

# ***The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire***

## ***User Guide***

Revised March 2021

**NOTE 1.** The abbreviation BoS is used, from end of 2019, to refer to *The Birds of Shropshire*, Smith, L. (2019).

**NOTE 2.** The SOS produced its *Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern*, or 'Red List' in 2021 (BB:114(2);70-71). The relevant colours are given in a cell in the left column at the species' first entry in the Species Index.

### **Introduction**

The following describes the composition and use of the database as a whole and the Species Index in particular. Some of the published material presented on this website may be regarded by some researchers as being of very low value. However the database attempts to be comprehensive and lists and indexes every known published work (over 7,000 pages from more than 1,000 Items); it is left to individual researchers to make the value judgments. It is all here – read what interests you and use what you need.

This *User Guide* is in eight sections:

- A The on-line database
- B Species Index
- C Citations
- D Additional Resources
- E *British Birds* references to Shropshire
- F Gallery
- G Acknowledgements
- H References and notes
- I The 21-volume hard copy

## **A. *The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire.* The database**

If you are looking at this on the website please go to bullet point three:

1. Start: either (a) online search for *Shropshire Ornithological Society's* (SOS) website or (b) enter this web-site address into the address-bar in your web-browser <http://www.shropshirebirds.com/>
2. From the SOS website right-click on 'The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire' among the bulleted options and it will take you to the 'Historical' website.
3. The black band under the landscape photograph contains a number of 'drop-down menus'. Hover the cursor over 'The Historical Record' and a drop-down appears.

Click on the option 'All Historical Documents' and they are listed down the screen.

**This is a central point on Histo. [LINK?]**

Every source is listed in chronological order from AD200 (or so), most with a **green** View button. There are also a few short-cuts listed, to sections such as the SOS Annual Bird Reports.

Scroll down to the year and document you want, click on its button and the contents will appear as a list of page-numbers each with a short text, the first-listed species name for pages within systematic lists.

Hover the cursor over the **green** View button of the item you want and it will turn **red**. Click on that and the text will appear (give it time). Some items appear as PFD files which you have to open and search through.

Some lists are rather long and if you roll over to a selection near the bottom of the list the page may appear at the top of the page – you will need to scroll up the document to see the page you requested, a process much easier by 'swiping' on an *iPad*.

To save a page right-click somewhere on it and the box will appear within which choose "Save image as ..." which will enable you to save the page where you want on your own computer.

An early version of Histo had a 'Search this site' window. Searches are better undertaken via the Citations and the Species Index files.

There are several **blue** Link buttons in the main chronological 'All Historical Documents' listing. These are short-cuts to expanded parts of the total list and each one presents a sub-list in chronological order, for example J. Rocke's four papers in *Zoologist* of 1865 and 1866.

## B. The Species Index

A basic understanding of *Excel* spreadsheets and .PDF files is assumed.

The Species Index (a PDF) is arranged alphabetically on **International English Name** order. Within species the references are presented chronologically and number around 14,100 (November 2019). Intensive users may request a copy of the *Excel* file version, which is easier to manipulate and search.

**The file is headed** by a Key explaining the colours used throughout the Index, for texts and/or entire spreadsheet cells. Familiarity with these will increase the usefulness of the index.

### B1. The data Columns are numbered 1 to 6.

**Col. 1** contains a colour fill using the national coding Green, Amber and Red for Species of Conservation Concern.

The field also contains a coded reference to the species' national status – key below; per BoS.

