



Birds of Carphín

S.T. Buckland

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Carphin Farm lies between Luthrie and Norman's Law. An ongoing rewilding programme is creating varied habitat which attracts a wide variety of wildlife. Illustrated here are some of the birds that occur either on the farm or flying over. I'm grateful to Stuart Paul, Briony Marcus, Ross Stuart and Billy Walker for welcoming me to Carphin, and giving me free access.

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Greylag goose

Greylags often feed on fields by Luthrie, and these birds often fly over Carphin.

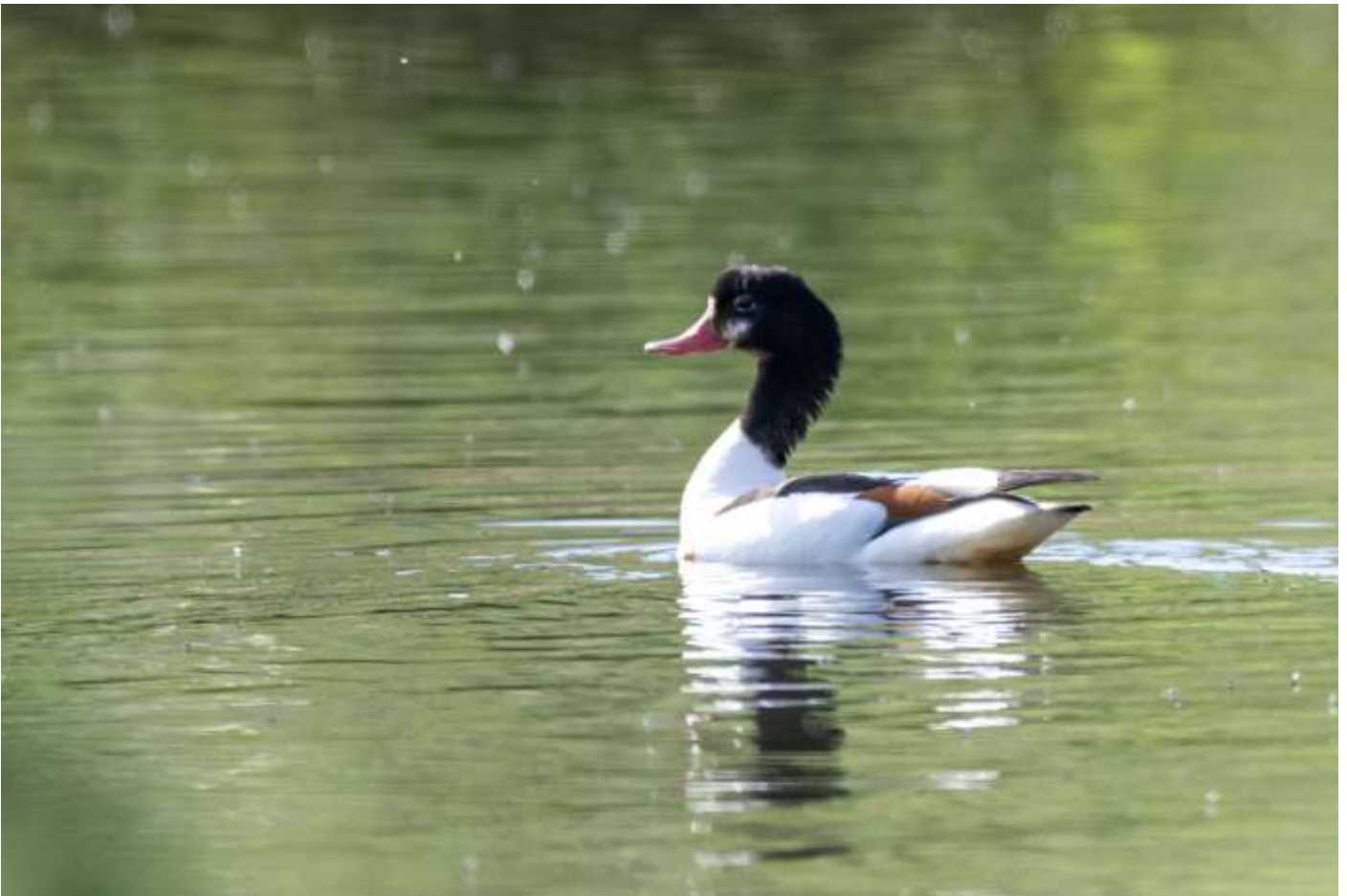




Pink-footed goose

Often seen flying over Carphin. Some stop by Luthrie to feed in the fields.





Shelduck

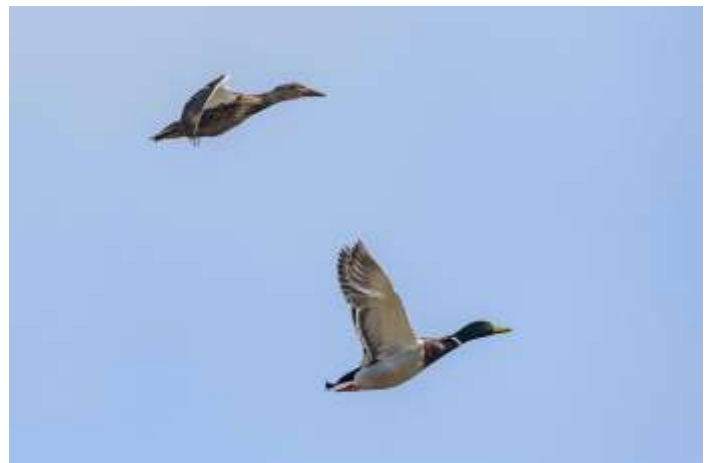
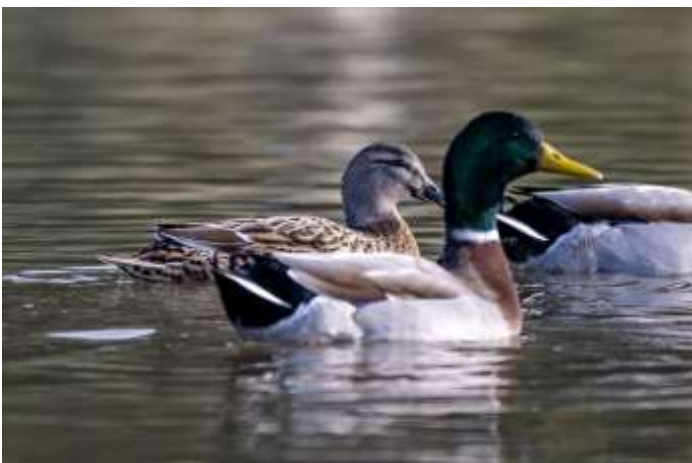
This bird put in an appearance in mid-May 2025. It landed briefly on the duck pond before taking off again.





Mallard

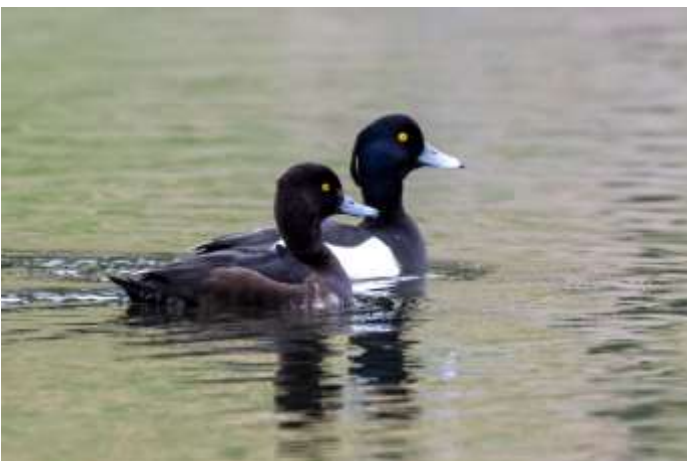
One of the species to benefit from the wildlife ponds on the estate.





