

# Compton Pool Farm

## Wildlife Report

Owners: John and Ann Stocks



*Overview of Compton Pool Farm Cottages*

Compton Pool Farm is set in fourteen acres, consisting of grassland with a substantial area taken up by the wet woodland scrub known as willow carr. Interspersed in the carr are five large ponds which are fed by natural springs. Compton Pool Farm is a complex of holiday cottages, each with their own outside seating area. The planters are kept simple with lavender and rosemary bushes, which when in flower not only have a wonderful scent but also attract a plethora of insect life such as bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Look out for butterflies such as painted lady, tortoiseshell, peacock and red admiral. The lawned area adjacent to the cottages has some shrubs and fruit trees,



*Recreation Area*

blackbird, robin and song thrush are regular visitors looking for earthworms, slugs and snails. In the autumn months particularly in the hedgerow behind the pigs, goats and chickens, look out for flocks of house sparrows, chaffinches and greenfinches, which take advantage of the food put out for the animals.



The wet woodland area consists mainly of willow with some patches of alder, such as the trees that line one of the ponds. These tall distinctive trees have prominent catkins, the males being a reddish colour that are pendulous, whereas the females are dark brown and cone-like. The ground flora is a mix of ferns such as harts tongue, broad buckler, male, lady's and hard fern. In the wet, damp areas the rounded bright green leaves and yellow flowers of golden saxifrage carpet the ground along with liverwort which can be found along the stream banks. The most striking part of the flora are the large upright stumps of the tussock grass which can be seen all around this area, at dusk they could almost be mistaken for people standing amongst the trees!



*Willow Carr*



*Tussock Grass*



*Golden Saxifrage*

Listen to the birdlife as you walk through the wooded area. The birdsong, particularly through the summer months when the bird population increases with the summer migrants, is a symphony to ones ears. There is plenty of bird activity in and around the site due to the habitat, all the common woodland birds can be seen such as blue, great and coal tit, blackbird, robin, greenfinch, chaffinch and nuthatch. Goldcrests can be heard high in the treetops and look out for a tree creeper climbing up the trunks of trees in search of insects. Through the winter months large parties of long tail tits are a regular sight flying one after another from tree to tree as if in a marching procession.



*Long Tail Tit*

As you walk through the site, listen for the curt 'chip' of the greater spotted woodpecker or the unmistakeable 'yaffle' of the green woodpecker. The harsh squawk of the jay is a common sound particularly in the autumn when they are busily caching acorns for the winter. Some of the summer migrants include the fruity chortley song of the blackcap and the similar song of the garden warbler,



the descending call of the willow warbler or the easily identified call of the chiffchaff (it sings its own name!). Whitethroat, with its scratchy melodic call, can also be heard amongst the scrub and hedgerows. At night tawny owls are heard with their characteristic 'kewick' often followed by a 'twooh', they are regularly seen swooping along the lane by the car parking entrance.



*Willow Warbler*



*Blackcap (male)*

Buzzards are a regular sight flying high on the thermals above the site and look for the characteristic flap, flap, glide of the sparrowhawk or the hovering of a kestrel over the surrounding farmland as it hunts for small mammals. Jays are particularly noisy in the autumn when they are busily caching away acorns for the winter, watch them fly from tree to tree showing their splendid blue wing-flashes. Through the summer months, the hirundines; swallows, swifts and house martins can all be seen high in the sky feeding on the plethora of insect life, as these birds leave in the autumn they are replaced by the winter migrants. Listen out for large flocks of redwing and fieldfare as they pass over looking for feeding grounds.

Foxes and badgers are regular stars on the closed circuit TV and evidence of them can be seen around the area, look for their faeces. Fox faeces is similar to dog but has a wisp at the end and always contains fur. Through the summer months you are more likely to see a fox out in the day, trotting over the fields looking for rabbits, small mammals and ground nesting birds to satisfy the increasing demand for food from their cubs. Badgers are very clean animals and use a latrine (loo), see if you can tell what they have been eating, it is really obvious when blackberries and sloes are on the menu. There are other tell-tail signs of badger too: well worn paths and scuffs in the ground where they have been nuzzling for earthworms, grubs, bulb and roots. If you are lucky you maybe rewarded with a sighting of a weasel or stoat, both prey on the many rabbits around the site. A black tip to the tail distinguishes the stoat from its close relation the weasel who is also slightly smaller in size.



*Fox*



The long grass and vegetation such as the hemlock water dropwort and meadow sweet is an ideal place to look for invertebrates such as grasshoppers and crickets. Easily distinguished from each other by the length of their antennae. Grasshoppers have short, stubby antennae whereas those of the cricket are long and bend back over their body. Look out for the great green bush cricket, which is a local speciality and reaches 8 cm at maturity.



