

**A BIRD SURVEY OF THE HARNHAM WATER  
MEADOWS TRUST AREA FOR THE PERIOD  
NOVEMBER 2007 TO OCTOBER 2008**

Conducted by:

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## **PART D AN OVERVIEW OF 12 MONTHS OF BIRD RECORDS AT THE HARNHAM WATER MEADOWS TRUST AREA FROM NOVEMBER 2007 TO OCTOBER 2008**

### **Introduction to Part "D"**

Through the twelve months bird survey period commencing in November 2007 and concluding in October 2008, two morning bird survey visits per month at roughly two-weekly intervals were carried out. The only exception to this regime was that there was only one visit made in April due to holiday absence.

Each bird sighting was entered onto a large scale map of the Trust's area and identified in accordance with the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) one and two-letter bird name codes. Bird behaviour was also noted in accordance with the symbols standardised on the BTO activity chart in common usage for BTO national survey work. One map was used for each month, and blue and red identification details define the relevant date of each survey.

The maps, appropriate BTO name codes and activity chart definitions, and associated brief monthly summaries are deposited at Rose Cottage and are available for study.

Three reports each covering a period of four months have preceded this Part "D" which is an overall review of the whole survey period of twelve months.

Part "A" pages 1 - 10 covers the period from November 2007 to February 2008.

Part "B" pages 11 - 24 covers the period from March to June 2008.

Part "C" pages 25 – 36 covers the period from July to October 2008.

Each of these parts covering a period of four months, in addition to containing a bird report, also contains observations of the general condition of the meadows during that particular period, and also discusses proposals and recommendations believed to be of long term benefit for the bird life, and wildlife in general, of the whole area of the meadows.

This Part "D" pages 37 - 53, has been prepared to provide an overall summary bringing together the bird observations made throughout the survey period of twelve months. It also brings together observations made through the survey period highlighting perceived habitat improvements through habitat management proposals and recommendations which, if implemented, are believed will be in the best interests of developing and enhancing bird diversity on the meadow's area, and will be of general benefit to all of the wildlife of the meadows.

## **The Bird Summary of Records from November 2007 to October 2008**

This summary lists all the bird species recorded during the twelve months survey period, and gives a brief general status of each species on the meadow's area.

For the purposes of the following list, Feral (Town) Pigeon has been ignored!

In The Natural History of the Harnham Water Meadows, January 1998, 88 species (ignoring Feral Pigeon) are recorded. During this survey period of twelve months, 69 species were recorded of which 8, namely; Little Egret, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Tawny Owl, Cetti's Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Jay and Brambling are not recorded in the 1998 list.

### **MS Mute Swan - *Cygnus olor***

Resident breeder. Up to 3 pairs breeding produced 9 cygnets.

### **CG Canada Goose - *Branta canadensis***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Generally a daytime visitor to the meadows from November to February 2007/08 and again from September to October 2008. A large flock of up to c.300 birds visits the meadows from time to time during the autumn and winter but the flock disperses to breed elsewhere in the Salisbury area from March to August.

### **MA Mallard - *Anas platyrhynchos***

Resident breeder. Probably about 40 birds frequent the area as about 20 birds can be seen around the Long Bridge and a similar number at the Harnham Mill during the winter months when most birds largely leave the meadow's area.

### **RL /P Red-legged or Grey Partridge - *Alectoris rufa* or *Perdix perdix***

On 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1 Partridge of one or the other species was flushed from Meadow 7A but was not seen well enough to assign to either species.

### **PH Pheasant - *Phasianus colchicus***

Resident breeder. Probable maxima of 3 male and 2 female adult birds. 5 poults were seen at the end of June.

### **LG Little Grebe - *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Autumn and winter visitor. Up to 3 seen on the R. Avon and adjoining banks of the meadows east of the Town Path.

### **CA Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax carbo***

Autumn and winter visitor. Seen in 1's or 2's; occasional birds fly high over the area generally westwards probably heading for the food rich Steeple Langford Nature Reserve gravel pits.

