ST CLEER GENERAL CEMETERY BREEDING BIRD SURVEY YEAR 2007.

INTRODUCTION

Following the completion of restoration work on the chapel and the “tidying up” activities within the cemetery, it was decided to conduct another Breeding Bird Survey. The reason for this repeat survey in the spring of 2007 was to ascertain whether the outcome of work undertaken had had any impact (both beneficial and detrimental) on the numbers and varieties of bird species using the site. As with the preceding spring period of 2006 a survey was carried out using the British Trust for Ornithology’s Common Bird Census mapping method. (For details of methodology refer to the 2006 report)

A total of 11 recording visits were made starting on the 27th March and ending on the 12th June. The interval between each visit was approximately one week. Once again both VISIT MAPS and SPECIES MAPS were produced and are included with this report. Similar to last years survey a total of 21 different species were recorded. The recorded species and their status is outlined in alphabetical order in the following section.

SPECIES RECORDED AND STATUS

Analysis of the SPECIES MAPS classifies species status as falling into three distinct categories:

1 DEFINITELY BREEDING

Qualifying criteria: Birds carrying nesting material or food. Record of nests and/or young.

2 PROBABLY BREEDING

Qualifying criteria: A grouping (cluster) comprising at least three registrations from 11 effective visits.

3 INSUFFICIENT DATA

Qualifying criteria: Recordings not meeting criteria detailed in 1& 2 above.

In addition so that comparisons can be made with the preceding years findings, the status for 2006 is shown in brackets.

BLACKBIRD Seven territories were recorded. Two plots showed definite evidence of breeding, whilst five plots indicated probable breeding.

 (2006 also had seven territories of which three showed definite breeding and four probable breeding).

BLACKCAP Insufficient data. Only two sightings were recorded. A singing male on visit D and a female on Visit E. Obviously these two birds were passing through on migration.

 (Similarly 2006 was insufficient data with only one observation recorded).

BLUE TIT Three territories were recorded. Two plots indicated definitely breeding. Both plots revealed that nest boxes 1 and 7 were in use. The third plot showed probably breeding.

 (Similarly the 2006 analysis revealed three territories. Two plots gave definitely breeding data with nest boxes 4 and 7 being occupied. The remaining territory indicated probably breeding).

CARRION CROW Although this species was regularly seen passing overhead and therefore not eligible for recording, one observation (Visit H) is of interest. This species was seen to take an egg from a WOODPIGEON’S nest, thus providing evidence that the WOODPIGEON was definitely breeding.

CHAFFINCH Three territories were plotted all indicating probable breeding.

 (2006 record was three territories also. Two plots showed definitely breeding with the remaining plot indicating probably breeding.

CHIFFCHAFF The observation was a singing male on Visit D only. Therefore insufficient data available. Another passage migrant.

 (2006 also had a single bird on Visit D. Again insufficient data).

COAL TIT This species was not recorded during 2007 period

 (one territory was identified in 2006 and listed as probably breeding. However, on cleaning out the nest boxes in the autumn, nest box 3 revealed a sad story. The nest box contained a nest, which held two addled COAL TIT eggs. It would appear that the female had died, probably to a predator such as a SPARROWHAWK and the male moved on).

COLLARED DOVE Late on in the survey period recordings indicated a territory and probable breeding. \*note these birds can rear broods throughout the year.

 (In 2006 one pair indicated definitely breeding status).

DUNNOCK Recordings could only show one sighting on Visit C. Therefore insufficient data.

 (In 2006 insufficient data was recorded to establish the existence of a territory).

GOLDCREST A single bird was recorded on four consecutive visits (A-D). Although a territory was held, the bird (male?) moved on to find a partner elsewhere.

 (In 2006 a territory was plotted, but it was not possible to state probably breeding).

GOLDFINCH On Visit J a bird foraging for food was the sole record; obviously the nest was off site. Status Insufficient data.