*Meadowsweet*

Due to the dark nature of the woodland carr, butterflies are fewer in number. The edges and glades, wet meadows and the open grassland areas adjoining the woodland are more fruitful. Gatekeeper, ringlet, common blue, painted lady and clouded yellow are but some of the species to be seen.



*Painted Lady*



*Ringlet*

The paths through the wet woodland lead you to each pond in turn, all of which have a slightly different character which means the diversity of the wildlife in the area is increased. There are five ponds in total, two of which are stocked with fish; carp, tench, rudd and roach. The vegetation consists of yellow flag iris, marsh marigold, typha, fools water cress, water figwort and water mint.

The ponds are regularly visited by the heron, which can be seen standing motionless ready to take an unsuspecting fish or frog. Look out for the electric blue flash of a kingfisher as it flies past often accompanied with its high pitched 'peep peep' call. The branches of the alder and willow trees overhanging the ponds are excellent perching post for the kingfisher. Moorhen can be seen scuttling in and out of the vegetation and dashing across the grassed areas and little grebe may also be seen particularly in the lily ponds. Mallards are a common sight too along with Canada geese and even little egret. Grey wagtails with their grey and yellow plumage can also be seen around the ponds.



*Canada Geese and Angler!*





*One of the ponds!*



*Little Grebe*

The ponds are excellent habitat for the insects, diving beetles and freshwater hoglouse and shrimps and therefore the ideal home for reptiles and amphibians including frogs, toads, grass snakes and newts. There are plenty of tadpoles to be seen particularly in the lily ponds where on sunny days the shallower areas will be a black writhing mass.. Look out for the young grass snakes which are no thicker than a pencil, swimming across the water or slithering through the undergrowth. In the summer months look out for dragonflies and damselflies flying around the area. Damselflies are daintier and fold their wings behind them at rest whereas dragonflies are much more robust and hold their wings out at rest. Damselflies such as blue-tailed, common blue and small and large red can be seen flying around along with dragonflies such as golden ringed, emperor, black tailed skimmer and southern hawkler. Look out for the beautiful demoiselle particularly by the running water of the stream. At first glance it could be mistaken for a butterfly due to its fluttering flight, it is in fact a damselfly. The male has a blue iridescent body with dark navy wings whereas the female has a green iridescent body and copper wings.



*Blue Tailed Damselflies (Mating)*

The hedgerows bottoms in the spring and summer are full of wildflowers such as foxglove, primrose, lesser stitchwort, lesser celandine, red campion, lords-and-ladies, herb robert, garlic mustard, violet and wood sage. Many species of fern including hart's tongue, hard shield-fern, male-fern, lady-fern, broad buckler and soft shield-fern can all be found in the hedgerows as well.



*Stitchwort*



*Primrose*



Autumn is a good time to look for fungus; many different types of fungi can be found on the dead wood in the hedgerows and carr, including orange peel fungus, dead man's fingers and candle snuff fungus and on the woodland floor earthballs can be found, you may come across the putrid smell of the stink horn, they are hard to find as their smell travels some distance.



*Earthball*



## Species List

Trees and shrubs	Plants	Birds
Ash	Annual meadow grass	Blackbird
Beech	Bluebell	Blackcap
Black Alder	Bramble	Blue tit
Blackthorn	Burdock	Buzzard
Buddleia	Cleavers	Carrion crow
Elder	Cocksfoot	Chaffinch
Field Maple	Ground Ivy	Chiffchaff
Hawthorn	Giant hogweed	Coal tit
Hazel	Common dog violet	Coot
Holly	Cow parsley	Dunnock
Oak	Creeping buttercup	Fieldfare
Rowan	Creeping Thistle	Garden warbler
Scots pine	Enchanters nightshade	Goldfinch
Silver Birch	Honeysuckle	Great tit
Sweet chestnut	Greater plantain	Greater spotted woodpecker
Wild cherry	Greater sedge	Green woodpecker
Willow	Herb Robert	Greenfinch
	Honeysuckle	Grey wagtail
<b>Ferns</b>	Herb Bennet	House martin
	Germander speedwell	House sparrow
Hard fern	Ivy	Jackdaw
Harts tongue fern	Lord and ladies	Jay
Lady fern	Marsh marigold	Kestrel
Male fern	Nettles	Linnet
Scaly male fern	Primrose	Little grebe
	Red campion	Long tail tit
<b>Mammals</b>	Snowdrop	Mallard
	Timothy	Marsh tit
Badger	Water figwort	Meadow pipit
Bank vole	Water mint	Mistle thrush
Common shrew	Yellow flag iris	Moorhen
Daubentons bat	Yorkshire fog	Pied wagtail
Field mouse		Raven
Fox		Redwing
Hare	<b>Reptile &amp; amphibians</b>	Robin
Lesser horseshoe bat		Rook
Pipistrelle bat	Common lizard	Skylark
Rabbit	Frog	Song thrush



Roe deer	Grass snake	Sparrowhawk	
Wood mouse	Palmate newt	Stock dove	
	Slow worm	Swallow	
	Toad	Swift	
		Tawny owl	
		Whitethroat	
		Willow warbler	
		Wren	
		Yellow hammer	

*NB This is not a comprehensive list*



## Wildlife Places of Interest Nearby

There are plenty of coastal walks which offer stunning views and idyllic little villages to visit. There are shingle beaches, high windswept cliffs and plenty of wildlife to see if you take your time to enjoy.

