

APPENDIX 6

NESTING BIRD SURVEY REPORT

38, Windermere Road
Patchway
Bristol
BS34 5PW

Parc Pelenna,
Neath Port Talbot, Wales,
United Kingdom

10th August 2023

To whom it may concern,

Nesting bird survey of Park Pelenna, Wales

I am writing to summarise the findings of a nesting bird survey undertaken at Park Pelenna, centred on national grid reference SS 80165 99265 (hereafter referred to as the "site").

Background to the activity

"Redevelopment of the existing site including vegetation and land management"

General surveys to gather a basic idea of breeding birds on site *"No clearance of vegetation or structures suitable for nesting birds, shall take place between 1st March and 30th September inclusive in any year without the prior written approval of the local planning authority for most passerines. This period can be extended if early breeders such as Crossbills (red-listed species) were to be found on site. The authority will require evidence provided by a suitably qualified ecological consultant that no breeding birds would be adversely affected before giving any approval under this condition. Where checks for nesting birds are required they shall be undertaken by a qualified ecological consultant no more than 48 hours prior to the removal of vegetation or the demolition of or works to buildings."*

As such, Aurora Gonzalo Tarodo was commissioned by Ramboll UK to undertake a nesting bird survey of site in order to provide advice on how the works can proceed in compliance with wildlife legislation, and in order to discharge Planning Condition 10.

Wildlife legislation

The core legislation relating to birds in Wales is:

- The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the "Habitats Regulations").

The legislation protects wild birds from being intentionally killed, injured or captured from the wild. In addition, it protects active bird nests and eggs from being destroyed, damaged or taken. Birds listed on Schedule 1 are afforded extra protection from intentional disturbance while they are nest building or using a nest, and from disturbing their young while they are dependent.

Methodology

Experienced ornithologist Aurora Gonzalo Tarodo (BSc, MSc, PgCert) conducted nesting bird surveys during two distinct periods: February to April and June to August of 2023.

For crossbills, surveys were conducted in the morning hours. Optimal weather conditions, characterized by mild winds, no heavy rain, and good visibility, were essential. Temperatures varied across the survey periods. The crossbill survey involved thorough exploration of suitable areas identified in 2022. These observations covered all tree elevations with potential nests for a minimum of 30 minutes, all from a discreet vantage point. Repeat surveys were performed on the same transects across four different dates. Key indicators of nesting bird behavior, such as repeated bird activity around specific trees, chicks begging for food, and adult bird alarm calls, were meticulously recorded.

The nightjar surveys encompassed both dawn and dusk periods. Slow-paced exploration of high-potential areas occurred, with a focus on detecting choring males during the early breeding season and hunting males and females as the season progressed. Four surveys were conducted in this manner.

To rule out the presence of honey buzzards, additional daytime vantage points were established.

Results

Crossbill surveys were conducted along the yellow transect lines (Fig. 1), revealing no evidence of nesting birds during any of the surveys. Nevertheless, the habitat demonstrated potential for crossbill utilization and could hold significance for juvenile dispersal.

Nightjar surveys followed the purple transect lines (Fig. 1), involving auditory detection of choring males in the early breeding season and tracking hunting males and females as the season advanced. None of the surveys recorded visual or auditory sightings of birds.

