



## STANFORD RINGING GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT 2012

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### Summary

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- In 2012, Stanford Ringing Group ringed 4371 birds. Of these, 3786 birds were ringed at our main site, Stanford Reservoir (where 5531 birds were processed of 57 species).
- Weather (rain) had a major impact on the breeding season, with numbers of most warblers, finches and buntings reduced in comparison to previous years. The odd exception to this observation was noted e.g. Willow Warblers and Lesser Redpolls were caught in record numbers.
- A very poor breeding season due to adverse weather. The only (minor) highlights were Greylag Goose and Oystercatcher being added to the list of breeding species at Stanford.
- Higher than average controls were recorded (13). The recovery rate for ringed birds was about average (one per 300).
- Extensive environmental work was undertaken for 4 months at the start of the year resulting in improved habitat.
- Many thanks to all who have helped during the past year - you have all made this possible.

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## Annual Review – Ringing at Stanford Reservoir

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### Drought & Deforestation

As everyone is well aware, 2012 will be long remembered as a year of extreme of weather.

For the first three months we experienced drought conditions. The Stanford Reservoir water level was extremely low and consequently we were eagerly anticipating ringing breeding Ringed and Little Ringed Plover (as we have done in previous drought years). However, all hopes of breeding waders on the exposed margins were washed away when the torrential rain started from April onwards. The rain however did not deter a pair of Oystercatchers from raising a single chick on one of the tern rafts.



Prior to the rain, we had taken the opportunity of the exceptionally dry conditions to clear trees and scrub right down to the (normal) water's edge. We had commenced our scrub clearance programme in November 2011, a month earlier than usual, because the winter thrush numbers were insufficient to sustain ringing during December 2011. Consequently by the end of March 2012 we had spent 4 months clearing scrub. What a horrendously arduous task that was but well worth the effort!

The scrub cleared area is now looking great and the result is significantly better habitat for the breeding warblers and buntings.

### Downpours & Devastation

The months from April to June were very wet indeed. Reports state this summer was the wettest recorded in the English Midlands since 1880 and we can believe that. Rain on almost every day was followed at the end of June by horrendous storms which produced hailstones the size of golf balls.

The rest of the year has also been similarly wet. At the end of September, 70% of the expected rainfall for the whole month had fallen in just 48 hours. December was notably wet and with the ground totally saturated, paths at Stanford Reservoir turned to liquid mud.

As anyone might expect, the impact of all this weather on birds and bird ringing has been pretty much calamitous. We have probably experienced the worst breeding season we can remember. Even if young birds successfully fledged, many are thought to have perished soon thereafter, due to the harsh conditions.

## Ringling & Redemption (sort of)

Despite all of the above, with perseverance, and much effort, 2012 saw the Stanford Ringing Group achieve our 3rd best ringling year to date at Stanford Reservoir, with a total of 5531 birds processed of which 3786 were new. The 57 species ringed was a new record species total for the site (beating the previous high of 53).

When factoring in the atrocious weather, the 2012 ringling data actually exhibits some incongruous totals when compared to previous years. The most notable of these are discussed below.

### Hirundines

Our House Martin ringling total of 55 in 2012 was by far the best since 1976 (when 66 were ringed). This year's birds were caught mainly on one session when they were feeding low over newly mown grass by the water tower on a cold and miserable Saturday afternoon (in June!). It was a case of 'right time, right place' because a good number of Swallows were also caught at the same time. Swallow numbers were then further increased by pulli ringling sessions at stables adjacent to the reservoir. This year's total of 84 Swallow ringed is the best since 1982.

### Thrushes

Unlike 2011, the autumn of 2012 brought good numbers of thrushes resulting on our 2nd best catching year ever. Although we did not manage any really big catches, dogged perseverance realised 309 Redwing, 87 Fieldfare, 102 Blackbirds and 28 Song Thrush.

### Warblers

Unsurprisingly, given the weather, the 1095 total warblers ringed in 2012 is woefully short of the 2469 ringed in 2011.

Sedge and Reed Warblers were devastated with only 67 and 87 new birds caught respectively. Just 3 Grasshopper Warblers were ringed this year and there was no successful breeding in 2012. An adult Grasshopper Warbler caught on 6<sup>th</sup> October was unusually late and in wing moult.

The *sylvia* warblers fared little better with below average numbers caught and a larger proportion of adults being caught than usual. It was only a late rush of Common Whitethroat that made for a respectable total of this species. 186 new birds were caught in August (from a 2012 total of 261), and it is thought that these birds were mostly likely to be migrants and late 2<sup>nd</sup>, or replacement, broods. Blackcaps appear, at first glance, to have had a reasonable year with a total 205 ringed. However this is well down on last year's record total of 710, so they too probably had a hard time of it.

