

# BIRDS

of

1. Benthall Edge Wood BE12D1 to BE12D4
2. Workhouse Coppice BE12K1 and holly control plot
3. Lydebrook Dingle management compartment and control plot
4. Olhouse Coppice

## 2011

A survey of breeding birds for the  
Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

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# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Part One: Objectives and methods</b>	4
1.1 Breeding bird species composition	4
1.2 Pied flycatcher	4
1.3 Site visits and collation of bird data	4
1.4 Order of classification and nomenclature	4
<b>Part Two: Benthall Edge Wood</b>	5
2.1 Breeding bird composition of management compartments BE12D1 to BE12D4	5
2.2 Pied flycatcher	7
<b>Part Three: Workhouse Coppice</b>	8
3.1 Species composition of management compartment BE12K1	8
3.2 Species composition of holly dominated control plot	8
<b>Part Four: Lydebrook Dingle</b>	10
4.1 Breeding bird composition of management compartment and control plot	10
<b>Part Five: Oilhouse Coppice</b>	11
5.1 Breeding bird composition	11

## Part One

### Objectives and methods

#### 1.1 Breeding bird species composition

To determine the breeding bird species composition of:

- management compartments BE12D1 to BE12D4 Benthall Edge Wood
- management compartments BE12K1 and holly control plot Workhouse Coppice
- management compartment and control plot Lydebrook Dingle
- Oilhouse Coppice.

#### 1.2 Pied flycatcher

To monitor the pied flycatcher nestbox scheme in Benthall Edge Wood and Lydebrook Dingle and to determine the presence and number of breeding pairs.

#### 1.3 Site visits and collation of bird data

Site visits during the period April to June 2011 were conducted as follows:

Benthall Edge Wood BE12D1 to BE12D4:	three 1 hour site visits.
Workhouse Coppice BE12K1 and holly control plot:	three 1 hour site visits.
Lydebrook Dingle management plot and control plot:	three 1 hour site visits.
Oilhouse Coppice:	three 1 hour site visits.

Visits were conducted at various times of the day and it was not considered necessary to standardise the duration of site visits as the aim was not to make comparisons with similar sites. Routes through the sites were varied in order to cover the total surface area and to ensure that potential bird species and their territories were not missed.

All birds encountered were identified by direct observation or vocalisations and their location within the prescribed site noted. The location of singing males, calls, territorial display, territorial flight, social interactions and nest sites relating to all target species and some additional species were plotted on site maps. Food plants and invertebrates taken were noted. Some habitat details were entered on site maps with particular reference to the basic structure and floristic composition of the tree canopy, shrub layer and field layer.

Where a bird was recorded on the boundary of a site and its territory overlapped both habitat within a SGCT site and habitat outside its boundary the birds was recorded as occupying a territory in the SGCT site. This particularly related to raptors which occupy large territories that will incorporate sections of several defined woodlands and other sites.

Species utilising a site for purposes other than breeding, including late departing winter migrants, passage summer migrants, foraging-only birds and birds flying over a site were noted but not classed as breeding birds.

#### 1.4 Order of classification and nomenclature

Classification follows the Voous system. Nomenclature is largely in accordance with the British Ornithological Union recommendations but added modifiers for a number of common species adopted for international use (e.g. western, Eurasian, common) are excluded in the main text.

## Part Two

### Benthall Edge Wood

#### 2.1 Breeding bird composition of management compartments BE12D1 to BE12D4

64 territories of 20 species were recorded in management compartments BE12D1 to BE12D4 in 2009. Table 1. This compares to 68 territories of 19 species recorded in 2009.

