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# The 2009 Shropshire Bird Report

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**The 50th Annual Report of the  
Shropshire Ornithological Society**

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgements	2
Editorial	3
Research Reports:	5
Lapwing, Curlew and Other Wildlife in the Upper Onny Valley (2009)	6
Lapwing, Curlew and Other Target Birds in the Upper Clun (2009)	8
Upland birds of the Long Mynd	9
Venus Pool Nature Reserve Report	11
Common Terns Breeding at Trench Pool, Telford	14
The House Martin Colony on Atcham Bridges	15
Shropshire Ringing Report 2009	22
Introduction to the Systematic List	27
The Systematic List	36
Officers and Management Committee (2009)	201
List of Observers	202
Field Trips and Indoor Meetings	205

Cover photo: Dipper, 6 April 2009 (*John Hawkins*)

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## EDITORIAL

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The Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS) was formed in April 1955, with its first Annual Report produced in 1956. At this time, the Society had 170 members, records included within the report were submitted by 17 observers and full membership cost ten shillings. Fast-forward to 2009, and the SOS has been overseen by four Presidents, six Chairmen and four named County Recorders, and significantly, this 2009 Annual Report is the 50th produced by the Society.

One of the original objectives of the SOS at formation was, and still is, to encourage the study and protection of birds within the County (and elsewhere). This Report provides information detailing how members of the Society are achieving this objective, with information in relation to ringing, species and site-specific studies by a number of committed groups and organisations as well as the ongoing monitoring work organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Details relating to these monitoring studies are provided within the 'Introduction to the Systematic List'. The Society also continues to invest in a number of sites around the County, including continued improvements (for birds and observers) at Venus Pool. Details in relation to the improvements at VP during 2009 are included in the 'Venus Pool Nature Reserve Report'.

The SOS now boasts some 600 members, with 444 observers providing a total of 84,600 records in 2009, involving 195 bird species. Within the first Annual Report in 1956, some 133 species were recorded, although, as noted above, the number of observers was considerably lower. Since that time numerous birds have been lost as breeding species within the county, and the populations of others have reduced significantly (particularly within farmland habitats), whilst on the plus side, numerous other species have become more regular as a result of range expansion and/or reduced persecution.

The continued Atlas monitoring (ongoing in 2009) will provide a detailed account of the status of species within the County. This information will be included within a definitive book on the county avifauna, to be released in 2015, which will include analysis of the ongoing Atlas monitoring and an evaluation of historic data for each species recorded within the County. Within Shropshire we are privileged to have all key historic documents in relation to the County's avifauna, including all Annual Reports, freely available via the SOS website within the 'Historical Ornithology of Shropshire'. This resource has been used to produce an informative account of the house martin colony on Atcham Bridges included within this Report.

Although there were no new species for the County recorded within Shropshire

during 2009, Kumlien's gulls at Chelmarsh and Priorslee Lake represented the first County records for this sub-species (of Iceland gull). Other noteworthy occurrences were the first breeding of common tern within the County at Trench Pool, an account of which is provided, and records of purple heron, spoonbill, white stork, ring-billed gull and hooded crow.

Martyn Owen

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## Research Reports

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*Leo Smith*

There are several groups undertaking monitoring and conservation of individual species. These groups produce information and annual reports which, where relevant, are summarised in the appropriate species account within the Systematic List.

Species covered in this way in this 2009 Bird Report are:

- Red kite
- Peregrine
- Snipe
- Dipper
- Barn owl
- Raven

In addition, there are a number of research surveys that cover more than one species, usually as part of multi-annual systematic monitoring. Where these take the form of projects over a specific number of years, the County Bird Report will not include interim reports, although some data may be included in the Species Accounts. These projects will be written up in full in the year when the final project report is published.

Annual surveys with no planned end date will be summarised annually.

A copy of any of the full reports summarised here can be obtained via the SOS website.

The summary of annual and research surveys for 2009 is as follows:-

### **Shropshire Moors Breeding Wader Survey 2009**

*Report of RSPB*

A Breeding Wader Survey of the Shropshire Moors (Baggy Moor near Oswestry and the Weald Moors north of Telford) was coordinated by the RSPB Midlands Regional Office, to collate baseline data of breeding waders in these areas, to

inform future conservation action.

The survey encompassed twenty-two landholdings and was conducted using the standard breeding wader survey methodology (O'Brien and Smith 1992). In addition to the recording of breeding waders, details on general land use and habitat were collected alongside records of bird species more commonly associated with arable farming.

The data was analysed to quantify the number of breeding pairs of lapwing, curlew and snipe. Fifty-two pairs of breeding waders were recorded in total:

- Lapwing: 47 pairs
- Curlew: Five pairs
- Snipe: Recorded at one survey site on Baggy Moor in April but breeding behaviour was not recorded.
- Redshank: Not recorded at any survey sites.

Baggy Moor supported the highest number of breeding waders with 33 of the 47 pairs of lapwing and three of the five pairs of curlew. However, this may be due to survey coverage rather than species status at each site since coverage was significantly higher on Baggy Moor than on the Weald Moor.

A repeat survey will be carried out in 2010 and additional survey areas will be included where appropriate.

## **Lapwing, Curlew and Other Wildlife in the Upper Onny Valley (2009)**

### *Report of the Upper Onny Wildlife Group*

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group has carried out a Breeding Bird Survey annually since 2004, concentrating on curlew and lapwing. It covers a total area of approximately 126 km<sup>2</sup> between the Long Mynd and the Welsh border. Most of this area is within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the Shropshire Hills Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). Skylark were also counted, and members were also asked to record several other species; cuckoo, dipper, red kite, grey partridge, snipe, wheatear, yellow wagtail, yellowhammer and brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*).

Both lapwing and curlew have declined substantially in this area in recent times, and very few breeding pairs were found by the survey, or during intensive follow-up work:

- 31 pairs of lapwing (only 17 within the designated AONB and ESA, ten of which were on one farm)
- 35 - 36 pairs of curlew (all except five pairs within the designated AONB and ESA boundaries),

The lapwing population was the highest since monitoring started in 2004, largely as a result of good breeding success in 2007. Cattle pasture has been the most important lapwing habitat in the ESA, and most of the pairs in the ESA nested on it again in 2009.

Many broods on both pasture and arable land came from repeat layings to replace clutches lost as a result of predation. Although trampling of nests was not a significant problem in 2009, because the main pasture habitat was ungrazed, several pairs lost nests as a result of agricultural activity.

Curlew are more difficult to monitor, but almost half the pairs had apparently failed again by mid-June. This level of breeding success is insufficient to halt, let alone reverse, the decline. An addition of new pairs to the population was off-set by loss of established pairs. However, decline elsewhere in Shropshire has been much quicker, and the Upper Onny may now hold a quarter of the County breeding population.

The Group's report concluded that although a small further increase in the lapwing population was found, breeding success was again insufficient to sustain the population. Loss of set-aside has reduced the available habitat, and urgent action is needed to compensate for this loss. Lapwings are restricted to six farms and concentrated on only two. They are still seriously threatened in the area. Swift and radical action is needed to improve and re-create suitable habitat, and combat predation.

The number of fledged young appears to be insufficient to sustain the existing population, which has declined by over 10% in only four years. Even in this important area, curlew are likely to become extinct within ten years, unless action is taken. The timing of preparing and cutting hay and silage appears to be the biggest factor limiting breeding success, and the *Please Conserve Our Curlews* campaign is continuing.

Nest boxes for dipper have now been installed under almost all bridges. Seventeen nests of 12 different pairs of dipper were found, ten in boxes. Several pairs have moved into boxes on bridges that were otherwise unsuitable, so new additional territories have been occupied. The work has also shown that brood sizes in boxes are bigger, so the project has already helped increase the population.

The barn owl nest box scheme has continued. In total, 20 boxes have been put up before the breeding season. Four were used. Some natural nest sites were also occupied. The boxes should help increase the population of around ten pairs.

More nest boxes for woodland birds were installed, and 166 were monitored at nine separate sites. Of these, 74 were used by four different species.

The Group's work has been actively promoted in the area. This work, together with the bird survey and nest box scheme results, and the *Programme of Action* to increase the area of suitable habitat and improve breeding success, for both lapwing and curlew, including recommendations to Defra, Natural England, and the AONB Partnership, is detailed in the Group's 2009 Report.

### **Lapwing, Curlew and Other Target Birds in the Upper Clun (2009)**

#### *Report of the Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group*

The Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group covers the part of Shropshire west of Clun Bridge. The area is divided into 31 squares ('tetrads'). The Group repeated the lapwing and curlew survey stated in 2007. Sixteen other target species of conservation interest were also recorded and mapped; red kite, grey partridge, snipe, cuckoo, skylark, yellow wagtail, dipper, dunnoek, wheatear, spotted flycatcher, tree sparrow, linnet, bullfinch, yellowhammer, corn bunting and reed bunting.

The lapwing population has been in steep decline for many years, and no breeding pairs were found.

Only ten - 14 pairs of curlew were found, compared with 14 – 17 pairs last year and 20 – 22 pairs in 2007

Comparison of the results with the distribution maps for lapwing and curlew in *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire* (1992) shows a substantial decline in the range of both species.

The Group's report concluded that "*It may already be too late to save lapwing from local extinction as a breeding bird, but immediate and effective action must be taken to recreate suitable habitat, and protect the nests of any returning pairs from predation, farm machinery and trampling, if lapwing are to have any chance of remaining in the area...At the current rate of decline, the curlew population will be extinct within five years, but there are two "hot spots", around Rhos Fiddle and Black Mountain, where conservation work will be concentrated.*"

Another 16 species were also surveyed, but only four; skylark, yellowhammer, dunnock and red kite - were recorded in more than half the squares in the survey area. The number of all these species found was higher than last year, but bullfinch, tree sparrow and linnet were found less frequently than last year, and most of the other target species were found in only a handful of squares. Grey partridge, snipe, yellow wagtail and corn bunting were not recorded at all.

Also, 14 breeding pairs of dipper were found. All except two of the nests were in boxes. At least three pairs laid a second clutch after raising a brood, and two more laid a second clutch to replace a predated clutch. At least ten of these pairs successfully raised young.

Twenty-five potential barn owl sites were surveyed, including 21 which already had nest boxes installed, mostly in the last year or two. Two territories were found, one fewer than last year.

The nest box scheme was expanded, and there are now seven groups of ten boxes each. Species using the boxes included blue tit, great tit, pied flycatcher and nuthatch.

Four red kite nests were also found, three of which each produced one young.

The habitat occupied by five of the target species (dunnock, tree sparrow, linnet, bullfinch and yellowhammer) was also recorded again. The 2009 results confirmed the conclusions drawn in the 2008 Report “*All the species were strongly associated with hedgerows, with over 80% of records coming from them. Around half of all records came from hedgerows where there were mature trees, and/or good verges (more than 1m wide)*”. However, the association of linnet with gorse was even more marked in 2009.

