

SUTTON POYNTZ BIODIVERSITY GROUP.

SUTTON POYNTZ BIRD REPORT 2008



The Mill Pond, Sutton Poyntz, 2008 © John Newbould

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Supported by:



1. SUMMARY.

Sutton Poyntz is located on the eastern border of Weymouth and Portland District a little over 1km north of the South Dorset Coast in 1km squares SY7083 and SY7084. There are around 200 houses mainly associated with Sutton Road and Plaisters Lane, with a small number of spur cul-de-sacs off. The area is undulating with an altitude range of 25m around “The Cartshed”, rising to 84m to the south-east on Wimslow Hill and 158m at the triangulation station on East Hill to the north. The village was certainly occupied from Roman times and with the barrows on the parish boundary to the north, there were also certainly pre-Roman settlements in the area.

There are now no working farm houses in the village, but there are areas of pasture, calcareous grassland with some scrub, ancient woodland, arable, hedges, former quarries and some relic orchards in modern house gardens. The old mill-pond provides a focus in the centre of the village. Wessex Water has an operational pumping station, together with an associated land holding.

The survey covers land north of Preston Road to the Ridgeway. The Weymouth and Portland boundary forms a convenient eastern boundary, whilst to the west it includes the farmland east of Greenhill.

1.1 UK BAP Priority Habitats¹ present in the area.

- Arable field margins
- Lowland calcareous grassland including roadside verges.
- Lowland Meadows
- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
- Open Mosaic habitats on previously developed land including built up areas and gardens
- Hedgerows
- Ponds
- Traditional Orchards
- Wet Woodland

1.2 Important biological features include:

- Populations of nine red-listed birds² with three species proven breeding and twenty-four species of amber-listed birds with eight species proven breeding. Of the seventy-five birds recorded, nine are national BAP species, two are local (Dorset) BAP species and three are on both the national and Dorset BAP lists¹. Twenty-three of the birds were considered to have definitely bred; six species probably bred and two species possibly bred.
- Populations of some nationally scarce invertebrates including: Lulworth Skipper (*Thelymelicis action*), Adonis Blue (*Polyommatus bellargus*), Jersey Tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*) (Notable) and Whitepoint moth (*Mythimna albipuncta*) (Local).

- There are populations of Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) and a decreasing population of Brown Hare (*Lepus timidus*) both Section 41 NERC Act BAP Priority Species¹.
- A population of Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in a garden pond.
- Sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) a nationally threatened (NT)³ plant is found to the west of the waterworks together with a number of Least Concern (LC) threatened plants cited in the SSSI designation including: Scarce bastard-toadflax (*Thesium humifusum*) (unable to locate at grid reference supplied) and Small-flowered Buttercup (*Ranunculus parviflorus*), which remains to be searched for. Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*) and Ragged Robin (*Lynchnis flos-cuculi*) (both LC) are found in the wet clay covered lowland meadows.
- There are a number of ancient coppice stools of Ash, Field Maple and Pedunculate Oak in the Waterworks wood.
- A chalk stream with a gravel bottom supports a population of the Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus* var. *pseudofluitans* and water invertebrates.

¹ UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and species have an action plan for their conservation published on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Group (revised, 2008). They have been selected because they are internationally important, rapidly declining or nationally rare and action plans are available from the UK BAP website.

² Red list species are globally threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery. Amber list species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years and those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.

³ Categorized in the Red Data List of Vascular Plants for Great Britain eds. C.M. Cheffings and L. Farrell (2005) J.N.C.C., Peterborough. Categories are indicated on page 18.

1.3 Key Management priorities:

The largest land unit of the village is the hill slopes of chalk grassland forming part of the White Horse Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which together with the smaller areas of wet grassland on the lower slopes are of primary importance to Natural England in meeting their public service targets for S.S.S.Is in favourable condition by 2010. Constraints on these targets include any management of the Neolithic burial mounds on the ridge.

- There is a presumption that scrub will be reduced to < 5% of the land units. The group have been actively trying to identify key areas of scrub used for both breeding and as shelter by birds *e.g.* Dartford Warbler and Yellowhammer and butterflies where both Lulworth and Large Skippers were found in small numbers during July and August 2008 sheltering amongst bramble.
- Additional grazing to the resident sheep population to reduce Tor-grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*) and encourage the finer species rich chalk grass communities and in particular Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis commosa*).

- The group would welcome active management of the Reed-bed within the Waterworks to keep scrub down to encourage Reed Warbler.