Table 1. Status Definitions

Status	Code	Definition
Resident	R	Breeds and present all year
Summer Visitor	S	Mainly occurs as a breeding visitor in summer
Winter Visitor	W	Mainly occurs as a visitor throughout the winter
Visitor	V	Can appear at any time during the year, with no obvious pattern as to when it occurs
Passage Migrant	P	Mainly passes through in the spring and/or autumn; this category is only used when it is the predominant status
Vagrant	Va	A very rare bird well outside its usual range
Naturalised	N	Introduced deliberately or accidentally by man and now breeds in the wild
Irruptive	I	Occurs sporadically, or in very variable numbers, in response to severe food shortages within its home range
No Modern Record	NMR	A species that has only occurred before 1 January 1950
Has Bred	HB	Species that have bred before 2008, either regularly or infrequently, but no longer breed; they may have another status now
Breeding Species	BS	Species that breed in low numbers and not always annually. This includes those that are predominantly winter visitors or passage migrants, where the breeding population is considerably lower; and those that have bred for the first time since 2008, but have not yet become established as a regular breeding species

Table 2. Abundance Definitions

Abundance	Code	Definition
<b>Residents and Summer Visitors (i.e. breeding species)</b>		
Very rare	1	Less than annual
Rare	2	Annual and up to 10 Breeding Pairs
Scarce	3	11–100 Breeding Pairs
Uncommon	4	101–1,500 Breeding Pairs
Fairly Common	5	1,501–3,500 Breeding Pairs
Common	6	3,501–15,000 Breeding Pairs
Very Common	7	Over 15,000 Breeding Pairs
<b>Winter Visitors, Passage Migrants and Rarities</b>		
Very Rare	1	Less than annual
Rare	2	Annual or nearly annual and up to 20 individuals each year
Scarce	3	21–200 individuals each year
Uncommon	4	Found in 10–24% of tetrads (2007–13)
Fairly Common	5	Found in 25–39% of tetrads (2007–13)
Common	6	Found in 40–89% of tetrads (2007–13)
Very Common	7	Found in 90–100% of tetrads (2007–13)

**Col. 2** contains **International English Names** (IEN) from the BOURC's 2011 Systematic List.

Each species top cell begins with the scientific name along with commonly used alternative English names, potentially useful during searches. Thus for example using the 'find' feature for 'Wood Lark' or 'Woodlark' will both return the official IEN 'Wood Lark' and searching for 'Dunnock' or 'Hedge Sparrow' both will take you to the official IEN 'Hedge Accentor'.

**Col. 3** (Cons) contains species sequential numbers imposed upon the BOURC's Systematic List of International English Names; a copy is available within Resources. [LINK?](#)

**Col. 4** contains the references.

References are given in chronological order

in this form: **Year : authority : page/s**

The documents can be found in the chronologically arranged drop-down menu

“The Historical Record” – “All Historical Documents”, where they can be opened.

**Col. 5** Species names as they appear in the referenced work, included especially for early references which use arcane names. Entries here are not wholly reliable in two respects. First, for example, the early use of the name Aberdevine in 1837 may refer to Eurasian Siskin but might also be to a redpoll. Second, the process of creating the index involved the frequent copying of existing records into new rows and previously used names were often carried forward into the new rows, in error.

**Col 6.** These cells may contain notes and in some cases clarifications in instances of actual or potential confusion.

## **B2. The use of Colours and highlighted fields.** See KEY at the top of the file.

**C1.** Species with their initial common name cell **highlighted in dark green** are those for which ***every known record is indexed.***

They are the less frequently recorded species and include all those on lists of species requiring descriptions for formal consideration by Rarities Committees.

**C2.** Species with their initial common name cell **highlighted in yellow** have ***every known record indexed EXCEPT mentions in the annual SBRs.***

This is because in general terms they can be assumed to have more or less annual SBR statements which the serious researcher will need to examine individually and for which indexed entries would be of no help.

**C3.** A *slightly* **paler green highlight** (see KEY in the Index file) is used, usually in Col. 3, to draw attention to the first county record, often from BoS.

**C4.** Cells made **pink** draw attention to the few unresolved issues in need of attention.

**C4.** Species with their **text in blue** are **introductions, escapes, aliens or exotics**. Latterly these are listed in SOS ABRs at the end of reports under, variously, 'Escapes and Feral', see 2.10. However some undoubted exotics (eg. Mandarin) are in the BOURC list and generally in the main texts of SOS ABRs. They are blue in this work because they are regarded as naturalised, 'breeding freely in the wild'.

**C5.** Index entries **with the entire text in red** may be records from just outside Shropshire. More often they will be references to errors, formal **Rejections or corrections** to them.