Detailed results and distribution maps were published in the UCCWG Report 2009, which also included recommendations to a number of statutory and voluntary organisations to implement appropriate action.

## **Upland Birds of the Long Mynd**

### *The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project*

The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project monitored the populations of over 20 upland species between 1994 and 1998, and correlated their territories with the different available habitats. The results were summarised in the *Shropshire Bird Report 2003*.

Work started in 2006 to repeat this survey over the three years 2006-08, with coverage of any gaps planned for 2009, to assess the impact of the Long Mynd ESA agreement on populations and habitat. This Agreement was primarily aimed at restoring the quality of the heathland by reducing grazing pressure from sheep.

The survey data has not yet been analysed, so results for individual species are not available for inclusion in the Systematic List. It is envisaged that the results will be published in the *Shropshire Bird Report 2010*.

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## Venus Pool Nature Reserve Report

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*Helen J Griffiths*

The reserve saw big changes during the year when, after much discussion and deliberation, the decision was made to replace the two original brick hides with two bigger and slightly repositioned, wooden hides; the new hides will still be known as the North hide and the Memorial hide. SOS was successful in obtaining some funding from Natural England towards this project, and I would like to record here the Society's thanks for the generous contribution. The funding helped to pay for the new Memorial hide and for the all-ability path to that hide, and, consequently, this hide is now designated for public access. The new North hide remains for use by SOS members only, with entry via a small gate on the path and a key pad on the hide door. The hides were erected very quickly and efficiently by Gilleards, in November, and have made an enormous improvement to the birdwatching "experience" at Venus Pool.



The new Memorial Hide  
*(Helen J Griffiths)*



The new North Hide (SOS members only)  
*(Helen J Griffiths)*

Birding highlights during the year at VP included osprey being recorded on 23 different days during April, and July and August, bittern recorded on many occasions between the beginning of January and mid-March, and again during the first half of October, and a single whooper swan in early November. Other records of note from 2009 were tree sparrow recorded in small numbers in each month, with the exception of July (these include evidence of breeding on the reserve), and a bar-tailed godwit seen several times in the first half of April, one sanderling in mid-May, one jack snipe in late January, a little gull in mid-November, and two water rails seen well from the Fen hide on many occasions.

As usual at VP, breeding success was mixed. Resident species including mute

swan, little grebe (two broods), mallard, black-headed gull, tree sparrow, long-tailed tit, wren, and song thrush were all successful, as well as several summer visitors, including sedge and reed warblers, lesser whitethroat, blackcap, willow warbler and garden warbler. A tufted duck raised eight ducklings, at least two lapwing chicks fledged, and a pair of kestrels raised three young in a kestrel box on a conifer tree. Unfortunately, although little ringed plover and oystercatcher made several breeding attempts, no offspring survived for more than a few days this year.

Although not breeding on the reserve, hirundines and swifts were, as usual, present throughout the summer, feeding over the water and fields each day, in large numbers of 50+ at times, and breeding in nearby buildings. Sand martins are usually the first summer migrants to arrive and, this year, were first seen on 24 Mar, with swallow arriving on 25 Mar and house martin on 30 Mar. The reserve is an important area for these birds; it is close to their nest sites, provides plenty of building material, and, of course, has an abundance of invertebrates, to which the presence of grazing animals makes an important contribution.

Eleven species of duck were seen on the reserve this year, including up to twenty wigeon in the first winter period and forty in the second, small numbers of gadwall were present on several days during the year, up to four pintail were recorded during late February and early March, and shoveler were recorded in all months except May and July, with a maximum count of 18 on 20 Sep. Tufted duck and pochard were present throughout the year, the maximum count being 30 of each species on 12 Jan.

Seventeen species of wader were recorded during 2009, including a jack snipe, a sanderling in mid-May, a bar-tailed godwit in mid-April, three sightings of whimbrel, and black-tailed godwits on several dates between early June and mid-October (max was five on 29 Aug). Lapwing were recorded in all months, with a max count of 500+ in December, dunlin were seen in nine of the twelve months (max three in early May), and common snipe were recorded regularly in small numbers (between one and the low teens) until the end of April and again from 1 Aug.

There were reports of nine species of raptor during the year - seven sightings of red kite, two of hen harrier (one male and one female), sparrowhawk (all records of a single bird), common buzzard (maximum count of eight in August), osprey (recorded in both spring and autumn migration periods), kestrel (which bred successfully on the reserve this year), four records of merlin, hobby (observed hawking for dragonflies and chasing small birds over the arable field), and peregrine.

Single Mediterranean gulls were recorded in September and November, a first-winter little gull was present in mid-November, a black tern appeared on 1 Aug, and several common terns were seen, including four together in early-June and 13 on 8 Sep.

Several work parties took place during the year; when willow and reeds were cut, some tree management undertaken, and a mini-tractor and topper hired to cut various areas on the reserve. After the flowering period in early summer, the hay fields were cut and baled into large black bags late in the summer, as soon as the weather allowed, and then grazed by the neighbour's cattle for a few weeks later in the autumn. The arable fields were again cultivated and sown with crops to provide plenty of seed for winter finches, buntings etc., with flocks of 60-70 chaffinch, a few brambling, 100 goldfinch, 100 linnet, 30 lesser redpoll, 50 yellowhammer and 60 reed bunting recorded during the winter months. The chicory strips are particularly successful and act as extra "hedges" for the small birds to use as cover when feeding in this large field.

The Society's six Hebridean sheep remained fit and healthy, and worked hard to control tall vegetation, including willow, birch, and brambles, around the reserve. Shearing was postponed a couple of times this year due to heavy thunderstorms, but the sheep were eventually relieved of their coats in late July. Hebrideans are a hardy, native breed of sheep, able to cope well in harsh conditions, and by the time the low temperatures and icy conditions arrived at the end of the year, their coats had grown thick and woolly again, and a feed of nuts and hay each day meant that they were able to remain outside throughout the winter.

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## Common Terns Breeding at Trench Pool, Telford

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*Martin G Grant*

My attention was roused by reports from Ed Wilson of a pair of common terns at Trench Pool on 23 Jun and still present on the 27 Jun. On the 29 Jun Ed commented, “*terns still present could they be thinking about nesting here?*” On 2 Jul he reported the fishermen had told him that the terns were driving the black-headed gulls off the floating platform, used by the sea cadets, and a third tern had been present the previous day.

I visited on the 4 Jul and noted one of the terns sitting on the corner of the platform when its mate brought a fish to feed it. When the sitting tern flew off the platform I could see an egg. I again visited on the 7 Jul and two eggs had been laid, with the pair taking turns incubating the eggs.

Ed again recorded two terns still present on the 9 Jul but no sign of a nest. They were not seen again after this date, so the eggs would appear to have been predated.

On the 20 Jul Ed reported a grey heron using the platform and also disturbed it attempting to predate a coot nest. May be this was the predator that robbed the tern eggs?

The nearest regular breeding common terns, outside the County, are at Belvide Reservoir (Staffordshire), where purpose built rafts have been installed. In 2009 one pair fledged just one young here and in Staffordshire, a total of 23 breeding pairs raised 23 juveniles.

It is unlikely that the breeding attempt will be repeated at Trench Pool as the platform was removed in 2009 at the request of the fishermen who looked on in dismay at the cormorants using it. Perhaps if breeding rafts were installed at a suitable site in the County, maybe Chelmarsh or Priorslee Flash, we could attract further breeding common terns to Shropshire.

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## The House Martin Colony on Atcham Bridges

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*John Tucker & Colin Wright*

### Early (pre-1950) Records

The first mention of house martins nesting on the 1776 Severn bridge at Atcham (SJ541092) ('the old bridge') is not until the early twentieth century when H. E. Forrest, in the Victoria County History, referred to "an almost continuous row of nests from end to end" (Forrest, 1908); regrettably he did not count them. This leaves 132 years from the construction of the old bridge to the first record of martins using it; surely the birds must have been there before 1908 but went unrecorded.

It is surprising that William Beckwith (1844-1892) left no account of the colony for he might have been familiar with it, the bridge being on a potential route from his home in Eaton Costantine to Shrewsbury. He refers to nests on the bridge over the Severn at Cressage close to his home and to some on Lord Hill's column, Shrewsbury (Beckwith, 1893). Perhaps he used the Bridgnorth road, now the A458, missing Atcham altogether, which would help to account for his familiarity with the bridge at Cressage.

Subsequently, and three decades on, it was the Shrewsbury School Ornithological Society (SSOS), then in its third year, which gave the first count of nests on the old bridge when they recorded '*Approx. 100 nests*' in 1938 (SSOS, 1939). That was not long after the replacement bridge was opened 100m or so north of the old bridge in 1929 ('the new bridge').

### Modern (post-1950) Records

Next, two decades on, comes the 1957 record of 168 nests by the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club in the Recorder's Report. That year the Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS), then in its first year, quoted Dr Bruce Campbell (he was a 'David Attenborough' of the radio in those days) reporting the 168 nests on 15 Aug and surmising that it was '*Probably the largest known colony of House Martins in Great Britain*'. He eclipsed that score himself in 1963 when he counted the site's peak of 335. Indeed it may have been the largest in 1963, for a colony of 513 recorded in Oxfordshire in 1952 had by then declined to 223 nests (Brucker *et al.*, 1992).

At Atcham, following occasional counts in the 1980s and the last documented suggestion of breeding in 1990 when '*some 50 birds attended*' on 30 May (SOS

ABR, 1990) there is a record in the SOS computer database of ‘10 nests disturbed by road works’ on 20 Aug 1995 (G. Holmes in litt.).

Table 1 presents the chronology of the house martin colony at the old and new Atcham bridges, the vast majority of nests being on the former. All counts are from the old bridge unless otherwise stated.