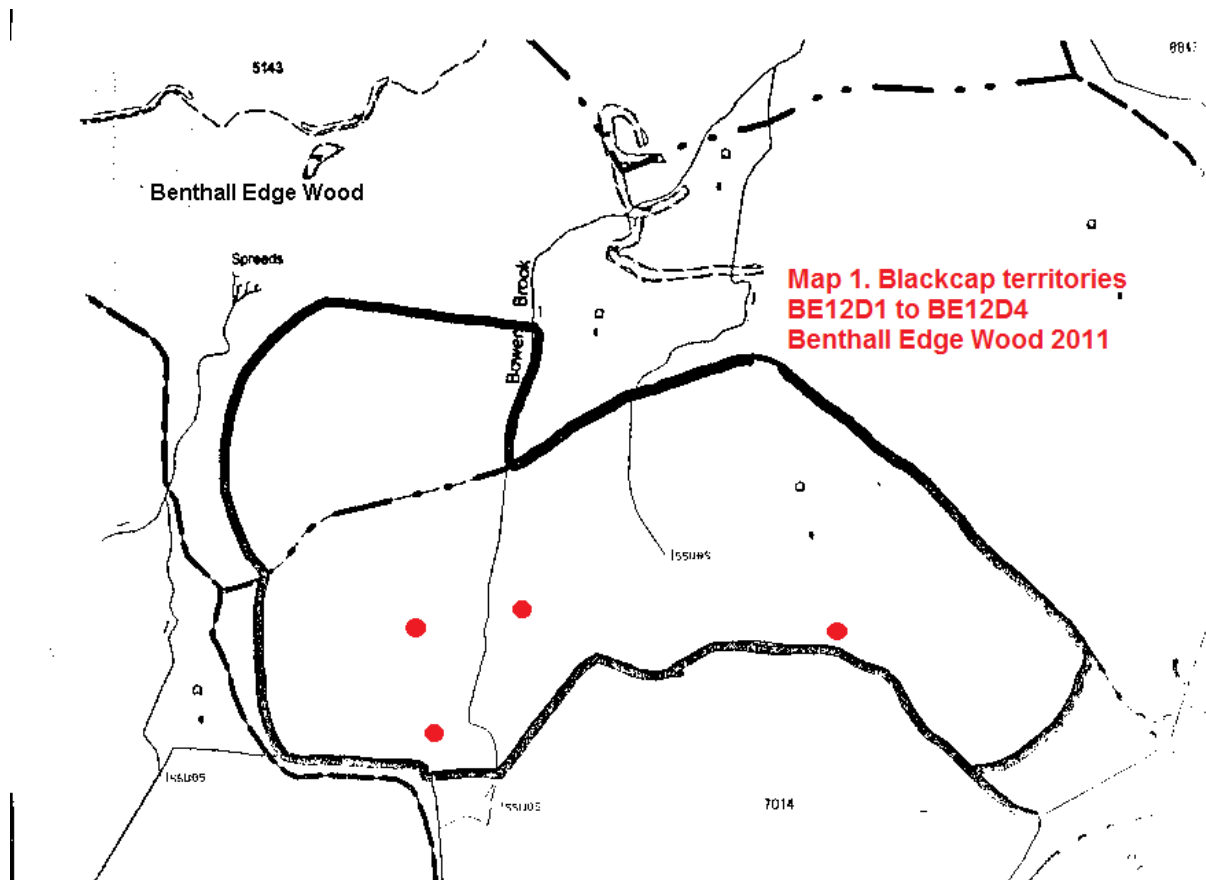
<b>Table 1. Breeding bird composition and number of territories of management compartments BE12D1 to BE12D4. Benthall Edge Wood April-June 2011</b>					
Data for previous years included for comparison					
Species	No. of territories				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Wood pigeon	2	1	1	2	3
Tawny owl	0	0	1	0	0
Green woodpecker	1	1	0	0	0
Great spotted woodpecker	3	1	3	3	3
Wren	8	10	10	12	3
Dunnock	0	2	1	0	0
Robin	5	8	15	7	5
Blackbird	3	8	7	4	8
Song thrush	3	4	3	4	2
Mistle thrush	1	0	0	0	0
Blackcap	2	0	2	3	4
Chiffchaff	2	0	0	1	4
Willow warbler	0	0	0	0	1
Goldcrest	5	7	0	3	3
Long-tailed tit	2	1	0	0	0
Marsh tit	2	2	5	3	1
Coal tit	0	1	5	1	3
Blue tit	4	8	10	10	12
Great tit	3	5	7	7	1
Nuthatch	2	2	2	1	3
Treecreeper	1	1	1	0	1
Jay	0	0	1	0	1
Magpie	0	0	1	0	0
Carrion crow	0	0	1	1	1
Chaffinch	3	6	5	3	4
Goldfinch	0	1	0	0	0
Bullfinch	1	0	3	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>64</b>

