

Lagan Valley Regional Park Bird Conservation Project

Progress Report August 2010

Lagan Valley Regional Park is involved in a program of bird conservation work as part of its Lottery-funded Landscape Partnership Scheme. RSPB is providing advice and assistance with this program, under contract. The initial period of work, carried out in early 2009, aimed to provide advice on conservation methods for priority bird species and to develop a practical conservation plan to cover the period 2009 – 2012. In 2010 efforts focused in putting the practical conservation plan in motion through the placing of nestboxes and creation of giant bird tables.

This report covers the work carried out in May – August 2010.

The main activities planned for this period of work were as follows –

1. Undertake review of progress on delivery since previous contract and strengthen 3 year programme. Status – completed. *No nest boxes were put up during 2009.*
2. Identify key contacts especially those who will require training and advice. Status – completed. *Largest landowners BCC, LCC and the National Trust were targeted this year. National Trust requested further training and advice.*
3. Identify NEW key contacts. Status – completed. *AFBI offices on Newforge Lane were approached regarding swift boxes and GBTs. Newforge Lane Office Park have also been approached by LVRP staff.*
4. Produce plan for nest box monitoring and maintenance. Status – completed.
5. Provide training workshops for nest box monitoring and maintenance. Status – not completed. *Effort was focused on getting nest boxes in place. National Trust will pilot the monitoring and maintenance programme designed in October 2010.*
6. Hold 121 advisory meetings with lead delivery bodies (e.g. LVRP, volunteers, partners) including site identification. Status – completed. *Meeting have been*

held with BCC, LCC and the National Trust to identify the most suitable options for each site and agree works. Numerous visits were made to the National Trust, BCC and LCC sites to identify sites for nest boxes and GBTs in preparation for the end of nest box construction. Further assistance has been offered following nest box delivery.

7. Prepare for workshop on GBT in partnership with BCC. Status – not completed. *Following conversations with LVRP staff it was felt a workshop was not needed this year. A workshop can be arranged with Ecoseeds for 2011 before GBT creation in 2011. Seed mixes and costings have been finalised and have been sent to LVRP for approval following budget consideration.*
8. Hold workshop on GBT. Status – not completed.
9. Collate feedback on workshop and provide necessary materials/added advice. Status – not completed.
10. Liase with UWT and NIEA for Summer barn owl and swift monitoring. Status – completed. *UWT have been sent locations of new barn owl boxes in the park. Tape luring has been carried out at the Giant's Ring with the NI Barn Owl Steering Group. Further survey work is scheduled. The NI Swift Group were approached for survey work and a number of visits were made throughout the park to potential colony sites. Information on historical colony sites has been gathered.*
11. Identify potential for inbuilt swift boxes. Status – completed. *The new barn development at the National Trust Minnowburn estate will provide an excellent site for swift bricks. The barn will also benefit swallows, barn owls and bats.*
12. Encourage uptake of Countryside Management Scheme options by active farmers in LVRP. Status – completed. *James McCormack who manages a significant amount of Ballyowan Farm holding has been approached regarding the establishment of ~1ha of wild bird cover (which will contribute to the target of*

~2ha of GBT). The take up of this option has been organised and secured through DARD.

13. Develop new advisory materials. Status – completed. *An easy read manual has been produced for participants of the conservation plan*
14. Review progress and reassess work programme for following year. Status – completed.

The following conservation work has taken place during May-July 2010.

Barn Owl – Of the four boxes were initially purchased in 2009 three are now in place at suitable locations in readiness for the 2011 nesting season. One further box supplied by the UWT is now also in place. Any birds in the area are able to use the boxes for roosting before the breeding season. The following sites were used:

- Moreland's Meadow (Belfast City Council)
- Minnowburn Farm (National Trust)
- Giants Ring/Edenderry Private Land (Mr Denton)
- Ballyowan Farm (Allen Anderson and James McCormack)

A further site has been agreed with Malone Golf Course through Orla Maguire of BCC. This is to be confirmed. An indoor box will be placed here.

Survey work (tape luring) was carried out at the Giants Ring/Edenderry Private Land site in to check for any barn owl activity. This was carried out in co-operation with the NI Barn Owl Steering Group. Further survey work is scheduled over the autumn and the pre-breeding season period of next year.

House Sparrow – Plans have been made with LVRP staff to take down nest boxes on the tow path, which were placed incorrectly. These boxes can be used for other agreed sites. Future nest boxes will be produced by LVRP volunteers as those produced by the Hydebank Young Offenders workshop were found to be of poor quality. Effort has been made to agree sites with Belfast City Council and Lisburn City Council. Agreed sites include:

- BCC Lagan Lands East (10 house sparrow boxes)

- AFBI premises Newforge Lane (3 house sparrow boxes)
- Minnowburn National Trust Estate (7 house sparrow boxes)
- Aberdelghy Golf Course (5 house sparrow boxes)
- LCC Glenmore Activity Centre (5 house sparrow boxes)
- LCC Lisburn Island Centre (5 house sparrow boxes)
- LCC McIlroy Park (5 house sparrow boxes)

The wardens of the Minnowburn National Trust Estate have restored boxes already in place on their grounds to be suitable for house sparrows. These boxes once repositioned will be incorporated into the LVRP conservation plan.