**Table 1** Timeline for Atcham bridges and the house martin colony

Year	Reference	Total nests	Notes
1776	The old bridge opened.		
1908	Forrest (1908)	-	<i>‘An almost continuous row of nests from end to end’.</i>
1929	The new bridge opened.		
1938	SSOS AR1937/39:3	100	<i>‘Approx. 100 nests’</i> , no date and old bridge not specified.
1952	Brucker (1992)	-	Peak count of 513 nests at Clifton Hampden bridge, Oxfordshire.
1957	1957: SOS ABR: 16	168	Dr Bruce Campbell counted 168 occupied nests on the old bridge and one on the new, <i>‘Probably the largest known colony of House Martins in Great Britain’</i> (18 Aug).
1958	1958: SOS ABR: 12	163	163 occupied nests (17 Jun).
1959	1959: SOS ABR: 14	184	184 nests including 2 on new bridge (27 Jun).
1960	1960: CSVFC RR: 93	256	256 nests, all but one on the old bridge (24 Jun).
1961	1961: SOS ABR: 13	253	253 total of which 5 on new bridge (no date).
1962	1962: SOS ABR: 20	325	325 nests, 200 south side and 125 north side. At least 275 occupied (4 Aug).
1963	1963: SOS ABR: 17	335	Dr Bruce Campbell counted 335 nests on old bridge with one on the new(4 Jun).
1973	1973: SOS ABR: 28	50	50 pairs counted at old bridge and <i>‘thought to be an increase on 1972’</i> (1 Jun).9
1977	1976/77: SOS ABR: 39	20	1977; old bridge; c. 20 pairs (1 Jun).
1978	1978/79: SOS ABR: 42	30	1978; 30 occupied nests on (11 Jul).
1979	1978/79: SOS ABR: 42	71	1979; old bridge 71 nests (3 Aug).
1980	1980/81: SOS ABR: 44	100	1980; old bridge; c. 100 nests (no date).
1982	1982: SOS ABR: 49	100	c.100 nests in use(9 Aug).
1984	1984: SOS ABR:42	143	c.143 occupied nests(7 Jul).
1985	1985: SOS ABR: 59	159	159 nests, 129+ occupied (June).
1988	1988: SOS ABR: 38	70	70+ occupied nests (17 Jun).
1989	1989: SOS ABR: 35	79	79 occupied nests (27 Jul).
1990	1990: SOS ABR: 41	25	<i>‘Some 50 birds attended’</i> (30 May).
1995	SOS, unpublished	10	<i>‘ten nests disturbed by road works, 20 Aug.’</i> G. Holmes in litt. per SOS computer records

*Table 1 Notes:*

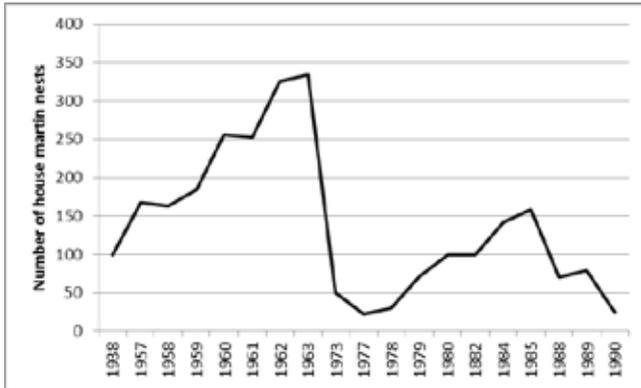
CSVFC RR = Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club 1960 Recorder’s Report.

SOS year ABR:page = Shropshire Ornithological Society Annual Bird Report.

SSOS = Shrewsbury School Ornithological Society; Annual Report for 1937/38.

The nest count data detailed within Table 1 is illustrated graphically within Figure 1. Note that the horizontal scale is not linear, the sporadic dates are between 1938 and 1990 and correspond to the counts in Table 1.

**Figure 1** A plot of nest counts at the Atcham bridges house martin colony.



### **Atcham Old Bridge as a Suitable Site for Nesting House Martins**

That the bridge was physically suitable for nesting house martins can be in no doubt. Indeed, one could be forgiven for thinking that it was in part designed specifically for the purpose – could that be true, an Environmental Impact Assessment in the 18th century? Plate 1 shows the old bridge and Plate 2 the overhang beneath which most of the nests were built. The martins nested almost exclusively on the south side of the old bridge, beneath the 29 cm overhang and also among some of the decorative fissures in the structure (Wright, 1984 in litt.).



**Plate 1**

The old Atcham bridge looking north with the wider spans of the new bridge showing behind it and the River Sever upstream. (Photo: John Tucker)



**Plate 2**

The 29cm overhang, spanning the entire width of the bridge, beneath which most of the nests were placed, on this the south side (Photo: John Tucker)

Aside from nest-site availability, food is the major determinant in the location of house martin colonies. This was as established by early work (Cramp, 1950, among others) when they established the correlation of food supply with colony size in a study in East Lancashire, followed by work by Bouldin (1959) who concurred. The combination of an abundant riparian food supply and stone bridge nest-sites proved a winning combination at Atcham, as at Clifton Hampden and other river-bridge nest-sites.

The riparian environment at Atcham must have furnished the martins with an abundant food supply and the biomass of aerial invertebrates necessary to support the colony, certainly at its maximum, must have been prodigious. In those days, a less-managed river bordering less intensively managed farmland presumably generated the abundance of insect food for the birds. At its peak, of 335 nests in 1963 if 80% of the nests were occupied (authors' low-side guess) and if there were 3.5 eggs in each of which 86% hatched (figures from Cramp, 1988) then it suggests around 810 young in the nest which, together with the adults, means close to 1,500 martin mouths to feed. Such bountiful resources are, it would seem, no longer available.

### **Colony Size Changes and the National Population Decline**

Dr Campbell's claim of the Atcham colony's record-breaking size may have been correct; his counts are certainly reliable. A considerably larger colony of 513 nests was known in 1952 at Clifton Hampden (CH), Oxfordshire (Brucker et al., 1992), though by 1963 it was down to 223. Parslow (1967) refers to CH and Atcham in relation to '*marked local population fluctuations ... at large colonies on bridges*'

and Cramp (1988) in *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* refers to only two ‘exceptionally’ large sites of more than 500 pairs being those at CH and another at Silwen, Bulgaria. So perhaps Atcham was indeed the largest in Britain by 1963. Elsewhere for example in East Lancashire in 1959 the largest colony was of 31 nests (Bouldin, 1959) while more recently colonies of from 62 to a maximum of 123 (in 1992) were reported in Cheshire (Norman, 2008).

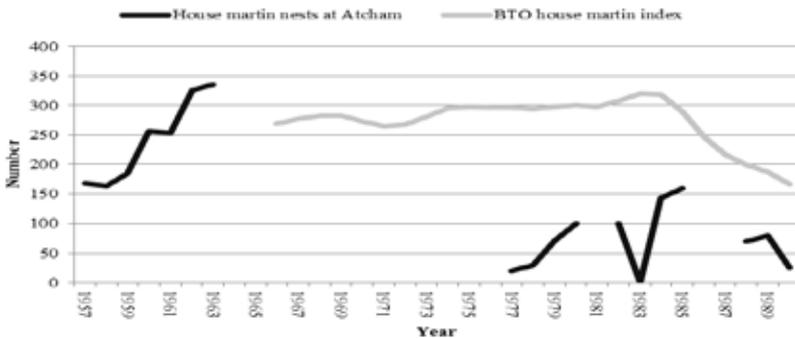
### The National Population Trend

The population changes at Atcham and the CH colony deserve further examination and comparison with the national trend. The data suggest cycles in population size, two at Atcham and three at CH, each peak failing to reach the numbers of that before it.

**Figure 2a** House Martin nest counts at Clifton Hampden and Swinford Bridges, Oxfordshire, between 1951 and 1975 before their apparent extinction around 1975



**Figure 2b.** House martin nest counts at Atcham Bridge, Shropshire, between 1957 and before their apparent extinction around 1990. Also shown is the national population trend 1966 to 1990.



At Clifton Hampden, Oxfordshire (Figure 2a), the population appears to show three peaks each being lower than the one before. The population there was 513 in 1952, followed by a low of 66 in 1959, a second peak of 283 in 1965, and its trough of zero in 1967, prior to 103 in 1975. The colony then declined into disuse by the early 1980s though it had 20 nests in 1989 (Brucker *et al.*, 1992). At Swinford bridge, also in Oxfordshire, the counts oscillated between 23 and 170 nests from 1969 until its last recorded count in 1975 with 14 (*ibid*).

Meanwhile, at Atcham Bridge (Figure 2b) the population may have peaked in the early 1960s at around the time of the highest available count of 335 in 1963. It was not counted again for a decade by which time it was down to 50 nests (in 1973) and in 1977 it was back down to just 20. There was then a final resurgence to 159 in 1985 followed by its terminal collapse with only 25 in 1990. The only further record of breeding on Atcham Bridge was of ten nests on 20 Aug 1995.

In comparison with the national population trend (Figure 2b, Baillie, S.R. *et al.*, 2012), the end of breeding at Atcham in 1990 coincides with a national decline, while the demise of CH in ‘*the early 1980s*’ (Brucker *et al.*, 1992) appears to pre-date a minor peak before the commencement of the final decline.

Marchant *et al.* (1990) refer to the fact that ‘*counts at individual colonies are an unreliable guide to population trends over a wider area*’ and how ‘*This is especially true of large colonies, with over a hundred nests, which are atypical anyway*’; the data from the two colonies above appear to confirm this assertion.

### **The Atcham Old Bridge Wildlife Site**

In 1982, Shropshire Wildlife Trust compiled a list of the 750 or so Wildlife Sites, the most significant sites for wildlife outside the SSSI system and on the strength of the house martin data included Atcham Bridge. However, by then the importance of the site was already in decline and it was finally de-notified in 2011.

### **Acknowledgements**

John Marchant of the Monitoring Team at the BTO for unpublished BTO population trend data. Online The Historical Ornithology of Shropshire (Tucker & Tucker, 2012) considerably eased access to the literature relating to the Atcham Bridge colony. Shropshire Wildlife Trust for access to their file on Atcham Bridge Wildlife Sites (ref. SJ50.20). Tom Wall for valuable comments on the final draft.

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# Shropshire Ringing Report 2009

*Martin George*

In 2009, there were 24 bird ringers registered in Shropshire, plus a few from other areas who also ring in the county. Between these, a total of 20,351 birds of 83 species were ringed in 2009, of which 4,336 were nestlings.

The five most ringed species were blue tit (3,070), greenfinch (2,465), great tit (1,997), goldfinch (1,788) and pied flycatcher (1,155).

For six species, the annual total was just one: snipe, cuckoo, black-headed gull, lesser back-backed gull, Cetti's warbler and spotted flycatcher.

