Greater Manchester Ringing Report, 2011-2025

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Introduction

The information included in this Report has been gleaned from the annual BTO Reports on Bird Ringing, from reports on the Manchester Birding Forum and from individual ringers and observers. As a result, some of the sightings of colour-ringed gulls are partially incomplete, lacking precise ringing or sighting locations, distances and directions moved and/or metal ring numbers.

Ringing Totals

Annual ringing totals for the County have fluctuated during the period from between 3,700 and 7,100, due to a range of factors including: changes in personnel, differing degrees of effort, new catching techniques, weather conditions at critical times of year and abundance and availability of different species.

Ringing Totals: Passerines

There was generally higher effort in the early years of the period, particularly for reed bed sites. Despite this, numbers of Cetti's Warblers ringed have increased during the period, consistent with their colonisation of reed bed and other sites in the County. Hirundine roosts have been less frequent latterly, leading to lower totals for these species. A Starling colour ringing project has boosted totals of these later in the period. For invasive species, such as Waxwing, Brambling, Siskin and, to a lesser extent, Redpoll, numbers available for catching fluctuate widely from year to year. The adoption of a Redwing song lure has increased totals later in the period. The decline and recovery of Greenfinch from outbreaks of trichomonosis can be clearly seen. Later in the period, increased ringing effort at farmland sites in winter has boosted numbers of some species of finch and bunting.

Ringing Totals: Non-Passerines

The increasing totals of Kestrel and Barn Owl latterly are at least partly a result of more extensive coverage and monitoring of suitable sites with nest boxes by local Raptor Groups. The recent development of the use of thermal imagers at night has aided the

capture of nocturnal waders such as Jack Snipe and Woodcock. Totals of Coot are mainly weather-dependent, with cold spells facilitating their capture.

Recoveries and Controls: Passerines

There was a good series of exchanges of roosting hirundines with Spain and Portugal during the period. A female swallow caught on spring passage in Northern Italy returned to breed at Hazel Grove in several subsequent years. There were several exchanges of Waxwing with Scotland and the East Coast during the invasion of 2012/13 and most notably a control of an Estonian-ringed individual, indicating the origins of some of our wintering birds.

There were two interesting exchanges of Cetti's Warblers with East Anglia, showing the wandering tendencies of the species. A series of recaptures of migrant warblers illustrates the routes taken to and from wintering grounds. A Willow Tit ringed as an adult female at Elton moved to Woolston Eyes where it has taken up residence for several years.

Winter visitors provided an insight into the origins of some of our migrants. There were several exchanges of Blackbirds with Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, a Danish-ringed Brambling was controlled at Elton and a Swedish-ringed Chaffinch found dead at Lowton. A useful recapture of a Fieldfare ringed in Scotland illustrates the nomadic behaviour of this species in winter. Among the regular movements of Siskin to and from Scotland, were two which were presumably on their way to breeding grounds in Norway. A series of four Goldfinch ringed on the Isle of Man were found at different sites in GM, maybe indicating a regular passage.

Meadow Pipit recoveries are quite infrequent, so it was useful to have one ringed on the Horwich Moors reported from Southern Spain later in the same autumn. Interestingly, this was a very long-winged individual, indicating that it was of Icelandic origin; Icelandic birds tend to 'leapfrog' British birds and winter further south.

Recoveries and Controls: Non-Passerines

The extensive use of colour rings has given rise to large numbers of sightings of several species of large gull. Herring Gulls originally ringed as nestlings in Germany and Poland were sighted in winter. An impressive series of Caspian Gull sightings was accrued of nestlings originating in The Netherlands (5), Germany (2), Poland and Czechia and mostly seen at Redgate Recycling. Four Great Black Backs from Norway were also sighted along with a Common Gull also from Norway; interestingly, one of the few Common Gulls ringed in GM was subsequently found dead in Sweden.

There was also a nice series of Mediterranean Gulls sighted in the County that had been ringed in Belgium, Poland and Hungary. Perhaps more interesting was a bird that had been ringed as a nestling at Belmont Reservoir in 2007 and not recorded again until some excellent work resulted in the BTO ring number being read in the field at Pennington Flash in 2026! This exceeds the longevity record of the species for birds ringed in the UK.

In contrast to the larger gulls, data for Black-headed Gulls include a good range of sightings of birds ringed abroad and those ringed as adults during the winter. Birds ringed in 11 North and East European countries were sighted and birds ringed in GM during the winter were reported from 8 countries, Poland being the best represented in both instances.

The regular moult migration of Canada Geese and Greylags was shown by several birds ringed in summer in Cumbria and subsequently sighted in the County. A Greenland Whitefront originally ringed as an adult in Iceland was reported from Little Woolden Moss, having been sighted earlier at Woolston Eyes. The furthest Mute Swan movement recorded during the period was of a bird moving to the Abbotsbury Swannery on the South Coast.

The female Tufted Duck bearing a nasal saddle that was ringed in France in 2017 was still regularly recorded from Pennington Flash. Among the regular dispersing juvenile Cormorant and Shag from coastal colonies was a Cormorant ringed in Finland whose metal ring was read off at Sale WP. This was obtained thanks to heroic efforts by the observer, comprising two long telescope sessions necessitating lying down in Canada Goose droppings! The ongoing colour ringing study of Coot has led to a large number of long-distance movements, including several to Scotland, North Wales and across The Pennines.

The increased effort at Barn Owl ringing has led to a series of interesting long-distance reports of birds ringed as nestlings from as far away as S Wales, Devon, Cornwall and Kent. In addition, several Peregrines ringed as nestlings in Sussex, Worcester and Gloucester were found in the County. A Merlin ringed as a nestling on Rhum was caught later in the autumn on the Horwich Moors. There was also an interesting report of a Hobby found quite locally 10 years after ringing. An adult Collared Dove moving to Stirling still had the tendency to migrate northwards, which led to the species' initial colonisation of the UK.

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Acknowledgements

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