



Breeding Bird Survey

Gondar Gardens Reservoir Site


West Hampstead, London

On behalf of
Linden Wates (West Hampstead) Limited

June 2011
Rev A December 2011

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The development has been subject to environmental impact assessment (EIA) in accordance with the town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. This report, whilst intended to be a standalone document, also forms Technical Annex 4.4 of the Environmental Statement (ES) which is being submitted in support of the application.

Revision	Purpose	Originated	Checked	Authorised	Date
		OR/AO	OR/MD	OR	06/11
Rev A	Layout change	OR/AO	OR	OR	14/12/11
Job Number: JBA 10/35		Title: Bird Survey at Gondar Gardens, Camden, London			

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0 Executive Summary

- 0.1 James Blake Associates carried out breeding bird surveys at the former covered reservoir at Gondar Gardens, Camden, London (TQ 248 853).
- 0.2 Six dawn surveys were carried out between 29th March and 6th June 2011.
- 0.3 Twenty three bird species were recorded on, or close to, the site. Three species are on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Red List of high conservation concern and two on the BoCC Amber List of medium conservation concern.
- 0.4 Due to the retention of the majority of trees on the site, it was considered unlikely that any nesting or foraging habitat would be significantly impacted by the proposed development.
- 0.5 Enhancement of boundary vegetation is proposed to maintain corridor linkages within the wider landscape.
- 0.6 Any thinning or removal of scrub should be undertaken outside the breeding bird season, (March to August inclusive). Should vegetation removal be required during the nesting season, it is recommended that a nesting bird survey be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist a few days prior to works.
- 0.7 Recommendations are detailed which will compensate for temporary loss of grassland habitat, and enhance the site for birds, post development.

1 Introduction

Background

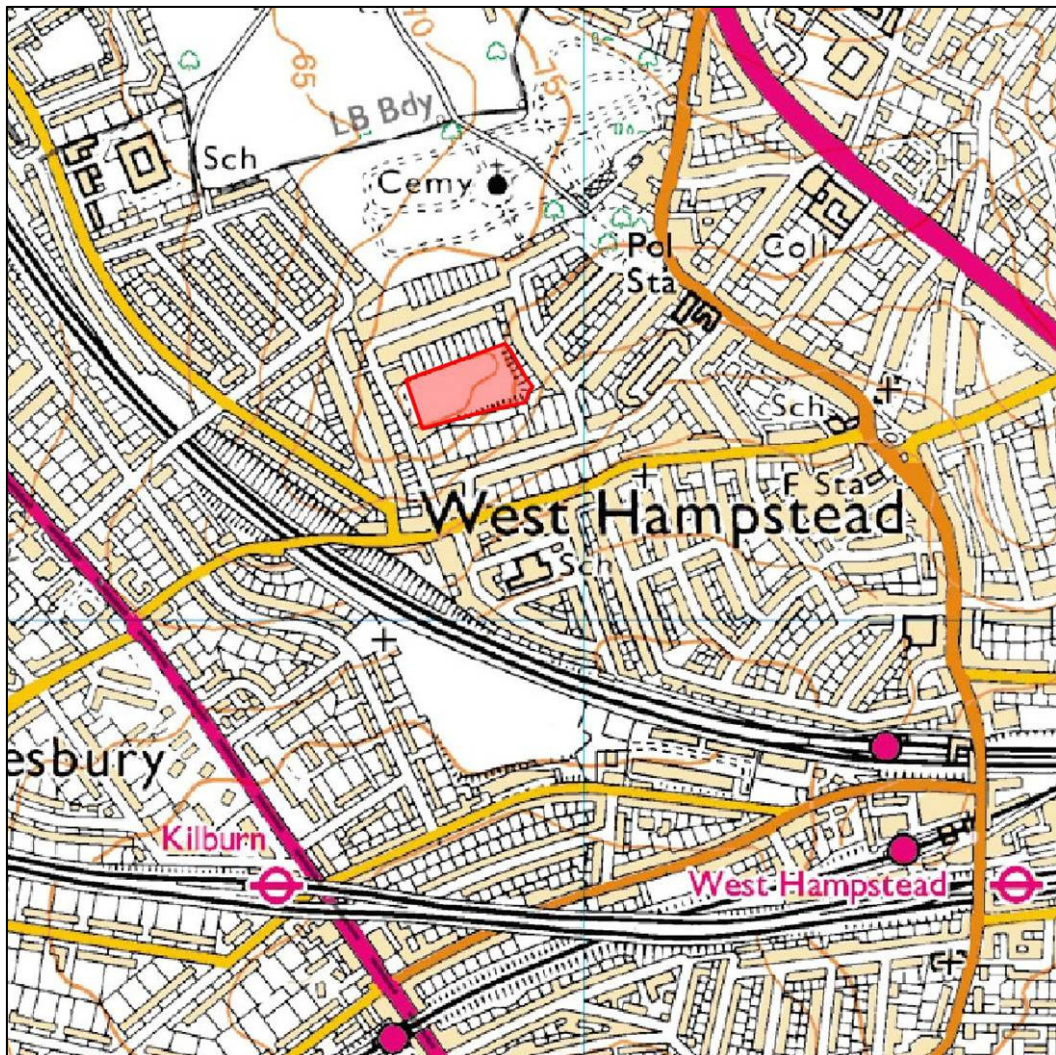
- 1.1 James Blake Associates were commissioned by Linden Wates to undertake breeding bird surveys of the former covered reservoir at Gondar Gardens, Camden, London. (Grid reference: TQ 248 853, taken from the centre of the site).
- 1.2 Birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) while nesting, and some bird species are also UK priority BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) species. All protected species and BAP species are material considerations for individual planning decisions under Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9, ODPM, 1994).

