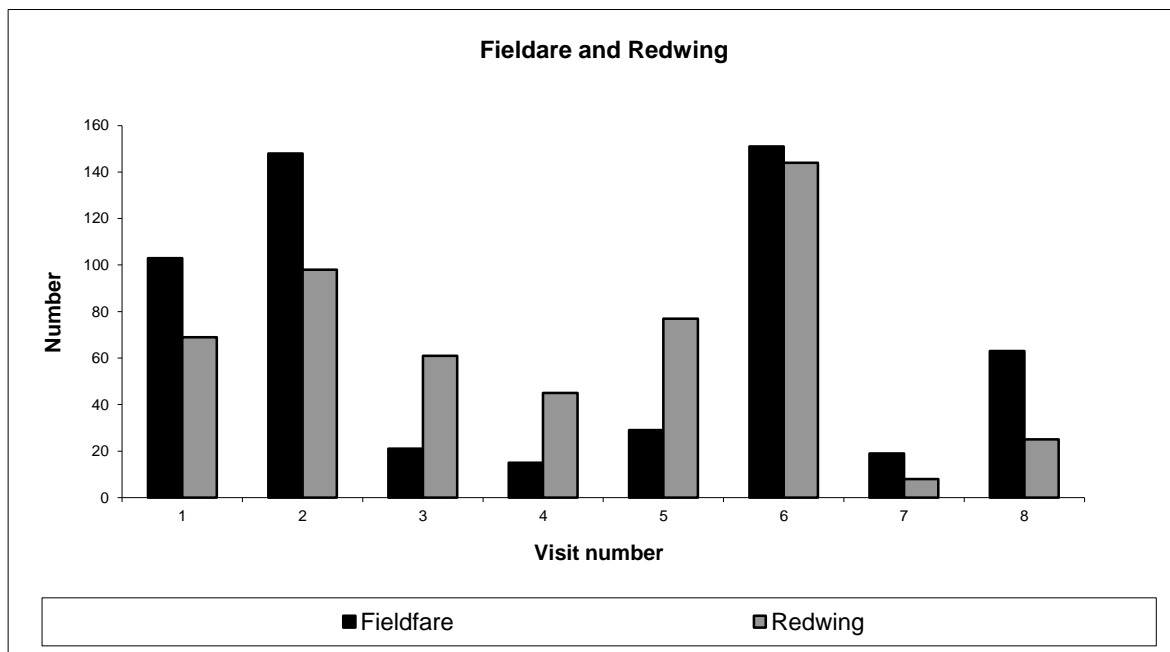


Chart 9 – Meadow Pipit

Numbers were not dissimilar to those recorded during the 2022-23 winter period and represents a reasonably good showing by this species. Numbers peaked at 89 in late-autumn and with no prolonged hard weather period to speak of, remained at a reasonable level throughout the winter period. The absence in early-spring is perhaps a result of reduced numbers during the cold snap in mid-January, but perhaps also indicative of an early spring departure in response to warm February temperatures.