Approximately 60% of the land on the less steep hill slopes is used for arable farming, although water collects on the lower slopes of the valley bottom leaving little to no yield. The hedges are managed usually on a three year rotation with the hedge verges generally having a nutrient rich **MG1** False oat-grass ground flora accompanied in one or two places by Corn Parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*): Preston *et. al.* (2002) describes the species (present in 301 10km squares in the UK) as a plant of well drained calcareous soils on clay or chalk. Bowen (2000) mapped the species in 34 tetrads mostly in the Weymouth and Poole areas.

There is a buffer zone of grassland between the houses and the arable field to the west of Plaisters Lane. There is also an old Ash-Maple hedge running east-west at the foot of White Horse Hill. In the valley bottom south of White Horse Hill, ditches are filled with Reed (*Phragmites australis*) where historically Snipe may be flushed in a hard winter (Mr Saunders *pers.comm.*).

The Environment Agency held a public consultation about a flood defence scheme along “Osmington Brook” during the autumn of 2008. Conversion of the “Cartshed” to housing was turned down by the Planning Authorities in the summer of 2008 as a potential flood risk.

Local gardens hold a wealth of wildlife, with five gardens surveyed during early November 2008 having up to 18 (range 13-18) species of birds. House Sparrow (RDB) appears only to be located near prickly bushes including bramble adjacent to gardens. Regular moth trapping takes place during the year in three gardens and around forty species of moth were recorded from mid-August to mid-October adjacent to the Waterworks. A key change, which may affect biodiversity and increase the flood risk, has been the increase in building on plots with larger gardens, especially since the mid 1980s.

The principal landowners Wessex Water and Mr Seal together with the tenant farmers Mr and Mrs G. Lunn have given permission for the surveys. A small number of householders have supplied information from their gardens.

2. BACKGROUND.

The survey was compiled as a result of the production of a *village plan*, during 2006-07, in which 85% of households were interested in improving habitats and the range of species within the village environment.

2.1 Information sources:

The report is based on records produced over a five-year period by the authors supplemented by anecdotal information. Surveying has often been undertaken on an informal basis whilst recorders walk around the village and fields in the ordinary course of their lives. Once confidence in recording methodology increased, effort was directed to noting and mapping the location of key bird habitats. The Group has

now received funding from the Dorset Biodiversity Fund, which will enable it to substantially increase the scope of environmental recording in the area over the next year.

- Information was obtained from Dorset Environmental Records Centre, the *Dorset Proceedings* and *Dorset Bird Club Annual Reports*.
- Comparison of our data against national sources such as Bird-track *via* www.bto.org/birdtrack and the National Biodiversity Network *via* www.nbn.org.uk for 10km square SY78.

2.2 Geology, Topography and Soils:

The underlying geology within the village boundaries falls broadly into two areas. There is an upper chalk escarpment to the North with the lower areas predominantly Kimmeridge clay. The village is also flanked on both sides by smaller ridges of Portland stone and sand. There are two fault lines in the upper chalk forming the basin where the river Jordan rises.

The land to the north and east on the steep scarp faces is in arable reversion and to the west is used for grazing. At lower levels there are a number of pasture meadows. The arable land is a loamy soil over limestone to the south and a strong loam over a cretaceous clay subsoil in the valley bottom.

3. RESULTS.

A full summary of the results is presented in the appendix. Data are lodged with Dorset Environmental Records Centre, which acts as our Data Custodian.

- Arable field margins: Birds in this habitat include Canada Geese in the autumn feeding on crop spillages, Common Pheasant, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw and Rook. Swallow is a regular summer visitor usually departing the area by mid-September. We have one record for Corn Bunting from set-a-side on the parish boundary on the Ridgeway. Yellowhammer is associated with scrub and hedges on the northern boundary where there are arable fields. Kestrel is regularly seen prospecting arable margins and verges.
- Lowland calcareous grassland including roadside verges: It is the areas of NVC type **W23** Gorse – Bramble scrub, which forms much of the unfavourable habitat of the calcareous grassland, which we have found extremely interesting for small birds. Many observers had regular sightings, in the autumn, of four or five Dartford Warbler, Stonechat and Yellowhammer, especially in the area around Margaret's Seat. During the summer months, Whitethroat is a regular summer visitor, together with Linnet. However, more quantitative work needs doing to establish the population of these two species. Buzzard and Stonechat are regularly seen perched on the wire fencing and associated posts through the year. Meadow Pipit may be seen on the lower slopes of West Hill.

