

# **Pamber Forest Wildlife Reserve**

## **Annual Report 2016**

Supported by



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Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust 2017

**Pamber Forest Nature Reserve  
Annual Report 2016**

**Reserves Officer Graham Dennis**

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## LABOUR RESOURCES AND STAFF

Nothing much has changed on staffing levels, so I am still without a part time assistant only this year it has been for the full year so an even bigger impact has resulted, leaving even more heavily reliant on volunteers. I was lucky to have the help of a Merrist Wood student one day per week. Martin Chapman (Binz) was very useful in providing support on all those jobs that require more than one person, especially where chainsaw use was needed; towards the end of his period he qualified to use chainsaws so was even more useful.

On a positive note the Friday volunteer team has risen to this challenge admirably and has continued to contribute to the Friday work but has also helped me out on other days of the week when either individuals or groups of two or three have come out to help with tasks. This was particularly notable when I had the use of the tractor to carry out some ride surface improvements in September hence the high figure for volunteers in that month.

Conservation groups from Basingstoke have held work parties every month, a group from Bedfordshire has spent two weekends coppicing and Hampshire Conservation Volunteers spent one weekend coppicing.

In total 529 work days were put in by the volunteer groups and a big thank you goes out to all of those involved as with the current pressures on finances this has a big impact, and once again it has meant I have been able to save a great deal of money that would otherwise have been spent on contractors.

Volunteer monthly work day figures for the year are as follows:

January	34
February	57
March	42
April	44
May	41
June	35
July	41
August	42
September	72
October	21
November	28
December	<u>72</u>
Total	529

## **RESERVE MANAGEMENT**

### **COPPICING**

The coppicing of areas widely spaced around the reserve remains a major priority and in line with this the following areas were coppiced.

The coppice work we do is structured in two cycles depending on the species of tree involved. Chestnut that is grown as coppice for its use as fencing stakes and straining posts is managed on a longer rotation of 15+ years often as many as 20 years. Other species are managed on a shorter rotation of 15 years and the material gathered from this are used for firewood (birch mainly) or hedgelaying (hazel).

In a departure from this model I am starting to experiment with a shorter rotation in the Kings Hogsty Copse coupes in Comp 9a and c. Here the bird ringing project has shown that after the coppice has reached 7 years old there is a significant drop of in bird use not just in species but in numbers trapped too. I have therefore started to re-cut older coppice before it has reached the usual 15 year point.

Obviously this only takes into consideration bird populations, but invertebrate numbers are also involved as when it becomes dense and shady after 6-7 years there is also a significant drop off in butterflies, bees and hoverflies as these prefer more open sunny conditions.

In January coupes in Mariners Copse (Comp 8c) and Heath Copse (1a) were cut.

In March a chestnut coupe was cut in Beggars Bridge Copse (2c)

In September a coupe was cut in Kings Hogsty Copse (9a) where the bird ringing project is focused.

In December a coupe in Gold Oak Copse (6a) was cut next to the one cut in January.

Less coppice was cut this year as the work carried out under our EWGS scheme ended in March and from then on there were no targets for coppice work and it was decided to switch our focus to ride edge coppicing.

During the summer fence repairs were required for many of the coppiced areas. Some of these fences are now over ten years old and the straining posts and intermediates are showing their age. These repairs were carried out in addition to other repairs to wire as a result of trees and branches that had fallen over the fences. In many of the fenced areas deer have been getting in and so when coupes were cut inside fenced areas the fences needed significant repair and work to establish that no deer were fenced in, an often difficult job.

### **RIDES AND GLADES**

Keeping the rides and glades open and free from encroaching scrub is an important and time consuming project. Regular cutting of ride edge coppice keeps the rides open and wide, while mowing the edges maintains suitable conditions for flowering plants. The glades need regular cutting back of encroaching scrub and mowing of grassy areas to maintain the flower rich sward.

Mowing was completed along most of the wider rides in mid-October slightly earlier than usual as I wanted this completed before I went away. Bowmonts Ride (1f) was mown using scythes in July and the hay raked off by volunteers, the remainder left uncut by the volunteers (on purpose) was cut using the BCS mower in September. Bentley Green Clearing (7b) was also cut using the BCS in September. The other area cut with the BCS was the path along the west side of the forest in Comp 7c and a small amount of the clearing in Kings Hogsty Copse (9c)

Where major rides intersect the coppice on each quarter is managed on rotation. In February and March the SE section of the Parkers Ride/Straight Ride junction was coppiced, and then in August/September a similar area on the SE section of Frog Lane Ride/Straight Ride was coppiced.

Ride edge scallops were cut along Frog Lane Ride (6b, 7a, b and d) in September and October and December.