Species	Adults	Pulli	Total
Mute swan	22	52	74
Sparrowhawk	16	0	16
Buzzard	1	1	2
Kestrel	3	10	13
Peregrine	0	3	3
Water rail	3	0	3
Coot	11	0	11
Oystercatcher	0	5	5
Little ringed plover	0	3	3
Lapwing	0	15	15
Snipe	1	0	1
Curlew	12	0	12
Black-headed gull	1	0	1
Lesser black-backed gull	1	0	1
Stock dove	17	6	23
Woodpigeon	30	4	34
Collared dove	83	2	85
Cuckoo	0	1	1
Barn owl	0	79	79
Tawny owl	5	4	9
Swift	8	3	11
Kingfisher	7	0	7
Green woodpecker	2	0	2
Great spotted woodpecker	53	0	53
Magpie	8	0	8
Jay	2	0	2
Jackdaw	2	5	7
Raven	0	5	5

Species	Adults	Pulli	Total
Goldcrest	25	0	25
Blue tit	1,732	1,338	3,070
Great tit	1,097	900	1,997
Coal tit	176	18	194
Willow tit	6	0	6
Marsh tit	19	24	43
Skylark	0	7	7
Sand martin	348	0	348
Swallow	150	187	337
House martin	20	0	20
Cetti's warbler	1	0	1
Long-tailed tit	227	0	227
Wood warbler	0	9	9
Chiffchaff	476	0	476
Willow warbler	43	0	43
Blackcap	298	0	298
Garden warbler	40	0	40
Lesser whitethroat	2	0	2
Whitethroat	26	0	26
Sedge warbler	62	0	62
Reed warbler	224	3	227
Waxwing	4	0	4
Nuthatch	32	38	70
Treecreeper	26	0	26
Wren	179	0	179
Starling	968	19	987
Dipper	44	133	177
Blackbird	649	35	684

Species	Adults	Pulli	Total
Fieldfare	15	0	<b>15</b>
Song thrush	57	12	<b>69</b>
Redwing	25	0	<b>25</b>
Mistle thrush	6	0	<b>6</b>
Spotted flycatcher	1	0	<b>1</b>
Robin	376	26	<b>402</b>
Pied flycatcher	122	1,033	<b>1,155</b>
Redstart	7	81	<b>88</b>
Stonechat	31	125	<b>156</b>
Wheatear	15	54	<b>69</b>
Duncock	398	4	<b>402</b>
House sparrow	451	51	<b>502</b>
Tree sparrow	94	0	<b>94</b>
Yellow wagtail	2	0	<b>2</b>
Grey wagtail	13	19	<b>32</b>

Species	Adults	Pulli	Total
Pied/white wagtail	93	0	<b>93</b>
Meadow Pipit	93	16	<b>109</b>
Chaffinch	699	0	<b>699</b>
Brambling	84	0	<b>84</b>
Greenfinch	2,459	6	<b>2,465</b>
Goldfinch	1,788	0	<b>1,788</b>
Siskin	1,149	0	<b>1,149</b>
Linnet	12	0	<b>12</b>
Lesser redpoll	155	0	<b>155</b>
Redpoll sp. (common/lesser)	129	0	<b>129</b>
Bullfinch	109	0	<b>109</b>
Yellowhammer	33	0	<b>33</b>
Reed bunting	437	0	<b>437</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,015</b>	<b>4,336</b>	<b>20,351</b>

There were 205 records of birds that were ringed and/or recovered in Shropshire in 2009. Selected highlights of these appear in the following table which includes an amazing recovery of a siskin that was ringed in Highley and had its ring number read in the field on the Isle of Skye.

Many of these recoveries are a result of dead or injured birds that have been reported by non-ringers. If you find a ringed bird, or are able to note the details of a colour-ringed one in the field, please report it via the home page of the BTO website: [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org). This website also holds lots of additional information on bird ringing.

2009 saw the formation of the Shropshire Ringing Group (SRG), with Gerry Thomas as Ringer in Charge. The Group has ten members including seven ringers with A and C class permits and three trainees. Much of the Group's ringing takes place in North Shropshire, primarily at three main sites with the permission of the landowners: Whixall Moss, Hawkstone Park and Shavington Park. It also ventures to areas around and south of Shrewsbury such as the Long Mynd to undertake specific ringing projects on meadow pipits and raptors.

Originally planned as the North Shropshire Ringing Group, the North was dropped at the request of the BTO as the Trust is keen to encourage county-wide ringing. Ringing as a group is not just good fun it also allows the team to do more project-based work and the SRG runs three RAS (Re-trapping Adults for Survival) studies on sand martins, house sparrows and marsh tits.

The SRG's work adds to the collaborative ringing carried out by the Chelmarsh Ringing Group and partnerships such as the long-established ringing study at ASF.

Below is a selected list of birds reported in Shropshire or ringed in Shropshire and reported in the county or elsewhere. Finding details (location, circumstance, time elapsed and distance from place of ringing) are in italics.

#### **Teal**

EL94929

First-year Female 30/11/2008 Slimbridge (Gloucestershire)

*Freshly dead (shot) 19/12/2009*

*Exfords Green, Shrewsbury 1y 0m 19d 104km*

#### **Pintail**

FH04724

First-year Male 04/01/2009 Slimbridge (Gloucestershire)

*Freshly dead (shot) 13/01/2009*

*Nr. Preston Montford Field Centre, Shrewsbury 0y 0m 9d 114km*

#### **Buzzard**

GJ00597

Nestling 19/06/1995 Clungunford

*Freshly dead (hit by car) 26/04/2009*

*near Leintwardine 13y 10m 7d 2km*

#### **Kestrel**

EG24979

Nestling 25/06/2009 South Burdon, Darlington (Durham)

*Freshly dead 18/10/2009*

*Edgmond, Newport 0y 3m 23d 206km*

#### **Barn owl**

GC36069

Nestling 18/06/2007 Achray Forest (Central Region)

*Freshly dead (natural causes) 21/02/2009*

*Shrawardine, Shrewsbury 1y 8m 3d 398km*

#### **Sand martin**

V827194

Juvenile Female 13/07/2008 Wood Lane, Colemere

*Caught by ringer 03/08/2009*

*Portland Bill (Dorset) 1y 0m 21d 265km*

#### **Chiffchaff**

BEC260

First-year 13/08/2006 Walcot, near Wellington

*Caught by ringer 26/01/2009*

*Parc National du Djoudj (Senegal) 2y 5m 13d 4,217km*

**Starling**LA59758

First-year Female 04/12/2008 Newport

*Freshly dead* 13/05/2009*Wandlitz, Berlin (Germany)* 0y 5m 9d 1,064km

RJ99119

First-year Male 20/01/2000 Cressage

*Freshly dead (cat)* 15/07/2004*Bergholz (Germany)* 4y 5m 25d 1,123km**Wheatear**V611475

Second-year Male 15/06/2008 Clee Hill, Cleobury Mortimer

*Alive (colour marks seen)* 04/04/2009*Titterstone Clee* 0y 9m 20d 2km**Pied wagtail**X357397

First-year Male 01/01/2009 The Rea, Upton Magna, Shrewsbury

*Freshly dead* 13/06/2009*Dunkeld (Tayside)* 0y 5m 12d 434km**Brambling**4E98260

Full-grown Male 01/11/2003 Dybo, Mandal (Norway)

*Caught by ringer* 21/01/2006*Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth* 2y 2m 20d 878km**Greenfinch**TJ38904

First-year Female 27/10/2008 Kingsteignton (Devon)

*Caught by ringer* 30/03/2009*Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth* 0y 5m 3d 237km**Goldfinch**X887140

Full-grown Female 04/10/2009 South Walney, Barrow-in-Furness (Cumbria)

*Caught by ringer* 28/11/2009*Prees* 0y 1m 24d 133km**Siskin**V983791

Adult Male 11/01/2008 Harpsdale, Halkirk (Highland Region)

*Caught by ringer* 13/03/2009*Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth* 1y 2m 2d 661km

T989707

First-year Female 11/02/2006 Highley  
*Alive (ring read in field) 25/05/2008*  
*Hallin, Halistra, Isle of Skye (Highland Region) 2y 3m 14d 626km*  
  
*Alive (ring read in field) 30/04/2009*  
*Hallin, Halistra, Isle of Skye (Highland Region) 3y 2m 19d 626km*

V715280

First-year Male 16/02/2008 Cressage  
*Freshly dead 26/05/2009*  
*Kylama (Finland) 1y 3m 10d 1,938km*  
V727038

First-year Female 09/03/2008 Pell Wall, Market Drayton  
*Caught by ringer 08/06/2008*  
*Giljastolen (Norway) 0y 2m 30d 858km*

**Lesser redpoll**

X194324

Adult Male 04/11/2008 Sandwich Bay Estate (Kent)  
*Caught by ringer 17/04/2009*  
*Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth 0y 5m 13d 299km*

T967315

First-year Male 11/03/2006 Fairford Leys, near Hayden Mill Farm (Buckinghamshire)  
*Caught by ringer 22/03/2009*  
*Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth 3y 0m 11d 130km*

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## Introduction to the Systematic List

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The Systematic List draws upon records received from a variety of sources, a summary of these sources is provided below.

### **Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)**

The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes of the UK's common and widespread breeding birds, providing an important indicator of the health of the countryside. BBS trends are produced each year for over 100 species, and the results are widely used by government and non-governmental organisations to set conservation priorities.

The BBS was launched, in 1994, to provide more representative habitat coverage than the main survey running at the time, the Common Birds Census (CBC). The CBC ended in 2000, and the overlap period between 1994 and 2000 allowed the BTO to develop methods for calculating long-term trends (from the 1960s to the present) using information from both schemes.

The BBS is a line-transect survey based on randomly located 1km squares. Squares are chosen through stratified random sampling, with more squares in areas with more potential volunteers. The difference in sampling effort is taken into account when calculating trends. BBS volunteers make two early-morning visits to their square during the April–June survey period, recording all birds encountered while walking two 1km transects across their square. Birds are recorded in three distance categories, or as ‘in flight’, in order to assess detectability and work out species density. Observers also record the habitat along their transect, and record any mammals seen during the survey. Surveying a BBS square involves around six hours of fieldwork per year, and the aim is for each volunteer to survey the same square (or squares) every year. The BBS provides reliable population trends for a large proportion of our breeding species. Trends can also be produced for specific countries, regions or habitats. In 2008, 52 1km squares were surveyed in Shropshire.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the BBS, please contact Allan Dawes (BTO representative for Shropshire) via the SOS website.

## **Bird Atlas (2007-2011) (BTO and SOS)**

The Bird Atlas 2007-2011 aims to produce maps of distribution and relative abundance for all bird species breeding and wintering in Britain and Ireland. It will allow an assessment of the changes in bird distributions since previous breeding atlases in 1970 and 1990, and since the last winter atlas of the early 1980s. Fieldwork will span four winters and four breeding seasons, and commenced on 1 Nov 2007. During the survey period the whole of Britain and Ireland will be cumulatively surveyed. To fulfil these objectives there are two core methods:

*Timed Tetrad Visits:* Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs) are principally concerned with discovering the broad patterns of relative abundance across Britain & Ireland by counting birds for fixed periods in tetrads. (2km × 2km squares). TTVs do not aim to produce a complete species list for the tetrad, but a sample of what one can find during a pair of visits (one early, one late) in winter and/or breeding season annually during the survey period.

*Roving Records:* A means of submitting lists for grid squares, one-off records of hard to find species, and anything in between. They are also a means of accumulating evidence of breeding and for providing records of nocturnal species.

Although fieldwork for the National Bird Atlas will conclude in 2011, in Shropshire fieldwork for the local Atlas will continue until 2013. This should ensure the same degree of coverage as the previous Atlas, published in 1992 enabling comparisons to be made.