**ET Little Egret - *Egretta garzetta***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. A breeding colony exists amongst the breeding Grey Heron heronry at Britford from where up to 4 birds have visited and been seen feeding on the meadows throughout the year.

**H Grey Heron - *Ardea cinerea***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. A breeding colony exists at Britford from where up to 2 birds have visited and been recorded feeding on the meadows throughout the year, and with others passing overhead generally heading westwards presumably commuting to and from the Steeple Langford Nature Reserve for feeding purposes.

**SH Sparrowhawk - *Accipiter nisus***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Birds breed in the surrounding area, and all through the year at least 2 birds regularly visit and hunt through the meadows.

**BZ Common Buzzard - *Buteo buteo***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Birds breed in the surrounding area and visit at almost any time of the year. 1 bird was seen from late summer and into the autumn “static hunting” from fence posts west of the Town Path. On 25<sup>th</sup> September, a group of 7 birds was seen soaring at great height on warm air thermals above Meadow 3.

**K Kestrel - *Falco tinnunculus***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Birds breed in the surrounding area, and at least 2 birds have been seen hunting over the meadows at any time of the year.

**HY Hobby - *Falco subbuteo***

Summer visitor and scarce breeder in rural areas near Salisbury. A summer breeding visitor to Wiltshire, and on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1 was seen drifting to the N.W. over Meadow 1.

**PE Peregrine Falcon - *Falco peregrinus***

Winter visitor. 1 and sometimes 2 birds roost at night on Salisbury Cathedral during the winter months. In November, 1 was seen flying westwards over the meadows heading off up the R. Nadder valley presumably on a hunting foray.

**MH Moorhen - *Gallinula chloropus***

Resident breeder. At least of 4 breeding pairs are believed to breed in the reeds and sedges of the meadows and river banks.

**CO Coot - *Fulica atra***

Resident breeder. About 4 breeding pairs are believed to breed in the reeds and sedges of the river banks.

**SN Common Snipe** - *Gallinago gallinago*

Winter visitor. Colder winters in years gone by produced significantly more birds on the meadows in winter than is the case now. 3 birds were seen during December.

**GE Green Sandpiper** - *Tringa ochropus*

Winter visitor. Occasional sightings are made most winters. In December, 1 was seen in the water channel dividing Meadows 7C and 7D. Sightings have also been reported through the winter on the channel edges between Meadows 1 and 2 (John Beckett)

**BH Black-headed Gull** - *Larus ridibundus*

Autumn and winter visitor. The nearest breeding birds are present at the Steeple Langford Nature Reserve. Up to 70 birds have been present on Meadow 1 in winter scavenging on the R. Avon and R. Nadder, and in the Queen Elizabeth gardens.

**LB Lesser Black-backed Gull** - *Larus fuscus*

Irregular visitor throughout the year. Immature birds can be seen in 1's and 2's flying over the area in the summer months, and in the winter, both adults and immatures fly over the area.

**HG Herring Gull** - *Larus argentatus*

Winter visitor. Only seen very occasionally with just one sighting of 1 bird associating with Black-headed Gulls on Meadow 1 in February.

**SD Stock Dove** - *Columba oenas*

Resident and potential breeder. At least 1 pair attempted to breed in a Willow pollard but which blew down in high winds in June causing the attempt to fail.

**WP Wood Pigeon** - *Columba palumbus*

Resident breeder. Up to 80 birds have been counted in the area on a single visit, and at least 20 pairs are estimated to breed.

**CD Collared Dove** - *Streptopelia decaocto*

Resident breeder in surrounding district. Breeding certainly occurs near to the survey area in Harnham and elsewhere. Up to 3 birds were seen from time to time through the year mainly in the hedgerows near to Harnham Mill.

**TO Tawny Owl** - *Strix aluco*

Resident breeder in areas close to the meadows. This species no doubt hunts at night in the survey area. 1 was reported to have been flushed from the thick hedgerow between Meadows 2B and 3 in early April (Ray Topp).