In Bentley Green Copse (Comp 7c) a long section of ride edge was coppiced in November. Also in Bentley Green Copse a scallop was cut along the ride in (Comp 7d).

## **HEATHLAND/WOODPASTURE**

The cattle were moved into Inhams Pasture on 6<sup>th</sup> July slightly later than usual, and were allowed to return to the main grazed area on 16<sup>th</sup> August. Like last year the gate between the two grazed areas was left open so that they access to both areas until mid-October.

Three of the old Dexters were put down on 6<sup>th</sup> September bringing the herd down to 19.

The on-going work of restricting the encroachment of birch and pine onto the heathy areas continues. Throughout the summer volunteers helped clear small trees from areas in String Lane Copse (Comp 3d and 5a) this work also involved thinning the planted trees in the old larch plantation (mostly larches) and pollarding some of the oaks to contribute to the very long term plan of producing some wood pasture pollards. In August the stumps of the thinned trees were sprayed to control the re-growth.

The Estate also thinned some of the larger trees in String Lane Copse and Gravel Pit Copse (Comp 3d and 5a) mainly oak but also birch and chestnut, this was part of the plan to reduce tree density in the more heavily shaded areas of the wood pasture. In total 60 oak trees were felled.

## **OTHER WOODLAND WORK**

A small clearing in Comp. 4a that had got very overgrown where bog bush cricket has been found in the past was worked on again by volunteers in June/July. Here more birch scrub was removed and the bracken was cut.

The Estate carried out some timber harvesting in Frame Green Copse (Comp 4e). The work commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> August, much earlier than last year so as to make use of the driest part of the year for timber extraction, this was all completed by 14<sup>th</sup> October. 100 oak trees were felled along with most of the understorey trees and coppice. Ground conditions were good so the impact on flora should be minimal. The timber will be removed as soon as is practical, but by spring in any case. The aim here is to establish natural regeneration of the oaks without fencing the area so it is envisaged that some deer stalking will need to be carried out during the growth season.

## **BRACKEN & RAGWORT CONTROL**

The chemical used to control bracken is still unavailable so no chemical treatment was possible this year. Instead I have once again been able to utilise the volunteers to carry out mechanical control. This is accomplished in two main ways; in spring when the frond growth is very fragile the volunteers were used to whack the opening fronds with sticks. This breaks them off so that they have to send up new fronds, in several areas this was done repeatedly and it is hoped will reduce the vigour of the plants

significantly. Later in the summer the fronds have hardened off and are too stiff to use sticks so instead scythes were used to cut through the stems. The response to this management last year has been reasonable; the bracken growth in the spring was not as vigorous as would normally be expected and certainly not in comparison with unmanaged areas. This was mainly carried out in the grazed area of String Lane Copse where because of the open condition the bracken growth is worst. Ragwort control was carried out in String Lane Copse (Comp 3d) by spot spraying the rosettes in April.

## **PONDS & STREAMS**

The rather dry winter meant that Gravel Pit Pond never really reached a point where it was full and so the draw down in the summer was completed fairly early in the season although summer rains meant that it never really totally dried out. The early part of the winter was particularly dry and so by the end of the year there was barely 5cm of water.

Honeymill Stream stopped flowing around 9<sup>th</sup> August, but was flowing again on the 16<sup>th</sup> September after some particularly heavy rain associated with a violent thunderstorm overnight.

Despite the situation in Gravel Pit Pond there was plenty of standing water in the old oxbows along the length of Honeymill Stream filled from flood water. The clay base to these meant that they retained water long enough to ensure that the amphibians that spawned in them managed to complete their metamorphosis.

## **HARD STRUCTURES**

A range of minor repairs were made to fences and gates around the reserve, and the whole of the cattle fence was inspected and repaired where necessary.

The repairs to the culvert in which Honeymill Brook runs underneath Green Ride in Bentley Green Copse carried out by the Estate is still in need of some attention. The edges of the gravel ride have slipped down into the stream here so this will need some work to repair the integrity of the ride.

Over the summer many of the smaller culverts that occasionally flood through blockages were rodded out.

## **OTHER INCIDENTS**

There has been a repeat of the bizarre decoration of a holly tree at the Honeymill entrance with a variety of womens underware, this time there were only 12 bras!

Apart from the usual reports of motorcyclists occasional using the site there have been several dog related incidents, the worst being at the very end of the year on 30<sup>th</sup> December when a fully adult muntjac deer was badly injured by dogs, by the time I got there it was too late for the deer so this was humanely despatched, and the dog owner reminded of their responsibilities.

A man was found to be stealing firewood from String Lane Copse while I was away, this included bringing a chainsaw onto site. He claimed to have my permission but was told to desist until my return. Obviously he did not have permission and he was not seen again.