## **Wetland Bird Survey (BTO)**

The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) is administered by the BTO in partnership with the WWT/RSPB/JNCC. WeBS monitors all waterbird species throughout the year, primarily during September-March, at inland and coastal habitats. The monitoring objectives are to: (1) detect UK population changes; (2) identify sites of conservation importance for particular species; (3) detect changes in locations of populations; (4) compute species thresholds for sites of UK and international importance and (5) the reasons for population changes at site, regional and national scales. Survey methodology is “look-see” within site boundaries. To minimise statistical bias by double counting, surveys are undertaken on synchronised monthly core count priority dates.

## Casual Records

In addition to records obtained through the above structured surveys, the County Recorder receives and compiles records submitted directly on an *ad hoc* basis. Such records are termed ‘casual records’ within this report.

Causal records can be submitted via BirdTrack, this is an online bird recording system developed through an exciting partnership between BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland. It is a year-round recording scheme that will use data from birdwatchers records to support species and site conservation at local, national and international scales. Results produced by BirdTrack will include mapping the migration and movements of birds and monitoring of scarce birds in Britain and Ireland. All Shropshire records submitted to BirdTrack can be accessed by the County Recorder provided the observer gives his consent.

## Nomenclature and Order

The Systematic list follows the species order within *The British List – The Official List of Bird Species Recorded in Britain* (2010), published by the British Ornithologists’ Union. Species names adhere to the British (English) vernacular names within this list.

## Species Accounts

Each species account includes the Shropshire status, with each species allocated to at least one of the following categories:

The below status descriptors are used in the headers to the species texts.

Vagrant	A bird well outside its usual range
Irruptive Visitor	Occurs erratically in response to food shortages in the home range
Passage Migrant	Mainly a migrant in spring and/or autumn
Resident	Breeds and present all year
Winter Visitor	Mainly occurs in winter
Summer visitor	Mainly occurs as a breeding visitor in summer
Naturalised	Introduced deliberately or accidentally by man and now breeds in the wild
Feral	Present in the wild although a self-sustaining population not present in the British Isles

The below abundance descriptors are used in the headers to the species texts. These numbers are the estimated number that occur within Shropshire during the year, or over previous years for rare and very rare species.

Abundant	60,000+ per year
Very common	10,001–60,000 per year
Common	2,001–10,000 per year
Fairly Common	201–2,000 per year
Scarce	21–200 per year
Very Scarce	2–20 per year
Rare	Annual or near-annual
Very Rare	Less than annual

It is anticipated that these categories will be refined when Atlas data are available, providing a reliable indication of the status of species within the County.

The national conservation status of each species is also included. Where species are included on one of the below lists, this is indicated:

- Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1987 (as amended)
- Annex 1 of The EC Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds).
- Shropshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP).
- Red, Amber and Green Lists of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC), see below.

The State of Birds in the UK analyses on-going population trends, each species status within *The State of the UK's Birds 2007* has been used within this Report. Species are assigned to one of three lists of BoCC. These are the Red, Amber and Green lists. 52 species are included on the Red List for one of the following reasons:

- Their population or range has declined by more than 50% in the last 25 years;
- The species has declined in the long-term (since 1800); and/or
- It is a globally-threatened species

Species are included on the Amber List because they are either:

- In moderate decline;
- Restricted to a small number of sites;
- Present in internationally-important numbers in the UK; or
- In unfavourable conservation status across Europe.

Birds on the Green list are not considered threatened.

The BBS status remains as in previous reports. Where this is omitted, the species was not included during BBS surveys. A total of 52 1km were surveyed in 2008. The number of birds per plot, included in the species introduction text, refers to the mean number of birds within the plots that birds were present.

Within the species headers those species monitored by the Rare Birds Breeding Panel (RBBP) are also detailed. The RBBP collects breeding data on the rarer birds breeding in the United Kingdom, allowing the production of annual totals of breeding pairs for each of the species monitored. Observers within the county are asked to be especially vigilant for these species during the breeding season, and to forward all records to the County Recorder.

### **Observer Initials**

Selected records within the systematic list are accompanied by observer initials in parentheses. The following guidelines are used to maintain consistency:

- The initial finder of any species for which a description is required (Shropshire or National).
- Exceptional counts.
- Exceptional behavioural observations.
- Species for which two or fewer records were received during the year.

### **Abbreviations**

AONB	Area of Outstanding National Beauty
ASF	Allscott Sugar Factory
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BBS	BTO Breeding Bird Survey
BoCC	Birds of Conservation Concern
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology

CBC	Common Bird Census
EGM	Ellesmere Group of Meres
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NR	Nature Reserve
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
RBBP	Rare Birds Breeding Panel
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SBOG	Shropshire Barn Owl Group
SVCP	Severn Valley County Park
SOS	Shropshire Ornithological Society
VP	Venus Pool
WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey

## **2008 – Review of the Year**

### *January – March*

January was mostly mild but unsettled. A short cold snap was experienced during the first week, with a drier spell towards the end of the month. February was a dry and very sunny month, with above average mean temperatures. March saw temperatures and sunshine generally slightly above average with well above average rainfall.

Rare and scarce wildfowl were represented by whooper swans (up to 23) present at Molverley throughout the period, pink-footed geese at Buildwas (16 Mar), Polemere (26 Mar), Shavington Big Pool (20 Jan) and VP (15 Jan-10 Feb), ring-necked duck were at Monkmoor Pool (10 Jan-27 Mar) and ASF (23-25 Mar) and scaup (up to six) resided at Cole Mere in early January.

An early osprey was present at VP (31 Mar) and hen harrier were reported from typical locations through the period. Two short-eared owls were occasionally observed on the Long Mynd.

Gulls recorded included a Mediterranean gull at The Mere on two dates in January, a 1<sup>st</sup> winter little gull at ASF/Mirelake occasionally during March, a minimum of two Iceland gulls were observed at Granville Landfill Site/Priorslee Lake during late January and February, with a further bird at The Mere occasionally in February. Finally, a 1<sup>st</sup> winter glaucous gull was present, again in the Granville Landfill Site/Priorslee Lake area, during January and February

Two woodlark were seen in the Wyre Forest on 10 Feb, and towards the end of March, a Cetti's warbler was present at Monkmoor Pool. Finally, a great grey shrike was present on Brown Clee (30 Mar).

### *April – June*

Mean April temperatures were close to average, but the coldest April since 2001. Occasional spells of heavy rain were experienced. May saw mean temperatures well above average, with rainfall also above average. June was very unsettled and changeable for the time of year, with only short spells of fine weather.

Garganey were reported from ASF (one, 18/19 May), Eyton Moor (three drakes, 31 May) and VP (up to two drakes, 1-3 Jun). Two drake common scoter were at Chelmarsh Reservoir (5 May). Up to two marsh harrier hunted at Whixall Moss (28-30 Apr), with hen harrier reported from the Long Mynd occasionally until the end of April. Osprey were logged at Cound (1 Apr), Priorslee (14 Apr), ASF (26 May) and VP on various dates. Single singing quail were reported from a number of sites in the north of the County from 22 May. Common crane were observed at a number of sites north of Telford, with up to three birds present from 17 Apr.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> summer Mediterranean gull was at Mirelake, ASF (25 May) with a black tern at the same site (7/8 May) and further birds at Priorslee Lake (five on 8 May) and VP (3/4 May).

Notable waders during this quarter included two avocet at Eyton Moor (28/29 May) and a singleton at VP (26 May), single knot at Wood Lane (1 Apr) and Whixall canal floods (6 May), sanderling at four sites, a little stint at Mirelake, ASF (26 May), a Temminck's stint at VP (8/9 May), a bar-tailed godwit at Wall Farm (5 May), a spotted redshank at Priorslee Lake (16 Jun) and whimbrel at Maesbury Marsh (19 Apr), Bromfield (8 May) and at VP on various dates with up to 17 present (3 May).

Up to two nightjar were logged at a typical site, a hoopoe was present at Pentre Hodre (24-30 Apr) with further birds at Adderley (7-9 May) and Badger (21 May). Ring ouzel were reported at several sites, with a maximum site count of ten birds on the Titterstone Clee (19 Apr). The Cetti's warbler continued its stay at Monkmoor Pool.

### *July – September*

July was unsettled for the most part, although a fine and hot spell occurred towards the end of the month. August was very unsettled with heavy rain or showers for much of the month. It was also an exceptionally dull month. September was unsettled and wet through the first half of the month, but much drier and brighter through the second half.

A juvenile black-necked grebe was found at ASF (19-31 Jul). A grounded gannet was found in the Wyre Forest (1 Jul), and subsequently released at the coast in Devon, a 2<sup>nd</sup> summer was also observed in flight over Shrewsbury (23 Sep). A great white egret took up temporary residence at The Mere (27 Aug-13 Sep). Up to two garganey were observed at ASF on various dates, with common scoter found at Chelmarsh (29 Jul) and The Mere (15 Sep).

Two honey buzzard records were received, one involving a satellite tracked bird that was ringed in Wales and travelled through Shropshire (29 Aug), and one was observed at VP (9 Aug). Marsh harriers were reported at Wall Farm on various dates, with two hen harriers on the Long Mynd (2 Aug and 9 Sep). An osprey overflew Bayston Hill (23 Aug). Quail were reported from Maesbury (1 Jul), Little Bolas (19 Jul) and Eyton Moor (5 Aug).

Juvenile Mediterranean gulls were at ASF (3 Aug) and VP (12/13 Aug). A sandwich tern roosted with black-headed gulls at Eyton Moor (4 Aug), Arctic tern were observed at VP (two on 12 Aug, and singles on 27/31 Aug), White Mere (27 Aug), Chelmarsh Reservoir (7 Sep) and at Mirelake, ASF (23 Sep). Black tern were at ASF (18 Aug), Mirelake, ASF (19/31 Aug) and Priorslee Lake (11 Sep).

Rare and scarce waders during this quarter were represented by a knot at Wood Lane (23 Sep), single ruff at a number of sites, single whimbrel in flight over Shrewsbury (19 Jul), at Wood Lane (24 Jul) and at VP (18 Aug). A wood sandpiper was at ASF/ Mirelake (23 Aug).

Nightjar were reported churring at a typical site until 25 Jul. The Cetti's warbler at Monkmoor was reported for the final time on 3 Jul.

### *October – December*

Rainfall was well above average in October, mean temperatures were below average, but with above average sunshine. November was mostly mild at first, but turning much colder later with some snowfall and sharp frosts. Rainfall and sunshine close to average. December was generally cold during the first half of the month with a milder, mainly dry, period towards Christmas before turning very cold by the new year. Rainfall was mostly below normal. Sunshine generally above or well above normal. Average temperatures were around one degree below normal.

A red-throated diver was found at Crose Mere (17 Nov). A bittern was reported regularly from VP (14 Oct-31 Dec). A cattle egret was found at Ellesmere Wharf (6 Nov) and remained for two days before relocating to Wood Lane (8-14 Nov). Whooper swans were back in the Melverley area from 10 Nov, with up to 20 birds

present, also reported from VP (22/23 Nov). Pink-footed geese were present in flight over Ruyton-XI-Towns (40 on 15 Nov) and a single at VP (21-30 Dec). Scaup were at Cole Mere (21/21 Dec, Shavington Big Pool (21 Dec) and White Mere (21 Dec) with common scoter at The Mere (15 Dec) and VP (15 Oct).

