



STANFORD RINGING GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT 2013

Summary

- In 2013 SRG ringed 5318 birds. Of these, 5062 birds were ringed at our main site at Stanford Reservoir on the Leicestershire/Northamptonshire border (where 7157 birds were processed of 58 species).
- The weather again had a major impact on the breeding birds at Stanford with the coldest spring since 1962 recorded in the East Midlands.
- Many early season species such as Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin and Dunnock were so late starting to breed that we believe the number of nesting attempts were reduced.
- Warblers were late arriving, and in smaller numbers, probably due to the cold weather suffered throughout Northern Europe as well as last years dismal breeding season.
- We processed more birds in 2013 than 2012, but only 11 controls and 16 recoveries were recorded
- Environmental work continued as usual from January to March with little ringing undertaken.
- We operated a BTO Constant Effort Site for the first time
- Many thanks to all those people who have helped us during the year. Your help is invaluable! Many thanks to Severn Trent Water for allowing us access to the site and to Northants Wildlife Trust and Parker Farms for their financial support.

Contents

- Annual Review – Ringing at Stanford Reservoir
- Nest Recording
- Controls & Recoveries
- Oldest Birds Retrapped in 2013
- Unusual or uncommon species at Stanford Reservoir during 2013
- Miscellaneous Group Activities

Annual Review – Ringing at Stanford Reservoir

2013 was certainly a year of two halves. Few birds were ringed in the first 6 months with us relying on the June pulli ringing to bolster totals. The second half of 2013 commenced with some very productive months but had a soggy and very windy end. However we still managed to record our 2nd best year for total birds ringed and processed.

We started 2013 in our usual mode with 3 months of scrub clearance. As we all get older the task gets harder but if we didn't do it, the reservoir margins would soon be lost to woodland. A loss of the grassland/low scrub habitat would result in a much smaller breeding population of threatened species e.g. Reed Bunting, Yellowhammer, Reed & Sedge Warblers and Grasshopper Warbler (currently on the brink of being lost as a breeding species at Stanford again, not having not bred for 2 years).

In 2013 we embarked upon a Constant Effort Site project for the first time. All visits were successfully completed.

Effects of the weather

The period April - June was the coldest since 1962 and resulted in most species breeding about 2 weeks later than in recent years. This time lag seemed to continue throughout the year with migrating warblers, pipits, finches etc., arriving about 2 weeks later than we have come to expect. Whilst 2013 resembled an early 1960's breeding season in *timing*, it unfortunately did not in the *number* of birds present with apparently smaller numbers than usual coming through (probably due to a smaller breeding stock resulting from the virtual washout of 2012, coupled with the cold spring of 2013).



Blowers Lodge Bay at Stanford Reservoir ~ July 2013 © SRG

The summer and autumn were very good with hot and dry conditions prevailing that allowed us to ring 3 times a week for most of the period. However, the wind and rain which started in mid November continued until the year end and much curtailing our activities.

All in all, 2013 was a difficult year, the poor first half of just 900 birds ringed being offset by the second half total of c.4200 (slightly more than in during our record year of 2011).

Some of our highs and lows of 2013 are discussed below.

Hirundines and Pipits

Our House Martin total of 85 smashed the long standing record of 66 set way-back in our first year of 1976. This year we caught House Martin in mid September during a period of high wind and low cloud when they came to a tape lure on the lee side of a hedge. A mixed flock of hirundine hawked up and down the hedgerow and we also managed to catch a number of Swallows, increasing our 2013 total to 106 (our 2nd best year ever). Meadow Pipits came through about 2 weeks late this year and in much reduced numbers, but we still managed a respectful 103 (also a 2nd best year).

Thrushes

With a bumper crop of Hips, Haws and Berries we were hoping to catch well in autumn /early winter for Thrush, and we did! 2013 was our best ever year for Blackbird with 134 caught. Of these 97 were caught during Nov-Dec of which 52 were adults (suggesting they didn't have a great breeding season on the continent). We had our 3rd best year for Fieldfare with 73, our 2nd best year for Redwing with 332, and our 2nd best Song Thrush catch with 41 caught and ringed.