## **VISITOR USE**

### **ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION**

The guided trail has been used as I frequently see visitors using the leaflets on the route. The rest of the site is as busy as ever the northern half more so than the southern half

When the rides get muddy, usually the latter half of the winter, all but the hearty souls tend to keep to the gravel tracks. There are occasional activities arranged by outside groups these can be visits by scout or guide groups, U3A groups or more commonly trail running groups. Here a trail is laid down using flour as a marker and the runners simply follow the route

### **GUIDED WALKS & EVENTS**

The following guided walks and events were conducted during the year.

23<sup>rd</sup> June                      Pamber Heath Guides (20 people)

10<sup>th</sup> July                        Councillors Walk (3 people)

### **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Close community links remain with Silchester Parish Council with the joint grazing scheme and giving advice on management of Silchester Common. I also help out with monitoring on this site. I attend Common management committee meetings on a regular basis.

Other local parishes are represented on the Advisory committee that meets twice a year where matters pertaining to Pamber Forest can be aired and representatives are brought up to date with developments. I also have close involvement with Tadley Town Council and Turbary Allotments Charity regarding the management of Tadley Common.

The quarterly newsletter is posted in Tadley Library, Pamber Parish notice boards and it is also available in The Plough Inn in Little London and Calleva Arms in Silchester.

Generous financial assistance was received from Tadley Town Council, Pamber Parish Council and Silchester Parish Council.

Financial support is also provided by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, Natural England and Forestry Commission.

## **RECORDS / SURVEY**

### **METEOROLOGY**

January was dominated by low pressure that brought frequent rainfall as Atlantic fronts swept across the country, this was accompanied by high winds. Rainfall for the month was 150% of the average.

The pattern continued into February with storms passing through early in the month. Despite the end of the month being dry rainfall for the month was 130% of the average.

Again March started wet in the first week but by mid-month high pressure brought more settled conditions and then it returned to stormy weather at the end of the month.

April started unsettled with plenty of showers, the second half of the month was very cold with sharp frosts and snow fell on the 25<sup>th</sup>, a very late date. The average temperature for the month was 0.9 C colder than the average.

May was a really mixed month with wet and windy spells and a settled spell of high pressure mid-month. It rained heavily for most of the day on the 11<sup>th</sup> that resulted in both stream valleys flooding.

June was again a cool, wet month with 139% of the average rain with a very disappointing amount of sunshine.

July was rather cloudy but dry with very little rain falling and mid-month it became very hot with temperatures of over 30 C reached on several days, this broke down into thunder storms followed by unsettled weather till the end of the month.

August was very unsettled full of extremes. On the 20<sup>th</sup> a deep low brought in very strong winds, unusual for August, after this a hot spell ensued with over 30 C reached again on the 24<sup>th</sup> and then the rest of the month returned to unsettled conditions.

The highest temperature of the year was reached on 13<sup>th</sup> at 33 C, the warmest September day since 1911, this obviously contributed to the above average temperature for the month, 2 C above average.

In October a very large high pressure over Scandinavia resulted in easterly winds dominating bringing cloudy but dry weather for most of the month.

November was mostly a dry and sunny month with cold nights. The mean temperature was 1.3 C below the long-term average (LTA). Storm Angus brought strong winds and flooding when it arrived on the 21<sup>st</sup>, after this high pressure was established leading to a dry settled end to the month.

The settle conditions continued into December with high pressure in charge for much of the month with southerly winds which meant it was very mild. It was the eighth warmest December since 1910, the temperature being 2.0 C above the LTA. This following last year's warmest December since 1910!



## FLORA

This year the hazel catkins were flowering on 8<sup>th</sup> January a testament to how mild the winter had been to this point. Bluebells were flowering on 12<sup>th</sup> April, again quite early as they are normally late April or May and early purple orchids flowered on 27<sup>th</sup> April (they usually flower along with bluebells). Oak trees came into leaf very early as well, this year on the 12<sup>th</sup> April when they are not normally breaking bud until May.

The fungi year went in fits and starts with some early boletes and parasol mushrooms in August then a gap and the autumn flush started just as I was going away so I have only second hand reports about the main part of the season.

One area that was coppiced where I know there is orpine (*Sedum telephium*) showed how well this plant responds to being opened up to the light as it put in a terrific show of flowers in July along with wood spurge and violets.

I noticed virtually no defoliation of the oak trees in May and June, this is caused by the feeding of several species of common moth and as a result the oaks, in response, put out a second burst of leaf growth at the beginning of August. No sign of this, this year, and this constitutes a worrying sign, not for the oaks, but for the rest of the food chain. Moth trapping sessions have yielded far fewer individuals of these common species such as tortrix moths, especially the green oak tortrix. Fewer moths mean fewer caterpillars for the birds to feed their young and the bird ringing project has revealed that it was a terrible year for chick survival especially among the tits. There are good indications that climate change may be affecting the synchronisation of caterpillar hatching and leaf emergence; the caterpillars are not emerging until the leaves have had time to develop a good tannin content and so become unpalatable, leaving the caterpillars and the young tits to starve.