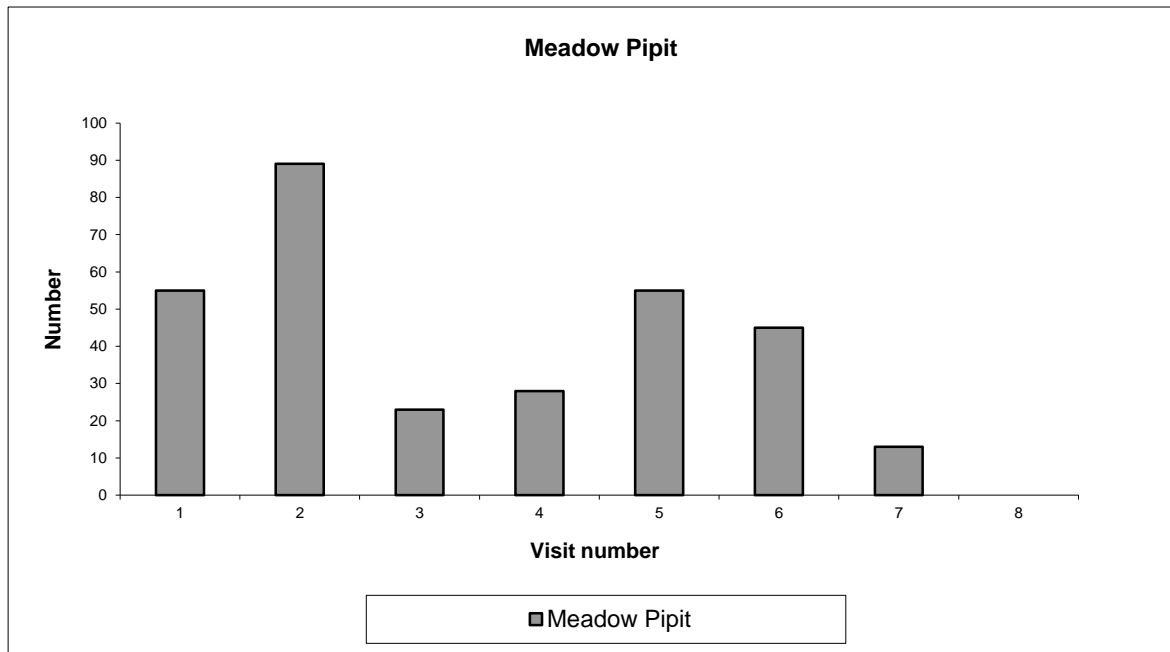
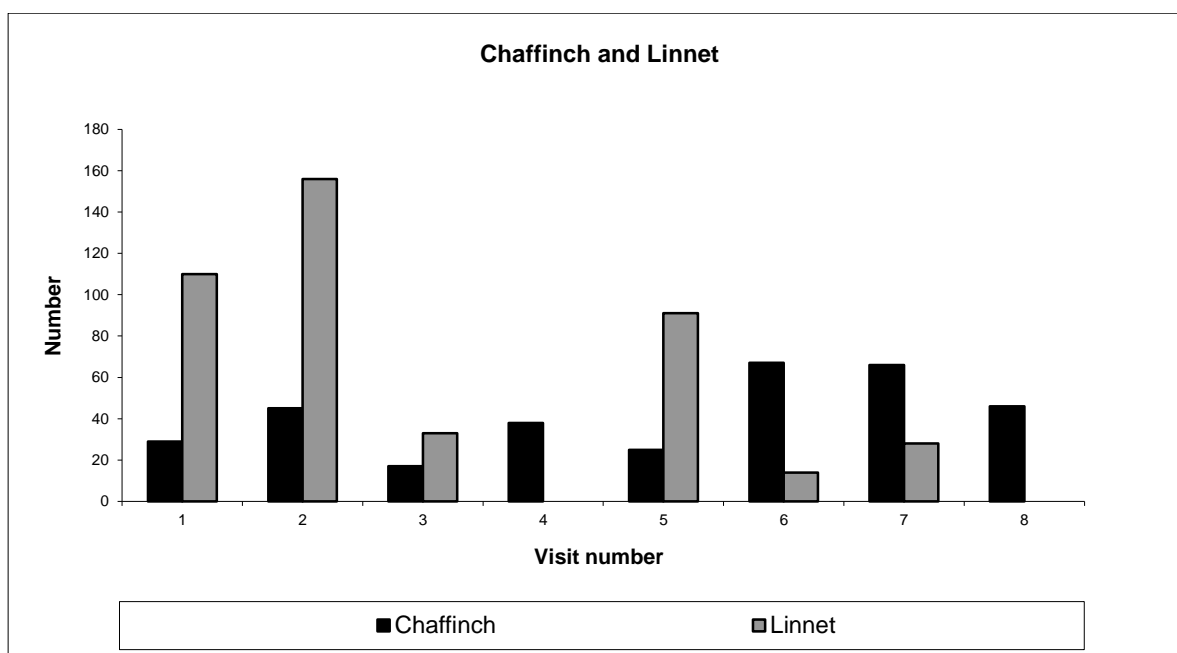


Chart 10 – Chaffinch and Linnet

The data suggests a reversal of fortunes for these two granivores on the previous winter period. Numbers of both species remain relatively poor. Chaffinch peaked in late-autumn at just 67, with no obvious influx of Continental immigrants in autumn. Linnets however, peaked at 156 in late-autumn but fell away quite quickly as winter progressed. Despite the milder winter weather in recent years, with little in the way of winter food for these species they tend to dissipate quite quickly in winter.



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