Once boxes have been produced by LVRP volunteers they will be delivered to site managers where advice on placement will be provided.

Spotted Flycatcher - Nestboxes will be produced by LVRP volunteers. Agreements have been made for nest boxes to be sited at the following locations:

- Lagan Meadows (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)
- Barnett's Park (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)
- Clement Wilson Park (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)
- Malone Golf Course (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)
- LCC Aberdelghy Golf Course (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)
- LCC McIlroy Park (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)
- Minnowburn National Trust Estate (2 spotted flycatcher boxes)

Once boxes have been produced by LVRP volunteers they will be delivered to site managers where advice on placement will be provided.

Kingfisher– The flagship species of Lagan Valley Regional Park. Two artificial nest tunnels have been purchased. Suitable sites were identified on BCC owned land during 2010 and the nest tunnels will be installed during autumn/winter 2010.

Swift – Survey work was carried out in co-operation with the NI Swift Group across the park during 2010 to identify any existing swift colonies to locate potential sites at which to create new colonies. Wilmont House at Dixon Park identified in 2009 is no longer a suitable site at which to create a new colony. Boxes are to be installed during 2010 at:

- Ardnalvalley Scout Centre (x2)

- RSPB Belvoir Office (x2 to reinforce existing boxes following birds entering boxes in 2010)
- LVRP Lock Keepers Cottage (x3)
- Minnowburn National Trust Estate (x4)
- Lisburn City Council were approached regarding the placement of boxes on the Island Civic Centre. A proposal has been submitted and is awaiting approval.

Seed-eating birds – The plan for GBTs has been revised. It is hoped with the agreement of James McCormack to re-enter the Countryside Management Scheme he will establish 1ha of wild bird cover. This is still to be confirmed. Seed mixes for the GBTs have been revised and costed. An agreement for GBTs to be created and restored have been made at the following sites:

- Laganlands East
- Lagan Meadows
- The National Trust are also considering the option for the Minnowburn estate and LCC for McIlroy Park.

The table below summarises the proposed activities for 2010 – 2012.

	2010	2011	2012	Target
Barn Owl	Install 5 boxes at: Malone Golf Club, Moreland's Meadow, Minnowburn, Giant's Ring, Ballyowan Farm. Carry out survey work to help identify future nestbox locations. Monitor progress.	Identify three new locations suitable for barn owl boxes. Order boxes with LVRP and organise their installation and monitoring. Monitor progress.	Identify two new locations suitable for barn owl boxes. Order boxes with LVRP and organise their installation and monitoring.	Ten nestboxes to be installed.
House Sparrow	Install 40 nest boxes at: Lagan Lands East, AFBI premises Newforge Lane, Minnowburn National Trust Estate, Aberdelghy Golf Course,	Install 10 nestboxes at Belvoir and outstanding boxes from 2010.	Relocate unused boxes if required.	50 nestboxes to be installed.

	Glenmore Activity Centre, Lisburn Island Centre, Mcllroy Park.			
Spotted Flycatcher	Install 14 nestboxes at: Lagan Meadows, Barnett's Park, Clement Wilson Park, Aberdelghy Golf Course, Mcllroy Park, Minnowburn National Trust Estate.	Install outstanding nest boxes from 2010 and identify further suitable locations within Belvoir Forest, Belvoir Park Golf Course and Laganlands East.	Review nestbox uptake and install nestboxes in suitable locations. Relocate unused boxes if required.	20 nestboxes to be installed.
Kingfisher	Install nest tunnels at Dixon Park.	If funds available secure two further nest tunnels to be placed at Moorland's Meadow and the Minnowburn estate. Monitor progress.	Monitor progress.	2 nest tunnels to be installed.
Swift	Expand colony at RSPB Belvoir Office. Install boxes at: Ardnalvalley Scout Centre, Lock Keepers Cottage, Minnowburn, Lisburn Island Civic Centre, AFBI premises Newforge Lane. Carry out survey work to identify further colonies and potential sites for new colonies	Expand created colonies if required. Protect existing sites. Seek opportunities for swift brick installation. Monitor progress.	Protect and develop existing sites. Seek opportunities for swift brick installation. Monitor progress.	50 nestboxes to be installed.
Seed-eaters	Plant GBT at Mcllroy Park, Belvoir, Laganlands East, Lagan Meadows and Stranmillis. Identify further suitable	Plant GBT at Mcllroy Park, Belvoir, Laganlands East, Lagan Meadows and other suitable locations. Review seed mix and planting methods.	Plant GBT at Mcllroy Park, Belvoir, Laganlands East, Lagan Meadows and other suitable locations. Review seed	2 hectares of GBT to be planted.

	locations. Review seed mix and planting methods.		mix and planting methods.	
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