

STOP WOODLANE WIND FARM ACTION GROUP OBJECTION DOCUMENT

Appendix 3.9 - Wildlife and ecology of the Woodlane Wind farm site and its immediate vicinity

A3.9.1 Ornithology

Pink Footed Geese

The northward migration is an annual spectacle enjoyed by many villagers as the first birds begin to pass through in February, their passage announced by a cacophony of loud calls. The passage continues into March.

The picture shows a skein of geese over Hillam Common Lane. They had flown directly through the proposed Woodlane wind farm site. In the photograph they are 800 metres due north of the nearest turbine. They were seen on 18 February 2009 on their way north and were flying at about 60 metres height, i.e. within turbines' blade area.



Whooper Swans

Every year the birds arrive in October and use the site as a staging point. Their flight path is usually towards the east, crossing the Haddlesey to Gateforth Road and then turning south and passing over Haddlesey.

The birds were observed daily over the period 19 January to 21 February and full details of their daily movements and numbers are

shown at Fig A3.9.3 and Fig A3.9.4 below.

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	Date	Day	Time	Number of birds	Location	Comment
1	19 Jan	Mon	08.00	16	5	
2			10.25	24	2	
3			12.41	21	1	
4			15.30	21	1	Birds more spread about
5			16.15	20	1	
6	20 Jan	Tue	08.00	20	3	Moving west on foot
7			09.00	20	1	
8			10.30	20	4	
9			13.00	20	4	
10			15.34	20	1	
11			16.05	20		Spread out across 1, 4 and 5
12	21 Jan	Wed	08.30	20	2	Spread out going west
13			09.30	20	1	
14			13.00	20	4	Flail mowing in dyke north of area 1 Birds moved on foot
15			16.00	20	3	In shallow flooded area
16	22 Jan	Thurs	08.30	20	3	Moving east
17			11.00	20	1	Still same location at 13.30
18	23 Jan	Fri	08.30	24	6	
19			16.00	24	1	
20	24 Jan	Sat	08.30	16	6	Very cold – ground frost
21			10.30	16	6	
22			15.00	24	1	Still there at 16.30
23	25 Jan	Sun	11.00	12	1	
24	26 Jan	Mon	08.30	16	2	
25			10.30	24	1	Still there at 14.30
26	27 Jan	Tue	14.00			No birds
27			16.00	4	2	
28	28 Jan	Wed	10.00	6	4	
29			12.00			No birds , not back by 16.00
30	29 Jan	Thurs				No birds seen all day
31	30 Jan	Fri	09.00	10	3	
32			14.00	8	1	Birds in the same area, observed at 16.00
33	31 Jan	Sat	11.30	10		Seen flying east at 100 feet towards West Haddlesey
34	1 Feb	Sun	09.00	11	2	Spread out moving west
35	2 Feb	Mon				Snow – no swans
36	14 Feb	Sat	09.00	13	1	First sighting of their return
37	15 Feb	Sun		13	1	
38	16 Feb	Mon	10.00	14	1	Same place at 14.00
39	17 Feb	Tue	13.00	14	1	
40	21 Feb	Sat	10.00			No birds
41			16.00	13	1	
42			17.00	13	4	Short low flight to change location
43	The swans were not seen again after this date					

Fig A3.9.3 Observation of whooper swans - 19 January to 21 February 2009

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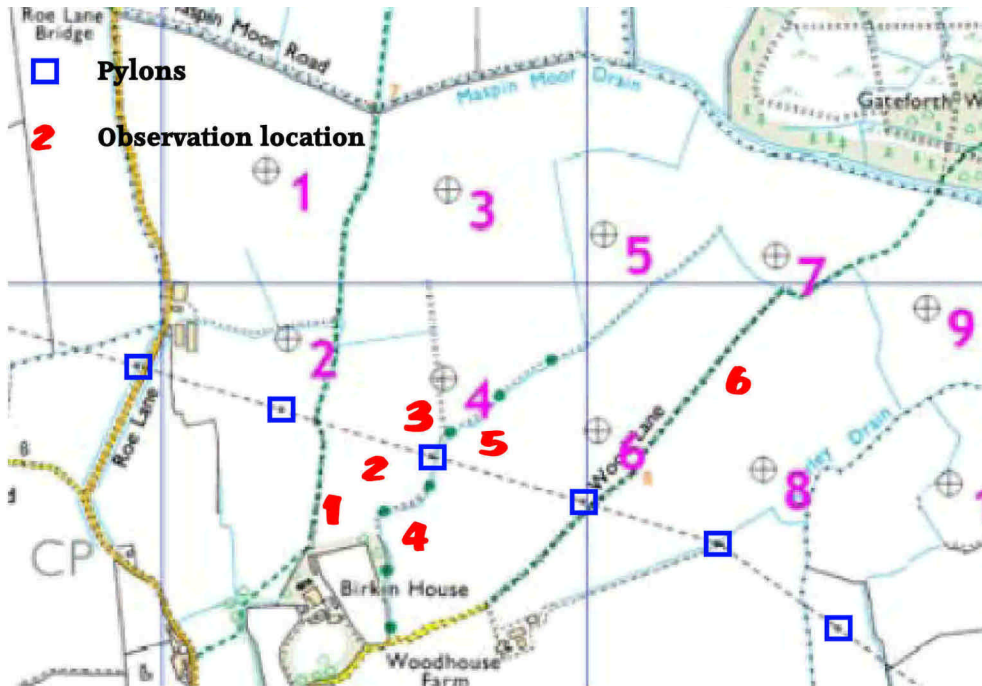


Fig A3.9.4 Whooper swan observations January / February 2009

Lapwing, Golden Plover, Swallows

Many of these birds are seen at and around the proposed site.