## ODONATA

There were no April dragonflies or damselflies on the wing this year showing how cold the spring was. As is always the case the first species on the wing was the large red damselfly on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

Other species recorded included:

Large red damselfly (*Phyrosoma nymphula*) from 7<sup>th</sup> May

Beautiful demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*) from 12<sup>th</sup> May

Common blue damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) from 14<sup>th</sup> May

Broad-bodied chaser (*Libellula depressa*) from 16<sup>th</sup> May

Azure damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*) from 26<sup>th</sup> May

Downy emerald (*Cordulea aenea*) from 22<sup>nd</sup> June

Emperor (*Anax imperator*) from 22<sup>nd</sup> June

Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*) from 27<sup>th</sup> June

Golden-ringed dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*) from 24<sup>th</sup> June

Brown hawkler (*Aeshna grandis*) from 19<sup>th</sup> July

Migrant hawkler (*Aeshna mixta*) from 22<sup>nd</sup> July

The most notable record was the presence of downy emerald around Gravel Pit Pond on several dates in June, this is a species only occasionally recorded here but is well represented at suitable breeding sites nearby.

## OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Of note was a very early hoverfly 24<sup>th</sup> January. This was probably our commonest species and a frequent migrant to our shores, the marmalade hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*) you would not normally see any of these until well into spring.

Giant lacewings (*Osmylus fulvicephalus*) were on the wing on 17<sup>th</sup> May and were frequently seen in or around Honey Mill Brook where they find the mix of sunny and shady sections to their liking.

A tortoise beetle (*Cassida vibex*) was found on 17<sup>th</sup> May, it feeds on plants in the daisy family, probably thistles in the area it was found where there are large numbers of marsh thistle.

It is some years since I have come across a stag beetle (*Leucanus cervus*) although they are regular in gardens in old Tadley, so it was nice to come across one on 10<sup>th</sup> June, an adult male. The volunteer team were repairing fences on the south side of Bowmonts Brook where a large dead oak tree had come down across the deer fence. The beetle was disturbed from underneath the trunk of the tree.

Another beetle this time a longhorn beetle was found on 8<sup>th</sup> July. I have recorded it as a black-clouded longhorn (*Leiopus nebulosus*) but it could equally be *Leiopus linnei* as the two species are inseparable unless they are dissected or have their DNA analysed, neither of which appealed to me (much to the relief of the beetle no doubt).

## LEPIDOPTERA

### Moths

2016 was generally a poor year for moths with few moths encountered in any numbers, many trapping sessions were notable only for their almost complete lack of moths!

- 13<sup>th</sup> April The first of the orange/light orange underwing was seen, these can only be separated by examining the males with a hand lens, no more were seen probably as a result of the cold spring.
- 13<sup>th</sup> May *Metriotes lutarea* an uncommon species found during the day on the flowers of greater stitchwort on which it lays its eggs.
- 16<sup>th</sup> May Mother Shipton (*Callistege mi*), this moth is another day flyer and can be found in the clearing in Bentley Green Copse (Comp 7b).
- 19<sup>th</sup> May The first drab looper (*Minoa murinata*) on the wing. Numbers were very low this year with a maximum of 3 on 6<sup>th</sup> June, no autumn generation individuals were seen.
- 7<sup>th</sup> June Common fan-foot (*Pechipogo strigilata*), 5 were recorded on a trapping session targeted at this species.
- 7<sup>th</sup> June In the same session as for the above species 12 lead-coloured pug (*Eupithecia plunbeolata*) were trapped followed by 30 on 1<sup>st</sup> July.
- 7<sup>th</sup> June Orange moth (*Angerona prunaria*) trapped.
- 7<sup>th</sup> June *Crassa tinctella* a nationally scarce species that appears to be increasing in North Hampshire, in the same trap as the above three species.

- 4<sup>th</sup> July *Elegia similella* a nationally scarce pyralid moth. Pamber Forest is a well known site for this species.
- 4<sup>th</sup> July Gold-oak beauty (*Hypomecis roboraria*) another nationally scarce species favouring ancient oak woodland.
- 19<sup>th</sup> July *Metalampra italica*, this is probably the most interesting record of the year. Used to be thought to be endemic to Italy hence its specific name, but was first recorded in Britain in Devon in 2003 and is spreading its range and thought to have been accidentally introduced. This was only the second record for North Hampshire.
- 14<sup>th</sup> September Blue underwing (*Catocala fraxini*). Despite searches in areas of aspen only one was seen.