A marsh harrier was observed at Hayes Farm, Alberbury (14 Dec) and hen harrier again on the Long Mynd, the only other reports coming from Eyton on Severn (23 Nov).

Ruff were on Whixall Canal Floods (12 Nov and 14 Dec), with a late wood sandpiper at ASF (15-18 Nov) and a grey phalarope at VP (27 Oct). Mediterranean gulls were reported from Trench Pool (4 Oct), VP (25/26 Oct and 3/4 Dec) and Market Drayton (8 Dec). An adult kittiwake was at Trench Pool (22 Nov).

Rare owls included a long-eared owl at Rhos Fiddle (15 Nov) and short-eared owls at four sites. A rock pipit was present for a single day at Chelmarsh (9 Oct), likewise a water pipit at ASF (15 Nov). Waxwing were reported from five sites, with up to nine birds present. A yellow-browed warbler, the first accepted record of this species within Shropshire, was in Telford (12 Oct). A great grey shrike was present at Whixall Moss (15-22 Dec).

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## THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

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### MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident.

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 4 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Green List

Of the 725 records received, 183 originated from Atlas work located to the tetrad rather than site; the remaining 542 records originated from 70 sites, only 12 of which were in the south of the County.

The table below presents the monthly maxima from 11 sites at which this species was regularly recorded in double figures. Within this table an asterisk indicates that the count includes adults and cygnets.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Buttery Farm	37	26	26	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cold Hatton	-	-	-	-	22	-	10	-	-	-	-	-
Crosslanes Melverley	2	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	5
EGM	5	5	3	-	-	-	-	28	32	31	7	14
Priorslee Lake	11	5	11	4	9	5*	5*	-	33	65	52	42
Mirelake, ASF	-	-	-	18	11	23*	23	-	-	20	-	24
Monkmoor	-	4	4	11	2	8	-	36	7	4	4	-
Trench Pool	4	8	4	6	2	8*	8*	-	8	8	11	14
VP	61	79	13	19	1	6*	6*	6*	4	2	4	10
Walcot Lake Lydbury North	43	49	41	46	45	55	35	38	30	62	69	56
Waters Upton	5	13	-	20	-	3	-	-	8	10	-	-

The 23\* at Mirelake ASF (6 Jun) included two pairs with six cygnets and four cygnets along with nine non-breeding birds, while the counts at Priorslee Lake, Trench Pool and VP in June, July and August were all of one pair with cygnets.

The only double figure counts, other than those shown on the table above, were on 25 Feb when 19 birds were within tetrad SJ70H (Kemberton), 4 Apr when 16 were within SJ32A (Maesbrook), 7 Dec when 15 were within SJ50I (Berrington) with probably the same flock reported nearby over Childs Ercall when 17 recorded flying South/West on 9 Dec. Further double-figure records received as casual records

occurred at Cae Howel/Hayes Farm (25 on 20 Dec) and at Cound (55 grazing on 27 Dec). The only record in double figures from the south of the County, other than Walcot Lake Lydbury North, was on River Severn between Quatford and Chelmarsh (14 on 17 Oct).

Confirmed breeding was received from 22 sites, with 18 sites in the north of the County and only four in the south, also Atlas work confirmed breeding in another 19 tetrads, 14 in the north of the County and five in the south.

Information was received from the BTO of two birds ringed as cygnets in the County. The first was ringed at Ellerton Mill on 3 Sep 2001 and was found freshly dead (oiled) at Irvine Harbour, Strathclyde on 4 Feb, 343 kilometres from the nest site. The other, ringed at Newport Canal on 30 Jul 1992 was reported at Murrells End Farm, Hartpury, Gloucestershire on the 24 Apr, 16 years 8 months 25 days after ringing.

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### **BEWICK'S SWAN** *Cygnus columbianus*

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List

The only record of the year was of two birds calling as they flew over Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13 Mar (YC).

After two blank years, this is a slight improvement but with no birds in seven of the last 15 years, this species appears to be becoming increasingly rare in the County. After a succession of mild winters it was thought that birds were wintering in the Low Countries rather than making the crossing to the UK; however, the results of an international swan census indicate a decline in the total population as the cause, rather than a shift in wintering areas.

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### **WHOOPEE SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

Shropshire Status: Annual winter visitor to the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence area, very scarce winter visitor elsewhere.

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

Twenty-two records were received from six sites.

As to be expected, the majority of these (13) were from the Molverley confluence.

This is a large area and birds can easily be missed, even when a flock is located some birds can remain out of sight in hollows. This may explain the variation in numbers, from eight to 28, reported in this area between 18 Jan and 15 Mar. A party of four adults and four juveniles flying west over The HUMBERS at 12.15 on 12 Feb was the only report away from the confluence in the first winter period.

The first report during the second winter period was of a single at VP from 9-12 Oct. Another, or possibly the same, bird was then seen at Chelmarsh on 2/3 Nov. Two birds were at Mirelake ASF two days later, and on 11 Nov two birds flew east over the Old Hill Fort (Oswestry). The first birds to return to Molverley confluence were noted on 7 Nov when five adults were on a flooded pool. The November and December WeBS also recorded five birds in the area, the only other reports were on 26 Dec and 31 Dec, when numbers had risen to 24 and 25 respectively.

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**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Summer records relate to feral/injured birds.

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

A total of seven records were received, originating from six sites.

In the first winter period, 11 birds were noted flying north over Bicton by two observers (31 Jan). No further flocks were sighted until the latter part of the year when 25 were flying north at Wollerton near Hodnet (8 Nov), then in Dec 400 flew northwest over Market Drayton (12<sup>th</sup>) and 68 were flying in the same direction over Cross Lane Head, near Bridgnorth the next day. Sightings of flying birds, especially in the north east, are typical as birds move between wintering sites in Lancashire and Norfolk.

It is difficult to determine the origins of single birds. One on the River Severn at Leighton (4 May) was described as '*probably flightless*'. Another single bird was reported from this site on 6 Dec and 30 Dec; if it was the same bird (which would appear likely) and it was flightless then it did well to survive, more so as a single bird has been in this area periodically since Feb 2007.

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**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons*

Shropshire Status: Very rare winter visitor, previously more regular

Conservation Status: Annex 1

A single bird (not assigned to a sub-species, although presumed to be of the nominate race) was reported from Polemere on 9 Jan (JBU) and two were reported from the same site the next day.

Formerly a common winter visitor, numbers dwindled but it remained an almost annual visitor up until 2002; this is the first record since that time.

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**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

Shropshire Status: Nominate form a fairly common naturalised resident. Wild birds from the Icelandic population may also occur.

BBS: Present in 10% of plots, 19 birds recorded, an average of 3.8 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Amber List (nominate)

Of the 342 records received, 62 were tetrad records from the Atlas and the remainder came from 43 named sites.

The table below shows the monthly maxima from the key sites for this species within the County, with the number of records during each month in parentheses. Summer months are omitted from this table when numbers at these sites are very low, if birds are present at all.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh Reservoir	69 (2)	5 (2)	5 (3)	2 (1)	133 (8)	65 (6)	(0)	106 (3)
Dudmaston	61 (2)	8 (2)	16 (3)	1 (1)	144 (3)	229 (4)	43 (2)	(0)
Polemere	400 (3)	100 (1)	(0)	2 (1)	78 (1)	132 (4)	(0)	160 (1)
Shavington Big Pool	160 (2)	(0)	4 (1)	150 (1)	(0)	1 (1)	3 (1)	(0)
VP	200 (5)	150 (5)	30 (8)	300 (12)	220 (9)	210 (8)	280 (4)	133 (4)
Wood Lane NR	6 (1)	2 (1)	6 (1)	300 (3)	200 (1)	(0)	1 (2)	100 (2)

Potential breeding pairs were noted from 18 Mar and the first goslings were at Coton

Hall, where a count of 29 included ten young. Goslings were reported from a further nine locations. Apart from one site near Stead Vallets, Bromfield the remainder were from the north east of the County, as are the majority of records.

Flocks began to build from late July when 94 were at Wood Lane NR on 29<sup>th</sup> and 165 were at VP on 30<sup>th</sup>, numbers at both these sites peaked at 300 in August. These sites are regularly used by moulting birds. Waters Upton also hosted 100 on 5 Aug; whether these were moulting at this site or passing through is unknown as no other reports were received from this location. Once moulting is completed, numbers at the main sites fall. This is especially noticeable at Wood Lane NR where no birds were recorded in September. A few large gatherings were noted elsewhere before the end of the year: 170 at Tittenley Pool (27 Sep and 4 Oct), 152 at Priorslee Flash (22 Oct) and 120 during the WeBS at Cae Howel (22 Nov).

The national population of re-established greylag geese continues to rise and reached its highest level this year. This may well be reflected within the County; the combined count of moulting birds at VP and Wood Lane NR would appear to suggest so.

## **CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis*

Shropshire Status: Common naturalised resident.

BBS: Present in 39 % of plots, 58 birds recorded, an average of 3.1 birds per occupied plot

Conservation status: Not assessed

Of the 874 records received, 261 were tetrad records from Atlas monitoring and the remainder came from 75 sites.

The table below shows the monthly maxima from the main sites for this species within the County and the number of records (in parentheses), summer months are not included as birds are often absent or present in very low numbers at this time.

	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
Chelmarsh	144 (2)	103 (2)	1 (3)	104 (2)	158 (3)	6 (2)	(0)	123 (1)
Dudmaston	77 (3)	94 (2)	46 (3)	47 (1)	125 (4)	97 (3)	4 (1)	2 (1)
Polemere	200 (2)	20 (1)	24 (1)	22 (1)	57 (1)	78 (1)	(0)	15 (1)
Priorslee Flash	(0)	25 (1)	(0)	17 (4)	70 (3)	283 (5)	100 (2)	165 (5)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Shavington Big Pool	1 (2)	1 (1)	6 (1)	35 (1)	(0)	200 (2)	(0)	5 (1)
VP	430 (6)	19 (5)	28 (9)	100 (13)	370 (12)	244 (7)	50 (10)	134 (8)
Wood Lane NR	(0)	30 (2)	27 (2)	500 (2)	300 (3)	50 (1)	3 (1)	150 (1)

In the first winter period flocks of over 100 birds were noted at the following locations: Atcham-150 (4 Jan), Trench Pool-108 (18 Jan), Whixall floods-170 (18 Jan), Middle Pool, Trench-109 (22 Feb) and Walcott lakes-168 (22 Feb).

