



Birds of Bankhead Moss

S.T. Buckland

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A selection of photos illustrating some of the bird species of Bankhead Moss. All photos were taken on the reserve since January 2024. I have included species that only fly over the site. In addition to the 65 species shown here, I have recorded, but failed to photograph, the following 5 species on the reserve: woodcock, kestrel, tawny owl, jay and pied wagtail.

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Pink-footed goose

Skeins often fly over the reserve from autumn through to spring.





Mute swan

The above pair flew over the marsh in early February 2024. The single bird below was on the marsh in late February 2024.





Mallard

There are usually a few mallards on the marsh.





Teal

Teal often occur on the marsh, but can be difficult to spot, given the height of vegetation.





Grey partridge

Occurs in the fields around the reserve, and often visits the edge of the marsh on the reserve. These photos were of birds that had flushed from the marsh.





Pheasant

Pheasants use the reserve for cover and for roosting. A few also breed.





Feral pigeon

Feral pigeons can occasionally be seen flying over the reserve.



Stock dove

A few pairs breed on the reserve, and are often seen in mature trees in the southern half of the reserve.





Woodpigeon

Very common on the reserve.





Water rail

Often heard but seldom seen on the marsh in front of the hide. Four were present in mid-March 2024 when these photos were taken.





Moorhen

A pair can sometimes be seen on the marsh in front of the hide.





Oystercatcher

Not often recorded on the reserve. This one flew over the marsh in early April 2024.





Lapwing

Occurs in the marsh in front of the bird hide, although usually where the marsh extends beyond the reserve into a heavily-grazed field, which provides more suitable habitat for feeding.





Curlew

Curlews can occur on the marsh, although usually just outside the reserve, where the marsh extends into a heavily grazed field, which gives a more suitable habitat for curlews to feed in. These birds were part of a flock that grew to around 140 birds in March 2024.





Snipe

Often present on the reserve, but usually hidden in the vegetation of the marsh.





Black-headed gull

Occurs in the marshy area in front of the bird hide.



Common gull

Often seen flying over the reserve.





Great black-backed gull

Mainly a marine species, with a few wandering inland. One bird was present most of March 2024, and these shots show one of two birds present in mid-April. It is holding a twig or stalk in its beak.





Herring gull

Often seen flying over the reserve.





Lesser black-backed gull

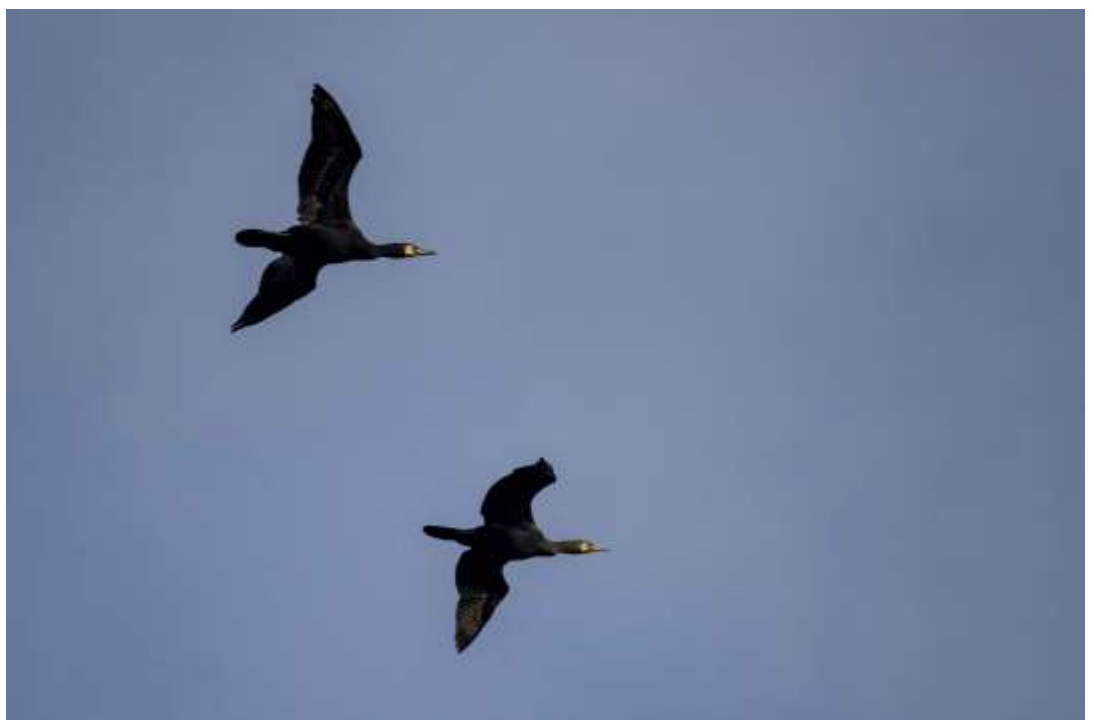
Largely absent in winter, birds start to return in late February. These flew over the reserve in March 2024 and April 2024.