- Lowland Meadows: Generally we see three pairs of Skylark singing in the grass fields above East Hill during spring and early summer. In the autumn, we noted a maximum flock of twenty Skylarks using the field above the Springhead. Flocks of up to twenty Meadow Pipit were noted in the waterworks meadows, the pasture above West Hill in the autumn. Three pairs of Buzzard may often be seen in the lowland meadows between Osmington and Sutton Poyntz. Other raptors seen in these areas include Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon (perched on pylons) and Hobby following the autumn passage of hirundines. Raven is regularly observed flying over and Rook feed in the wet meadows. Tawny Owl is often heard calling over the fields at dawn and dusk and we have a number of recent records for Barn Owl.

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland: This broad description covers a range of micro-habitats alongside the Jordan from the spring basin though to the pumping station. Some areas are dense Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice woodland (the copse); a more open water meadow type with some reeds and willows and another dense woodland area to the south, in which there is significant surface water, depending on the flow rate of the river. Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) form a typical NVC type **W8** woodland to the east of the river.

During the summer months there is a significant population of warblers with confirmed breeding of both Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. Up to six male Blackcaps have been recorded at the same time early in the year but it is not known how many pairs were successful in breeding. Wood Warblers are regular visitors during the spring migration. Reed Warblers have been recorded in the small reed bed in the spring. Spotted Flycatchers have been recorded in the water meadow area but have not bred. Other confirmed breeding has been Mistle Thrush and Green Woodpecker in the copse and Sparrowhawk in the northern section of woodland.

A large range of finches have been recorded in the water meadow area from Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch, which have most probably bred, Bullfinch, particularly in the spring, feeds off the willow, together with Linnet. Significant numbers of more common birds such as Blackbird, Robin, Wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Long-tailed Tit have been recorded but their breeding status has not yet been established.

- Open Mosaic habitats on previously developed land including built up areas and gardens: There are two small quarries in Sutton Poyntz. For the purposes of this report, these are ignored, with gardens and houses being the most significant element of this broad habitat type. During November 2008, we asked four houses to write down the first occasion a bird was seen in the garden. These were located on Old Bincombe Lane, Plaisters Lane, The Puddledocks and Mission Hall Lane. A total of twenty-five species

(approximately 33% of the total) were recorded with two houses scoring eighteen species and two houses scoring thirteen species. Three Red Data birds were recorded *viz.* House Sparrow (4), Song Thrush (3) and Starling (1). Three Amber list birds were recorded *viz.* Dunnock (4), Green Woodpecker (1) and Grey Wagtail (1). [Figures in parenthesis indicate the number of locations]. Species such as Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Robin, Blackbird and Wood Pigeon were recorded in every garden. With many gardens providing winterfeed supplements, these provide a valuable resource to local natural foods. Green Woodpecker feeds in many other gardens of the village on garden ants. House Sparrow forms three known colonies of thirty to forty birds in bramble at the junction of Verlands Road and Sutton Road; in a thorn hedge near the allotments on Puddledock Lane and in the garden of Fox Cottage at the south end of the Waterworks. Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin, Wren, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Song Thrush and Starling have had proven breeding records in gardens.

- Hedgerows: Newbould surveyed hedges in the valley, east of Plaisters Lane and Sutton Road, in 2004. A report was published in the *Dorset Proceedings* **126**, 119-125. Thorn provides winter feed for the thrush family with Fieldfare, Blackbird, Redwing and Song Thrush associated with many of these hedges. Fieldfare particularly favours the hedges of the wet valley bottom. Yellowhammer is associated with the hedges of the Ridgeway together with many of the finches, tits, Dunnock and Robin. Long-tailed Tit is commonly observed associated with hawthorn hedges. Nearly all boundaries shown on figure 1 are important perching areas for the resident bird population.
- Ponds: There are two ponds in the village: opposite the Springhead public house and in the valley to the south-east of Puddledock Lane. Both ponds support a breeding population of Mallard and Moorhen. Water Rail, a secretive bird, which likes tall bank-side vegetation is seen in winter months at the junction of Plaisters Lane and Sutton Road. Grey Wagtail is known to breed near Garland House in the mill leet and under the waterfall to the south of the Springhead pond. This species feeds in many of the adjacent gardens. There has been one unconfirmed record for Kingfisher in Osmington Brook in the last three years.
- Traditional Orchards: Early editions of large-scale Ordnance Survey maps show a number of traditional orchards in Sutton Poyntz. By 2008, these have been mostly built on, but there are a number of old apple, pear and plum trees remaining, especially in the area of Old Bincombe Lane, Brookmead Close and off Sutton Road. Certainly at Bellamy Cottage, Mistle Thrush is associated with such trees and Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is found on one tree.
- Wet Woodland: Wet woodland containing a NVC type **W6** woodland community is mainly associated with the lower valley slopes adjacent to Osmington Brook and then the River Jordan. Alder is rare, with just one tree