Tufted duck

Tufted ducks use several of the small wild-life ponds during the breeding season.





Pheasant

Pheasants are reared on the estate and released in autumn.





Swift

Swifts often fly over the estate in summer.





Feral pigeon

Birds will occasionally wander onto the estate from a nearby farm.





Stock dove

A few pairs breed, and small numbers are present in winter.





Woodpigeon

Very common on the estate.





Water rail

This bird was at the duck pond (Nancy's Pond) in early October 2025, showing itself just as the light was fading.





Moorhen

This pair arrived at one of the wildlife ponds (Nancy's Pond) in March 2025, and stayed to breed. One of the young is shown below right.





Coot

This bird was on one of the wildlife ponds in mid-April 2025.





Little grebe

This pair bred at one of the wildlife ponds in 2025.





Curlew

This bird flew over Carphin in mid-March 2025.





Woodcock

A few occur in autumn and winter, mostly in woodland. This one flushed from moorland on Black Craig.





Green sandpiper

A passage migrant in small numbers in Fife. This one briefly visited the duck pond in early September 2025.





Black-headed gull

Often seen flying over the estate. Birds sometimes feed on grazing land on the estate, as for the mixed flock of common and black-headed gulls above and below.





Common gull

Often seen flying over the estate, and sometimes feeding in fields on the estate.





Great black-backed gull

Mostly a species of marine habitats, a few great black-backed gulls venture inland. This immature flew over the estate in late February 2025.



Herring gull

A frequent sight flying over the estate.





Lesser black-backed gull

Lesser black-backed gulls are mostly absent in winter, returning from late February. These were present in April and May 2025.





Grey heron

The wildlife pools that have been created on the estate attract the occasional heron, especially in spring when frogs are active.





Sparrowhawk

Sparrowhawks hunt mainly in the woodland areas, although the male below flew from the woodland to hunt on the slopes of Norman's Law.





Common buzzard

A common sight over the estate. The buzzard below right was being harried by a carrion crow.





Barn owl

Barn owls bred on the estate in 2025. Although barn owls sometimes hunt in daylight, I have only seen them hunt in darkness at Carphin. These shots were taken in the pre-dawn gloom after a night of nothing.





Long-eared owl

This long-eared owl was hunting at around 10pm one evening.





Tawny owl

This tawny owl came to investigate when I was recording moths. Photos taken with a macro lens and ring-flash turned up to maximum.





Great spotted woodpecker

Occurs mostly in areas with mature deciduous trees.





Kestrel

A frequent sight over Carphin.





Jay

Jays sometimes appear on the estate, but are not always in evidence.





Magpie

Magpies occasionally wander onto the estate. These flew through, heading towards Norman's Law.





Jackdaw

Common on the estate.





Rook

Common, mostly on or near the arable fields.





Carrion crow

A common species on the estate. The above two were mobbing the buzzard.





Raven

Ravens can often be seen on or flying over the higher ground on the estate.





Coal tit

Common in the wooded areas of the estate.





Blue tit

Common, especially in the areas of woodland.





Great tit

Common, especially in the areas of woodland.





Skylark

Occurs mostly from late February through the breeding season. It can often be heard singing high above fields on the estate.





Sand martin

This bird was hawking for insects with swallows and house martins, flying over Black Craig and the eastern slopes of Norman's Law.



Swallow

A common summer migrant that can often be seen hawking for insects at Carphin. A few pairs breed on the estate.





House martin

House martins can often be seen hawking for insects over the estate.





Long-tailed tit

Small numbers occur on the estate throughout the year.