**SI Swift** - *Apus apus*

Summer visitor and breeder in buildings close to the survey area. Most birds arrive during May and depart by early August. A minimum of 30 birds can be seen daily soaring and feeding over the meadows.

**KF Kingfisher - *Alcedo atthis***

Resident breeder in suitable river banks in the Salisbury area, and visits are made to the meadow's area throughout the year moving locally along the river systems. At least 2 birds were recorded mainly through the autumn, winter and early spring months along the river banks of the meadows and along the water channels.

**G Green Woodpecker - *Picus viridis***

Resident and potential breeder. At least 1 pair breeds in the Salisbury Close area, and up to 2 birds were often recorded during the year on the survey area east of the Town Path.

**GS Great Spotted Woodpecker - *Dendrocopos major***

Resident and potential breeder. Territorial drumming was frequently heard and seen in spring in Scout's Island Copse and elsewhere near by. 2 fledged juveniles were seen in the survey area in July.

**S Skylark - *Alauda arvensis***

Autumn passage migrant. At the end of September and through October, calling birds, mainly in 2's or 3's and flying at considerable height were seen heading S.W.

**SL Swallow - *Hirundo rustica***

Summer visitor breeding in suitable buildings in the Harnham and other areas near to the meadows. A minimum of 30 birds could be seen hawking for insects over the meadows from April to September.

**HM House Martin - *Delichon urbicum***

Summer visitor breeding under the eaves of houses in areas close to the meadows. Often in the company of Swallows, at least 40 birds can be seen hawking for insects over the meadows from May to September.

**MP Meadow Pipit - *Anthus pratensis***

Autumn passage migrant. From September to November, birds fly overhead in a S.W. direction or pause for feeding at suitable localities such as on 25<sup>th</sup> September when a flock of 20 were feeding on Meadow 1.

**GL Grey Wagtail - *Motacilla cinerea***

Resident and breeding near to the survey area. Only regularly seen on the survey area in late spring and early summer when a pair was recorded feeding and collecting food along the edge of the meadows with the R. Avon and which probably bred in the Cathedral Close area.

**PW Pied wagtail - *Motacilla alba***

Resident and breeding near to the survey area. At irregular intervals, 1 or 2 birds were seen in flight over the meadows. Breeding probably took place in the adjoining Churchfields Industrial Estate. In December, a flock of 8 birds was feeding in Meadow 1.

**WR Wren** - *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Resident breeder. At least 8 pairs suspected of breeding in the survey area. A family party was seen in the garden of Rose Cottage.

**D Dunnock** - *Prunella modularis*

Resident breeder. Surprisingly scarce with only 3 pairs appearing to hold territories in the survey area.

**R Robin** - *Erithacus rubecula*

Resident breeder. At least 6 pairs breeding within the survey area.

**B Blackbird** - *Turdus merula*

Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor. About 9 breeding pairs were estimated on the survey area. From November to March, at least 25 winter visitors roamed around as a loose flock in the thicker hedgerows feeding on berries. At the end of October, the first winter or passage migrant arrivals of 2008 consisted of at least 15 birds in the Rotary Copse area.

**ST Song Thrush** - *Turdus philomelos*

Resident breeder. Another scarce breeding bird of the meadows. No more than 2 pairs were located at the survey area.

**RW Redwing** - *Turdus iliacus*

Winter visitor. At least 50 birds roamed around the meadows from November to March feeding on berries and on invertebrates in the ground.

**M Mistle Thrush** - *Turdus viscivorus*

Resident and probable breeder. 2 birds were regularly in song from tree top vantage points during early spring generally in the Scout's Island Copse or Rose Cottage garden areas. A flock of 6 birds was seen in October near Scout's Island Copse and was probably a family party still loosely keeping together.

**CW Cetti's Warbler** - *Cettia cetti*

Scarce resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Not located on any of the survey days, but 1 was heard uttering its distinctive and explosive song from the Willows of Meadow 1 near the Long Bridge in early January. Presumably a local bird exploring new localities.