### Wildlife sites close by to visit:

#### Berry Head and Sharkham Point

**OS Map: SX 941 562**

Torbay's most important wildlife site, it contains several nationally rare and threatened limestone plants along with a large seabird colony including guillemots and fulmar.

For more information contact Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust tel: 01803 882619

#### Dainton Common

**OS Map: SX 848 673**

Dainton common is a calcareous grassland with a plethora of floristic delights including yellow wort, burnet saxifrage and salad burnet. Roe deer are regularly seen in the woodland and the peregrines nest in the quarry.

#### Dartmoor National Park

A day out to Dartmoor will give you a moorland experience, with blanket bogs, upland heath, oak woodlands (Wistmans Wood OS map SX 612 774 and Yarner Wood OS map SX 786 788) and the impressive granite tors. Wildlife to look for includes buzzard, dipper, salmon and skylark. For more information contact the High Moorland Visitor Centre tel: 01822 890414

### Wildlife sites further afield to visit:

#### Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve

**OS Map: SX 827 443**

The largest freshwater lake in the southwest, it is separated from the sea by the narrow shingle ridge known as Slapton Sands. There is plenty to see, cettis warbler is a resident warbler (listen out for its explosive song), reed and sedge warbler in the summer. Waterfowl include tufted duck, coot, golden eye, great crested grebe and mammals include badger, otter, dormouse and many species of bats. Slapton Bridge, which divides the two leys, is a great vantage point to watch the plethora of wildlife that the reserve supports.

The shingle ridge itself is home to a host of wildflowers including yellow horned poppy and viper's bugloss and looks stunning in May and June. Guided walks run throughout the summer. Tel 01548 580685



## Beesands

**OS Map: SX 819 410**

The small village of Beesands sits behind a mile long stretch of shingle beach. There is a small freshwater lagoon 'Widdecombe Ley' which is an important wildlife site. There is a bird hide which is open to the public from which to watch the wildfowl and other wildlife that visits this ley.

## Start Point

**OS Map: SX 821 374**

A perfect spot for watching the sun go down looking at the lighthouse and the stunning scenery. It is also a good place to watch the summer migrant birds such as willow warbler, chiffchaff and wheatear arriving. March and April is the best time for the migrants, however all year round interest includes peregrine, kestrel, raven and circl bunting. Look out on to the rocks known as Pear Tree Point and you may see a seal or two.

## Hallsands

**OS Map: SX 817 388**

Visit the ruined village of Hallsands, above the village by the row of old fishing cottages is a kittiwake colony, watch these noisy birds fly to and from their nesting site, look out for fulmars in this area too.

## Prawle Point

**OS Map: SX 741 373**

Coastal headland south of the village of East Prawle, great views and one of the best bird migration points. Spring and autumn are the best time. Circl bunting breed in the area.

## Andrew's Wood- Devon Wildlife Trust reserve

**OS map: SX 713 520**

A wet woodland with acidic grassland. Has one of the largest populations of dormice in Britain, woodland birds include wood warbler; flowers include marsh orchid and heath lobelia. There are plenty of butterflies to see in the grassland and woodland glades such as marbled white and silver washed fritillary.

## Wembury - Voluntary Marine Conservation Area

**OS map: SX 518 484**

Four miles of coastline, rocky cliffs with nesting seabirds, rocky shore, slate reefs and wave cut platforms makes it a great site to spot marine plants and animals.

There is also a Marine Centre ideal for learning about the marine life, with regular rock pool rambles. For more information tel: 01752 862538



## Compton Pool Farm Wildlife Enhancement Advice

Wildlife needs food and shelter: places where creatures can rest and nest. Those gardens which are richest in wildlife have colour in all seasons with plants blooming much of the year and seeds and fruit in the autumn and winter. A carefully planned structure, with plenty of variation in plant height and different habitats is ideal.