Fig A3.9.5 Hobby (falco subbuteo)

Stock photo

Not one of the birds seen in Gateforth

Raptors

Hobby

A rare raptor species, which is afforded special protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, has taken up residence in Gateforth Wood, which is adjacent to the northern boundary of the Woodlane development. The wood provides the valuable habitat of mixed Ancient Woodland, with isolated Scots pines and man-made pools, the latter encouraging a healthy dragonfly population, the staple diet of the Hobby.

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Other Birds

Heron

These hunt along the drains and roost in the fields on the site. This is a slow flying bird, and likely to be vulnerable to turbine collision.

Owls

Barn owls, which are afforded special protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, are found in the area. Tawny owls, long-eared owls and little owls are also local to the area.

A3.9.2 Mammals

Badger

There is a small local badger population. Three setts are known in Gateforth Wood and along the boundary of the wood. These are all within the 500 metre study site. This population was reduced in the autumn of 2008 when the badgers in a sett by Mearley Drain were killed by persons unknown. Later the sett was destroyed by work on the sides of Mearley Drain. This sett was very large and was known to many people in the area. It was also very old (anecdotal reports say it may have been there for more than 25 years). The sett was located 146 metres from the centre of turbine number 8. Allowing for a 19 metre diameter base, this would place the sett just 137 metres from the excavation for the base of the turbine.

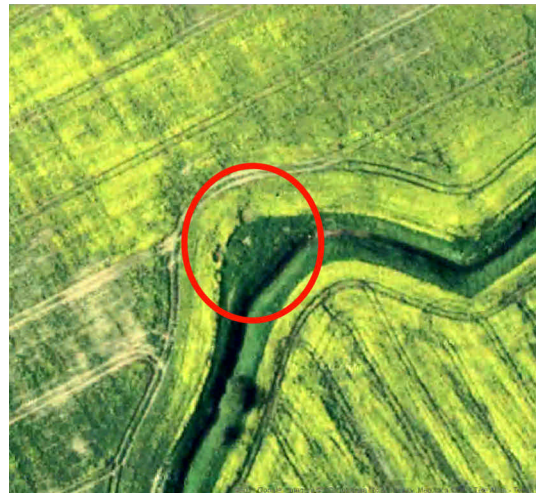


Fig A3.9.6

Location of the badger sett on Mearley Drain

The sett was at location SE 545 275 and was identified in the ecology survey. The distance of the sett from turbine 8 is stated as 200 metres. We estimate that the sett entrance was 146 metres from the centre of the base for the proposed turbine number 8. On the basis of the destruction of one very extensive badger sett we believe that the impact on local badgers has already been serious.

Bats

Local observation is that bats are present in Gateforth, all around Gateforth Wood, along Hillam Common Lane and in Birkin. The fishing pond and the woodland by Birkin House are prime locations in Birkin. Without specialised equipment we can say only that we know that Pipistrelle and Daubenton are both present.

Brown Hare

The brown hare used to be common in the area and is now struggling, due to poaching activity. Poaching was much reduced last year (winter 2008/09) due to increased police activity, and it is hoped that numbers will recover. The hares range over large distances and move around the

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area during the course of a crop-growing season to find suitable food. Loss of access to seasonal feeding grounds by introduction of fencing could have a serious impact on the reduced population at a time when it needs less disturbance, and an opportunity for the population to recover.

Roe Deer

Deer also free-range over the site area and use the woods and hedges for cover. Numbers have been depleted due to illegal poaching. The population needs minimum disturbance and an opportunity to recover. The ecology survey comments on deer tracks being found but says that no deer were seen.

Water Vole

These are present in the drains which cross the site and have their burrows in the banks.

A3.9.3 Biodiversity - Other Species of Interest

Grass Snake

The ecology survey did not report the sighting of any grass snakes. This is surprising as they are often seen in the area and around the site. None was found during the wildlife survey. Smooth newts and the Common Frog are also seen and provide food for the snakes.



Fig A3.9.7
Grass snake seen near the site



Fig A3.9.8
Four-spotted chaser dragonfly
(*libellula quadrimaculata*)
seen near the site

Dragonfly

A wide range of dragonfly and fungi contribute to biodiversity. Both Common Hawker and Brown Hawker dragonfly, together with myriad damselflies, breed in Gateforth Wood in the artificial ponds. There is no mention of this, even though the 500 metre survey zone extends into the wood.