**SW Sedge Warbler** - *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Summer breeding visitor to the Salisbury area. A few pairs breed in the reeds and sedges on the Harnham side of the R. Nadder off the survey area, and 1 singing bird was present in the sedges of the water channel between Meadows 7C and 7D but no breeding attempt appeared to have taken place. 2 migratory birds were seen in sedges at the end of August.

**RW Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Summer breeding visitor. Up to 3 pairs held territories in reed areas adjoining the R. Nadder and R. Avon throughout the summer and are likely to have bred.

**BC Blackcap** - *Sylvia atricapilla*

Summer breeding visitor. 2 pairs held territories in the thick hedgerows and probably bred.

**GW Garden Warbler** - *Sylvia borin*

Summer breeding visitor to the Salisbury area. 1 bird was in full song on 9<sup>th</sup> May in Rose Cottage garden, but was not recorded again.

**LW Lesser Whitethroat** - *Sylvia curruca*

Scarce summer breeding visitor to the Salisbury area. On 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1 seen in a thick hedgerow would have been a migrant bird feeding up and passing through on return migration to East Africa.

**CC Chiffchaff** - *Phylloscopus collybita*

Summer breeding visitor to the Salisbury area. Only recorded during the survey year from late August to October indicating these birds were passage migrants passing through the meadows following breeding elsewhere.

**WW Willow Warbler** - *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Summer breeding visitor to the Salisbury area. Just one record on 28<sup>th</sup> August of a bird associating with Chiffchaffs and tits in a thick hedgerow. Certainly this was a passage bird embarking upon its return migration to southern Africa.

**GC Goldcrest** - *Regulus regulus*

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Up to 3 birds together were recorded at various times during the survey year and they tended to associate with roaming mixed species' tit flocks working through the thick hedgerows, but no evidence of breeding at the survey area.

**LT Long-tailed Tit** - *Aegithalos caudatus*

Resident breeder. 2 pairs probably bred at the meadows, and combined family parties banded together in the autumn forming a roving flock of 20 or more individuals with tits and other species travelling in association.

**BT Blue Tit** - *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Resident breeder. About 6 pairs likely to be breeding at the meadows. Roaming flocks of up to 15 birds have been seen in the autumn.

**GT Great Tit** - *Parus major*

Resident breeder. About 6 pairs likely to be breeding at the meadows.

**TC Treecreeper** - *Certhia familiaris*

Resident breeder. At least 1 successful breeding pair was seen in the Scout's Island Copse area.

**MG Magpie** - *Pica pica*

Resident breeder. Up to a maximum of 12 breeding pairs were recorded at the meadows with birds ranging over the whole area throughout the year.

**J Jay – *Garrulus glandarius***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. A visitor to the meadows with just one sighting on 9<sup>th</sup> October of a bird in flight over the meadows which may have originated from the Cathedral Close area. This may be the first recorded sighting of this species at the meadows.

**JD Jackdaw - *Corvus monedula***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Though not recorded as breeding at the meadows, the area is frequently visited by this species for feeding and sheep wool gathering for nest building material. After juveniles have fledged, up to 40 birds were seen generally to the east of the Town Path.

**RO Rook - *Corvus frugilegus***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. No breeding takes place at the meadows, but there is a breeding rookery at Harnham Hill close to the survey area. Passing birds are seen in flight over the meadows from time to time, and occasionally feed on the meadows east of the Town Path.

**C Carrion Crow - *Corvus corone***

Resident breeder. At least 3 pairs breed at the meadows and range over the meadows throughout the year.

**SG Starling - *Sturnus vulgaris***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. No breeding was recorded at the meadows but flocks were seen in flight over the meadows. At breeding time, the meadows east of the Town Path were visited for feeding by breeding birds from the Harnham area.