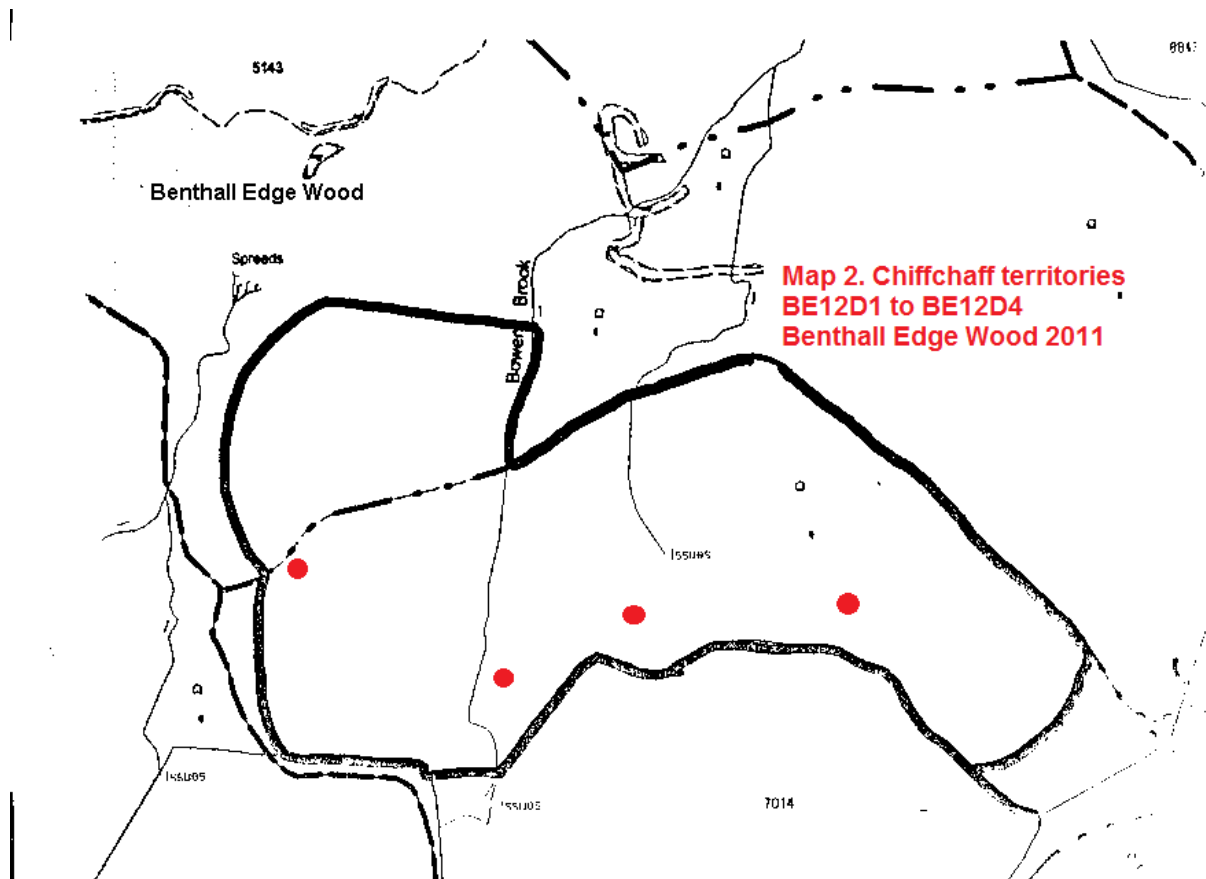
Willow warbler was recorded for the first time with one bird present in the south-western section of the plot on 7 April 2011. The bird was not subsequently recorded which suggests that the bird was on passage through Benthall Edge Wood to a breeding site breed elsewhere.

The numbers of wren and great tit were significantly down on previous years which was probably attributable to severe weather conditions in the preceding 2010/11 winter. Robin was similarly reduced in number. Blue tit and nuthatch attained their highest numbers so far.