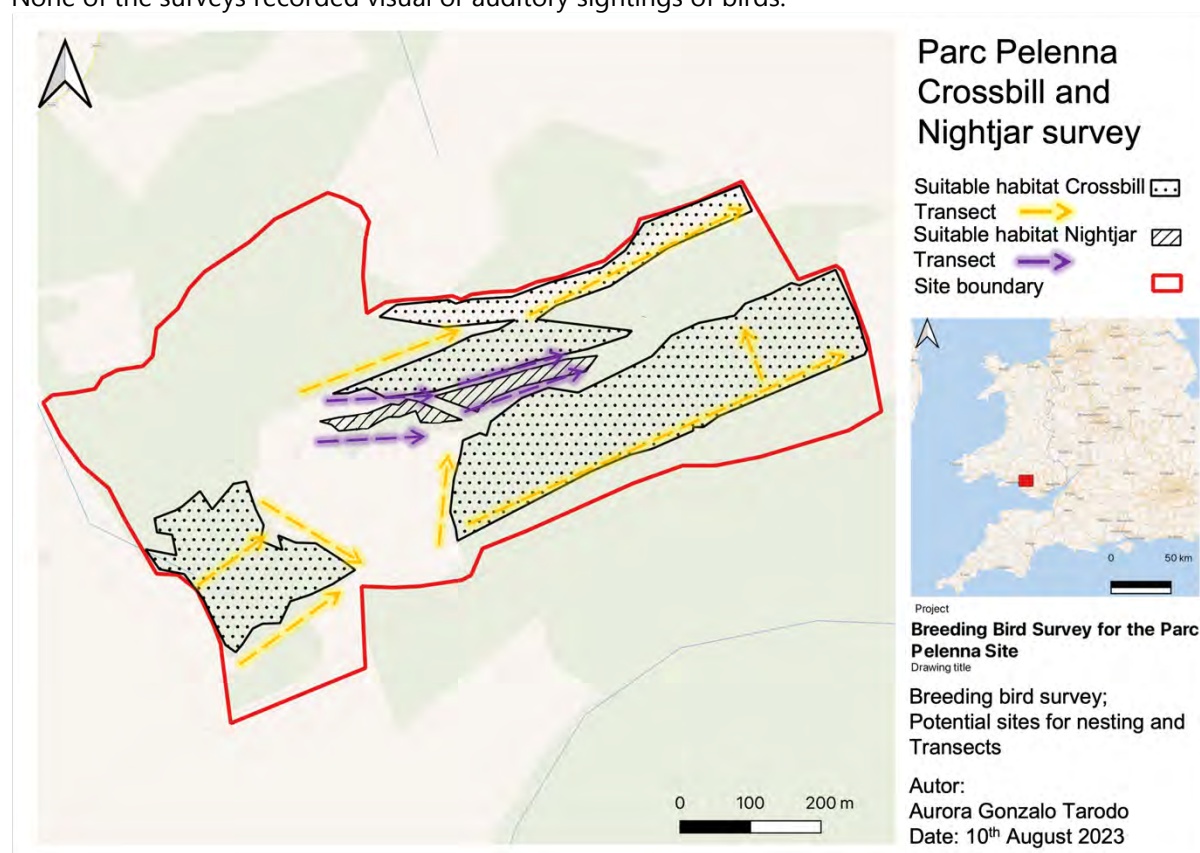


Figure 1 Crossbill and Nightjar transects on suitable habitats identified in 2022

Daytime vantage point assessments to ascertain the absence of Honey buzzards on the premises were conducted concurrently with the nightjar surveys, spanning the months of June through August. These efforts were undertaken on identical dates. Although Honey buzzards were not observed during these observations, it's noteworthy that other raptor species commonly breed within the area. The flight paths of certain raptors are illustrated in Figure 2 for reference.