Not all warbler species suffered as much as others. Chiffchaff numbers started off well before numbers petered out during September/October. Willow Warblers were a success throughout the year resulting in a record 224 ringed. With good numbers of first year birds ringed, one would assume Willow Warblers had a good breeding season. How this happened we're not sure as they are a ground nesting species and therefore we might have expected them to have also experienced problems with the rain.

2 Cetti's Warblers caught in late autumn is a good record for Stanford Reservoir and these were the first record of the species since 2010.



Cetti's Warbler, 26/10/12 © M.D.Haigh

We had an excellent year for Goldcrest with more than double our previous best ringing effort. This was probably due to penetration inland from the large falls of birds on the east coast in the autumn (our totals coincided with these arrival dates).

### Tits

Tit species did not do well in 2012. Although they appeared to fledge satisfactorily we do not think they survived particularly well afterwards as they have not been seen in their expected numbers around the feeding station since.

### Finches & Buntings

Numbers caught were well down on 2011 with the poor weather and (presumably related) poor migration to blame. Goldfinch ringed fell from 157 last year to 37 this, Linnet 124 to 51, and Reed Bunting 297 to a paltry 70. The table below illustrates the decline of the latter species during the past 2 years – note the dramatic reduction in juveniles ringed in 2012.

<u>Reed Buntings</u> Quantity Ringed	Age code								Total
	1	1J	2	3J	3	4	5	6	
2011	5	9	3	148	80	44	6	2	297
2012		1	2	13	30	18	6		70
<b>Total</b>	5	10	5	161	110	62	12	2	367

It was not all bad news, as the Lesser Redpoll migration was excellent. This species did breed at the reservoir back in the late 70's. Since then Lesser Redpoll has contracted its range nationally and is now a passage migrant at Stanford Reservoir, showing up in late September/early October and passing through in small numbers until December. Occasionally a few will be seen during the winter but not very often. In 2012 we ringed a record total (for us) of 281.

A Brambling in November was the first of the species ringed at Stanford Reservoir since 2004.

### Other species - notable ringing records

We managed to catch a few oddball species in 2012. Two Redstarts were a good record for us as was a single Firecrest caught in October near the feeding station. A Woodcock was another unusual catch for Stanford and with remarkably good timing, fortuitously showed up on a ringing demonstration day (for picture see page 9).

A full breakdown of Ringing Totals by species per month and year can be found at [http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg\\_statistics.html](http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_statistics.html)

## Nest Recording

2012 was a poor breeding season for most species, with Stanford's warbler species, finches and buntings particularly badly affected. Barn Owls, Tawny Owls and Kestrels all failed as the saturated ground seriously affected the vole population. The highlights were Oystercatcher and Greylag Goose added to the list of confirmed breeders. Nests recorded are summarised below -

Mute Swan	Two of the five nests recorded were flooded out in May and a further three nests were an 'unknown outcome' although no cygnet sightings suggested these failed.
Greylag Goose	A new breeding species at Stanford with two small young observed with adults on 12 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> May.
Sparrowhawk	The first confirmed record since 2002. A female carrying food to a nest in woodland close to the rail track on 10 <sup>th</sup> Aug was followed by numerous sightings until 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept.
Kestrel	Kestrels have used the same nestbox on the Leicestershire bank for four consecutive years. However, this year's clutch of four eggs failed to hatch.
Coot	Due to low water levels, there were no suitable locations for Coots to anchor their nests. When the water levels reached a preferable height, one nest was found with four eggs but this was soon predated.
Oystercatcher	The first record of Oystercatchers breeding at Stanford. A single bird arrived in early February and paired with another arrival on 21 <sup>st</sup> March. On 22 <sup>nd</sup> April, two pairs were observed. On 25 <sup>th</sup> May a large chick was seen with two adults on one of the Tern rafts with the last sighting on 30 <sup>th</sup> June.
Stock Dove	Twenty-eight nests surpassed 2011's record. Nine nests failed due to the cold and wet conditions. However, a record twenty-six pulli were ringed.
Woodpigeon	Four of six nests were predated at egg stage. Four young fledged the other two.
Barn Owl	A female was found on two eggs on 23 <sup>rd</sup> June but the nest was deserted. A second attempt was made a week later but that was abandoned on 11 <sup>th</sup> July.
Tawny Owl	Two nesting attempts both produced two eggs each. Only one clutch advanced to nestling stage but this single chick disappeared from the nest too early.
Swallow	Stanford Stables hosted our best ever haul of 60 Swallow pulli ringed. 16 nests produced 71 eggs including two broods of 6. Only one nest failed due to predation and two further nests were of 'unknown outcome'.
Dunnock	One nest with four nestlings was found tucked in the back of a hedge in the Dam car park but sadly predation had occurred between recording visits.
Robin	An open-fronted box located in ivy produced results with five pulli ringed. A nest found in the stables had three young that were too large to ring.
Song Thrush	Three nests were found. Nine pulli ringed from two nests fledged, but the third nest was predated at early nestling stage.
Blackbird	5 pulli were ringed in one nest. Predation & desertion accounted for 2 further nests.
Garden Warbler	A nest found on 7 <sup>th</sup> July contained three eggs. Due to adverse weather conditions we decided no further visits would be carried out to this nest. Outcome unknown.
Long-tailed Tit	Two nests from this early breeder had different outcomes. One nest successfully fledged several young and the other was predated at egg stage.
Blue Tit	Although 1 <sup>st</sup> April is reasonably early for the first egg laid it did not prove beneficial to the Blue Tit this year. Out of 25 nests, 11 were deserted at either egg or nestling stage. Several boxes were found to be sodden inside with an overall count of 61 dead pulli from 7 boxes alone succumbing to rain or starvation. Only 44.3% of the 221 eggs laid advanced to fledge from the nest. 122 pulli were ringed.
Great Tit	30 nests was our best total since 2007. 245 eggs were laid with 61.2% fledging. Six nests were deserted and two predated. 154 pulli were ringed this year.
Jackdaw	Three nests of which two were successful (better than last year). Three pulli were ringed from two nests and the third failed at egg stage.
Tree Sparrow	Even with the poor weather our growing Tree Sparrow colony produced another record year. 14 nesting attempts including two double broods. 66 eggs were laid with 72.7% advancing to fledging from the nest. 34 pulli were ringed including seven nestlings from a clutch of nine eggs!
Chaffinch	Two nests were predated at egg stage. However, 3 pulli in another nest were ringed.
Linnet	Three nests found is a record. Eight pulli were ringed from two nests with the third nest falling to an unknown predator.
Reed Bunting	A poor year. Two nests were discovered with one failing at egg stage and another, found with a female incubating 5 eggs was left undisturbed due to poor weather.



