

Survey of Breeding Birds along the Military Road 2002 – 2010

Introduction

A survey of the breeding birds along the A3055 (Military Road) between Compton and Chale had been undertaken by Mr Dave Hunnybun each year since 2002. This work has been generously sponsored by the Island 2000 Trust and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to inform management decisions and land advice being given to landowners a part of their prescriptions under agri-environment schemes.

Methodology

The aims of the survey are to ascertain the breeding species and their abundance along the land adjacent to the Military Road along the south-west coast of the Isle of Wight. The survey was to target key species listed by the RSPB as endangered or declining in population nationally as breeding species.

Red list birds

Grey Partridge Skylark Song thrush Starling Linnet
House sparrow Reed bunting Corn bunting Yellowhammer

Amber list birds

Kestrel Lapwing Stock dove Green woodpecker Swallow
Dunnock Stonechat Mistle thrush House Martin Meadow pipit

The land was surveyed between April and June three times a year ie one visit per month. Initially the land was split into seven sections but this was reduced to five.

The number of hours worked each year was relatively consistent (Table 1)

Table 1 : Hours spent on Survey per annum

Year	Hours spent
2002	137
2003	128
2004	100
2005	139
2006	138
2007	139
2008	143
2009	146
2010	147

The surveyor mapped singing males (Table 2) and noted land use in each of the land parcels where the singing male was recorded.

Results

The survey brought species into three categories :

- i) Species with stable populations
- ii) Species with stable populations but in small numbers
- iii) Species with declining populations

Table 2 : Territories and Species recorded per annum

Year	Territories	Species
2002	591	20
2003	618	21
2004	552	19
2005	617	20
2006	626	22
2007	559	24
2008	527	21
2009	527	22
2010	521	18

i) Species with stable populations;

Swallow, linnet and yellowhammer

ii) Species with stable populations but in small numbers ;

Kestrel, grey partridge, song thrush, mistle thrush, reed bunting

iii) Species with declining populations;

Housemartin declining since 2008

Meadow pipit declining since 2007

Skylark declining since 2009

Stonechat declining since 2006

Starling declining since 2006

House sparrow declining since 2007

Corn bunting declining since 2004

Corn bunting is now probably extinct as a breeding species on the Isle of Wight

It is encouraging that Stock dove, Green woodpecker, Dunnock and Reed warbler have increased in recent years.

Further observations :

The land use of the area under the survey was approximately 60% arable : 40 % pasture. However territories were set up with a 73% pasture : 27 % arable split.

Pasture was strongly favoured by meadow pipit, dunnock, stonechat, song thrush, yellowhammer, reed bunting and linnet.

No bird species strongly favoured arable habitats.

Interestingly skylark was found to nest in arable and pasture equally.

Conclusions

- Land bordering the Military Road continues to provide important breeding habitat for a number of species experiencing national population declines
- Eight target species found to have essentially stable populations in 2002-2008

- Seven target species found to have declining populations in 2002-2008
- Corn Bunting and lapwing appear to have been lost as breeding species in the survey area. Grey partridge is increasingly rare.
- Further monitoring is required to confirm whether House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Starling and House Sparrow are experiencing cyclic population fluctuations, or longer-term declines
- Land owners should be encouraged to continue to provide set-aside, additional hedge planting, and leave scrub pockets