Surveyor

- 1.3 Surveys were carried out by Odette Robson BSc (Hons) PhD MIEEM, a suitably experienced ornithologist.

Geographical Scope

- 1.4 The site consisted of a disused underground water reservoir (now drained) with a neutral rough grassland covering and some shrubs and trees located to the site boundary. The area is designated a site of Borough Grade II Importance for Nature Conservation.
- 1.5 Residential properties with mature gardens were located directly adjacent to the south, north and east of the site. To the west was Gondar Gardens Road, beyond which were further residential properties. The surrounding habitats were mostly urban with the parkland habitats of Hampsted Cemetery approximately 126m north of the site with playing fields beyond. A railway and associated vegetation was located approximately 170m south west of the site. Golders Hill Park lies approximately 1.35km north east of the site and Hampstead Heath is situated approximately 1.9km east of the site (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: OS map of site location

Objectives

- 1.6 The purpose of the survey was to determine the presence of nesting or foraging birds on the site.
- 1.7 This information was used to determine the likely risk of impact on birds and local bird conservation from the proposed development, and to recommend precautionary measures, compensation of habitats or mitigation to prevent harm to birds.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 A record search was undertaken through the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and the Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), to identify records of bird species within 2km of the site which are listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 2.2 Surveys were conducted in optimal weather conditions (dry with little wind) and during the peak bird nesting season (March to June). The duration of each survey was approximately three hours.
- 2.3 Six breeding bird surveys were undertaken on the 29th March, 13th April, 28th April, 5th May, 23th May and 6th June 2011. Surveys were undertaken within four hours of dawn when territorial behaviour is usually at its peak. The survey was based on a registration mapping methodology adapted from the BTO Common Bird Census: During each visit, all birds seen or heard were recorded on a plan along with any significant behaviour, particularly regarding breeding activity e.g. territorial singing, display, carrying food, active nests etc.

Constraints

- 2.4 Access was available to the whole site. However, due to internal hoardings around the footprint of the reservoir structure, it was not possible to observe this area at all times during the survey. However, most transect stopping points were made at locations where damaged and warped boards enabled the reservoir roof to be observed. The hoardings had the advantage of providing screening, enabling birds to be observed without disturbance. It is likely that the hoardings reduced the impact of the presence of the surveyor on bird behaviour.

