

Marden Quarry



North
Tyneside
Council

The natural cover provided here, only half a mile from the coast, is particularly important to migrating birds. In the autumn, hundreds of thousands of birds cross the North Sea on their way to their winter quarters. They have flown 400 miles non-stop in a single night, using up most of their body fat, and finding the park could quite literally mean the difference between life and death. Marden Quarry is one of the few natural wooded sites near the sea where they can come down to rest and feed.

Migratory species



Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

A large, colourful thrush, with a chestnut-brown back and yellowy breast, streaked with black. Black tail, dark wings and pale grey rump and head.

Lifespan: 2 years. **Food:** Insects, worms and berries.

Breeding: Little is known about their breeding habits here, but 5-6 eggs are normally laid.

Did you know? Fieldfares nest in small colonies, giving protection against predators and higher breeding success. They aggressively defend their nests, often pelting intruders with droppings.



Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

The smallest UK thrush, around 21cm long. It has a creamy-white chest with dark brown streaks, distinctive red-orange underwing and creamy-white stripe above its eye.

Lifespan: 2 years. **Food:** Worms and berries, particularly hawthorn and rowan.

Breeding: Broods of 4-6 eggs are laid.

Did you know? Redwings were the first bird species proven to detect fruit using ultraviolet vision. Waxy berry coatings reflect ultraviolet light, making them more appealing to birds.



Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

A warm-brown head, wings and back, and a cream breast covered in dark brown spots the shape of upside-down hearts. Slightly smaller than a blackbird and has a beautiful, loud song.

Lifespan: 3 years. **Food:** Snails, worms, caterpillars and fruit.

Breeding: A clutch of 4-6 glossy blue eggs is laid.

Did you know? To get at the meat inside a snail, they crack the shell open by banging it against a stone 'anvil'. This behaviour is unique to these birds.



Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

A tiny bird, weighing around the same as a 20p coin. The crest of feathers on its head is completely yellow on females, with an orange centre on males. Other plumage is mainly green-brown.

Lifespan: 2 years. **Food:** Insects and invertebrates. The bird will flit among trees, catching small creatures. It often takes food from the underside of branches while hanging upside down.

Breeding: Females lay 6-8 eggs.

Did you know? This is Europe's smallest bird. Its Latin name refers to its crown and means 'petty king' or 'prince'.



The quarry's thick cover provides good conditions for resident populations of common British species.



Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Unmistakable white belly and famous red breast. Young robins are mottled gold and brown. They sing from prominent perches through the winter.

Lifespan: 2 years. **Food:** Fruits, seeds and insects. They love earthworms.

Breeding: Robins lay clutches of around 4-6 eggs, between April and August.

Did you know? Both males and females are fiercely territorial, driving off intruders and even fighting.



Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

A colourful little bird with a blue cap, white cheeks, black eye-stripes, greeny-blue back, yellow belly, and blue wings and tail. It is a delicate bird, around half the size of a robin.

Lifespan: 3 years. **Food:** Insects, spiders, caterpillars, fruit and seeds.

Breeding: Unlike many other birds, they usually only raise a single brood each spring, of around 7-14 eggs.

Did you know? Like all birds, blue tits can see ultraviolet light. The front of their head glows brightly under UV light and this is how females are thought to choose their partners.



Great Tit *Parus major*

A colourful bird with greenish-yellow plumage, black head and striking white cheeks.

Lifespan: 3 years. **Food:** Invertebrates, berries and seeds.

Breeding: Great tits typically lay 7-9 eggs in April or May. They are cavity nesters, building in holes within trees or other surfaces.

Did you know? Male great tits have a broad black stripe on the belly, which is an indicator of status - the wider the stripe, the more attractive the male is to females.



Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Typically seen hovering, their wings held out. Males have a grey head and tail with a prominent black band, a gingery-brown back and a creamy underside speckled with black. Females have a more uniform brown back and dark bands on the tail.

Lifespan: 4 years. **Food:** Voles, mice, shrews, birds and invertebrates.

Breeding: Around 4-5 eggs are laid in April or May.

Did you know? It can keep its head still while it hovers - even in strong winds - helping it to pinpoint its prey by sight.



Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Small birds of prey with strikingly bright yellow eyes, broad wings, yellow legs and long talons. Males are significantly smaller than females, with grey upper parts, a streaked orange-brown front, slate-grey head and an orange-brown face. Females are streaked dark brown and their head is dark brown with a slight eye stripe.

Lifespan: 4 years. **Food:** Thrushes, sparrows, finches and tits are all favoured food sources. Females have even been known to eat pigeons and bats!

Breeding: Males perform a 'rollercoaster flight' in spring to impress females.

Did you know? The eyes change colour as it gets older, going from bold yellow to a deeper orange, and even red!