The other frequently counted species on the butterfly transect is the speckled yellow (*Psuedopanthera macularia*); this species peaked at 4 on May 20<sup>th</sup> with only a further 1 on the transect another species that performed very badly.

## Butterflies

This was a very poor year for butterflies, on a par with the awful summer of 2012. A meagre 2281 butterflies were recorded on the transect, less than half of last year's total. The year was very late starting with the first species on the wing on 25<sup>th</sup> March and by the end of April only five species had been recorded. The only species to do well were large white and red admiral, both wider countryside migrants, while the woodland specialists, white admiral, silver-washed fritillary and speckled wood all had disastrous years. About the only plus for the year was the presence for the third year running of dark green fritillary.

## Pamber Forest Summary of Butterfly Records for 2016

### Small/Essex Skipper

These had a very poor year (only 2012 was worse) with only 117 on the transect, much lower than last year. There was a peak of 54 at end of July, the first was on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

### Large Skipper

This species also had a poor year with less than half the number recorded last year at 67. The first was on 5<sup>th</sup> June with a peak of 23 in early July.

### Brimstone

This was an average year for this species. The first of the year was rather late on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, with a peak of 30 in the second week of April and 31 in mid-May; the last of the spring flight was in mid-July. The new brood was on the wing on 21<sup>st</sup> July but this flight was much poorer than the spring with a peak of 15 in second week of August. There were 282 recorded on the transect.

#### Large White

This species relies on migration to boost numbers and there were some arrivals from the continent with the first on 7<sup>th</sup> May. The spring flight was very poor with only 8. The summer flight was much better, peaking at 13 in late-August and in total 59 were recorded on the transect.

#### Small White

The first was on 11<sup>th</sup> May but all the transect records came in late-August and September.

#### Green-veined White

This was a below average year for this species with 111 recorded on the transect. The first was on 20<sup>th</sup> April but the spring flight was poor with a peak of 4 in mid-May. The second brood was on the wing in the second week of July and a peak of 31 was noted in late-July.

#### Orange Tip

This was an average year for this species with 29 recorded on the transect. The first was on 12<sup>th</sup> April with a peak of 9 in the second week of May.

#### Purple Hairstreak

Another poor year for this species with only a few less recorded on the transect than last year at 12. The first was on 18<sup>th</sup> June but the weather meant that they were difficult to find throughout the flight period with small numbers being noted until the end of August.

#### Small Copper

One on the 24<sup>th</sup> May was the only record.

#### Common Blue

None were recorded this year.

#### Holly Blue

With only 7 seen on the transect this was disappointing after the 36 last year. The first was on 4<sup>th</sup> May with singletons seen mid-May to mid-June and in all the weeks in August.

#### White Admiral

This was the worst year recorded since the transect began in 1984 with only 17. The flight period was right on time starting on 26<sup>th</sup> June and a peak occurred soon after in early-July but after this only ones or twos were seen. Given this poor performance it was ironic that a butterfly conservation member decided to mark the locations of larvae he found with a view to following their progress. Very few were found and most of these disappeared in the following few weeks with only a couple being found hibernating. This does not bode well for next year.

#### Purple Emperor

One on 6<sup>th</sup> July and another on 26<sup>th</sup> July were the only records.

### Red Admiral

This was a good year for this species no doubt bolstered by migration from the continent with 43 recorded on the transect making it the 4<sup>th</sup> best on record. Two peaks of 8 were recorded in the third week of July and in late-September.

### Painted Lady

There were 5 all between late May and early July.

### Peacock

A poor year with only 55 recorded on the transect. The first was on 3<sup>rd</sup> April a very late first sighting reflecting the cold spring. There was a spring peak of 9 in mid-April but very few in the summer flight either because there were few around or as they will do sometimes, they aestivated and went straight to hibernation after this.

### Comma

It was a pretty average year for this species with 50 recorded on the transect. The first was on 25<sup>th</sup> March and the last of the spring brood in early May. The summer brood started in early July and lasted until early-August. The autumn flight was the strongest with a peak of 9 in early-September.

### Dark Green Fritillary

Once again individuals were seen on the reserve for the third year in succession meaning that they almost certainly bred again last year. The two were seen on 6<sup>th</sup> July and 23<sup>rd</sup> August and so were definitely different individuals.

### Silver-washed Fritillary

It was a poor year for this species with 220 recorded on the transect. You have to go back to 1998 to find a year when fewer were recorded. The first was on 26<sup>th</sup> June and a peak of 42 was recorded in mid-July, compare this with the peak of 98 last year. The last was seen in the second week of September. For the first time for many years none of the 'valesina' female colour aberrations were seen, perhaps reflecting the poor numbers of individuals.