noted off Puddledock Lane, but the Crack Willow sub- community is quite common often in association with Ash or Sycamore. There were no special birds noted along the valley. Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen making holes along Puddledock Lane and a pair was seen prospecting for a nest hole adjacent to the Weymouth and Portland boundary early in the year. (See the note on Fieldfare above.)

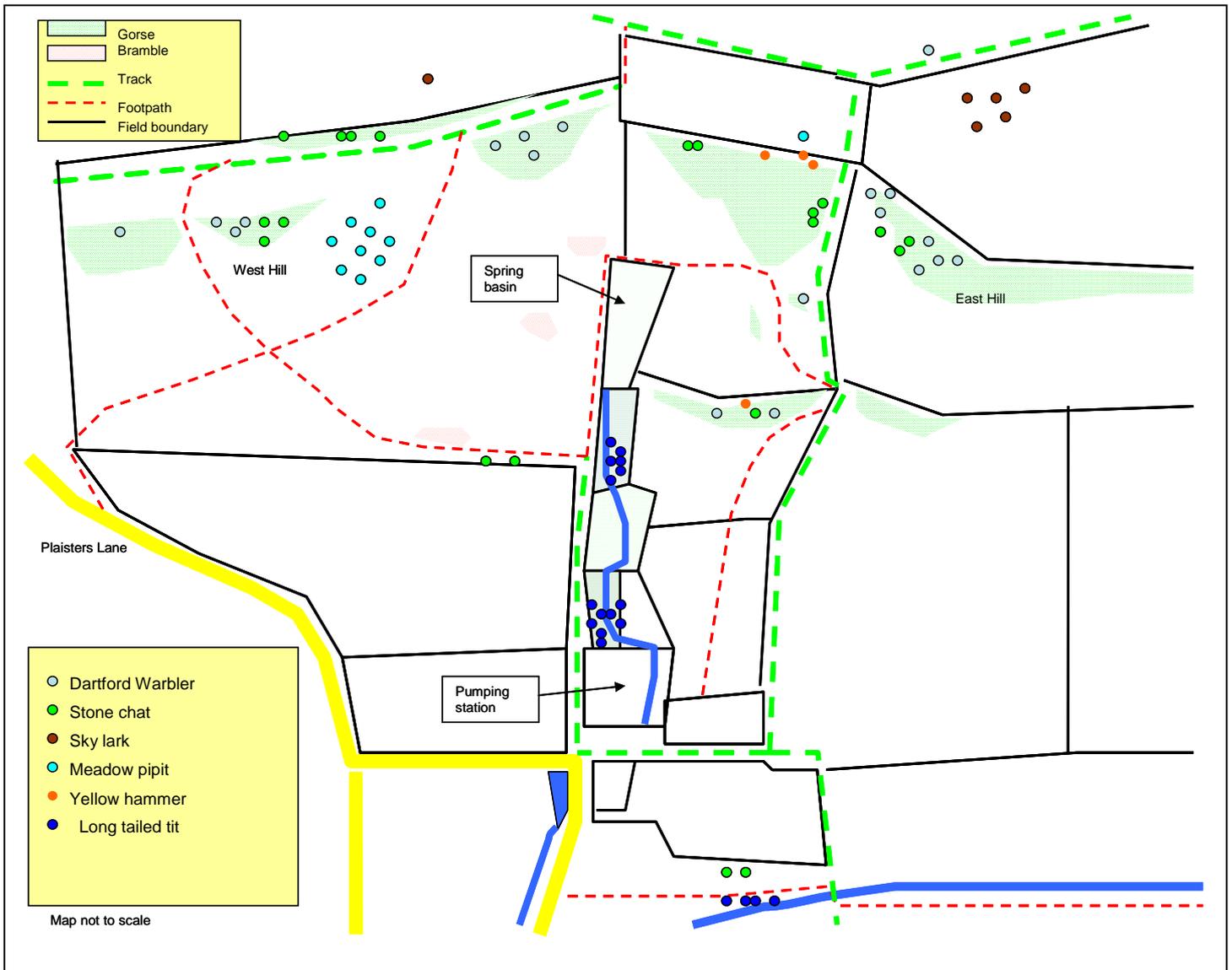


Fig.1. A typical distribution map of species recorded by David Emery (October-December 2008)

Areas of hatched green are Gorse of <1.5m with dots indicating selected species of birds, especially Dartford Warbler, Stonechat and Yellowhammer, but also Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Blackbird, and Linnet. Some of the Bramble, Elder and Hawthorn are indicated by the small-

hatched red areas, which are favoured by Whitethroat as well as many of the species listed above.