Warblers

Although there were probably fewer breeding birds this year, it was good to see that they recovered to somewhere near their 2010 peak with 1,959 warblers ringed around the reservoir this year. However, it was another abysmal year for Grasshopper Warbler with only 2 caught and no suspected breeding for the second year running. Sedge and Reed Warblers had a much better year with Sedge Warblers doubling last year's numbers. 242 Reed Warblers almost trebled the 2012 total but this was probably helped by us being able to access the large reed bed on the Leicester side this year.

Sylvia Warblers also had a good year with all 4 breeding species increasing on 2012 figures by between 33 and 52 percent. Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler numbers were a bit puzzling with record numbers of Chiffchaff being ringed from what appeared to be a smaller breeding stock. We were expecting Willow Warblers to have a bumper year after last years record breaker, but in fact we were about 50 birds down on 2012, probably due to a very poor Autumn passage through Stanford.

Tits, Creepers and Crests

After a slow start due to the cold spring, Long-tailed Tits bounced back with a late surge to record our 6th best year. Marsh, Willow and Coal tits were all recorded in very low single figures whilst Blue Tits recorded their 3rd best ever year. Great Tits on the other hand only increased by 7 from last years low which is odd.

2013 was a poor year for Goldcrest with only 33 being ringed but this probably reflects the poor passage counts on the coast. One might not think coastal passage would affect numbers at Stanford reservoir, being so far inland. However, in the past we've caught a Goldcrest here bearing a Finnish ring fitted 20 days previously, and this year we had a Goldcrest recovered in Stratford upon Avon some 50 days after ringing, demonstrating the onward passage we see here.

A most unexpected rise in Treecreepers this year saw 27 ringed compared to just 8 in 2012.

Sparrows, Finches and Buntings

Tree Sparrows suffered a dramatic and disappointing fall in numbers this year. In 2012 we ringed 432 but managed just 188 in 2013. There was just one nesting attempt this year compared to 14 in 2012, and this despite us erecting more nest boxes.

Finches had a real up and down year, which we struggle to understand, as the habitat is broadly the same. Chaffinch climbed a significant amount this year (50%+ increase) putting them back to their more usual numbers. Greenfinch numbers were even higher, with a large, later than usual, migration through the site. The Greenfinch totals are quite amazing really, as we stumbled on this annual migration by accident about 3 years ago. We don't see or hear that many Greenfinches either moving about or flying over but if we put on a sound lure they just turn up. The 253 caught this year was our best year to date and hopefully in the future we will get more recoveries from these birds to give us an insight into where they are coming from and going to.



Brambling © SRG
Bonus catch with Greenfinch in October, we don't see/catch many of these. This bird was one of two caught in 2013

Goldfinch numbers were on a par with last year (i.e. not very good) while Linnet suffered a further set back with only 32 caught (cf. 124 in 2011!). Lesser Redpoll failed to show up in any significant numbers. They were late arriving on passage, and when they did, there were few of them (whether this is due to much reduced numbers or perhaps a different migration route only time will tell).

The Buntings fared a lot better in 2013 with Yellowhammers recording their best numbers since 1999. Following last years abysmal Reed Bunting total of 70, we surprisingly had our best ever year in 2013 with 318 birds ringed (the previous best was 1978 when 312 were ringed). Mind you, this year we were helped by finding a bonus passage roost in a hedgerow where we managed to catch over 100 birds in 2 weeks.

A full breakdown of Ringing Totals by species per month and year can be found at http://www.stanfordrg.org/srg_statistics.html

Nest Recording

There was disappointment for a number of species in 2013. Barn and Tawny Owls made no nesting attempts, possibly due to eviction by Squirrels and Hornets (the latter taking over 2 large boxes in Game Wood this year!) Tree Sparrow made 14 nest attempts in 2012 but despite erection of more nest boxes, 2013 was a let down with just one nest attempt. More positive news was Collared Dove, a new nesting species, with three attempts at nearby Park Farm. Oystercatchers again successfully raised young on the raft alongside Greylag Goose. Nest box species were 1-2 weeks later than we are used to and a recent report from the BTO confirmed that in 2013, tit species were actually back in line with nesting attempts of 1966.