3 Results

Data Search

3.1 The data search from the Greenspace Information for Greater London and the National Biodiversity Network (consulted in December 2011) highlighted records of the following bird species within 2km of the site (most recent records and those recorded closest to the site are shown for each species):

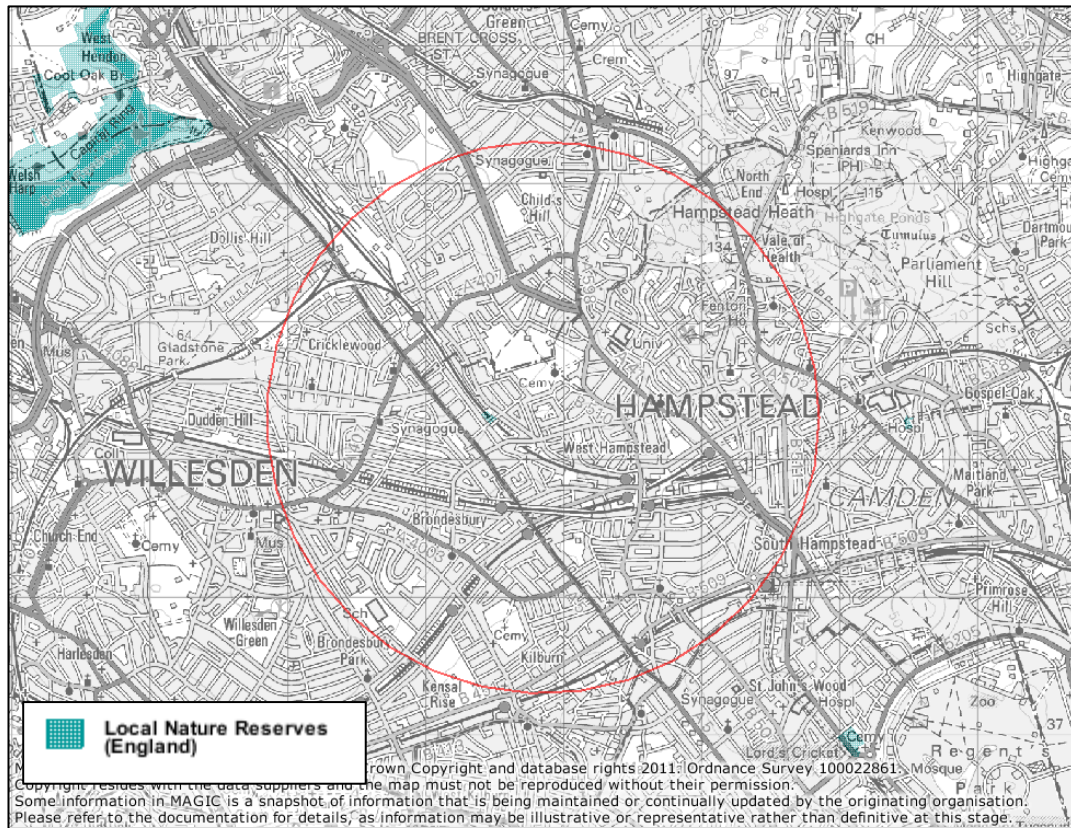
Table 1: Data search results

Birds	Protection	Approximate distance from site	Year of Record
Cuckoo	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	Within the same 10km square	1968-1972
Common grasshopper warbler	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	Within the same 10km square	1968-1972
Tree sparrow	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	2km grid square approximately 3km north west	2005-2010
Turtle dove	UKBAP, LBAP, BoCC red list	1.3km south west Adjacent 2km square to the north east	1987 2005-2010
Grey partridge	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	Within the same 10km square	1968-1972
Hawfinch	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	2km square approximately 3km north west	2004-2009
House sparrow	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	Within the site Within 100m 902m west	2002 2009 2010
Lesser redpoll	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	1.3km south west	1987
Common redpoll	LBAP	902m west	2010
Lapwing	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	Adjacent 2km square to the north west	2005-2010
Reed bunting	UKBAP, BoCC red list	4.3km north west	2009
Spotted flycatcher	UKBAP, BoCC red list	2km square approximately 3km north west	2004-2009
Wood warbler	BoCC red list	Within the same 10km square	1968-1972
Yellowhammer	UKBAP, BoCC red list	1.4km south west 6km south east	1987 2009
Barn owl	WCA Schedule 1, BoCC amber list	5.7km north west Confidential record within 2km	2009 1998
Black redstart	LBAP, WCA Schedule 1, BoCC amber list	Within the same 10km square	1988-1991
Brambling	WCA Schedule 1, BoCC amber list	1.4km south west 1.8km north east	1987
Starling	UKBAP, LBAP, BoCC red list,	Within 500m north 447m west	2009 2010