### Speckled Wood

A disastrous year for this species, the worst year on record with only 137 recorded on the transect. This compares to 474 and 611 in the previous two years. The first was rather late on 4<sup>th</sup> May with a small peak of 11 in late-June. The largest peak of this multi-brooded species was of 21 in early-September when typically you do get the highest numbers.

### Marbled White

The 28 recorded on the transect was a fairly typical figure for recent years. The species peaked at 10 in the third week of July.

### Gatekeeper

This species is really struggling on the reserve with only 144 recorded on the transect this year with only 2012 recording fewer in recent years. The first was on 12 July and a peak of 43 in the second week of August.

## Meadow Brown

The transect recorded 258 this year very similar to 2012, 2013 and 2014 with 2015 being the standout year with 776! The first was seen in the second week of June with a peak of 57 at the beginning of July after this numbers stabilised in the mid 30's and 40's until dropping off after mid-August.

## Ringlet

With 633 of these recorded on the transect it was easily the most numerous species on the reserve, which is well below average and yet it was still the commonest species on the reserve. The first was on 26<sup>th</sup> June and a peak of 164 was reached in the second week of July.

## REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Adders were out of hibernation at about normal with the first on 29<sup>th</sup> February with the highest number recorded on 25<sup>th</sup> March with 11 (5 of them black). Slow worms were regularly seen under the felts put down on the reserve to monitor reptiles and nine others were seen from March to August notably when cutting grass with scythes, the scythes doing no damage to the slow worms. There were five grass snakes seen including 2 on 16<sup>th</sup> May, the others were on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 22<sup>nd</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> June, this represents a good year for sightings of this species.

Frogspawn was first seen on the very early date of 23<sup>rd</sup> February in Bentley Green Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> March I counted 300 male frogs in this pond and on returning a few days later there was at least 150-200 batches of spawn in addition to this there was plenty in some of the old meanders in Honeymill Stream totalling some 80-90 batches. Toads were observed spawning in Gravel Pit Pond on 26<sup>th</sup> March and while doing a dragonfly survey there in mid July a mass exodus of small toadlets was witnessed.

## BIRDS

The usual sightings of winter chiffchaffs occurred near the sewage works with one singing from 5<sup>th</sup> February and throughout the rest of the month.

Arrival dates for migrants were as follows:

27 <sup>th</sup> March	Swallow
30 <sup>th</sup> March	Willow warbler
31 <sup>st</sup> March	Blackcap
13 <sup>th</sup> April	Cuckoo
16 <sup>th</sup> April	House martin,
18 <sup>th</sup> April	Sand martin
24 <sup>th</sup> April	Whitethroat
14 <sup>th</sup> May	Garden warbler

The spring arrival dates were normal apart from garden warbler that was very late. Redwings arrived for the winter on 11<sup>th</sup> October a day later than last year

A yellow wagtail was recorded at the sewage works on 24<sup>th</sup> April the first time I have seen this species here.

A pair of mandarin duck was regularly seen in April around Gravel Pit Pond and the sewage works. Ravens were seen on 6 different dates between 14<sup>th</sup> February and 23<sup>rd</sup> September, and there were many more sightings from the surrounding area.

The first spotted flycatcher was not seen until 2<sup>nd</sup> August when a fledged brood of three young were seen and then a further two fledglings were seen on 15<sup>th</sup> August in a different part of the reserve suggesting there were at least two successful broods.

Only one hobby was seen on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

There were three reports of woodcock all between 12<sup>th</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

After reporting on feeding damage by lesser spotted woodpeckers last year there were four sightings of adult birds this spring on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April these were exhibiting territorial behaviour by drumming so it is quite likely that they bred this year.

While checking dormouse boxes in Bentley Green Copse on 24<sup>th</sup> May I found a coal tit nest and a marsh tit nest both with well fledged young in them.

### Bird Ringing In Pamber Forest 2016

#### Introduction

This was the fourth year that ringing in Pamber Forest centred on a constant effort site at Kings Hogsty Copse with additional ringing taking place at Bentley Green Copse and Goldoak Copse.

#### Ringling Overall Totals

Overall since ringing began in March 2008, 1975 new birds have been ringed and 712 birds have been retrapped within the forest. This total of 2699 birds processed represents 35 species.

In total including the constant effort survey (CES) results, 280 new full grown birds were ringed representing 20 different species. In addition 141 retrapped birds were processed. This represents a reduction in both variety and in new birds ringed. This may reflect changes in fledging success rates (there is anecdotal evidence of nest abandonment early in the year) or may indeed be due to ageing and changing within the coppice itself. This will be closely monitored over 2016.