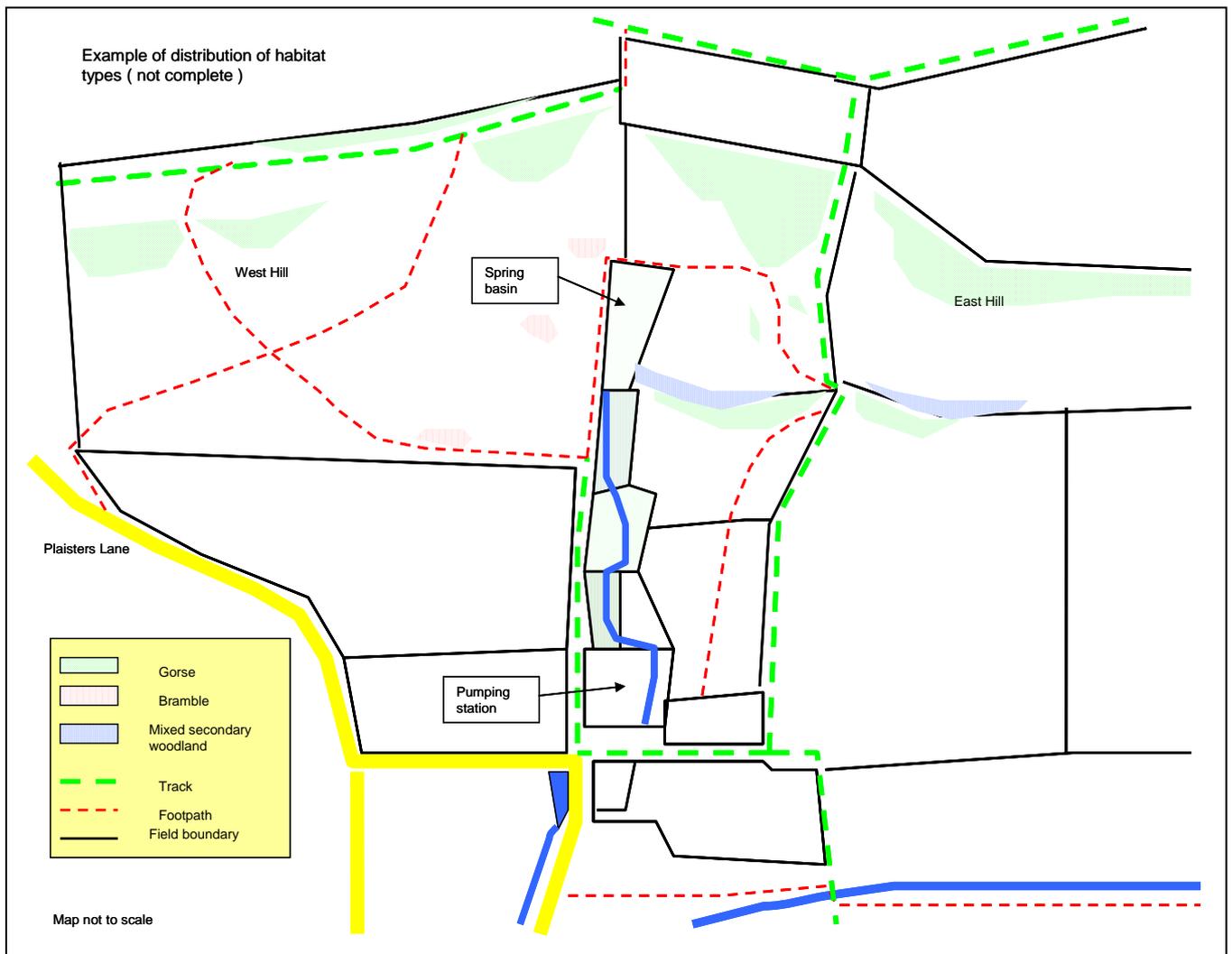


Fig. 2 Areas of scrub, which birds use for shelter, depending on weather conditions.