By 7 Apr nesting was well underway, with five incubating birds at Mirelake. This is an easy species to confirm breeding as the total of 44 sites where this occurred testifies, many nests and incubating adults were noted in April but goslings provided the bulk of confirmed breeding records from early May onwards. The majority of the breeding records were from the north of the County, but records came from all parts, and even the smallest wet areas can attract a breeding pair.

From late May through to early July large numbers were present at Priorslee Flash reaching a peak of 269 (26 Jun). This is in stark contrast to other sites which record their highest numbers in the winter months.

A flock of 200 at Wood Lane NR on 27 Jul increased to 500 on 29 Aug, by 5 Sep numbers were down to 300 and only 50 were present here on 9 Oct. Many of these birds probably made the short trip to Cole Mere and would have been part of the c.420 recorded there on 9 Oct. Thirteen other sites held flocks of over 100 birds before the end of the year. The largest counts were 200 at Isombridge (3 Sep), 210 at Tittenley Pool (27 Sep), 600 at Blake Mere, Whitchurch (24 Nov), 588 on the flooded fields at Whixall (29 Nov) and 330 at Buildwas (6 Dec).

The long-term increase in the national population for this species seems to have levelled off. The number of moulting birds at the main sites was similar to last year.

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### **BARNACLE GOOSE** *Branta leucopsis*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce naturalised resident. Occasional wild birds may occur rarely.

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List

Twelve records were received from four sites and all of the birds were probably feral.

Two were at VP from the start of the year to 13 Jan. Polemere held three birds on 21 Jan, after which singles were noted on 27 Feb, 4 Mar and 5 Mar. It was September before the next single was at Cole Mere on 10<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> and two were at Atcham on 22<sup>nd</sup>. The final report was also of two at Cole Mere on 21 Dec. Feral species are often under recorded, does this explain the lack of records for long periods or do the birds leave the County?

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

Shropshire Status: Scarce breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Amber List

Of the 331 records received, 22 were from Atlas survey work and identified only to the tetrad rather than the site. The remaining 309 casual records originated from 12 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima for this species, at the key sites in the north of the County, that produced 291 of the 331 records received. The figures in this table represent only adults. Where juveniles were also present this is marked with an asterisk and details are provided in the subsequent text.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASF	-	-	2	17	11*	15*	14	5	-	-	3	-
EGM	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VP	1	3	4	-	3	2	-	-	-	1	1	2
Wood Lane NR	9	20	14	9	10*	5*	2	-	1	1	3	4

Breeding was reported from four sites. Sites reporting broods of young were ASF two broods of ten and four juveniles on several dates from 27 May to 8 Jul, Wood Lane NR two broods of seven on 9 May and eight on 28 May but one pair appear to have lost six of their brood of seven as broods of eight and one reported on 13 Jun. As well as the sites in the south of County detailed above, Atlas work also produced confirmed breeding with young (numbers not reported) in SJ43B (White Mere) (9 Jun).

The species was recorded in every month of the year, with peak numbers in the breeding season. Post-breeding adults move out of the County to moult, so the five at ASF (27/30 Aug) were likely to be all immature birds, as were singles at Wood Lane NR and VP in September and October.

Only three records were received from the south of the County: a pair was within SO39Z (Gatton Lodge) (11 May), with breeding confirmed in SO37B (Milebrook) (28 Jul) and two birds at Chelmarsh Res (19 Oct).

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**MANDARIN DUCK** *Aix galericulata*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce naturalised resident.

Conservation Status: Not assessed

Of the 54 records received, 15 were from Atlas work located to the tetrad rather than the site. Of the remaining 39 records, 33 originated from six sites in the south of the County and only single records from three sites in the north.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at the six sites at which the species was recorded in the south of the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bridgnorth; R. Severn	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Bromfield; River Teme	2	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chelmarsh	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Highley/Upper Arley; R. Severn	4	-	5	3	1	3	8	1	-	1	4	-
SVCP	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Wyre Forest; Dowles Brook	-	3	4	3	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The three records from sites in the north of the County were a single bird Fenmere (16 Jan), also at Rowe Farm, Frodesley (16 Jul), and confirmed breeding on the River Severn at Leighton/Buildwas where a female with a well grown juvenile was recorded on 10 Jul.

There were also three Atlas records from two tetrads in the north of the County SJ22Q (Llanymynech) three on 8 Feb and two on 20 Jul with confirmed breeding in SJ50A (Frodesley) (9Jun).

Confirmed breeding from the south of the County occurred on the Dowles Brook (Wyre Forest), River Severn at Highley/Upper Arley and also Atlas breeding record from tetrad SO37Y (River Clun).

The remaining Atlas records were of birds in tetrads SO47S (Lady Halton), SO49Z (Leasows).

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**WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor and scarce passage migrant. Rare during the breeding period.

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

Of the 172 records received, 29 were from Atlas work and located only to the tetrad rather than the site. The remaining 143 records originated from 29 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at selected key sites for this species within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EGM	170	50	38	-	7	4	7	141
CaeHowell/ Ponthen	236	185	51	4	-	-	8	517
HayesFarm Alberbury	65	185	65	4	-	-	14	295
Ossmere	-	41	16	-	-	4	-	-
Polemere	50	29	35	26	4	-	-	43
River Severn: Leighton/Buildwas	39	37	17	-	-	-	-	25
Shavington	1	35	58	6	8	28	10	75
Priorslee Lake	2	-	-	-	6	14	-	1
VP	20	-	-	-	4	10	12	51
Whixall(canal floods)	20	-	13	-	-	-	30	57

There was only one record received outside the winter periods, not shown on the table above. That was a single bird at Walcot Lake, Lydbury North (14 Jun).

The peak numbers at the above ten sites are in the mid-winter months of December, January and February and are at the traditional sites in the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence area of Hayes Farm, Alberbury and Cae Howell/Ponthen. These sites probably share many of the same birds, as indicated by the counts at these sites in February.

The last records at the end of the first winter period were of the six at Shavington (18 Apr) and four in the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence area (19 Apr). The first returning birds in the second winter period were three at VP (14 Sep) with six the following day, and six at Priorslee Lake (15 Sep).

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## GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Amber List

Of the 74 records received, four were from Atlas work and located only to the tetrad rather than the site. The remaining 70 records originated from 12 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at all 12 of the sites at which the species was recorded within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASF/Mirelake	-	-	1	5	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chelmarsh	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	10
Dudmaston	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EGM (Colemere)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ellerton	2	9	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	8	-	-
Marion Pool Baschurch	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Priorslee Lake	1	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
SVCP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Bog, Worfield	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trench Pool	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VP	2	4	-	2	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-
WhixallMoss	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

The peak count of ten at Chelmarsh came with the comment “*probably frozen out from Dudmaston*” even though the only record received from Dudmaston was a single male on 31 Mar. Perhaps more records from here would show it to be a favoured site for the species.

There were no confirmed breeding records received, but it is noticeable that only single males were present in May, at the sites of ASF and VP, where pairs were seen in April and June, so possibly the females were on nests.

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**TEAL** *Anas crecca*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor and very scarce breeder.

Conservation Status: Amber List

Of the 434 records received, 110 were from 75 tetrads during Atlas work and located only to the tetrad rather than the site. The remaining 324 records originated from 45 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at the favoured sites for this species within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASF/Mirelake	-	-		20		4	-	3	107	108	38	75
Buttery Farm	30	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cae Howel/Ponthen	37	60	2	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	147
Chelmarsh	3	57	12	3	-	-	-	11	51	30	1	-
EGM	100	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	37
Ellerton	10	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hayes Farm Alberbury	47	60	21	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	660
Marton Pool Baschurch	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Polemere	10	108	38	14	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	124
Shavington	6	5	46	20	-	-	2	1	5	30	16	23
VP	30	31	15	15	2	2	1	4	40	47	50	69
Wall Farm	50	300	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Whixall Moss/canal floods	200	17	75	2	-	-	-	-	19	15	10	150
Wood Lane NR	27	23	16	4	-	-	-	-	12	14	20	12

As would be expected, peak counts were in the winter months; in the first winter period 300 at Wall Farm (4 Feb) and the second winter period at the traditional site, in the Severn/Vyrnwy confluence area, 660 at Hayes Farm Alberbury (5Dec).

Other than those listed in the above table, there were 14 other sites with a count in double-figures, the maximum from these sites was the 40 recorded in SJ40G (Pulverbatch).

The only confirmed breeding were the juveniles recorded 1 Jun in SJ41G (Onslow Park). Possible breeding occurred at only four other sites; pairs were present during

the breeding season at ASF and Rednal and also within tetrads SJ22J (Coed Cochion) and SJ42B (Boreatton Moss). There were also two birds in May and June at VP, the only site with records in every month of the year, but the sex of the birds was not recorded.

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**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

BBS: Present in 57% of plots, 141 birds recorded, an average of five birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Amber List

Of the 1,790 records received, 768 were from 378 tetrads during Atlas work and located only to the tetrad rather than the site. The remaining 1,022 records originated from 87 sites. Breeding was confirmed in 82 tetrads, the earliest a nest with eggs in SJ41W (River Severn at Frankwell) and multiple broods were noted from 26 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at the favoured sites for this species within the County throughout the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alveley	38	4	8	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	10
ASF/Mirelake	60	-	-	9	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Berth Pool	44	10	-	-	11	-	26	-	2	-	10	46
Buttery Farm	133	58	32	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39
Brown Moss	45	44	38	36	-	-	21	-	-	22	49	139
Cae Howel/Ponthen	43	35	6	4	-	-	-	-	1	6	54	365
Chelmarsh	314	131	50	61	55	70	103	87	169	40	67	95
Chetwynd Pool	40	39	10	7	-	-	-	-	12	20	82	54
Dudmaston	66	29	13	29	37	54	40	11	43	52	60	46
EGM	122	73	60	-	-	-	-	-	167	204	118	367
Ellerton	10	25	-	-	2	-	-	8	-	-	-	-
Fenemere	103	71	133	-	-	-	-	-	95	38	101	228
River Severn: Hampton Lode/Highley	67	67	24	12	29	13	88	114	165	128	139	124
River Severn:Highley/Upper Arley	46	-	16	13	14	47	39	29	46	37	67	55
Hayes Farm Alberbury	13	24	12	6	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	14
Marton Pool Baschurch	133	14	151	-	-	-	-	-	254	107	32	98

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ossmere	4	16	4	10	12	34	18	6	24	16	14	42
Polemere	100	24	9	12	6	36	24	14	74	57	9	146
Priorslee Lake/Flash	15	-	27	35	12	22	66	-	-	82	-	93
SVCP	19	30	13	12	19	13	16	21	34	39	21	3
Shavington	29	30	12	12	-	-	104	90	38	65	75	45
Trench Pool	19	17	11	9	-	8	-	-	-	15	-	44
VP	20	6	21	15	23	75	62	53	74	25	19	51
Wall Farm	38	-	-	10	22	32	-	-	-	-	5	-
Whixall Moss/canal floods	40	24	39	6	2	-	-	-	24	-	130	125
Walcot Lake, Lydbury North	29	22	33	29	33	24	194	226	67	50	30	31
WoodLane NR	44	51	12	20	22	46	46	130	32	50	45	51

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## **PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Amber List

Of the 47 records received, 42 were from the 13 sites in the table below, including 17 from VP. The remaining five records were located only to the tetrad, although as they were from the tetrads containing four of the sites in the table below they almost certainly referred to the same birds.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at all the sites in the County at which this species was recorded.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cae Howel/Ponthen	3	4	-	-	1	-
Chelmarsh	2	-	-	-	-	-
Cole Mere	17	-	-	-	-	-
The Mere, Ellesmere	25	-	-	-	-	-
Hayes Farm, Alberbury	45	4	-	-	-	11
Marton Pool, Baschurch	-	-	-	-	-	3
Mirelake ASF	-	-	-	-	1	-
Priorslee Lake	-	-	-	-	1	-
VP	1	4	4	1	-	-
Wall Farm	1	-	-	-	-	-
Whixall Canal Floods	60	27	5	-	3	6
Whixall Moss	4	2	-	-	-	5
Wood Lane NR	2	-	-	-	-	-

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**GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

The three records received almost certainly refer to a single male, seen at Mirelake ASF on 16/17 Apr (AL *et al*) and also reported on the 21 Apr (MGG).