**HS House Sparrow - *Passer domesticus***

Resident breeder in the Salisbury area. Once taken for granted as a very common breeding bird of urban areas, this species has suffered huge population declines nationwide during the last 30 years. House Sparrows do breed in the Harnham area and elsewhere close to the meadows, but the only sighting was of a male bird foraging for food at breeding time in the thick hedgerow of Meadow 6 adjacent to Harnham Mill.

**CH Chaffinch - *Fringilla coelebs***

Resident breeder. Consistently low numbers recorded throughout the survey year seem to indicate that this species is rather scarce on the meadows, and about 5 territories were identified. Only short lengths of decently thick hedgerows are available, and this is almost certainly responsible for the paucity of breeding birds.

**BL Brambling - *Fringilla montifringilla***

Winter visitor. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2 calling birds were seen flying over heading S.W. over Meadow 7E and were lost to sight beyond the Churchfields Industrial Estate. These migrating birds may be the first recorded sighting of this species at the meadow's area.

**GR Greenfinch** - *Carduelis chloris*

Resident and probable breeder. Up to 19 birds frequented the thicker hedgerows during the winter feeding on the berries, but probably only 1 or 2 pairs bred in the short stretches available.

**GO Goldfinch** - *Carduelis carduelis*

Resident and probable breeder. Up to 11 birds were present in the thicker hedgerows during the winter months, and 1 or 2 pairs may have bred in these stretches.

**SK Siskin** - *Carduelis spinus*

Winter visitor. Nationally, numbers of immigrant Siskins can vary hugely from year to year depending on available winter seed on the Continent and Scandinavia particularly. 7 were seen in an Alder tree near Scout's Island Copse in January, and 5 migrating birds flew over Rotary Copse and Meadow 7B carrying on S.W. over the Churchfields Industrial Estate in October.

**BF Bullfinch** - *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce resident breeder in the Salisbury area. October 22<sup>nd</sup> provided the only sighting of this beautiful species on the meadows when 1 male was seen in the thick hedgerow between Meadows 7 and 7E.

**RB Reed Bunting** - *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Scarce resident breeder in the Salisbury area, and winter visitor to river valley systems. At least 1 bird was seen during the winter months in the thick hedgerows and along the R. Nadder adjacent to Fisherton Island.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE CONDITION OF THE HARNHAM WATER MEADOWS TRUST AREA AS OBSERVED FROM NOVEMBER 2007 TO OCTOBER 2008**

The comments made below are based on observations made during the year long survey period, and proposals and recommendations for habitat improvements in the future are based on those observations.

### **The Effects of the Sheep Grazing Regime on the Meadows during this Period**

During the winter months of November to mid January, heavy sheep grazing on the wet meadows resulted in very close cropping of the available grass which could not regenerate quickly enough to feed the large number of sheep present on the meadows. This regime created several grass-free and thus very muddy areas especially at stock pinch points such as near to and at gateways and bridges.

From March, spring plant growth began to assert itself especially to the west of the Town Path from where sheep were removed at this time. By the end of June, the grass here had become tall and thick. East of the Town Path, sheep continued to graze and therefore kept the grass much shorter.

During late June, sheep were reintroduced to the area west of the Town Path and at the end of July, a general mechanical topping of the meadows was carried out across all of the meadows.

In early September, a modest number of Jacob's Sheep had been introduced to the meadows, and by the end of that month all of the original flock of sheep had been removed from the meadows. Jacob's Sheep remained the only grazing sheep up to the conclusion of the survey period at the end of October.

It is to be hoped and recommended that sheep grazing will largely cease during the winter months from the end of November to the end of February thus enabling the meadow grasses and other plants to be properly rested and so permitted to commence a timely initial growth pattern before grazing recommences in March with a suitable number of animals.

Historically, cattle may well have played their part as an ingredient of an overall grazing regime on the meadows. Due consideration should be given to reintroducing an appropriate number of cattle of an appropriate breed at an appropriate time. It is suggested that if deemed desirable, cattle should initially be limited to grazing on Meadow 1 only. There being no water channels or ridges to damage or degrade by these heavier animals, Meadow 1 could be an ideal starting point for grazing cattle.