4. DISCUSSION.

The report lists seventy-five species seen in the period 2005-08 against 269 for the county (*Dorset Bird Report, 2006, 6*) = 26% of the county list being recorded in 2 x1km squares. Breeding information is available for 27 of the species. It would appear no records have been submitted from Sutton Poyntz for the report, although one of us has sent records to Dorset Environmental Records Centre. The report highlights species in terms of the UK BAP Priority habitat areas (www.ukbap.org.uk) revised 2008.

The observers found that with the UKBAP having no clear Habitat Action Plan for scrub, that in the target obsessed culture of 2008, conservation priorities could be targeted to reduce scrub within the adjacent S.S.S.I., as there is no box to tick to score the associated ornithological and invertebrate interest. Mortimer *et.al.* (2000), report that scrub has received little attention from nature conservationists, resulting in insufficient knowledge of the distribution, management and conservation status of scrub in Britain. Shrubs are generally characterised as consisting of woody plants 0.5-5m high with shrub communities existing when the area covered by woody plants exceeds the area of grassland. Most high-level stewardship schemes require scrub to be < 5% of the area (Defra, 2005). HLS considers scrub on calcareous grassland to be of high environmental value if it contains three or more of the following: Wayfaring-tree, Wild Privet, Dogwood, Buckthorn, Hawthorn or Spindle *e.g.* on

Melbury Down. These conditions do not apply within the White Horse Hill S.S.S.I. Scrub is also considered of value if any UK BAP Priority species, any animal species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act; or any Red Data Book species is present. We can demonstrate that Red Data species are using the area. Hedges contain species, which are considered scrub but are defined as boundaries <5m wide and >30m in length with gaps of < 20m. Otherwise these may be considered scrub.

- The Higher Level Stewardship focuses on quality habitats. It is used for more complex types of management directed at specific features. Key features include biodiversity, the historic environment, resource protection, landscape character and access.

[Editor's note: Technical guidance for applicants lists a number of target farmland birds for which funding may be available to enhance their conservation. These include:

Table 1: Target farmland birds for which funding may be available. Species in **bold** occur in SY7083 and SY7084.

Code	Species	Code	Species	Code	Species
SB01	Barn owl	SB07	Lapwing	SB13	Song Thrush
SB02	Bullfinch	SB08	Linnet	SB14	Starling
SB03	Corn Bunting	SB09	Redshank	SB15	Tree Sparrow
SB04	Curlew	SB10	Reed Bunting	SB16	Turtle Dove
SB05	Grey Partridge	SB11	Skylark	SB17	Yellow Wagtail
SB06	Kestrel	SB12	Snipe	SB18	Yellowhammer

*In addition Code SB19 lists the following uncommon birds: Black Grouse, Brent Goose, Cirl Bunting, **Dartford Warbler**, Dunlin, Golden Plover, Merlin, Nightjar, Ring Ouzel, Stone Curlew, Twite and Woodlark. Specific habitat guidance notes have been developed to facilitate recognition of what constitutes good habitat for a number of breeding bird assemblages e.g. Grassland code G12 for breeding waders – lowland; G13 Habitat for wintering waders and wildfowl and G14 Habitat for breeding waders – upland.*

Source: High Level Stewardship Farm Environment Plan. Guidance Handbook, Defra, 2005]

Scrub within the White Horse Hill S.S.S.I., and associated areas, is mainly Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), with small areas of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and scattered Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Elder (*Sambucus niger*): NVC Type **W23**. Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) is only found in one hedge to the south-west of the S.S.S.I. Grime (2007) describes Gorse as an evergreen shrub to 2m high regenerating mainly by seed from a persistent seed bank. Rodwell (1991) draws our attention to Gorse becoming tall and leggy when not grazed or burnt becoming out of the reach of herbivores. Typically plants are spread out, but regeneration after fire produces dense colonies. It is more frequent on south facing slopes, avoiding wet ground with seedlings preferring areas containing a moderate amount of bare ground with the pH range 4-6, although it occurs on mildly calcareous soils. The soil round the roots is mildly more acidic than surrounding soil. Duffey *et. al.* (1974) describe calcareous gorse scrub as existing on soils derived from loessic material from the edges of clay with flints deposits or from coombe deposits. Duffey also emphasises that in the absence of management grassland will progress through a scrub phase to a woodland dominated community. Gorse has been widely used as a fodder plant, being quite nutritious to species with a hardened mouth. In Dorset it was used traditionally for firing bakers' ovens.