Histo is the one place containing all such corrections.

**C6.** A thick black line is used to delineate the start of the 'Modern Period for Records', 1950 onwards.

**C7.** Museum materials are listed at 'Additional Resources – Museums' are Species Indexed BTO ringing data at 'Additional Resources – BTO Ringing data' and are generally not Species Indexed.

### B3. Species Index. The future

The author will be pleased to hear of additional Shropshire material which will, wherever possible, be added to the database; it is in all our interests that it remains comprehensive.

The author is the custodian of the single hard copy of Histo. There is no printout of the Species Index; with over 14,000 entries a printout would occupy hundreds of pages and it should be used in e-form, which is in any case by far the quickest way to search it.

Please report any errors or omissions in the database; they will be corrected.

**Researchers.** The *Excel* spreadsheet versions of the **Species Index** and **Citations**, which are easier to search and manipulate in detailed searches, is available on request to the author – via the Contact page.

### C. Citations

The **Citations** file, another PDF, is the other key reference point to see where the materials are and to find their full citations.

**Citations** lists all Histo's material in chronological order and allocates each a sequential Item number, necessary for the hard copy and sometimes the Species Index.

**Columns 1 & 2** colour-code hard copy volume numbers and their unique **Item** numbers.

**Column 3** gives the year of publication or, if unpublished, the last data referred to in the title or text.

**Column 4** gives the author name/s and **Column 5** the title and full citation reference of the material. The column also acknowledges sources and permissions for reproduction. In some cases the latter have not been forthcoming in spite of repeated requests, often because the publishers and/or the author's estates no longer exist. Only once has permission to post on Histo been denied.

## D. Additional Resources onwards!

This drop-down gives access to a variety of useful material. First, 'Historical Resources' leads to the following, all of which relate directly to this data set

1. User Guide and explanatory text.
2. Species Index, for explanatory text see Section B here.
3. Citations List and explanatory text above.
4. Author Index – under development.
5. Gazetteer of Shropshire place-names. Recently revised to include tetrad.
6. Key maps to Shropshire cover by OS maps at 1:50,000 and 1:25,000.
7. 'BTO Ringing Data' gives links to three British Trust for Ornithology websites listing ringing totals and selected recoveries. The BTO is thanked for permission to use these links. Ringing records are not indexed in this website's Species Index.
8. 'Museums' currently links to the bird collections of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, **AND** ...a six-part series of PDF files listing skin and egg collections. Museum material obtained within Shropshire is included in the Species Index.
9. There are two texts covering Acknowledgements and Copyright.

## E. *British Birds* references to Shropshire

### Introduction.

In relation to this Shropshire-oriented 'Historical' website *British Birds* is a primary source because of its papers on rare breeding birds and national rarities. Both topics are the subject of committees publishing definitive annual reports which include occasional references to Shropshire. Further, from time to time papers appear which relate specifically to Shropshire or include references to the birds of the county. All meaningful *BB* references to birds in Shropshire are indexed in Histo's Species Index. The following explains how they are indexed.

*British Birds* references are available online and the website should be consulted for the latest system used to access them.

## F. Gallery

This features a few relevant images including likenesses of some of the county's early writers.

## G. Acknowledgements

The SOS has kindly given several small grants to cover start-up costs of the project and continues to support material costs, for example of requests to Inter Library Loans for additional materials as they become known. Their help is greatly appreciated.

Much of the material first used in this resource came from either the periodicals of the *Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club* (CSVFC), its predecessor the *Shropshire Natural History and Philosophical Society* (SNHPS) or the *Shropshire Ornithological Society* (SOS) for whom it has been compiled. The SNHPS no longer exists and the CSVFC kindly gave permission for their material to us used. A full copy of the CSVFC papers is kept at the *Shropshire Archive* in Shrewsbury and was photographed by the editor using facilities kindly made available by the Conservator Andrew Davidson. The *Shropshire Archive* was also the source of several other works used here and their continued support is greatly appreciated. Acknowledgements are given to sources in their website entries. All are thanked for their valuable help and permissions.

