



## Birds of Stover Country Park

# Birds

### Introduction

Stover Country Park was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1984 because of its wildlife interest, overwintering wildfowl, rare dragonfly species and invertebrates. It also became a Local Nature Reserve in 2001.

A wide range of both common and rare bird species occur here with many species breeding, including the great crested grebe (shown on the front of this leaflet). During the winter months a variety of wildfowl arrive on the lake.

Bird feeders can be found at the hide (winter only), the aerial walkway and by the Visitor Centre. These are frequently used by woodland birds such as nuthatch, blue tit and great spotted woodpeckers.

Nuthatches nest in holes in trees and can be seen on the bird feeders.



Areas of heathland on site provide nest sites for nightjars, and the conifers attract crossbills in the autumn and provide nesting sites for siskins and goldcrests.

Marsh areas and reed beds provide habitat for reed buntings, snipe and water rail.

### Bird Seasons

Stover has something to see all year round. As the seasons change different birds come and go, leaving resident birds here for you to see any time.

#### January to March:

A good time to see wintering wildfowl. Resident birds are becoming increasingly vocal as they look for mates and prepare for the breeding season. Huge finch roosts appear during January and February including greenfinch, chaffinch and brambling. Sand martins are the first migrants, appearing in March.

#### April to June:

Bird song is at its best; come early to the woodland areas to hear these wonderful springtime sounds. Nightjars arrive in early May from Africa, their eerie churring can be heard at dusk. Blackcaps and swallows arrive.

#### July to September:

Black-headed gulls arrive from early July and numbers build up during the autumn. All goes quiet in the woodland as the bird song virtually ceases.

### Species List

Woodland:	Waterways:	Other:
great tit	poohard	nightjar
blue tit	tufted duck	bullfinch
blackbird	teal	willow warbler
wren	gadwall	wood warbler
robin	shoveler	greenfinch
nuthatch	pintail	chaffinch
treecreeper	goldeneye	redwing
spotted flycatcher	mute swan	tree pipit
pie'd flycatcher	mallard	swallow
tawny owl	coot	sand martin
sparrowhawk	moorhen	blackcap
song thrush	water rail	brambling
mistle thrush	grey heron	
woodcock	common rail	
goldcrest	snipe	
siskin	kingfisher	
crossbill	goosander	
great spotted woodpecker	reed bunting	
lesser spotted woodpecker	little grebe	
green woodpecker	great crested grebe*	
	common gull	*cover photo by Ron Champion

Full species list is available at the Visitor Centre.



Stover Country Park  
Stover  
Newton Abbot  
Devon  
TQ12 6QG

Country Park  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Tel: 01626 835236  
www.devon.gov.uk



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### Habitat Management for Birds

At Stover active management is carried out for the benefit of birds. A variety of habitats including open water, scrub, mature trees (both deciduous and conifer), woodland, reeds, marsh, marginal vegetation, heathland and grassland mean that lots of different bird species can be accommodated here.

Stover Lake is regularly cleared of excessive water lilies and marginal vegetation to leave clear water for the over-wintering wildfowl whilst leaving enough cover for water rail, reed bunting, coot and moorhen.

Scrub areas are provided alongside paths and woodland for birds such as willow warblers.

Heathland areas are kept clear of encroaching scrub to make it suitable for breeding nightjars.

Bird nestboxes have been erected around the site for hole-nesting birds such as tits, nuthatches and summer-visiting spotted flycatchers.

### Records and Sightings

We hope you have enjoyed your visit. Please let us know if you see anything unusual by calling in at the Visitor Centre.

The Visitor Centre has more information about the wildlife on site.

Nightjars are summer visitors to the heathland and are extremely well camouflaged.



#### All year:

Coot, moorhen, grey heron, mute swan and mallards can be seen on the lake at any time of the year.

Woodland birds such as blue tit, great tit, blackbird, wren, robin, song thrush, nuthatch and great spotted woodpecker can be seen all year - look on the bird feeding stations.

#### October to December:

Birds that come here to overwinter start to arrive in October. The lake is full of ducks and wading birds. Look for teal, pochard, tufted duck, pintail, shoveler, gadwall, goldeneye and goosander. Birds such as water rail and snipe are easier to see as the vegetation dies back.

Having arrived in March and April, swallows and sand martins can be seen feeding over the lake during the summer months. Most birds are moulting their summer plumage before the winter. Male mallards look drab like the females. Crossbills arrive in mid-July.

# Where to look for Birds

## Broadleaved Woodland and Scrub

Look for:  
 nuthatch, treecreeper, 3 species of woodpecker,  
 bullfinch, song thrush, tit families including a resident  
 pair of marsh tits.  
 Summer migrants include blackcap, willow warbler,  
 chiffchaff and spotted flycatcher.  
 Up to 3 pairs of tawny owls use the  
 woodland.



Song Thrush



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Blue Tit



Tawny Owl



## Lowland Heathland

Heathland is becoming an increasingly rare habitat.

Look for:  
 long tailed tit, willow warbler,  
 chiffchaff, tree pipit, nightjar (late  
 May-early June)  
 woodcock (Winter).



Nightjar



## Staple Copse, Aerial Walkway and Bird Hide:

The best area for viewing woodland birds.  
 Look for:  
 green and great spotted woodpecker,  
 marsh tit and tawny owl.

## Lake

Look for:  
 Breeding: great crested grebe, coot, moorhen,  
 mallard, mute swan.  
 Passage Migrants: little grebe, teal, shoveler,  
 gadwall.  
 Winter: pochard, tufted duck, goldeneye,  
 goosander.



Scale  
 40m 120m

**Island:**  
 Used by roosting cormorant, black-headed  
 gull, kingfisher and heron.

## Conifer Plantation and Car Park

Look for:  
 goldcrest, coal tit, wood pigeon,  
 crossbill (July), siskin, redpoll,  
 spotted flycatcher, bullfinch,  
 mistle and song thrush  
 and resident chaffinch.



Chaffinch



Grey Heron

## Marsh

The viewing screen in the southern marsh  
 enables views of secretive snipe and  
 water rail.  
 Look for:  
 reed bunting (breeding), herons and  
 kingfishers, snipe and water rail  
 (October-March).



Tufted Duck



Coot



Shoveler



Pochard



Goldeneye

The interpretation board near the  
 lake will help with identification.