Land with Furze was typically valued in the 1840 Tithe accounts. Typical ground flora plants associated with Gorse include Common Bent, Sweet Vernal-grass, Yorkshire Fog, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Common Ragwort. These species are typically found on the more acidic grasslands in Dorset, *e.g.* Stonebarrow require a pH in the range of 4-6, but are replaced on chalk by Tor-grass (NVC type **CG4** [Rodwell, 1992]) requiring a pH of 8. (Hill *et.al.*, 2004). There are few herbs present when Gorse is found over chalk. Indeed, if the Gorse colony becomes too dense, the grassland progresses to one dominated by False Oat-grass (as seen under many hedges) and then even the grasses start to die back with insufficient light. Gorse is considered to have expanded its range, with the reduction of grazing of marginal grasslands. In the 19th century much of the Dorset calcareous grassland, where Gorse is found today would have been grazed by sheep with those few areas of scrub found being reduced to stubs.

On the moister soils at the foot of the hills, the gorse becomes more scarce giving way to Hawthorn-Ivy scrub of NVC type **W21** and adjoining the arable field at the foot of East Hill a Bracken – Bramble NVC type **W25** community (Rodwell, 1991). The southern margin of White Horse Hill and East Hill both have old coppice stools of Ash with some Field Maple. The canopy here is quite dense with little ground flora on the hillside.

Grazing is a key feature in maintaining grassland. In *On Course Conservation* (1990) a panel describes the situation at Lindrick Golf Course, South Yorkshire in the mid-1980s. Cattle had traditionally grazed the Golf Course in winter (the greens and tees were fenced off), until the Second World War. In 1950, there was not a tree in sight and grazing ceased. By the early 1980s the roughs had mainly disappeared into Gorse Bramble scrub in many places and Hawthorn or Blackthorn elsewhere. Inevitably Oak and Ash grew as maidens. However, there were still a number of fine botanical areas with Rare Spring Sedge (*Carex ericetorum*) in small quantities (including a bunker on the 10th.) Following a survey, by South Yorkshire Natural History Societies, we were able to utilise community programme labour to clear the worst areas. Although complete removal of scrub and trees was unacceptable to the club membership, all the roughs were opened up in a four-year programme of winter scrub clearance, followed up with summer cutting using strimmers, together with removal of litter. Club members commented on the increase in butterflies, Skylark and Linnet. Following designation of key areas as S.S.S.I. by NCC, the management has continued benefitting the Course's wildlife today. Members further benefitted by being able to play balls hit into the roughs. Similarly in Sutton Poyntz, the Saunders family grazed the hill in winter with crossed Galloway cattle until retiring in 1990. (Bacon *et.al.*, 2003 [4.87]). Mr Saunders explained that until the family retired in 1990, there was only a little Gorse on the hills. In addition to management by grazing, they used burning when the Gorse became higher. The grass areas on the top of the hill were sprayed with slurry from the farmyard with the increase in nitrogen levels stopping the Gorse (and indeed killing off) any encroachment from the hill. This explains the low species richness of the hilltop grasslands. Land to the east of the White Horse was cut with a front mounted fail in 2004, but has not been repeated. This area appeared to support few birds in the autumn of 2008.

It is against this background in the later summer and autumn of 2008 that the group began to identify habitat within the scrub layer favoured by our bird population together with an interpretation of our interim findings in line with Mortimer *et.al.*(2000). The paper

describes Gorse scrub on chalk being of low botanical diversity but of high conservation value due to its associated fauna: in particular, for the populations of Stonechat and Dartford Warbler with figure 1 showing a typical distribution in Sutton Poyntz as seen by most observers. In addition, Dunnock, Robin, Wren, Whitethroat and Yellowhammer are associated with gorse scrub on East Hill. Berried scrub not only provides food for thrushes and other wintering birds, it also provides roost areas for a range of birds including Fieldfare, Redwing, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Bullfinch, Greenfinch and Yellowhammer. Over-wintering Chiffchaffs were observed associated with Hawthorn covered with Ivy on the lower slopes. Within the landscape context, these smaller birds become prey for Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Buzzard and other raptors but also Tawny Owl. The group have observed these raptor species “hawking” scrub territories. Hobby was observed on a number of occasions following flocks of migrating hirundines. Generally Yellowhammer was observed associated with boundary hedges. These observations were in line with a study by Whittingham *et.al.* (2005), which concluded that within the limitations of a small survey Yellowhammer not only needs boundary strips, tall hedges with ditches and trees but proximity to winter set-a-side fields.