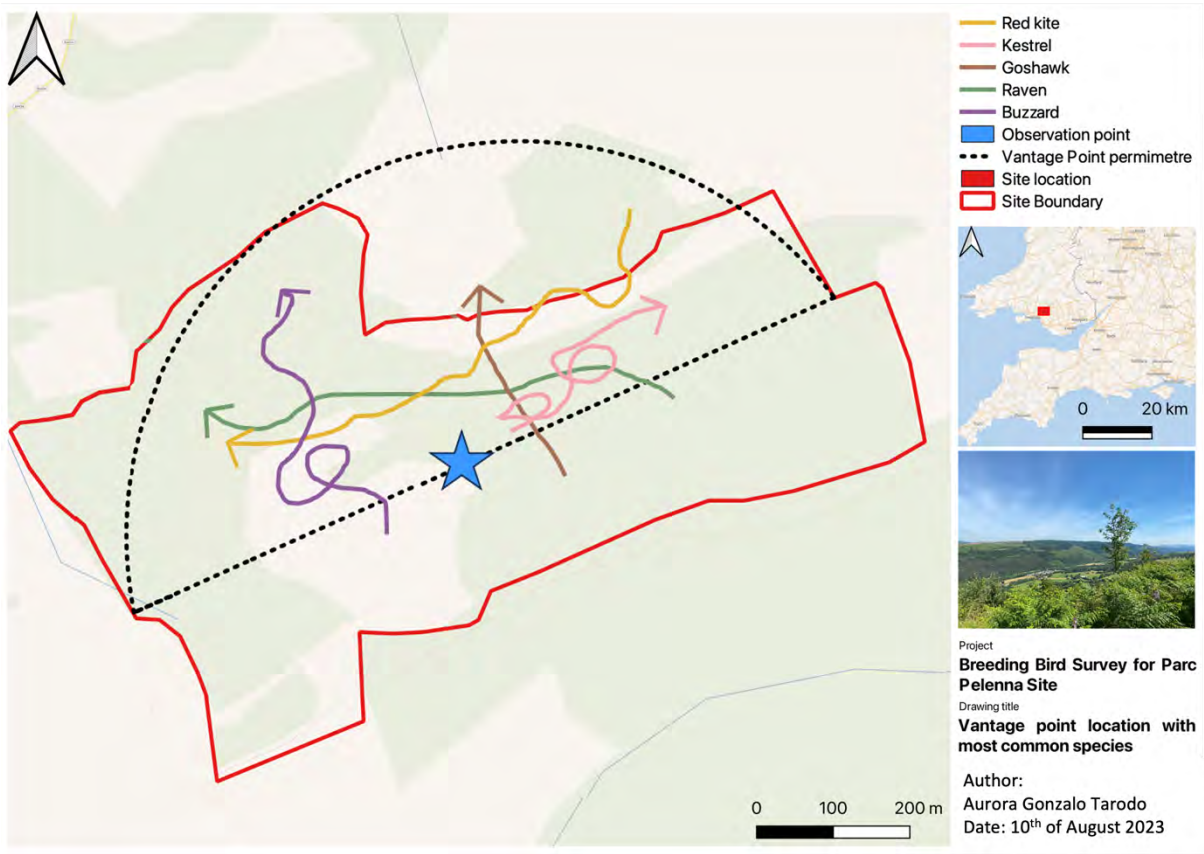


Figure 2 Fight trajectories of birds of prey and ravens. This figure only illustrates one trajectory of each species.

While conducting the crossbill and nightjar surveys, I opportunistically documented other bird species that were encountered. Notably, among these, during the crossbill surveys, an Alpine Swift was observed. A vagrant species, a migratory bird found in various parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa but very scarce in the UK. In total, the compiled list accounts for 22 distinct bird species, all of which were observed during the course of these surveys and are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Bird species and rough numbers that were observed on-site while conducting crossbills and nightjars' surveys

Species	Count
Tawny owl <i>Strix aluco</i>	1 (heard)
Barn owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	2 (seen)
Common woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	10+ (seen and heard)
Common swift <i>Apus apus</i>	20+ (seen)

Species	Count
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	100+ (seen)
Herring gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	10 (seen on vantage point)
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	1 (seen on vantage point)
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	4 (seen)
Mistle thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	4 (seen and heard)
Meadow pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	15+ (seen)
Tree pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	4+ (seen and heard)
Song thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1 (heard)
Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	2+ (heard)
Alpine swift <i>Apus melba</i>	1 (seen)
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	20+ (seen and heard)
Grey heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1 (seen)
Pied wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	5 (seen)
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	1 (heard)
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	8 (seen and heard)
Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>	12+ (seen)
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	10+ (seen and heard)
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	12+ (seen and heard)

Recommendations

To ensure the preservation of essential habitats and minimize disruptions to breeding bird populations, a comprehensive approach is recommended:

1. **Habitat Preservation:** The preservation of woodland areas, standing water features, and marshy landscapes remains paramount. Consideration should also be given to establishing semi-natural habitats, such as hedges, to enhance the overall ecosystem resilience.
2. **Breeding Season Precautions:** To prevent disturbances during the breeding season, activities like ground clearance and vegetation management should be meticulously scheduled outside the avian breeding period. If tree removal is deemed necessary within the breeding season, a 48 to 24-hour survey led by an experienced ecologist/ornithologist is essential to confirm the absence of nesting birds before any felling occurs.
3. **Impact Reduction:** Implementation of these measures will significantly mitigate the impact on nesting bird populations, fostering a more favourable environment for breeding and raising young birds.
4. **Enhanced Vegetation and Connectivity:** Supplementary efforts encompass buffer planting using native species and enhancing existing vegetation where feasible. This approach will bolster connectivity with the broader landscape, facilitating the movement of both local and migratory species, thus contributing to overall conservation goals.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of cavity-dwelling specialist species, the installation of nest boxes is recommended as an effective strategy:

- Small Wooden Nest Boxes (5x): These boxes, designed with a 33 mm entrance hole, cater to species like Great tits, Pied flycatchers, and smaller avian species such as Blue tits.
- Small Wooden Nest Boxes with Open Fronts (5x): Created to accommodate Robins, Redstarts, and Great tits, these boxes provide suitable nesting options.
- Large Wooden Nest Boxes (2x): Featuring a spacious 250 mm entrance, these boxes are ideal for species such as Tawny owls or Jackdaws. Siting these boxes at a minimum height of 3 meters above ground level is advised. Additionally, strategic placement should ensure avoidance of entrance orientations that face the prevailing wind, generally sidestepping west or southwest directions.

By implementing these multifaceted strategies, the preservation and enhancement of bird habitats, as well as the protection of their breeding and nesting activities, will be significantly advanced.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



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