Great Crested Grebe	One nest was found with four eggs in the large reed bed but as the water level rose the outcome of this nest was unknown.
Mute Swan	2 records this year with one nest failing and the second raising five cygnets.
Greylag Goose	A pair of adults was observed sitting on the raft for the second consecutive year but the outcome was unknown.
Kestrel	One nest recorded this year but not in the 'usual' box on the Leicester side. Instead, they bred in a box at the settling pond but failed due to desertion.
Coot	One nest found was flooded out at egg stage. Most nests are found in floating vegetation among the Willow trees on the Leicester side and several nests are found annually. However, pictures taken of a family of Mink and a young kit also seen in the reed bed will no doubt have devastated the nests.
Oystercatcher	Once again a successful year for this species with two large young first seen on the raft on 15 th May.
Lapwing	One brood of two chicks were ringed from a nest but from the evidence of adult numbers there were likely to be more nests but they could not be found.
Stock Dove	Another fairly successful year with 18 pulli ringed from 15 nests. Adults trapped on the nests included a female ringed in the same wood two years previously as a chick, and another female ringed as an adult in 2012 which has raised three broods from three different boxes.
Woodpigeon	Three nests were found. One was wind damaged in June! Two further nests were found in autumn with two pulli from each nest ringed.
Collared Dove	A new species for us with 3 nests being found at a nearby farm. One nest was old with damaged eggs but two nests had two young from each nest ringed.
Swallow	An increase from 16 nests in 2012 to 23 in 2013 was welcome. 69 pulli were ringed including 7 broods of five young.
Pied Wagtail	A nest with four pulli at a nearby farm was the first to be ringed since 1992.
Robin	One nest found in hay bales at the stables contained four young.
Song Thrush	A nest with four young was found but they remained unringed due to their size.
Reed Warbler	One nest was predated and two further nests were not visited again due to the water levels and weather conditions. However, 54 juvenile birds ringed in the same reed bed which would indicate some success.
Whitethroat	Two nests were found. One was predated at egg stage and the second contained large young that were left undisturbed.
Willow Warbler	Watching adults carrying food back to nests paid off with three nests found and 15 pulli ringed. Our highest total since 1985!
Blue Tit	A steady increase in number of attempts over the past three years is notable and possibly assisted by the Great Tits recent decline. 27 nest records this year resulted in our third highest total of 203 pulli ringed.
Great Tit	137 pulli ringed from 22 nests is the lowest total since 2003. Pox virus has not been seen in adult birds so there's no obvious explanation to the steady decline in breeding attempts. In 2013, Average clutch size was 7.4 eggs compared to 8.5 eggs in 2011 & 2012. However, a higher percentage of pulli were retrapped this year than previously, with 51 individuals retrapped.
Jackdaw	This species has continued to enjoy our large boxes which were erected for Tawny Owls. Jackdaws are a welcome resident as there would be little opportunity to ring this species otherwise. 3 nest attempts were made with one nest falling to predation. Two further nests resulted in five pulli being ringed.
Tree Sparrow	In 2012 we were treated to 14 nest attempts. In the winter we erected more nest boxes to accommodate the expected establishment of a colony. One nest attempt was made and four pulli ringed and the lack of records was backed up by the notable reduction in numbers of adult birds.
Reed Bunting	19 pulli ringed from five nests found was our best total since 2005.

Controls & Recoveries

The systematic list of Controls and Recoveries for 2013 can be found at <http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srgstats/2013-rc.pdf>

Controls

With only 11 controls recorded at Stanford this year we were a little disappointed as we had increased the number of birds ringed quite significantly. This year we only managed an average of 1 control for every 650 birds processed.

As with previous recent years, a good number of Lesser Redpoll (3) were controlled in 2013 from a much reduced overall catch of just 89 birds. For the second year running we controlled a bird which was originally ringed in Northern Ireland at Copeland Bird Observatory.

All the remaining controls recorded in 2013 were of Warblers. They consisted of 3 Reed Warblers, 2 Blackcap and singles of Chiffchaff and Sedge Warbler, the best of these being a Chiffchaff from Dorset re-caught 18 months after ringing.