A more controlled grazing regime by appropriate numbers and breeds of stock across the whole of the meadows may, with other management recommendations put in place, encourage some of the historical breeding birds of the meadows to return e.g. Lapwing, Curlew, Redshank, Snipe and even possibly the now hugely reduced and nationally scarce Yellow Wagtail.

### **The Future for Grazing and other Management Developments for Meadow 1**

Various aspects of how Meadow 1 is different from the remainder of the meadows and how it might thus be managed in a different way have been discussed in previous parts of this report; Part "A" pages 7 - 8, Part "B" pages 18 - 19 and Part "C" pages 33 - 34. Management of Meadow 1 is also discussed in a report entitled "The Canada Goose" by John Vickerman, 2007.

In essence, given the fact that this meadow will never become part of the projected regeneration of the working water meadow's system, then alternative management of this meadow can add diversity of wildlife to the meadow's area as a whole. New management of Meadow 1 can be a positive generator for achieving the goal of encouraging historical breeding birds of the meadows that bred here 40 years ago of species as indicated above, to return once again.

The idea of creating a man made and very gently sloping shallow scrape in Meadow 1 which would have almost permanently muddy and wet edges with shallow water over its main area all through the year, is a tried and well tested method of attracting and increasing bird diversity with the added bonus of creating a new habitat for water-loving insects and a host of other invertebrates.

Naturally, a feasibility study would need to be carried out on this meadow to determine, amongst other things, the depth to which a scrape should be excavated in relation to the surrounding ground surface level, determine the average depth of the surface of the water table through the year, determine what the soil substrate consists of, and by no means least, could the necessary machinery required to carry out the work actually be moved on to the meadow.

In addition, the issue of devising an appropriate grazing regime for this meadow in conjunction with the presence of such a scrape would need to be addressed so that any scrape area does not suffer eutrophication or physical degradation as a result of grazing animals persistently damaging any of the scrape area.

## **Plant Spraying on the Meadows**

This issue is discussed in Part "B" pages 19 - 20.

Whilst some selectively directed plant control spraying e.g. to Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and Thistles (*various sp.*), may be deemed necessary within the grazing areas, great importance must be applied to making sure that such controls are conducted at the right time and under the right conditions.

It also has to be recognised that all plants do have a place in the ecosystem, and therefore areas of these plants should be maintained from where animals are excluded. Larvae of insects, especially of butterflies such as Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*), Peacock (*Inachis io*) and Comma (*Polygonia c-album*) require Stinging Nettles as a food source, and at present, butterflies of all species need all the help they can get on a national scale.

Before considering any plant control by spraying in areas excluded access by grazing animals, a very careful assessment needs to be made as to the extent of any spraying and the impact that any spraying will have on the wider plant community in such areas. It will also be necessary, in conjunction with the effects of spraying of plant life, to assess the impact such spraying may inflict upon the ability of insect species to complete their life cycles.

## **The Future of the Copses**

Various aspects of management of the four copses, namely, Rotary Copse, West Nadder Copse, Seven Acre Copse and Scout's Island Copse have been indicated in Part "A" pages 8 - 9, Part "B" page 20 and Part "C" pages 34 - 35.

Management action is more urgently required in some copses than others. Where new or replacement planting with berry and seed bearing trees, shrubs or other plants is recommended, the same or similar species can be used as detailed as suitable species for hedgerow restoration and reinstatement in Part "A" page 10.

### **Rotary Copse**

Of all the four copse's management proposals and recommendations addressed in this report, it is Rotary Copse that requires the most urgent attention with immediate action necessary. There has been rapid growth of the trees within it over recent years. Delay of any action will only cause a more complex, costly and lengthy regeneration of the copse for it to become a more wildlife friendly place.

This roughly square shaped copse was planted some 15 years ago in Meadow 7B with the objective of providing a visual barrier to the unsightly buildings of the Churchfields Industrial Estate which could be seen from the Town Path.