### Ponds

The ponds may be improved slightly by creating more of a marsh habitat. The long narrow pond lends itself in particular to a more marshy habitat. This could be established at the shallower end by planting plugs of cuckooflower, one of many attractive native plants for pond margins or marshes (orange-tip butterflies lay eggs on it). Other plants include marsh marigold, water avens, yellow flag iris, brooklime, ragged robin, bogbean and water plantain. Arrowhead is useful for emergent dragonflies and is also a specific food plant to some leaf beetles and also attracts hoverflies. This is a splendid plant for a largish pond. Ponds with fish support fewer species of aquatic animals for the simple reason that fish eat them, so it is best not to introduce them.

The best way to keep a pond oxygenated and free of weed is to fill it with native pond plants. Always use British waterweeds and avoid non-native species such as swamp stonecrop or New Zealand pygmy weed *Crassula helmsii* (also sold as *Tillea aquatica*), parrot's feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum* and floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*. These are very invasive and will only cause you problems.

Smaller ponds need some of the vegetation cleared every couple of years, however this is better carried out in the autumn along with weed and leaves to avoid de-oxygenation problems. It is best practice to clear out one section of the pond at a time and leave the vegetation you remove at the side of the pond for a day or so to give the small aquatic animals tangled up in it a chance to get back to the water. Surplus pond vegetation makes excellent compost!

### Walls and fences

Within the grounds of Compton Pool Farm there are many walls and fences, which are very good for nesting birds, foraging and hibernating insects and small mammals. Any new trellises to be erected should be attached about 10-15 cm from the wall using spacing blocks. Climbers should be planted approx. 10 cm away from the trellises, out of the dry zone. The space between trellis and wall will be ideal for nesting birds such as blackbird and dunnock and, on the ground, will provide a relatively safe green corridor for small mammals such as bank vole, wood mouse and shrews.

As well as providing cover for nesting birds, wild honeysuckle and ivy offer hibernation sites for butterflies such as brimstone and are good food plants for hawkmoths (honeysuckle) whereas hoverflies, small tortoiseshells, commas,



peacocks and other butterflies feed on ivy which provides flowers late in the season.

### **Nest Boxes**

Use an open fronted nest-box behind a climbing plant to attract nesting robins, one could be placed within the climber at the end of crazywell cottage.

Nest boxes for birds should be put in place carefully and never on a south facing wall or fence in full sun. A couple of swift boxes put up on the barns could also help to encourage swifts to nest, a calling tape should be used to attract the swifts, they will come and investigate and hopefully use the boxes. House sparrow terrace boxes could also be put up around the buildings. In the hedgerows dormouse boxes could be put up, site them about 5ft from the ground attached to hazel. In the woodland around the ponds, boxes with varying holes sizes could be put up at differing heights

Bird boxes should be cleaned out in the autumn when there's no risk of disturbing the occupants. Clean them out with boiling water so that disease and parasites are killed.

### **Useful addresses**

Ash Tree Nursery, Bowden, Nr Dartmouth TQ6 0LR

Tel: 01803 712437

Mobile nos: 07792 525070/07980 922316

Supplier of native wildflowers and shrubs.

The Really Wild Nursery, 19 Hoopers Way, Torrington Devon EX38 7NS.

Tel: 01805 624739. Website: [www.kathryn-moore.co.uk](http://www.kathryn-moore.co.uk)

Supplier of native wildflowers and shrubs.

Flora Locale website for locally sourced plants near you.

[www.floralocale.com](http://www.floralocale.com)

BBC website for useful information on nest boxes for both birds and mammals along with other wildlife tips.

[www.bbc.co.uk/science\\_and\\_nature](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science_and_nature)

Envisage Wildcare: mail-order conservation supplies, everything under the sun!

01793 724848, Freepost NAT18592, Swindon SN2 2BR



# Compton Pool Farm

Listen for birds such as blackcap, garden warbler, willow warbler and chiffchaff. Parties of longtail, blue and great tit can be seen in the trees along with goldcrest and bullfinch.

Mallard and moorhen nest around the ponds and heron and kingfisher are regular visitors. Look out for grey wagtails too.

Willow carr with tufted sedge grass and harts tongue, broadbucker and male fern as ground flora.

The lily pond is the best pond to look for tadpoles sunbathing on the edges.

Listen for the curt chip of the greater spotted woodpecker or the yaffle of the green woodpecker. Nuthatch, treecreeper and spotted flycatcher can all be seen here.

Golden ringed, southern hawkler and emperor are amongst the dragonflies to be seen along with blue tailed, common blue, beautiful demoiselle and large red damselflies.

In the long grass and vegetation look for grasshoppers and crickets- giant green bush cricket is here.

Fieldfare and redwing feed in the surrounding fields and on the berries from the holly and hawthorn in the hedgerow. Watch the blackbirds, song thrush, mistle thrush and robins feeding on the lawned area.

Small flocks of sparrows, greenfinch and chaffinch feed in the animal pens.

