



There are now several proposals for windfarms in our local area: at Airfield Farm, Podington; Nun Wood above Harrold; Petsoe End and possibly another towards Felmersham. Two of these stretch for most of the way along the Three-Shires Way from Lavendon to the Santa Pod racetrack. I'm still in two minds over whether the benefits outweigh the deficits. My immediate concern is whether the birds which use these sites will be adversely affected. An ecological survey has been carried out for the Airfield Farm site but with the casual dismissal of 'ploughed arable fields' as 'of negligible conservation importance'. I take issue with this as it is precisely these fields at Airfield Farm which hold a locally (and arguably County and Nationally) important population of Yellow Wagtails, as well as a few pairs of Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting which went unrecorded. The report does admit to the presence of seven pairs of Yellow Wagtail here but I would suggest that this is a minimum figure and, even so, the largest concentration that I've found in many miles of waling locally. This sort of habitat may indeed be the major stronghold now for the Yellow Wagtail in Great Britain as it has disappeared from many of its traditional wetland sites in recent years. It's a very special bird to me as it was one of the first really exotic looking species that I ever encountered. The male has a gorgeous lemon-yellow head and breast, and this bird is one of the few distinct British sub-species.

Other birds for which arable fields are important and which also occur at Airfield Farm are: Skylark (58 pairs recorded), Grey Partridge (3 pairs), Lapwing (5 pairs) and Yellowhammer (32 pairs). If it's true, as the report suggests, that the smaller birds are unaffected by wind turbines then all well and good - but some breeding habitat will inevitably be lost, and one wonders just how well the many birds of prey will fare. In the nearby woods several pairs of Buzzard now breed, as well as Hobbies, Sparrowhawks and Kestrels. These all hunt over the open fields at times and have suffered badly in France and Spain at windfarm sites.

It may be worth bearing some of this in mind when the nearer wind farms come to the planning stage.

Br. John