Mortimer also highlights there is little understanding of the use of scrub by birds for feeding, whether insectivorous or foraging for fruit. Certainly with over 95% of the scrub on the hill being Gorse, it is the insectivores *e.g.* warblers who prefer such habitats. In areas of chalk scrub, where berry fruited shrub is plentiful, there is rich feeding for birds such as thrushes and finches. There is also a complex relationship between birds such as thrushes, Robin, Blackcap and warblers, who disperse seed and the pulp consuming species such as Bullfinch who are fruit predators.

Another area highlighted by Mortimer is the use of landscape mosaics by birds. On warm days, birds use the upper area of the hill *e.g.* around ‘Margaret’s Seat’ for foraging, whilst on cold days, they are found in thick scrub or in areas where the physical landform provides shelter. The importance of mixed wooded areas, with climbers *e.g.* Ivy and Honeysuckle, to the bird population requires investigation.

Garden Birds: two articles in *the Journal of Applied Ecology* **42** 2005, 659-671 highlight the importance of gathering information from gardens for the bird populations. However, with data collected in just one week in 2008 in just four gardens, only the presence of these birds on the village list can be stated with confidence. Lepczyk (2005) 672-677 demonstrates the importance of citizen lists in compiling bird data using all available sources to get a complete picture across a landscape.

Song Thrush: Song Thrush is seen in Sutton Poyntz occasionally in both gardens and associated with hedges in farmland. In a report by staff members of R.S.P.B. (Peach *et.al.*) published in *Journal of Applied Ecology*, **41**, 275-293. (2004), a significant decline (70%) in the populations in the period 1970-95 is highlighted. The report confirmed our observations of its presence mainly in gardens and field boundaries, avoiding arable land and woodland. It highlights earthworm availability in summer as a major component of the thrush diet with a decline in earthworm population as the soil dries out during the hot summers. The provision of invertebrate rich damp soils is a requirement to sustain populations.

Dartford Warbler: This species is doing well in Dorset with the results of the 2006 RSPB survey showing that the County contains around 30% of the national population. The species is known to have bred at Lodmoor in 2008 (J. Stobbard *pers. comm.*) with the *Dorset Bird Report 2006* reporting a maximum of 754 breeding territories. Whether the Sutton Poyntz population is breeding, we do not know. Although nationally the breeding population is increasing, both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight showed a decline.

5. Conclusions.

1. There are nine UK BAP priority habitats within our two 1km squares.
2. This provides a rich area for wildlife including: populations of nine red-listed birds² with three species proven breeding and twenty-four species of amber-listed birds with eight species proven breeding. Of the seventy-five birds recorded, nine are national BAP species, two are local (Dorset) BAP species and three are on both the national and Dorset BAP lists. Twenty-three of the birds were considered to have definitely bred; six species probably bred and two species possibly bred.
3. The Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity Group was only formed six months ago with a small group of experienced watchers, who through this group are now providing data to the highest standard with targeted recording. This initial cautious start has been built on by recruiting new people who will be trained to become capable recorders.
4. From the limited studies so far, the group has demonstrated an important relationship with areas of scrub with increased biodiversity of the area, with particular reference to birds.
5. The *Scrub Management Handbook* (Bacon, 2003, 5.7) highlights the importance of scrub as a significant component of many landscapes. The European Landscape Convention emphasises the importance of people and the history of surrounding landscape around peoples' homes. We can confirm the pleasure of our villagers when shown Dartford Warbler and Stonechat.
6. We also have concerns about the pressures on the small areas of ancient woodland, which provide a species rich habitat but also serves as a valuable recreational area for local children. Striking a balance between access and conservation will also be a matter of delicate compromise but we do feel that some of the SSSI woodland is now suffering adversely from over use by youths drawn from a wider area beyond the village. Perhaps some consideration should now be given to some restricted access conservation zones.

6. Recommendations.

1. Further large-scale removal of scrub should be informed by a better understanding of its importance to the biodiversity of the S.S.S.I. The survey work planned by the group over the next year will make a contribution to this.
2. Undertake a spring survey of the woodland, north of the waterworks including informal social use.
3. Recruit new surveyors for a garden nature watch and to achieve a more comprehensive coverage of the area, especially assessing breeding populations.

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