Red-listed (high conservation concern) species recorded in BE12D1 to BE12D4 comprised song thrush and marsh tit. Two song thrush and one marsh tit were recorded. Song thrush is a UK BAP priority species.

The blackcap population of four territories (Map 1) was the highest recorded to date and continues a steady increase in their numbers since 2007. Territories were located in the southern section of the study area. Similarly, chiffchaff comprised four territories (Map 2), the highest in the management compartment to date, and suggests that the habitat is becoming increasingly favourable to this warbler. The present 2011 population of breeding warblers represents a 100% increase since 2007.





## 2.2 Pied flycatcher

Pied flycatcher was not recorded in Benthall Edge Wood in 2011. Table 2. This is the sixth successive year that pied flycatchers have failed to breed in the wood after successfully breeding in 2004 and 2005. The pied flycatcher has declined by 51% in the UK since 1994 and the species is now amber-listed as a species of medium conservation concern. The decline may be attributable to phenological responses to climate change. The main food source for provisioning nestlings, caterpillars, peak sixteen days earlier but the pied flycatcher has advanced its breeding by only ten days.

**Table 2. Number of pairs of pied flycatcher in SGCT nestbox scheme 2001-2011**

Site	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Lydebrook Dingle	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benthall Edge Wood	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

All incidents of previous confirmed breeding by pied flycatchers have been exclusively confined to the nestboxes and pied flycatcher has not been recorded as a breeding species in any other SGCT woodland during this period. This would suggest that the nestbox scheme has been instrumental in securing the pied flycatcher as a breeding bird in the SGCT woodlands.

The nestboxes have been monitored annually, repaired regularly and the scheme constantly reviewed. Nestboxes were repaired or replaced by SGCT volunteers in April 2011. Holes protected by metal plates have deterred grey squirrels and there was no significant woodpecker damage to nestboxes in Lydebrook Dingle.

## Part Three

### Workhouse Coppice

#### 3.1 Species composition of management compartment BE12K1

Management compartment BE12K1 was monitored during the 2011 breeding season in order to establish the bird species composition of the plot. Twelve breeding territories of seven species were recorded in 2011. Table 3. This compares to 16 breeding bird territories of 6 species in 2010.

Eighteen species have been recorded in BE12K1 since 2007. No red-listed species were recorded in the plot in 2011. The absence of some common bird species in 2011, including wren and robin, would suggest that populations were depleted as a result of severe weather conditions in the preceding 2010/11 winter.

**Table 3. Breeding bird composition and number of territories in management compartment BE12K1.  
Workhouse Coppice April-June 2011**

Date for previous years included for comparison

Species	No. of territories				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Wood pigeon	0	0	1	0	1
Green woodpecker	0	1	0	0	0
Great spotted woodpecker	0	0	1	0	1
Wren	0	3	0	2	0
Robin	2	0	5	0	0
Blackbird	1	1	3	3	1
Blackcap	1	0	0	0	0
Spotted flycatcher	0	0	1	0	0
Great tit	1	1	2	2	1
Blue tit	1	3	3	7	5
Marsh tit	0	0	2	1	0
Long-tailed tit	1	0	1	0	0
Nuthatch	0	1	1	0	0
Treecreeper	2	0	1	0	0
Jay	0	0	0	1	0
Carrion crow	0	1	1	0	1
Chaffinch	0	2	1	0	0
Bullfinch	0	0	0	0	1
<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>

#### 3.2 Species composition of a holly dominated control plot

In order to make future comparisons of the diversity and density of bird species between the managed compartment BE12 K1 and a 'pre-managed' phase of holly dominated woodland, a control plot in the mid-section of southern Workhouse Coppice was also

surveyed in detail in 2011. A plot in the centre of the southern section was chosen in order to allow a like-for-like comparison with BE12K1, which was also a central plot, and to negate any edge-effect and any potential increase in the diversity and density of birds this might produce. Both plots are approximately of equal area. The relatively small size of both plots might restrict the diversity and density of birds recorded but will allow direct comparisons to be made.

