

An unusual choice of nesting site for Linnets *Carduelis cannabina*.

Rob Prudden.

A two-acre plot of land owned by Vale Landscape Heritage Trust at Wick near Pershore, Worcestershire has been allowed to revert to mixed scrub and as such has become attractive as a breeding site for several species of birds. While walking through the area on 2nd May 2021 a Linnet flew from low down in a large clump of Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* (01). On investigation, most unexpectedly a nest holding four eggs was located well into the heart of the sedge just c25cms above ground level (02). Within ten metres of this first site were two other similar clumps of sedge and to my surprise a nest was also located in each of these in an almost identical situation.



01. Location of Linnet nest. Haines Meadows 10.05.21.
Rob Prudden.



02. Linnet nest located very low down in Pendulous Sedge. Haines Meadows 10.05.21. Rob Prudden.

Over the next two weeks or so the area was visited on several occasions and viewed from a distance to avoid disturbance to any birds. Continuous coming and going by adult Linnets with food was observed and appeared to be directed to the area where the nests were located. By mid-June up to ten juveniles were seen being fed on top of scrub around the site, this leading to the assumption that at least some success had been achieved from the oddly located nests. A visit in August showed all three nests to be well used, flat platforms surrounded by droppings so presumably they had all been successful in raising at least some young.

Linnets are normally to be found nesting in Bramble or other scrub several feet above the ground, so why were these unusual sites chosen? Although there is plenty of Bramble and Hawthorn scrub around the site, spring 2021 had been continuously cold and damp with many overnight frosts, especially around the adjacent low lying river meadows, leading to a late leaf-bud burst. That had led to very few leaves being present on any of the normally utilised nesting habitat at the right time of year. Had this forced the birds into their unusual choice? Would breeding have been delayed if the sedge had not been there? It will be interesting to see if similar activity is recorded in 2022.

Images

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02. Linnet nest located very low down in Pendulous Sedge. Haines Meadows 10.05.21. Rob Prudden.