		1km south	2007
Lesser spotted woodpecker	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list,	217m south 1.6km south west Adjacent 2km squares to the north west and north east	1987 2004-2009
Redwing	WCA Schedule 1, BoCC red list	902m west 1km south 4.5km north east	2010 2006 2009
Reed bunting	UKBAP, LBAP, BoCC amber list	4.3km north west	2009
Skylark	UKBAP, LBAP, BoCC red list	1.4km south west 902m west	1987 2010
Song thrush	UKBAP, BoCC red list	348m west 1km south 0.6km north west	1999 2007 2009
Common tern	Annexe 1 of Birds Directive, BoCC amber list	1.9km south east	2003
Barnacle goose	Annexe 1 of Birds Directive, BoCC amber list	1.7km north east	1992
Bullfinch	LBAP, BoCC amber list	1.4km south west	1987
Kingfisher	WCA Schedule 1, BoCC amber list	1.8km north east	2001
Fieldfare	WCA Schedule 1	902m west	2010
Hedge accentor	UKBAP, LBAP, BoCC amber list	447m west 476m north west 498 south west	2010 1992 2010
Herring gull	UK and LBAP, BoCC red list	447m west 902m west	2009 2010
Eurasian hobby	WCA Schedule 1,	Confidential record within 2km	2002
Peregrine	WCA Schedule1, LBAP	Confidential record within 2km	2006

3.2 There is one statutory site within 2km of the site: Westbere Copse Local Nature Reserve, approximately half a kilometre to the west. Westbere Copse, Local Nature Reserve consists of Jenny Wood Nature Reserve, locked and only opened at certain times, and Westbere Copse Open Space, which is open to the public at all times. The area was once farmland through which the railway was built in the 1860s. Grey poplar trees were planted for matchwood and still dominate the site

Figure 2: Statutory conservation sites within 2km of the site



Survey Results

Table 2: Summary of survey results

Species	BTO code	Camden BAP	London and National BAP	BoCC	Survey dates & Summary of results.					
					29/3/11	13/4/11	28/4/11	09/5/11	23/5/11	7/6/11
Black cap	BC					✓	✓			
Blackbird	B				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blue tit	BT				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carrion crow	C				✓		✓	✓		✓
Coal tit	CT									✓
Cormorant	CA							✓		
Dunnock	D		✓	Amber	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Feral pigeon	FP				✓	✓	✓			✓
Great spotted woodpecker	GS				✓					
Goldfinch	GO				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Great tit	GT				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green finch	GF						✓			
House sparrow	HS	✓	✓	Red	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jay	J				✓	✓	✓		✓	
Long tailed tit	LT								✓	

Magpie	MG				✓	✓			✓	✓
Ring necked parakeet	RI						✓			✓
Robin	R				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Song thrush	ST		✓	Red			✓			
Starling	SG		✓	Red	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swift	SI			Amber				✓		✓
Wood pigeon	WP					✓				✓
Wren	WR				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Twenty three bird species were recorded on or close to the site, of which 12 species used habitats within the site boundary: robin, wren, blue-tit, great-tit, wood pigeon, black cap, house sparrow, dunnoek, feral pigeon, jay, blackbird and starling. The remaining 11 species were observed flying over the site or using adjacent gardens, though were not recorded on the site during the six survey visits (see Appendix for plans showing bird activity).