Willow warbler

A summer migrant. Climate change is causing declines in willow warbler numbers, and a corresponding increase in chiffchaff numbers, and chiffchaff numbers now exceed willow warbler numbers in some parts of Fife, a remarkable change from a few decades ago.





Chiffchaff

A summer migrant that arrives early in spring.





Blackcap

A summer migrant that arrives in early April. Female below right, and a newly-fledged bird on the right. Males above and below.





Garden warbler

Similar to the blackcap with a similar song. It is much less common than the blackcap. Two birds arrived at the end of April 2025 and established territories.





Whitethroat

A common summer migrant.





Goldcrest

A few occur in suitable woodland areas on the estate.





Wren

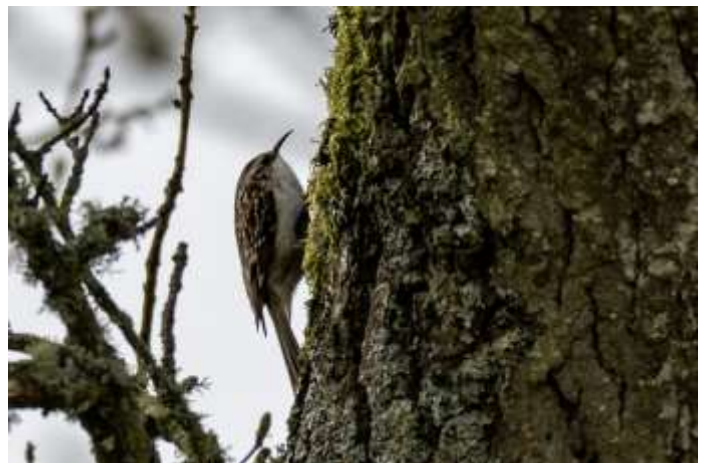
Common throughout the year on the estate.





Treecreeper

Occurs in woodland on the estate.





Starling

Common on the estate.





Song thrush

A few pairs breed, usually arriving on their territories in late February. The bird on the right was singing in the rain in late evening, with the light almost gone.





Mistle thrush

Small numbers occur on the estate.





Redwing

Common in autumn feeding on the estate or flying over, with a few staying into winter.





Blackbird

Common throughout the year.





Fieldfare

Common in autumn. Many just fly over on migration, while others stop to rest and feed, with some staying into winter.





Robin

Common throughout the year on the estate.





Stonechat

This pair arrived at Berry Brae in early April 2025. Male above and below left, female below right.





Tree sparrow

Seen mostly at the lower parts of the estate.
The bird on the right was one of a pair that
bred near the farmhouse in 2025.





House sparrow

Common in Luthrie, and occasionally, as here, one wanders onto Carphin estate.





Dunnock

Common throughout the year.





Grey wagtail

Birds occasionally come onto the estate. This was one of two at Nancy's Pond in mid-September 2025.





Pied wagtail

Most likely to be seen on the estate between late February and autumn. The fledgling on the right was near Carphin farmhouse.





Meadow pipit

Occurs mostly in spring and autumn, with a few breeding on or near Black Craig.





Tree pipit

A few pairs breed in the far west of Fife, but otherwise, singing birds seldom occur in Fife. The one above and below was near Wester Kinsleith on 20 April 2025. The one on the right was on the slopes of Berry Brae two days later. Both were doing frequent song flights.





Chaffinch

Common on the estate.





Bullfinch

A common species on the estate. Many arrive on the high ground around Black Craig in winter to feed on heather seeds.





Greenfinch

A few occur on the lower parts of the estate.





Linnet

Linnets are typically associated with habitats where gorse grows. A few occur on the estate in summer, and a large flock forms in autumn and winter, to feed on various weed seeds.





Goldfinch

Common and sometimes numerous on the estate, benefitting from the abundant weed seeds.





Yellowhammer

Common in and around the arable fields.





Reed bunting

Associated with wet habitats during the breeding season, the reed bunting often moves into dry habitats in winter. These were photographed in February and March.