Since there is now a good screen of trees on the western bank of the R. Nadder which largely blocks off any significant sight of the estate from the Town Path, the value of Rotary Copse can therefore be reassessed as to how it can usefully contribute to the wildlife of the meadows as a whole.

It is apparent that this copse was planted too thickly with fast growing trees and shrubs that were selected for their quick growing screening capabilities and with little or no attention paid to their value for being of any use for wildlife purposes.

Some of the larger trees now urgently require topping e.g. some of the Willows. Others need removing completely since they have been drawn up into leggy and weak specimens which will never be of any meaningful value to wildlife. Most of the shrub specimens were planted for decorative reasons, and are of very limited wildlife value. They too, need appropriate removals.

As mentioned in Part "A" page 10, there are a number of suitable berry and seed bearing trees and shrubs which are just as suitable for copses as they are for hedgerow planting, and some of these species can be used as replacements at an appropriate and more spacious density in place of those which are removed.

At suitable perimeter locations around the edge of the copse, clumps of brushwood can be placed as further points of cover and foraging facilities for small birds, mammals, amphibians and insects. In addition, areas of Stinging Nettles can be maintained for insects, and particularly butterfly larvae as important larval food sources.

The pathway through the copse can be simply and easily maintained to a safe standard by the timely use of a strimmer.

### **West Nadder Copse**

This triangular shaped copse was also planted about 15 years ago on the edge of Meadow 7C close to the edge of the R. Nadder. Like Rotary Copse, it was planted with the specific objective of screening the unsightly buildings of the Churchfields Industrial Estate from being seen from the Town Path. Now, there is also an effective tree screen here created by trees on the western bank of the R. Nadder. The wildlife contribution that this copse can offer to the meadows as a whole can therefore be looked at afresh.

Similarly to Rotary Copse, this copse was planted too thickly with fast growing trees and some decorative shrubs of minimal wildlife benefit. Although the planting structure of the copse is very much like that of Rotary Copse, the potential for the regeneration of it is rather more limited due to its awkward shape and is thus seen to be a little less urgent in its need for attention.

However, like Rotary Copse, some trees can be topped and others removed with an appropriate replant of beery and seed bearing trees and shrubs.

Given the present stages of growth of the trees and shrubs within this copse, action to address revised planting in this copse should be taken within three years.

### **Seven Acre Copse**

It appears that this strip copse has been created along the line of one of the ancient hedgerows dividing Meadows 1 and 2B.

Mature trees within this strip are probably part of the old hedgerow. There are some dead branches on some of the trees which provide useful habitat for nesting woodpeckers and other hole nesting bird species, and dead wood is a necessary habitat for insect life such as larvae growth and beetle habitat. Removal of such limbs should be resisted.

The relatively newly planted trees and shrubs of about 15 years ago need to be assessed as to their contribution to the overall wildlife value of this copse. Some should be removed before they become too established and be replaced with a variety of more wildlife-useful berry and seed bearing trees and shrubs that would provide food and cover for a wider range of wildlife than is presently the case.

It is envisaged that this copse will require attention within five years, and in the longer term, its wildlife value will be much enhanced when it forms a part of a projected reinstated hedgerow westwards from the copse.

### **Scout's Island Copse**

This mature copse on the bank of the R. Nadder downstream from the Harnham Mill has a satisfactory mix of deciduous trees including a good number of the very useful seed bearing Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) trees which provide excellent winter feed for several tit and finch species. This copse also contains a mix of under story plants and smaller tree growth providing cover, foraging capability, nesting opportunities for birds, refuge for mammals and decaying wood for insect life.

It is unlikely that any significant management input within the next five years would appreciably improve this copse.

### **The Future of the Existing Hedgerows and the Reinstatement of Hedgerows along Original Hedgerow Lines**

Considerable space has been given in this report concerning these subjects and which can be found in Part "A" pages 9 - 10, Part "B" pages 20 - 23 and Part "C" page 35.