All controls ever recorded at Stanford Reservoir can be found at http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_controls.html

Recoveries

A poor year for us with only 16 birds reported to date. The recovery rate this year is low with only 1 recovery for every 316 birds ringed at Stanford.

Within the recoveries received there were at least some interesting ones, with a Sedge Warbler being reported from Anglesey. Two 2 Greenfinches were reported from our autumn passage catch, both ringed in October, (one in 2011, the other in 2013). The 2011 bird was found in Derbyshire during the breeding season, whilst the other was from Warwickshire (50 days after ringing). Both were killed by cats.

Perhaps the best two recoveries for this year were Lesser Redpolls. One was ringed on the 6th October 2012 and the other on the following day. Remarkably both birds were recovered on the same day this spring on the 27th April, one in Suffolk and the other in Scotland (destinations 397km apart).



All recoveries ever recorded at Stanford Reservoir can be found at http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_recovs.html

Oldest Birds Retrapped in 2013

Ring number	Species	Date Ringed	Latest Retrap	Age
CL87412	Blackbird	22-Dec-05	01-Jun-13	7y 5m 10d
TE89027	Great Tit	28-May-05	26-May-13	7y 11m 29d
T179169	Garden Warbler	02-Jul-05	29-Jun-13	7y 11m 28d
T489522	Reed Warbler	13-Aug-05	10-Aug-13	7y 11m 28d
T682439	Chaffinch	23-Dec-06	01-Jul-13	6y 6m 9d
AYK840	Willow Warbler	02-Jun-07	20-Jul-13	6y 1m 17d
T684126	Blue Tit	10-Jun-06	08-Jun-13	6y 11m 29d
T682272	Chaffinch	29-Jul-06	01-Jun-13	6y 10m 3d
T683561	Chaffinch	01-Sep-07	04-May-13	5y 8m 2d
T683849	Chaffinch	13-Oct-07	21-May-13	5y 7m 8d
V190161	Garden Warbler	03-May-08	13-Jul-13	5y 2m 11d
V732247	Reed Warbler	31-May-08	09-Aug-13	5y 2m 10d
CW04222	Blackbird	11-Oct-08	18-Nov-13	5y 1m 6d
T683351	Reed Warbler	11-Aug-07	19-Jun-13	5y 10m 8d
V732221	Chaffinch	31-May-08	29-Jun-13	5y 0m 29d
V732347	Reed Warbler	14-Jul-08	24-Jul-13	5y 0m 10d
X247748	Garden Warbler	09-Aug-08	01-Jun-13	4y 9m 22d
CW04244	Blackbird	03-Jan-09	17-Oct-13	4y 9m 13d
V732630	Bullfinch	11-Apr-09	15-Oct-13	4y 6m 5d
RF20786	Song Thrush	18-Apr-09	12-Nov-13	4y 6m 26d
X248314	Chaffinch	18-Jul-09	23-Nov-13	4y 4m 7d
X248139	Great Tit	04-Jul-09	23-Nov-13	4y 4m 21d
X248429	Blue Tit	02-Aug-09	26-Nov-13	4y 3m 25d
V732927	Reed Warbler	02-Jun-09	09-Aug-13	4y 2m 8d
X248545	Great Tit	12-Sep-09	13-Nov-13	4y 2m 2d
V732691	Reed Warbler	09-May-09	27-Jul-13	4y 2m 19d
X248766	Chaffinch	26-Sep-09	09-Dec-13	4y 2m 14d
X248634	Chaffinch	19-Sep-09	29-Oct-13	4y 1m 9d
X248172	Reed Warbler	04-Jul-09	10-Aug-13	4y 1m 6d
CBY921	Long-tailed Tit	10-Sep-09	31-Oct-13	4y 1m 20d
X248025	Reed Bunting	27-Jun-09	17-Aug-13	4y 1m 20d
X248151	Garden Warbler	04-Jul-09	14-Aug-13	4y 1m 10d
X248196	Reed Warbler	09-Jul-09	11-Jul-13	4y 0m 3d
X248186	Reed Warbler	09-Jul-09	11-Jul-13	4y 0m 3d
CW04285	Blackbird	25-Oct-09	09-Nov-13	4y 0m 16d
X248197	Reed Warbler	09-Jul-09	24-Jul-13	4y 0m 16d
X248127	Whitethroat	04-Jul-09	13-Jul-13	4y 0m 10d

The table above shows birds caught during 2013 that had been originally ringed more than 4 years previously.