Additional Notes

Visit 1: 29th March 2011. 6.30am to 9.15am.

Weather: Still; 3°C; 5% cloud cover initially, increasing to 80% at the end of the survey.

A number of flights by starling and pigeon over the site were not noted as this would have caused lack of clarity on the plan. However, all occurrences of birds using the site itself (feeding, perching resting), were noted on the plans. Starlings regularly flew over the reservoir between gardens, usually in small groups (2-6 individuals) or singly. Groups of up to 12 starlings were observed feeding to the open grassland.

Visit 2: 13th April 2011. 5.45am to 8.30am.

Weather: Beaufort 0-1; dry; 8°C; 100% high cloud cover.

Fewer starlings observed feeding on the reservoir roof. Maximum count was five.

Visit 3: 28th April 2011. 5.15am to 8.15am.

Weather: Beaufort 5-6; 100% cloud cover; dry.

Numerous starlings (approximately 20) seen flying over the site, though only 3 seen foraging on the site. Not all flights of starlings and pigeons over the site are shown (for clarity).

Visit 4: 9th May 2011. 5.00am to 8.15am.

Weather: Beaufort 1-2; 10°C; 0% cloud cover; dry.

Swifts were high passes, not foraging low over the site. Up to four swifts at a time foraged very high over the site and surrounding gardens. The cormorant record was also a high pass. A number of wood pigeon passes over the site are not listed (~15 during the course of the survey). The house sparrow colony was of unknown size (not visible from the site), though a maximum of four individuals were heard calling at any one time. Two great-tits were observed taking food into a nestbox on a silver birch trees approximately 1m north of the site in adjacent garden.

Visit 5: 23rd May 2011. 4.30am to 8.00am.

Weather: Beaufort 4; 10°C; 80% cloud cover; dry.

Visit 6: 7th June 2011

4.30 to 7.30 am.

Weather: Beaufort 2; 11°C; dry; 10% cloud cover.

Swifts were foraging high above the site and above gardens to the north and south of the site. Starling activity was all recorded: this was noticeably reduced since previous visits.

4 Legislation & Evaluation

All wild birds are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) by Schedule 12 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The law covers all species of wild birds including common and pest or opportunistic species. Some bird species are further protected, while breeding, under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. No Schedule 1 species were observed at the site during the survey, however the data search highlighted records of two Schedule 1 species within 2km: Redwing (2006) over a kilometre from the site; and brambling (1987) over a kilometre from the site.

BAP species are material considerations for planning decisions. Four BAP species were recorded using the site.

Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC), designates species to red or amber lists, under the following criteria:

Red List species

These are species of high national conservation concern. Species are included on this list if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Globally threatened,
- Historical population decline in UK during 1800-1995,
- Rapid (> 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years,
- Rapid (> 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years.

Amber List species

These are species of medium national conservation concern. Species are included on this list if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Historical population decline during 1800-1995, but now recovering with population size having more than doubled over the last 25 years.
- Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding or non-breeding population or breeding range over the last 25 years.
- Species of European Conservation Concern.
- Five year mean of between only one and 300 breeding pairs in the UK.
- >50% of the UK breeding or non-breeding population in ten or fewer sites.
- >20% of the European breeding population in the UK.
- >20% of the NW European (wildfowl), East Atlantic Flyway (waders) or European (others) non-breeding populations in the UK.

Overview of birds observed during the surveys:

Red listed species

Three BoCC red-listed species were recorded, of which two (starling and house sparrow) were observed to be using the site itself. Starlings are red listed due to population numbers having declined by over 70% in recent years, such that they are now on the critical list of UK birds most at risk. The RSPB believes that the decline is likely to be due to the loss of permanent pasture, increased use of farm chemicals and a shortage of food and nesting sites in many parts of the UK. However, although starlings are red-listed, they are still ranked within the top six most common bird species in all counties of the UK. The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch results show that starlings were the most common garden bird in Greater London in the 2011 survey, recorded in 47% of gardens at an average of 2.9 starlings per garden. Starling sightings had increased by a quarter since 2010, but their numbers were still down from when the Big Garden Birdwatch began in 1979. The house sparrow is also red-listed due to a dramatic decline, however for the eight year running, with an average of four

seen per garden, this was the most common bird in gardens taking part in the Big Garden Birdwatch. In Greater London the house sparrow was ranked 4th behind starling, wood pigeon and blue tit; seen in 43.77% of partaking gardens, with an average of 2.64 individuals per garden.