Eleven territories of five species were recorded in the holly dominated control plot in 2011. Table 4. This compares to 19 territories of 11 species in 2010. No red-listed species were recorded in the plot.

Eighteen species have been recorded in the holly control plot since 2007.

<b>Table 4. Breeding bird composition and number of territories in a holly dominated plot. Workhouse Coppice April-June 2011</b>				
Data for previous years included for comparison				
<b>Species</b>	<b>No. of territories</b>			
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Wood pigeon	0	1	1	0
Great spotted woodpecker	1	0	1	0
Wren	0	5	1	0
Dunnock	1	1	0	0
Robin	4	7	3	4
Blackbird	1	2	3	3
Blackcap	2	1	0	0
Chiffchaff	3	0	0	1
Willow warbler	0	0	1	0
Goldcrest	1	6	0	0
Great tit	3	2	1	1
Blue tit	1	3	5	2
Coal tit	0	0	1	0
Long-tailed tit	0	1	0	0
Nuthatch	0	0	1	0
Jay	1	1	1	0
Chaffinch	1	1	0	0
Bullfinch	1	1	0	0
<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>

## Part Four

### Lydebrook Dingle

#### 4.1 Breeding bird composition of management compartment and control plot

Five territories of five species were recorded in the management compartment in 2011. Three territories of three species were recorded in a control plot of the same area immediately adjacent to the managed plot. Table 5. It should be stressed that both plots are relatively small in area and therefore the diversity and density of bird species recorded is likely to be limited.

**Table 5. Breeding bird composition and number of territories in management compartment and control plot.**

**Lydebrook Dingle April-June 2011**

Data for 2010 included for comparison

Species	No. of territories			
	Management compartment		Control plot	
	2010	2011	2010	2011
Blackbird	0	1	0	0
Song thrush	0	0	0	1
Robin	0	1	0	1
Wren	2	1	3	0
Great tit	1	1	0	0
Blue tit	1	1	1	1
<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

The managed plot is currently in a stage of re-growth following woodland operations and the minimal understory and low volume of dead standing timber is possibly restricting the diversity and density of birds at present. The open structure of the plot generally is also possibly inhibiting occupation by common breeding birds but this is likely to improve as the structure of the shrub and ground layers develop.

## Part Five Oilhouse Coppice

### 5.1. Breeding bird composition

Eighty four territories of 18 species were recorded in Oilhouse Coppice in 2011. Table 6. This compares to 55 territories of 21 species in 2010. One species of high conservation concern (red-listed) – song thrush - was recorded in Oilhouse Coppice in 2011. The number of breeding blue tit and great tit increased significantly compared to 2010 due to the provision of small hole-entrance nestboxes by SGCT in spring 2011.

Summer migrant warblers, including blackcap, garden warbler, chiffchaff and willow warbler were all recorded in Oilhouse Coppice in 2011, garden warbler for the first time. The number of blackcap territories increased from 2 in 2010 to 4 in 2011 (Map 3) and chiffchaff increased from 2 to 6 (Map 4). This is likely to be attributable to the opened canopy which in places has allowed a field layer of low level bramble and other vegetation to develop, providing essential nest sites for blackcap, garden warbler and chiffchaff.

Willow warbler is amber-listed and has a very restricted distribution in the Severn Gorge and does not presently breed in other SGCT woodlands. Oilhouse Coppice therefore represents an important stronghold for the species both within the Severn Gorge and the SGCT woodlands.

**Table 6. Breeding bird composition and number of territories.  
Oilhouse Coppice  
April-June 2011**

**Data for 2010 included for comparison**

	2010	2011
Wood pigeon	1	3
Great spotted woodpecker	1	3
Wren	7	5
Dunnock	2	1
Robin	10	12
Blackbird	14	12
Song thrush	2	1
Blackcap	2	4
Garden warbler	0	1
Chiffchaff	2	6
Willow warbler	1	2
Goldcrest	1	0
Marsh tit	1	0
Coal tit	2	1
Blue tit	2	16
Great tit	2	8
Nuthatch	1	0
Jay	1	0
Magpie	1	3
Carrion crow	1	1
Chaffinch	2	2
Bullfinch	1	2
<b>22</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>84</b>