Several individuals have been particularly helpful over several years now. My brother Peter, joint author, has been central to the project and entirely responsible for the website and its maintenance. Without Peter's tireless and patient work the material would lie only within the printout on my shelves and in my own computer. This website is a monument to his design skills and dedication.

The late Colin Wright, one-time editor of the SOS Annual Bird Report, was been an ardent supporter of the project over the 25 years or so that we discussed it. Simon Holloway has given his support, often finding obscure publications on the internet and Tom Wall has put me onto several local history books including for example the first-hand account of collecting Lapwing eggs for Fortnum and Mason in the 1930s and latterly his work transcribing bird records from several estate Game Books. Patricia Francis, editor of *The North-Western Naturalist* (TNWN) and Natural History Curator & Exhibitions Co-ordinator at Gallery Oldham kindly searched and provided copies of Shropshire material from TNWN. Gallery Oldham kindly gave permission for the reproduction of the painting of the taxidermist's workshop by John Houghthorn Hague (1842-1934) <http://www.galleryoldham.org.uk>.

**Ralph Collingwood** published "*Noyful Fowles and Vermin. The Statutory Control of Wildlife in Shropshire: 1532–1861*" in 2014, a massive scholarly work resulting from consulting all available county parish churchwardens' accounts at the Shropshire Archives looking at payments for the destruction of wild birds and mammals (and adders) since the early 1500s. It is followed by his otherwise unpublished MS "*Control of vermin after the repeal of the 1566 Act in 1861*" also of 2014. Both appeared in time for writing BoS and had Ralph not carried out and published the work then the data would probably have remained hidden for a long time.

**Alan Brisbourne** deserves a huge thanks for his contribution for during his own historical researches combing local newspapers he kindly copies to Histo anything he finds about birds. Usually only single paragraphs, sometime single sentences, these often give wholly new records for scarce or rare species and from time they have given specific details, such as exact dates for records previously known only in broad terms. The exact date of the first county Curlew Sandpiper in 1836 (on 16<sup>th</sup> September) is an example.

**Dr Andrew Pattison** drew our attention to the ca.1738 colour estate map/picture of Pickmore Pool – with its two White Storks(?), discussed in its associated text. Andrew also pointed out the Shrewsbury street name commemorating the Rocke family.

Several of the above and others have helped with additional material, proof-reading and checking; any errors which remain are my own. I must also thank the many people who between them compiled the Shropshire Gazetteer as volunteers for Shropshire Wildlife Trust in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

## H. References

Gill, F. & Donsker, D. WorldBirdNames A website at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/> *Ibis* 65(3):424-435 (1923) XXVII Report of the Committee on the Nomenclature and Records of Occurrences of rare Birds in the British Islands and certain necessary Changes in the Nomenclature of the B.O.U. List of British Birds.

**Appendix 1 Index to the abbreviations** used for authorities as cited in Column 6 (Reference) of the Species Index.

Beckwith, WE Paddock, GH Tuer, B and other authors in similar format

Forrest, HE Rocke, J Yapp, WB

various years various years one paper

various years various years one paper

**BMAG** Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery collections of skins indexed as “year. SKIN BMAGn: pages” where n is the number of the text ‘Part’ available at

<http://www.lanius.org.uk/sos/sos-museums.html>

or as EGG (in place of SKIN) in the case of eggs, all of which are in BMAG6. **BuISNU** Bulletin of the Shropshire Naturalists’ Union (one volume only, 1995)

**BoS** *The Birds of Shropshire*, Smith, L. (2019). Published in late 2019 this work has its own website containing the maps and a vast amount of data from the book:

<http://www.shropshirebirds.com/AvifaunaSupplement#start>

The SOS is to be congratulated for publishing the much overdue book.