Amber listed species

Two BoCC amber-listed species were recorded during the surveys, of which one (dunnock) used the trees on the site to the eastern boundary. A dunnock was also heard within gardens beyond the southern site boundary. The other amber listed species recorded was swift; recorded in numbers of up to ten at a time, foraging high over the site and over adjacent gardens.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Any scrub or tree management should be undertaken outside the breeding bird season, (March to August inclusive). Should vegetation removal be required during the nesting season, it is recommended that a nesting bird survey be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist a few days prior to works.
- 5.2 To increase bird nesting opportunities on the site, ten bird boxes could be installed either on retained trees or on new buildings. It is recommended that bird boxes should be suitable for sparrows, swifts and starlings – as these are the species of highest conservation concern which were recorded on, or close to, the site during the surveys. Bird box installation should be conducted following the advice of an ecologist to ensure most appropriate location.
- 5.3 It is recommended that soft landscaping uses native or wildlife attracting plants and trees, and incorporates flower-rich areas. This type of landscaping would be more likely to produce and attract high quantities of seeds and insects for foraging birds. Gaps in tree lines to the boundaries could be planted with appropriate local and berry-bearing tree/shrub species, which will both increase foraging opportunities and improve connectivity and movement of birds across the site.
- 5.4 Part of the roof space could be a 'brown roof' which may encourage black redstarts, a local BAP species which has been known to utilize brown roofs for nesting in London.
- 5.5 The proposal to designate the eastern part of the site as a nature reserve, to be managed by an independent conservation organization, such as the London Wildlife Trust, will ensure appropriate management of the newly created and existing grassland and tree/scrub band to the east of the site. Maintenance of the bird boxes outside this wildlife area should be specified in a Landscape Management Plan, which will be the responsibility of a management company, post development.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The birds identified during the survey were mostly commoner species, both at a National and Local level. Red listed species included the starling and house sparrow – both of which were found to be using the site, though both are common and widespread species in the London area.
- 6.2 The majority of birds heard and seen during the surveys were using the gardens and vegetation to the site boundaries. Only one species, the starling, was found to be regularly using the roof of the reservoir (the only part of the site which would be temporarily lost under the proposals). Although red listed, starlings are a common and widespread species in the London area.
- 6.3 Most of the higher quality foraging and nesting habitat on the site is proposed for retention as a wildlife area, therefore, it was considered unlikely that birds would be significantly impacted by the proposed development. If recommendations in this report are followed, then any residual risk of harm to birds would likely be reduced further so that the proposed development could proceed with minimal risk of impact to birds or local bird conservation.

7 References

Gregory, R. D. Wilkinson, N. I. Noble, D. G. Robinson, J. A. Brown A. F. Hughes, J. Proctor, D .A. Gibbons, D. W. & Galbraith, C.A. (2007). *The population status of birds in the United Kingdom and Isle of Man: an analysis of conservation concern 2002-2007*. British Birds 95: 410-450.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), (1994). *Planning Policy Statement 9*. The Stationary Office (TSO), London.

The Population Status of Birds in the UK – Birds of Conservation Concern: 2002-2007 (UK's statutory and leading non-governmental bird conservation organizations in 2002 – chaired by the RSPB).

Web references

MAGIC: Designated area data downloaded from URL
<http://www.magic.gov.uk.html>

National Biodiversity Network: Protected species data downloaded from
URL <http://data.nbn.org/interactive/map>

UK BAP www.ukbap.org.uk

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 2011:
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/results.aspx>

Appendix: detailing all sightings of each species, over the six visits, amalgamated onto a single plan.