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## Controls & Recoveries

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### Controls

13 controls were recorded at Stanford in 2012. Two of the controls were Common Tern field sightings which if excluded (because they are not part of ringing processing totals) still makes the year better than average for controls with 1 control for every 503 birds processed.

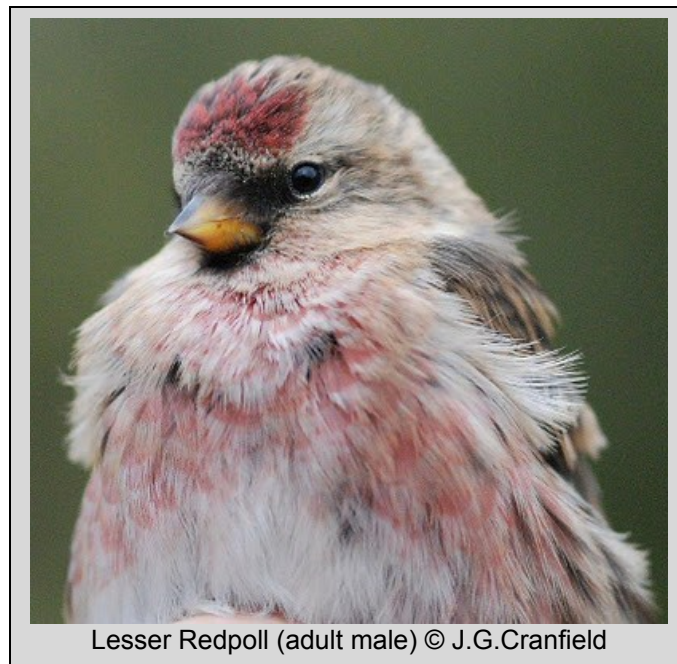
4 Lesser Redpolls were controlled including one from Belgium (actual ringing details awaited).

Of the remaining controls, the pick were a Sedge Warbler ringed a year previously in Highland, Scotland, and a Reed Warbler from Powys, Wales. A House Martin from Icklesham, East Sussex, was the first control of this species at Stanford Reservoir.

All controls ever recorded at Stanford Reservoir can be found at [http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg\\_controls.html](http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_controls.html)

### Recoveries

Only 2 have been received to date for birds actually ringed at Stanford Reservoir in 2012. However, 22 recovery reports were received during 2012 for birds previously ringed at Stanford. This recovery rate is about average for us since the year 2000, with approximately 1 recovery for every 300 birds ringed at Stanford Reservoir.



Of the year's 22 recovery reports, 6 (more than a quarter) were for Lesser Redpoll. During 2011/2012 we have processed 438 Lesser Redpolls. With the 6 Lesser Redpoll recoveries (to date) plus 6 controls, this is by far our best species for recoveries & controls. Oddly, the 6 Lesser Redpoll recoveries were all ringed by different ringers so this species has also proven to be a real team player!

