

The South Pennines is changing for Twite

They're back! 8 Twite were seen on 1st March in Rishworth, singing merrily! Last year the first Twite back from their wintering grounds were recorded on 3rd March.

Four years have now passed since the **Twite Recovery Project** was first launched. It was a steady start but with a lot of support it is well and truly going places, mainly Calderdale, Kirklees and Rochdale, with the odd meander into Greater Manchester and the Peak District!

Support has come from many organisations including the National Trust at Hardcastle Craggs who have supplied us for the last 3 years with semi-species rich seed for our work. Officers at Natural England and The Brown Hare Project in Greater Manchester have helped feed contacts through to us.

As a result of the Twite Recovery Project, **330 hectares of grassland (made up of 234 fields) within the South Pennines is now being managed to provide foraging habitat for Twite**. Of this, almost 130 hectares has been reseeded with tasty Twite foods like Common Sorrel and Autumn Hawkbit and, where possible, species rich meadow and pasture is being restored. In addition to helping Twite, the work that has been done including the changes in land management, will benefit many other species, in particular, Brown Hare, Chimney Sweeper Moths, Lapwings and Curlews.

Very exciting news – this year the RSPB, with support from Scottish Natural Heritage and Natural England, will be involved in the **UK Survey of Twite** so we will find out just how our South Pennines Twite are bearing up following the appalling weather of last year, which will be balanced hopefully by increased foraging sites through our reseeded programme! This survey will allow us to measure population change since the first national survey in 1999 and prioritise conservation action. We will bring you the results just as soon as they are available.

Over the next 7 months, we will be working on helping more farmers get their land into HLS agreements with options for grassland restoration and target species, both of which will benefit Twite. **To date, there are 53 farms in the scheme (both directly and indirectly through the project)** – with more coming through. We will also be carrying out in-depth botanical surveys on all the fields we have reseeded over the last 3 years to establish the germination success of the seed.

We will be working with farmers to prepare fields ready for **this year's introduction of seed to fields in September** – we hope to beat last year's record of 54ha. This year, we will be not only broadcasting seed by hand, but also using the green hay technique, harvesting hay from donor sites in August and spreading it immediately (within an hour!) on nearby receptor sites with the same soil composition. This technique has been used in North Yorkshire and in the Forest of Bowland, and although needing a high degree of coordination, has reputedly very good results.

We will continue to work with local communities, bringing them details of the work that farmers, landowners, the RSPB and Natural England are doing to help restore the habitat for the Twite.

We will continue surveying potential sites for restoration and helping bring farmers into HLS agreements. We will then establish if this has all had an effect on our endangered little Pennine Finch, the Twite.

By the way, thanks to our friends at the BTO, our **oldest recorded Twite which was ringed during the Project** was seen at Blakeney Freshes in December 2012 – it was ringed as a chick at Chelburn Moor in June 2010, but it has a long way to go before it reaches the longevity record of just over 5 years 7months!

Thank you once again for all the help and assistance you have given us over the last few years – whether through funding, voluntary work, practical work or general support. In addition, a specific thank you to all the farmers and landowners without whom none of the work so far could have happened, their patience and commitment has been outstanding.

FARMER CONTACTS – some of you will receive a phone call from a gentlemen called Nick Wilkinson, he is overseeing a twite survey of a selection of areas throughout the Pennines.

Please note, we are not producing a newsletter this spring, but hope to be back with one in the autumn.

The Twite Recovery Project is run and funded as a joint venture by the RSPB and Natural England, with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (through the Watershed Landscape Project managed by Pennine Prospects) and from Kirklees Council with additional support from South Pennines LEADER.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654



Twite at Blakeney Freshes, ringed at Chelburn Moor in 2010

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Please note: My usual days of work have changed, I now normally work Mondays and Thursdays. If you need to speak to someone more urgently please contact Jenny Oldroyd on 07841317034, or email jenny.oldroyd@rspb.org.uk Thank you.

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