

Landguard Conservation Trust (known as Landguard Bird Observatory)

Report to Felixstowe Town Council

1/ Trust's Objectives

The Trust's objectives are to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment at Landguard Point, Suffolk and to advance the education of the public in ornithology, flora and fauna, ecology, conservation, history and other matters relating to the area in particular but not by the way of limitation by the provision of educational and study facilities.

2/ Background

The project is on going and has contributed to conservation of the natural environment at Landguard, particularly birds, for nearly 50 years.

The grant money has been spent to support our ringing activities.

Our ringers become qualified under strict guidelines laid down by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Birds that we catch are identified, checked for their age, health and sex, and given a unique numbered metal ring. These records are forwarded to the BTO to enable them to give fact-based evidence to support the conservation of bird populations.

Our activities monitor.

- a) The resident species like Ringed Plover, Blackbird, Robin, Song Thrush and Tit species
- b) The migrants that choose to breed at Landguard like the Common Whitethroat & Lesser Whitethroat
- c) Passage birds both in Autumn and Spring. Conservation is not only about maintaining suitable habitat in the UK but also habitat where birds spend their summer, to breed, or winter. We are always informed when birds trapped at Landguard are retrapped in other parts of the world.
- d) Why populations and their behaviour are changing.
- e) Climate change indicators and phenology.

Retraps are important as they give an indication of where these migrant birds spend their time away from Landguard and why our work contributes to international conservation. By way of example a Common Whitethroat ringed at Landguard was later caught in The Gambia, as it happened by one of our local ringers who was on holiday there.

While monitoring of bird populations goes on throughout the year our ringing activities with nets starts in March and ends November with peak months being April/May and September/October.

3/ Benefits of FTC grant

The nets that we use need replacing regularly due to weathering. The grant has enabled us to purchase quality nets from the BTO for the coming seasons. The project this year has only just started with just our resident birds wearing their new unique numbered ring. However today (13th March) early migrants were noted with Chiffchaff coming back from Africa and Redwing on their way to breeding grounds in Scandinavia.

4/ In summary

Landguard Bird Observatory would like to thank Felixstowe Town Council for their support which is really appreciated.

Footnote: In recent years ticks have been collected from migratory birds. These were sent away to the UK Health Security Agency to ascertain whether the ticks are new species for this country and to examine the blood in the ticks for Tick-borne Encephalitis Virus. Due to be published soon is the results of this study with no evidence of birds bringing this disease into the country (despite it being found in deer in Thetford Forest recently).

News has also been recently received on the identification of feather lice collected that included a new species for Suffolk from a migratory Meadow Pipit that had presumably come from the far North.