Garden Warbler T179169 appeared in the equivalent table last year, but one year younger. The UK longevity record for this species is 9 years 10 months.

The record longevity of each species recorded by Stanford Ringing Group can be found at http://www.stanfordrg.org.uk/srg_species.html

Unusual or uncommon species at Stanford Reservoir during 2013

A **Black throated Diver** stayed briefly on 16th April and is the second annual record in succession after Stanford's first stayed for two days during April 2012. A winter plumaged **Black-necked Grebe** was seen regularly in Blower's Lodge Bay from 5th Oct to 30th Nov and a first winter **Shag** dropped into the same area but briefly on 24th Dec.

A **Bittern** was seen flying into the Leicestershire reed bed on 21st Dec. Four **Shelduck** were together on 16th Mar with a single on 16th Nov and a single **Egyptian Goose** was noted on 28th Feb. **Red-crested Pochard** are seen annually during the winter period but an adult pair with two young on 24th Aug was noteworthy. Sawbills included a 'Redhead' female **Smew** on 28th Dec and a female **Red-breasted Merganser** on 17th Nov. The first **Osprey** of the year was logged on 20th April and a long-staying individual remained till 9th Nov which was often seen feeding on fish in the trees on the NW bank. This is the latest date of an **Osprey** in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. **Red Kites** were seen on numerous occasions with three together on 16th Mar. The first **Hobby** of the year was recorded on 20th April and there were four sightings of **Merlin** including two chasing Skylarks. **Peregrines** are becoming more frequent with pairs seen four times during the year and **Water Rail** has been seen seven times including four on 8th Dec.

Waders included breeding **Oystercatcher** with two chicks seen on 15th June, seven **Ringed Plovers** on 27th Aug, three **Dunlins** on 28th Feb, a **Redshank** on 9th April, a single **Wood Sandpiper** on 10th Aug, **Green Sandpiper** on 22nd Aug, pair of **Curlew** on 2nd April & 22nd Aug, a **Whimbrel** flew over on 29th April and a **Black-tailed Godwit** was present on 9th Feb. The first **Woodcock** arrived on 16th Nov with three seen flying over the rail track and **Snipe** were recorded on four occasions with four being the maximum count on 12th Sept.

Gulls included a first-winter **Little Gull** on 13th & 14th Oct and an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on 7th Nov. Single adult **Caspian Gulls** were observed in the roost on 2nd Nov & 29th Dec whilst pairs of **Yellow-legged Gulls** were also seen in the roost on 5th Jan, 27th Oct & 27th Dec. A single **Arctic Tern** was passing through on 4th May with Common Terns.

Two **Collared Doves** were present on 24th Aug and a male **Cuckoo** was heard on 6th May. A single **Rock Pipit** was seen on the dam on 19th Oct and a **Tree Pipit** flew over on 24th Aug. A **White Wagtail** arrived on 20th April and the first **Yellow Wagtail** was noted on 12th April with five together on 20th April.

Waxwings included an unconfirmed report of a single bird at the feeding station on New Years Day and seventeen were seen flying over and heard calling 8th Feb. A **Wheatear** was observed in a nearby field on 16th April and a male **Ring Ouzel** stayed from 30th Mar to 24th April. A pair of **Cetti's Warblers** was heard on 9th Feb and a single **Spotted Flycatcher** was noted on 28th Sept. **Ravens** have been seen on seventeen different occasions with three together on 12th Jan. Finches included the first **Brambling** of the winter on 5th Oct, fourteen **Siskins** on 15th Feb and a **Common Redpoll** trapped and ringed on 29th Oct. Six **Crossbills** flew over on 2nd Mar including a male at nearby South Kilworth nursery and nine flew over on 29th Oct.