Cormorant

Not a species that you would expect to encounter at Bankhead Moss, but the one above flew over the Moss in mid-April 2024, and the two below in late April 2024.





Grey heron

Attracted to the marsh especially when frogs are spawning.





Sparrowhawk

A sparrowhawk can often be seen hunting on the reserve. The one below right is being pursued by a carrion crow over the Moss.





Goshawk

The goshawk is becoming more common in Fife. This one was photographed over the marsh.





Hen harrier

A rare visitor to the marshy area in front of the bird hide. Although these shots were taken from the hide, the birds were beyond the reserve, over the hill at Bruntshiels. The images show a crow harrying a ringtail (female or immature hen harrier) and what is probably an immature male. They were taken in early January 2024.





Common buzzard

A common sight over the Moss.





Great spotted woodpecker

Can often be seen or heard in the mixed woodland on the south side of the Moss, or in the birchwood to the north and west of the Moss.





Peregrine

This bird was around the reserve in March 2024. The above shot was taken just after an unsuccessful chase of a lapwing over the marsh.





Magpie

A species that is rapidly increasing in east Fife.





Jackdaw

Common on the reserve and in the surrounding farmland.





Rook

Often seen flying over the reserve. There is a small rookery where the shelter strip of trees at the south-east corner of the reserve reaches Peat Inn.





Carrion crow

Ever-present on the reserve.





Raven

Ravens are spreading through Fife, following a reduction in persecution, and are often at the reserve. These birds were flying over the marsh.





Coal tit

Common, especially in areas with pine or spruce trees.





Blue tit

Common, especially in the area of mixed woodland.





Great tit

Occurs mostly in the area of mixed woodland.





Skylark

Can often be heard singing high over the reserve.





Swallow

A common summer migrant that can often be seen flying over the reserve.





Long-tailed tit

A small flock can often be seen on the reserve.





Willow warbler

Very similar to the chiffchaff, but with a very different song. These shots were taken just after their arrival on the reserve, in mid-April.





Chiffchaff

A summer migrant that is becoming increasingly common. The birds in the small images were singing in the mixed woodland in late March, reflecting the early arrival in spring of this species. The above bird was in the birchwood in mid-April.





Grasshopper warbler

A scarce summer migrant. This was a newly-arrived bird in late April 2024 in the ungrazed marshy field south of the Moss.





Blackcap

A summer migrant that is increasing in numbers. The above male and the female below were at the southern end of the birchwood in late April.





Wren

Occurs throughout the year on the reserve.





Treecreeper

This species can often be seen either in the mixed woodland or in the birchwood, sometimes joining a tit flock.





Starling

Common over and around the reserve. A few breed in holes in old trees in the shelter belt linking the reserve to the village of Peat Inn.





Song thrush

Occurs mostly around the margins of the reserve.





Mistle thrush

This was one of a pair flying through the reserve.





Redwing

The redwing is the one on the right, and was one of two in a large group of fieldfares passing through the reserve.





Blackbird

A few pairs breed on the reserve.





Fieldfare

Flocks often fly over or through the site in autumn and winter, and can sometimes be seen resting in trees on the reserve.





Robin

Occurs throughout the year on the reserve.





Stonechat

Fairly scarce in Fife, especially away from the coast. This pair was present through late winter and spring 2024, usually on or around the marsh.





Tree sparrow

This shows two birds in a group of four by the shelter belt of trees that extends the reserve east to the edge of Peat Inn.



Meadow pipit

A few breed on the marsh and on the moss.





Chaffinch

Common on the reserve.





Bullfinch

A frequent visitor to the Moss, especially when heather seeds are available.





Greenfinch

Greenfinches frequently fly over the shelter belt of trees at the eastern end of the reserve, but I have yet to see one land in the reserve, and this out-of-focus shot is the best I have managed so far!



Linnet

Linnets are typically associated with habitats where gorse grows. The lack of gorse on the reserve probably explains why they are not often encountered on the reserve. These were at the edge of the marsh in late March.





Lesser redpoll

Redpolls occur in winter and spring. In March 2024, the flock grew to around 70 birds.





Common crossbill

An uncommon visitor to the reserve. These (male above and female below) were part of a group present in winter and spring 2024. In March, a few fledglings appeared.





Goldfinch

A relatively frequent visitor to the reserve.





Siskin

Occurs in the mixed woodland along the path to the south car park in winter, and a small number join the redpoll flock.





Yellowhammer

Common in the farmland surrounding the reserve.





Reed bunting

Occurs throughout the year on the marsh.