 (A pair were recorded in 2006, but insufficient data was recorded to establish breeding)

GREAT TIT Two pairs were present throughout the survey period and evidence indicated that both pairs were probably breeding.

 (Status was the same for two pairs noted in 2006).

GREENFINCH A territory was established and nest building was taking place. However, no recordings occurred from Visit D onwards. It appeared the pair had abandoned the nest.

 (In 2006 insufficient data was obtained for this species).

HOUSE SPARROW Only four plots indicating definite breeding were recorded. The number of territories was much lower than in 2006, but was expected as renovation of the chapel sealed many nesting holes. Also other nesting sites had been removed to give clear access to a number of graves.

(In 2006 nine plots indicated definitely breeding; six in the chapel roof with a further three plots showing probably breeding.)

JACKDAW Only a single recording made on Visit K, but it was a sighting of a pair lining an abandoned ROOKS nest with moss in preparation for nesting. Verdict: most probably bred

 (Insufficient data was gathered in 2006 to identify possible breeding).

LONG TAILED TIT Insufficient data to establish status as only one observation was made.

 (This species was not recorded in 2006).

MAGPIE A pair occupied the same nest as in 2006 and were definitely breeding

 (Recorded as definitely breeding in 2006).

ROBIN Three territories were recorded of which two plots indicated definitely breeding. The remaining plot showed probably breeding. The number of plots were significantly lower than in 2006. This was probably due to grubbing out shrub vegetation to provide access to graves.

 (In 2006 six territories were identified. Two plots showed signs of definitely breeding, with four showing probably breeding).

ROOK The rookery established in the previous year showed an increase in the number of occupied nests to six. All six pairs were definitely breeding,

 (Four nests were built and four pairs were definitely breeding in 2006).

SONG THRUSH One territory was identified and evidence indicated probably breeding.

 (Similarly the 2006 survey indicated one probable breeding territory).

STARLING This species was not recorded.

 (In 2006 insufficient data was gathered to establish breeding).

WOODPIGEON Two territories were noted. One plot showed definitely breeding; the other probably breeding.

 (In 2006 three plots were noted. One definitely breeding, one probably breeding and the third plot provided insufficient data).

WREN Two territories were identified and both plots provided evidence of probable breeding.

 (Only one territory was noted in 2006 and indications were of probable breeding).

CONCLUSIONS

The survey of 2006 was carried out to establish a datum against which it would be possible to measure the impact of management and restoration work carried out within the cemetery and on the chapel, on the diversity and number of bird species.

It is pleasing to report that despite a considerable amount of work being undertaken, very little change was made to the bird population and variety of species. The only exceptions noted were with regard to the HOUSE SPARROW and ROBIN whose breeding population showed a marked decrease. These decreases were directly attributable to the restoration and “tidying up” activities. In an attempt to restore HOUSE SPARROW breeding fortunes five nest boxes with larger holes have been placed on trees near to the chapel. It was not possible to mount nest boxes under the chapel guttering and eaves, which would have been preferable.

The variety of fauna and flora recorded within the cemetery still shows the site has real potential to become a valud wildlife haven for the community.

Bob Stockhausen

26th June 2007.

TERRITORY COMPARISON BETWEEN YEARS 2006 AND 2007.

SPECIES Status 2007 compared with 2006

BLACKBIRD =

BLACKCAP =

BLUE TIT =

CHAFFINCH =

CHIFFCHAFF =

COAL TIT -

COLLARED DOVE =

DUNNOCK =

GOLDCREST =

GOLDFINCH =

GREAT TIT =

GREENFINCH +

HOUSE SPARROW -

JACKDAW +

LONG TAILED TIT +

MAGPIE =

ROBIN -

ROOK +

SONG THRUSH =

STARLING -

WOODPIGEON =

WREN +

Above indicates no real differences between the two years. This indicates that the restoration and “tidy up” work has made minimal impact, with exception of HOUSE SPARROW and ROBIN