Conversely, just 2 recovery reports for warblers were received in 2012 (both from Icklesham).

All recoveries ever recorded at Stanford Reservoir can be found at [http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg\\_recovs.html](http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_recovs.html)

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## Oldest Birds Retrapped in 2012

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Ring number	Species	Date Ringed	Latest Retrap	Age
RB53236	Blackbird	22-Feb-03	11-Apr-12	9y 1m 17d
R651676	Chaffinch	09-Oct-04	11-Apr-12	7y 6m 3d
AYK570	Long-tailed Tit	16-Jul-05	25-Jan-12	6y 6m 11d
T179169	Garden Warbler	02-Jul-05	26-Jun-12	6y 11m 25d
V189937	Chaffinch	18-Nov-06	27-Mar-12	5y 4m 9d
T684126	Blue Tit	10-Jun-06	13-Apr-12	5y 10m 3d
T682786	Garden Warbler	02-Jun-07	28-Jun-12	5y 0m 27d
AYK840	Willow Warbler	02-Jun-07	28-Jun-12	5y 0m 27d
T683921	Chaffinch	24-Nov-07	11-Dec-12	5y 0m 18d
V190195	Duncock	10-May-08	01-Dec-12	4y 6m 23d
T683754	Chaffinch	29-Sep-07	14-Apr-12	4y 6m 16d
T683677	Chaffinch	22-Sep-07	21-Mar-12	4y 5m 29d
T683968	Great Tit	26-Apr-08	13-Oct-12	4y 5m 18d
T683850	Chaffinch	13-Oct-07	27-Mar-12	4y 5m 14d
CW04194	Blackbird	10-May-08	04-Aug-12	4y 2m 26d
V732160	Garden Warbler	28-Jun-08	02-Aug-12	4y 1m 4d
T682452	Reed Bunting	07-Apr-07	03-Apr-12	4y 11m 27d
T683328	Garden Warbler	11-Aug-07	20-Jun-12	4y 10m 9d
V732454	Reed Bunting	22-Jul-08	18-Aug-12	4y 0m 28d
T683993	Chaffinch	26-Apr-08	05-May-12	4y 0m 10d

The table above shows birds caught during 2012 that had been originally ringed more than 4 years previously. The two oldest birds were both retrapped on the same day (11<sup>th</sup> April) and, remarkably, this was the first time they had been caught since ringing.

The Long-Tailed Tit of more than 6 years old is noteworthy (but still 2 years short of the UK longevity record).

The table also illustrates the propensity of Chaffinch and Garden Warbler to live relatively long lives and, in the case of the Garden Warbler, retain faithfulness to breeding site.

The record longevity of each species recorded by Stanford Ringing Group can be found at [http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg\\_species.html](http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_species.html)

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## Interesting Species at Stanford in 2012

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One new bird species was added to the Stanford list this year – A Black-throated Diver was present on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November and was the 19<sup>th</sup> record for Northamptonshire.



Black-throated Diver, 4/11/12 © C.Hubbard

As mentioned previously, Oystercatchers bred for the first time and successfully raised a single chick on one of the tern rafts in what is probably a record year for breeding numbers in Leicestershire with eight pairs at Rutland Water and at least three pairs in the Soar Valley.

Up to two Short-eared Owls were at Stanford for five days in April during a large influx of this species into the country at that time.

Butterfly numbers were well down on previous years – there were few records of Painted Lady for example but a Marbled White (26<sup>th</sup> July) was a good sighting and only the third for the reservoir – previous records being in 1977 and 2003.

A sighting of a Smooth Newt was the first known record for Stanford.

A record of all Flora and Fauna recorded at Stanford Reservoir can be found at [http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg\\_florafaua.html](http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_florafaua.html)



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## Miscellaneous Group Activities

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### Web Site

Our web site ([www.stanfordrg.org.uk](http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk)) has now been live since October 2010. Individual visits to the website increased by 25% in 2012 compared to 2011. The blog also remains popular, notably the 'Latest Sightings' page which records recent species sightings reported by visiting naturalists.

### Ringling Demonstrations

The weather prevented many planned demonstrations but we did manage a few that were very well received by the attendees.



Woodcock, 25/11/12 © J.G.Cranfield  
A welcome visitor at a ringing demonstration!

### Moth Night

We attempted another moth trapping night in 2012. Having suffered virtually freezing temperatures in late June 2010, we thought we'd play safe this year with a date of 10<sup>th</sup> August. It didn't actually rain (which was remarkable) but the ground was so saturated from previous rainfall that the generators were badly affected by the damp. We managed to catch 42 macro and 8 micro species of which Double-lobed and Lunar-spotted pinion were probably the best.

### Team

The Stanford Ringing Group has added 2 trainees in 2012. Congratulations go to Mike Haigh on obtaining both his 'A' licence and Trainer endorsement which were awarded by the BTO this year.