A summary of Birds ringed to date (including both non-CES and CES birds) is attached below showing over 3000 birds have been processed.

Two birds were controlled (i.e. re-trapped in Pamber but ringed elsewhere originally) this year. A willow warbler was trapped on 02/04/2016 have being ringed as an adult in April 2015 on Portland Bill. The second retrap was a chiffchaff initially ringed at Icklesham Sussex as a juvenile in September 2013 then retrapped in Pamber Forest in April 2015 and in Pamber Forest in April 2016.

In the table below:

The first 4 columns are for 2008-2015, the second 4 columns are for 2016, and the third 4 columns are 2008-2016.

	New	Pulli	RT	Total	New	Pulli	RT	Total	New	Pulli	RT	Total
<b>Mallard</b>	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Little Owl</b>	1	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	5
<b>Kingfisher</b>	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
<b>Woodpigeon</b>	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Great Spotted Woodpecker	7	0	3	10	0	0	0	0	7	0	3	10
Grey Wagtail	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Wren	141	0	68	209	24	0	18	42	165	0	86	251
Duncock	21	0	6	27	2	0	1	3	23	0	7	30
Robin	176	0	73	249	26	0	24	50	202	0	97	299
Blackbird	48	0	17	65	9	0	6	15	57	0	23	80
Song Thrush	28	1	5	34	7	0	2	9	35	1	7	43
Redwing	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
Reed Warbler	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Garden Warbler	36	0	12	48	5	0	3	8	41	0	15	56
Blackcap	127	0	38	165	10	0	8	18	137	0	46	183
Chiffchaff	114	0	24	138	16	0	11	27	130	0	35	165
Willow Warbler	12	0	0	12	2	0	0	2	14	0	0	14
Goldcrest	158	0	5	163	20	0	2	22	178	0	7	185
Firecrest	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Long-tailed Tit	125	0	45	170	23	0	10	33	148	0	55	203
Marsh Tit	43	0	44	87	2	0	5	7	45	0	49	94
Coal Tit	51	0	10	61	4	0	2	6	55	0	12	67
Blue Tit	397	11	189	597	28	0	12	40	425	11	201	637
Great Tit	316	0	128	444	32	0	16	48	348	0	144	492
Nuthatch	17	0	0	17	4	0	0	4	21	0	0	21
Treecreeper	45	4	14	63	8	0	1	9	53	4	15	72
Rook	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
House Sparrow	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Chaffinch	13	0	2	15	0	0	0	0	13	0	2	15
Greenfinch	5	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	6
Lesser Redpoll	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Siskin	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
Goldfinch	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Bullfinch	69	0	26	95	16	0	9	25	85	0	35	120
<b>Totals</b>	<i>197</i> 5	20	712	2707	238	0	130	368	2213	20	842	3075

An Investigation into the Effect of Coppice Ageing on Migrant and Resident Bird Numbers  
(King's Hogsty Copse Pamber Forest N Hampshire)

P James, R Powell  
Pamber Ringing Team



## Introduction

Lying within the ancient woodland remnant of Pamber Forest in North Hampshire, Kings Hogsty Copse is an area of mixed deciduous woodland within which an area has been fenced and managed by coppicing – the Coupe. The coupe has widely spaced standing Oak and Ash with a coppice below of Hazel and Alder. Early in 2012 after 4 years of initial ad hoc bird ringing within the forest it was decided that this should be the site of the coppice ageing project. The key factors were its accessibility, the absence of large grazing animals and its mix of both resident and migrant species. As it was well within the forest the effect of nearby housing with consequent influence of bird feeding and the sewage works with the possible effects of variable natural food source was minimised. It must be noted that any coppicing activity on this site happens in the autumn after the annual project season is complete.

## Discussion

There have been clear “winners” and “losers” over the five-year period in terms of increasing and decreasing abundance in the sample. While this is interesting it was not the focus of the project as the differentiation of local trends from national and international changes in abundance was beyond the scope of this project. In a similar way the variations year to year were interesting with the influence of wet springs notable, but much better covered by the BTO CES report and RAS programmes

To avoid the “global changes” obscuring the picture it was decided to compare catch changes by area not in total numbers but by the proportion of the catch by area. Three coppice age areas were identified