**CSVFC RBF** Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club, annual *Record of Bare Facts* (latterly *Recorder’s Reports*) 1892-1960 *Annual reports contain records from the same year.* **CSVFC Trans** Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club, annual *Transactions* 1893-1960 *Year reports, usually called Zoology Reports, present records from the previous year.*

NOTE. *Transactions* were not published every year and the following combined volumes (here as years) appear in references named by their start years:

**HandI** SOS *A Handlist of the birds of Shropshire* (1964)

**SN** Shropshire Naturalist 1992 and 1993 (only) **SOS ABR** Shropshire Ornithological Society Annual Bird Reports NB. *Annual reports contain bird records of that year.* **SSOS/SONHS** Shrewsbury School – Ornithological Society or Natural History Society

**NWNat** The North Western Naturalists’ Union Bulletins **Appendix 2**

All the works of William E Beckwith are now published in a single volume: Tucker, J. & Tucker, P. (2017) *Beckwith’s Birds of Nineteenth Century Shropshire* sponsored by the Jean Jackson Conservation Trust and in part by the SOS.

Also now in book form (30 copies) and on this website is the *Journal of Field Ornithology Volume II 1888-1911* of Charles Gawen Roberts Gawen (1860-1940), Ed. Tucker, J (2018), the original manuscript of which surfaced in 2015, sponsored in part by the SOS. Gawen’s volume I would be a significant discovery.

### **Problem species and other issues.**

Redpolls and White/Pied Wagtails are potential problems: A plethora of common/ lesser/ mealy/ redpoll/ redpole references are recorded under a range of names in columns 4,7 and the notes in 8 and serious students of these groups are left to sort them out.

Pied Wagtail now has the International English Name White Wagtail and, once again, the student of these two is left to sort them out.



## I. The 22-volume printout version

A single hard copy of Histo is held by the author in Aston on Clun and used for indexing, general administration and personal research; it is annotated with the indexing and other notes. It will ultimately transfer to the SOS.

The hard copy version is arranged in chronological order as is the on-line version. Each document is given a unique sequential number, 1 to 80 (80 being 2019) at 6.11.2019.

Within this system all CSVFC annual *Record of Bare Facts/Recorders' Reports* are within Item number 23, all CSVFC Transactions are within Item number 24 and all SOS *Annual Bird Reports* are within Item number 45.

### Appendix 1

**Hard copy:** Contents of the three plastic boxes containing the 21 lever-arch files.

#### Box 1 (V1-V7), Box 2 (V8-V14) & Box 3 (V15-V21)

- Volume 1** Chronological file 1. Items 0 – 5.517
- Volume 2** Chronological file 2. Items 5.518 – 5.5122
- Volume 3** Chronological file 3. Items 25 – 27 [except 23 & 24, below]
- Volume 4** Beckwith's work: Items 5.525, .526, .530.8 9 & 10
- Volume 5** CSVFC *Record* part 1. Items 23 (1). 1892 - 1925
- Volume 6** CSVFC *Record* part 2. Items 23 (2). 1926 - 1972
- Volume 7** CSVFC *Transactions* part 1. Items 24 (1). 1893 – 1926
  
- Volume 8** CSVFC *Transactions* part 2. Items 24 (2). 1927 - 1972
- Volume 9** Chronological file 4. Items 28 – 35.9
- Volume 10** Chronological file 5. Items 36 – 44.7
- Volume 11** Shropshire Bird Reports: 1. Items 45(1). 1955 - 1969
- Volume 12** Shropshire Bird Reports: 2. Items 45(2). 1970 - 1984
- Volume 13** Shropshire Bird Reports: 3. Items 45(3). 1985 - 1992
- Volume 14** Shropshire Bird Reports: 4. Items 45(4). 1993 – 1999 Subsequently online
  
- Volume 15** Chronological file 6. Items 46 – 57-5
- Volume 16** Chronological file 7. Items 58 - 72
- Volume 17** Tucker (1992-2013). Items 62.51 – 62.69. Subsequently filed chronologically
- Volume 18** Chronological file 8. Items 72.1 – 77. 2010 - 2014
- Volume 19** Chronological file 9. Items 78 onwards. 2016 ...
- Volume 20** Museum material. Various
- Volume 21** *British Birds* 1907 - 2007