## **Willow Pollards**

Essentially, many existing Willow pollards urgently require re-pollarding. Due to old age and storm damage continuing to degrade many of the pollards, re-pollarding will provide the required material for replacing the poorest specimens and also to fill in the gaps in the pollard lines left unfilled over many years.

## **Hedgerow Restoration and Reinstatement**

In general, the hedgerows have become severely fragmented and are of poor quality. There are some thick lengths, and it is in these short stretches that much of the bird life of the meadows is concentrated for feeding and breeding.

With immediate effect from the autumn of 2008 and carried out along the lines of proposals submitted in July 2008, the commencement of hedgerow restoration and reinstatement along old hedgerow lines with the aim of connecting up existing reasonably satisfactory lengths of hedgerows of acceptable wildlife value and with the copses in order to create continuous wildlife corridors throughout the meadow's area, will hugely enhance the number and variety of bird species that traditionally occupy such habitat in river valley agricultural areas.

Achievement of this single commitment carried out over the next few years will, as the hedgerows become established, bring lasting benefits for a whole range of bird, mammal and insect species associated with such habitat, but which at present are either severely locked up in isolated stretches and thus become vulnerable to predation when they move out into the open in search of new areas, or are simply not present at all in the first place.

In addition, achievement of this objective will return the meadow's area very significantly to a similar aesthetic state as when the meadows were once working water meadows in a previous age. What an added bonus this action of hedgerow restoration and reinstatement would provide!

## **Proposals for Renewing a Breeding Birds Nest Box Scheme**

This issue is addressed in Part "A" page 10. As the bird survey year has progressed and rudimentary plans for copse redesigning plus the restoration and reinstatement of the hedgerows become more likely to happen, so then the provision of strategically placed nest boxes aimed at particular bird species can provide a population boost in such areas as and when habitat improvements are progressed.

In addition, with the high value placed on educational exercises by the Trust, and for children especially, a series of nest boxes carefully placed in Rose Cottage garden could make a riveting introduction to bird life for enthusiastic people of all ages who visit Rose Cottage.

Any boxes should ideally be in place by the end of February so as to attract prospecting pairs of birds which by then are well into establishing breeding territories and actively seeking out potential nesting sites.

## **Vermin Control**

This issue is introduced in Part “B” page 23 and Part “C” page 36.

Urban areas, because of the generally freely available sources of waste food largely generated by human wastefulness, tend to attract and support heavier densities of populations of predatory vermin species of birds and mammals. Havoc can be wreaked amongst other populations of creatures that cannot survive unnaturally increased levels of predation and are thus unable to maintain their own populations.

Control of such predatory species in an urban area is always difficult. Legal requirements permitting the implementation of control measures are necessarily strict so as to ensure there are no risks to obvious health and safety issues.

Bird species which may need to be controlled from time to time would include Canada Geese, Magpies and Carrion Crows. Control of mammals may include Foxes (*Vulpes canis*), Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus cinereus*) and Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*).

## **Formalising the Future Strategy for Habitat Improvements to the Meadows**

In Part “B” page 24, there is an indication that there appears to be a lack of any coherent preparation of strategy to address any plans for habitat improvements on the meadows. The result is that it appears little has been done in a structured way to improve the habitats of the meadows with little attention being paid to the longer term interests of wildlife in general.

In order that a planned and agreed course of action can be confidently expected to take place, a formal Strategy Document outlining such plans needs to be prepared with due consideration for anticipated labour resources and funding flows. In the first instance, such a planned strategy should project anticipated activity over the next five years with periodic reviews on, at least, an annual basis to check progress against the planned and agreed targets from both a costing and an “on the ground” work achieved basis.

Other agencies e.g. Natural England, may be required to make some input to ascertain particular work requirements so that it can be more accurately anticipated what habitat management activities, costings and time scales it may be necessary to follow and incorporate into a Strategy Document.

John Vickerman     3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008.