Miscellaneous Group Activities

Web Site

Our web site (www.stanfordrg.org.uk) continues to attract visitors and 10,000+ visits were made to the site in 2013, an uplift of 22% on 2012. Unique visitors exceeded 4000 for the first time.

Whilst we may not have written as many blog articles as in previous years, the 'Latest Sightings' page continues to be very popular.

Ringling Demonstrations

A number of ringing demonstrations were again held for various groups and were well received by those attending. If you are a member of a group (birding or not) who would like to come along, then please get in touch.

Moth Night

Our interest in moth-trapping continued in 2013 with three moth nights attempted.

On a warm 12th July night we had our first session of the year on the rail track. A single MV trap and illuminated sheet were set overnight and by morning we had recorded 177 moths of 57 species. Good numbers of **Peppered Moth**, **Beautiful Hook-tip**, **Buff Arches** and **Common Footman** were notable. Hawkmoths included **Poplar** 3, **Elephant** 7 and singles of **Privet** and **Eyed**. Other moths of interest included singles of **Green Arches**, **Lackey** and **Blackneck**. **Cream-bordered Green Pea** and **Lunar Hornet Moth** were welcome new species, the latter was found clinging to a mist-net during a ringing session the following morning.



Lunar Hornet Moth © SRG



Eyed Hawk-moth © SRG

With the continuing mild weather we organised a second session on 2nd August. Once again a single MV trap and sheet were set and another fairly successful night was had with 145 moths of 43 species recorded. **Dark Arches**, **Lesser Broad-bordered** and **Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwings** were recorded in double figures.

Poplar and **Elephant** were the only hawkmoths recorded. Other moths of note were **Lackey**, **Black Arches** and **Lunar-spotted Pinion**.

Our third session took place on the Leicestershire bank to see if we could trap any reedbed species. 92 moths of 25 species were recorded. **Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwings** were once again in double figures as were **Flame Shoulder**. The only reedbed specialist was a solitary micro-moth **Chilo phragmitella**.

Dragons, Damsels, Darters and Skimmers

Over the past ten years we have taken notes of the Dragonfly and Damselfly species at Stanford Reservoir. In 2013, a record seventeen species were recorded with these mostly being collated by Mark Piper. Only nineteen species have ever been recorded and so 2013 looks to be an exceptional year.

As usual **Common Blue Damselflies** were the first to be seen on 26th May. **Southern Hawker** and **Banded** and **Beautiful Demoiselles** were noted on 30th June, the latter being a new species for Stanford.



Perfect conditions were apparent on the 6th July with eight more species observed. A pair of **Hairy Dragonflies**, including an egg-laying female, were seen in the channel north of the settling pond, the second such sighting (with the first record in 2010). Five **White-Legged Damselfly**, an uncommon species, were also noted below the dam on the same day along with **Red-Eyed** and **Large Red-Eyed Damselfly**, **Blue-Tailed** and **Azure Damselfly**, **Emperor Dragonfly** and **Black-Tailed Skimmer**. **Brown Hawkers** were recorded in good numbers on 27th July as well as two **Emerald Damselflies** and a **Four-Spotted Chaser**. On 10th July seven **Migrant Hawkers** were recorded with the last seen on 19th Oct. **Common Darter** was the last record on 7th September.

Team

The SRG have added three new trainees this year and congratulations go to Ed Tyler and Dawn Sheffield who have both attained an upgrade to a "C" permit.

Unfortunately we have lost two "A" permit / trainers. Mike Haigh has moved to Wales although he still very kindly manages our website.

John Cranfield died suddenly in April after a long illness. John was our first trainee back in 1977 and was an enthusiastic Group member from that point onwards. With John's scientific background he quickly got to be our technical man developing the pneumatic net system and making various tape lures. After early retirement he took up the mantle of Group Secretary and when Mick also took early retirement they ringed together twice a week during the week. John and Mick both enjoyed ringing trips abroad and went to Senegal, Kenya and Cyprus on numerous occasions. John will be sorely missed.

Adam Homer has now taken on the role of Group Secretary.