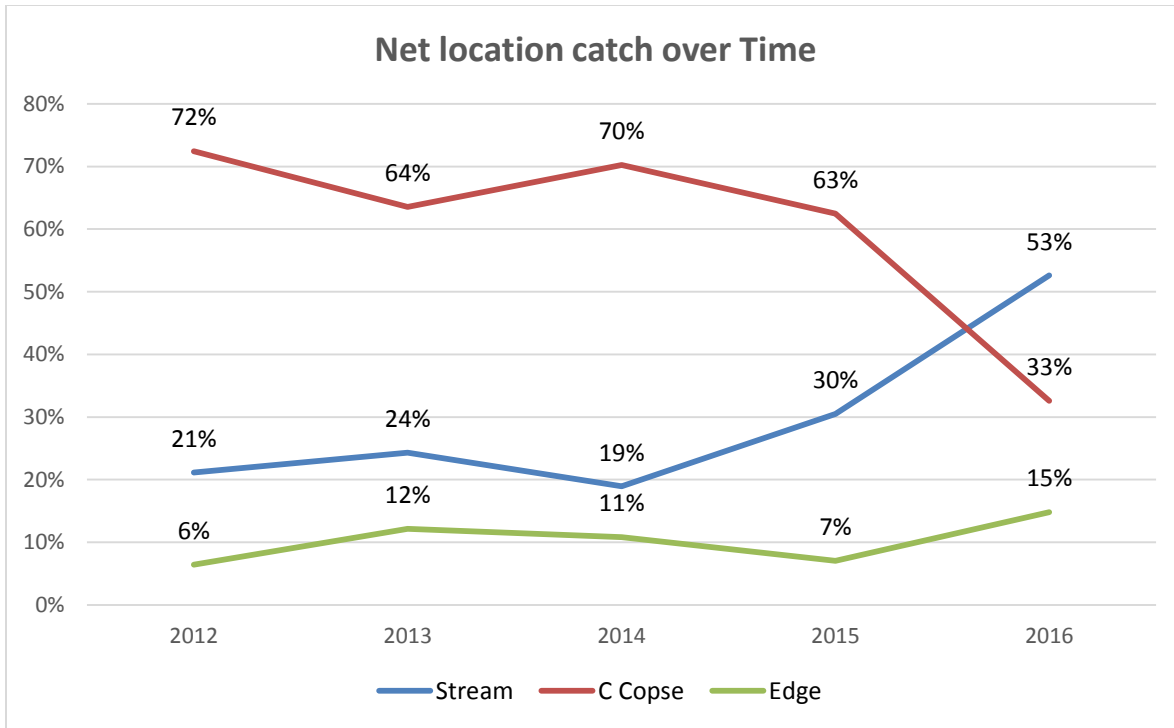
- a. Central Coppice area; last coppiced in 2009
- b. Stream Coppice area; last coppiced in 2013
- c. Edge coppicing area; this area is close to the eastern fence and one side was coppiced in 2010 while the area on the outside of the fence was cut in 2012

It is clear from the Summary Graphs (see appendix) that a change is occurring within the bird population sample that is consistent across both adult and juvenile population samples. There is a reduction in the proportion in the central coppice area and an increase in the stream population. As there has been no change in the flora in these areas this is hypothesised as being due to ageing of coppice. The change appears to be more immediate in the juvenile population being seen earlier and in a slightly more marked manner. There is also a reduction in the number of species in the sample in juvenile birds caught although as the numbers are low this may not be significant statistically.

The next step will be to place nets in the area coppiced in September 2016 to verify the effect of the coppice ageing process on the bird population

## Appendices

Appendix 1 Showing changes in catch percentage vs year (Total catch)



(More data is available from the authors but not included in this one page summary)

## MAMMALS

Foxes were seen much more regularly than usual and this included being able to watch one hunting voles in ride edge long grass. Fallow deer were seen on 9<sup>th</sup> January with a herd of 14 and two were seen on 16<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> July.

Deer management has been carried out this year but fewer were culled than in previous years by the estate.

Roe deer made up the bulk of the culled animals with 13 hinds and 4 bucks taken out, in addition to this five muntjac were also culled, 3 hinds and 2 bucks.

Hampshire Bat Group put a selection a bat boxes in four different areas to monitor species presence. On the 10<sup>th</sup> April on their first check a brown long-eared bat was found in one of the boxes in Lower Inhams Copse. While carrying out a butterfly transect on 13<sup>th</sup> April I was really surprised to see a bat flying in sunshine at about 1.30pm. I have seen day flying bats before but it is a very rare occurrence and was probably due to one being disturbed from its roost by a bird seeking a nest site.

The intermittently used badger set in Beggars Bridge Copse has been active all year, this year with many dung pits observed around the sett. Activity was also noted within the deer fenced area alongside Bowmonts Brook

While monitoring the dormouse boxes in various locations around the reserve no dormice were found but both wood mouse and yellow-legged mouse were found. It is not known why the dormice choose not to use the boxes now, my own theory is that they are mostly up in the oak canopy and so build their nests higher up nearer their activity zone; this theory is supported by the location of old nests in old squirrel dreys that are typically around 6-7 metres high. These are found when felling taller coppice, mainly birch.