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**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

Of the 201 records received, 18 were from Atlas work and were located only to the tetrad rather than the site. The remaining 183 records originated from 27 sites. Only 11 sites, all in the north of the County, had significant flocks in the winter months with counts in double-figures.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at selected key sites for this species within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASF (excluding Mireake)	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	5	-	-	-
Brown Moss	25	46	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chetwynd Pool	40	25	2	-	-	-	-	-	53	-	80	31
EGM	30	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	20
Hayes Farm, Alberbury	5	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Mireake ASF	14	-	29	18	4	5	9	26	22	8	2	8
Monkmoor Pool (SSF)	-	1	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	-
Polemere	5	18	19	3	-	-	-	-	-	10		6
Priorslee Lake/Flash	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1		1
Shavington	-	3	2	4	-	-	-	-	59	36	17	2
VP	11	16	5	2	-	3	-	8	18	1	1	10
Whixall Moss/canal floods	35	1	14	2	-	1	-	-	2	-	2	20
Wood Lane NR	1	-	-	2	1	2	3	2	1	1	-	-

The only records from the south of the County were single birds at Dudmaston (15 Mar) and Callow Hollow (12 Apr) with a pair found during Atlas work in SO39Z

(Gatton Lodge)(11 May).

No confirmed breeding was reported although breeding season records were received from Mirelake ASF (two pairs, May/June), VP (three males, 5 June) and Wood Lane NR (two birds (unsexed) Apr-Jul).

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**POCHARD** *Aythya ferina*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor and very scarce in summer; previously bred.

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

Of the 158 records received, ten were from Atlas work and were located only to the tetrad, rather than the site. The remaining 148 records originated from 22 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at selected key sites for this species within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cound Fishery	10	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
EGM	30	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Monkmoor Pool (SSF)	23	24	7	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	16	-
Priorslee Lake/Flash	19	14	2	-	-	1	-	-	1	15	30	52
Trench Pool	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	15
VP	30	18	9	2	1	-	2	4	1	-	2	2

The above six sites are the only ones to have double-figure counts, when only three years ago in 2006 there were twice this number. There were no records received this year from Chetwynd Pool, whereas in 2006 there was a maximum of 50 (Jan), and also in 2006 at VP-68 (Mar), Priorslee Lake-65 (Nov).

The only records of possible breeding were a pair at ASF (29 Apr) with probably the same pair, at Mirelake ASF (16 May). Single males were also recorded at VP (24/27 Apr, 7 May and 22 May) and also at Priorslee Lake (22 Jun). The male at VP was reported to be continually following the Canada Geese around.

Last confirmed breeding in the County was at VP in 1995.

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**RING-NECKED DUCK** *Aythya collaris*

Shropshire Status: Rare vagrant

Conservation Status: RBBP

A female was at the Mirelake, ASF from 16 Apr until 27 Apr (AL).

This is the second year running the species has been recorded at this site, following a male in Mar 2008. One record a year is about average for the County with the last blank year being 2006.

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**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce breeder and fairly common winter visitor.

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 6 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Green List

Of the 607 records received, 90 were from Atlas work and were located only to the tetrad, rather than the site. The remaining 517 records originated from 43 sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at selected key sites for this species within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brown Moss	9	8	27	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chelmarsh	92	55	7	19	4	11	24	24	141	140	52	103
Chetwynd Pool	-	13	31	25	8	-	-	-	18	-	6	12
Cound Fishery	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	-	19
Dudmaston	61	16	15	4	4	-	1	-	25	3	6	9
EGM	54	98	90	-	-	-	-	-	36	59	14	68
Fenemere	4	14	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marton Pool Baschurch	2	4	23	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	8
Monkmoor Pool SSF	5	7	6	2	4	-	-	3	-	6	4	-
Oss Mere	14	13	18	8	15	17	-	-	5	3	3	-
Polemere	4	6	8	8	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-
Priorslee Flash	23	92	72	33	8	11	13	21	124	100	30	60
Priorslee Lake	60	39	12	17	2	4	25	7	26	125	50	148

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sambrook Mill	2	15	-	-	9	2	-	11	-	-	-	-
Shavington	13	25	21	30	-	-	12	16	34	17	19	5
Showell Mill	33	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trench Pool	48	50	44	32	5	3	2	-	8	93	28	69
VP	30	21	4	8	12	9	8	5	8	1	1	10
Wood Lane NR	-	-	2	23	14	29	18	2	2	2	-	-

Significant counts in double-figures during Atlas work were 19 in SO69Y (Nordley) (1 Feb), 12 in SJ41E (Little Ness) (22 Feb) and the same number in SJ71H (Lilleshall) (25 Feb), with 16 also in the same tetrad on 21Apr.

Confirmed breeding occurred at 13 sites/tetrads. A nest with eggs was at Sambrook Mill (16 Jun) and juveniles were recorded at seven sites and five tetrads; Colemere (1 Jun), Priorslee Flash (11 Jun), Wood Lane NR (20 Jun and 3 Aug), SJ63D (Cloverley Pool) (22 Jun), VP (27 Jun), SJ22J (Coed Cochion) (30 Jun), SO79V (Lower Beobridge) (4 Jul), SJ40S (Stapleton) (7 Jul), SO69X (Tasley) (16 Jul), Shavington (18 Jul), Priorslee Lake (4 Aug), ASF (16 Jul and 18 Aug).

Possible breeding with pairs in the breeding season, was noted at a further ten sites and 15 tetrads.

### **SCAUP** *Aythya marila*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, UKBAP, Red List, RBBP

Two records received; a first winter male on 1 Jan at White Mere (HMP, JBu) and a female at Crose Mere on 18 Jan (MGG).

### **COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

Shropshire Status: Rare passage migrant and rare winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, UKBAP, Red List, RBBP

An unusually large flock of 20 (18 males) at Cole Mere (11 Apr) (MJP, PCr, WA) was the second largest flock recorded in the County, only surpassed by the 28 recorded at

The Mere, Ellesmere on 29 Oct 2004. Traditionally, multiple counts have come from the months of June and July, the only other double-figure flocks, in modern times, being 19 (16 males) on Priorslee Lake on 25 Jul 2000, 11 at VP on 2 Jun 1984 and ten (all males) at Trench Pool on 25 Jun 1973. Historical records show that five were shot from a flock of 20 at Acton Burnell Park 24 Nov 1892 (Forest 1899).

One other record was received at the end of the year, a single male at Mirelake ASF (11 Nov).

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

Of the 43 records received, six were from Atlas work and were located only to the tetrad, rather than the site. The remaining 37 records originated from eight sites. The six Atlas records were from tetrads containing four of the eight sites.

The table below presents the monthly maxima at all eight sites at which the species was recorded within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Colemere	4	4	11	-			8
Dudmaston	3	4	3	-			3
The Mere, Ellesmere	24	36	6	-	3	11	11
Newton Mere	2	4	-	-			5
Oss Mere	6	2	-	6			
Ponthen, River Severn	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Shavington	-	2	1	-	1		
White Mere	13	14	5	-	-	-	5

The late first winter record of six at Ossmere (20Apr) was a month later than the final birds reported at any of the other sites.

The first birds that returned to the County were three at the Mere Ellesmere on 12 Oct, with one at Shavington on 18 Oct.

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## GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor, passage migrant and very scarce breeder.

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 3 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Green List

333 records were received from 49 locations in Shropshire, mainly larger rivers, lakes, pools and reservoirs.

Both the first winter period and the second winter period saw male and female goosander congregating in flocks throughout Shropshire, the largest of which comprised 108 birds on Chelmarsh Reservoir (5 Dec). Monthly winter maxima for important and regularly monitored sites are included in the table below. Of the eight sites, only the River Severn supported goosander in each of the six winter months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh Reservoir	68	41	20	-	10	108
Dudmaston	15	2	19	7	-	-
Priorslee Flash	-	3	-	-	-	7
Priorslee Lake	1	4	6	4	-	1
River Severn	22	64	24	12	5	12
Shavington Big Pool	22	30	7	2	-	21
The Mere, Ellesmere	3	5	6	-	-	-
Middle Pool Trench	12	21	-	-	-	-

Sites other than those tabulated holding large winter counts included Walcot Lake where 17 goosander were recorded on 18 Jan, Bromfield with 12 on 13 Feb, Dothill Park with 20 on 28 Oct and Chetwynd Park which held 11 on 6 Dec. Large flocks of goosander were still evident in April with 37 noted on Chelmarsh Reservoir on 21 Apr.

Both males and female goosander were noted throughout January, February and March and pairs were noted in March. Two females and one male were noted on the River Severn at Shrewsbury on 23 Mar and pairs noted at Monkmoor Nature Reserve, Polemere and Bromfield on 25 Mar, 28 Mar and 31 Mar respectively. Pairs were also recorded at several other sites and in Atlas tetrads in April. Evidence from elsewhere suggests that male goosander migrate in spring to Norway to moult and remain there throughout July and August, and males became increasingly absent as

April progresses. The final male of the summer was a male in a pair at Bettws-y-crwyn on 16 May. No males were recorded during the summer months of June, July, August and September.

Breeding was confirmed at three locations and all related to females with young, males notably absent. The first evidence of breeding was on the River Severn at Monkmoor (15 Apr) when a female was noted with 11 young. Breeding was subsequently recorded at Clunbury (12 Jun) when a female was recorded with ten young, and on the River Severn at Bridgnorth (17 Jul) where a female was recorded with seven fully-grown juveniles. Breeding was also confirmed in ten Atlas tetrads between 3 May and 22 Jun and all records comprised females with young.

The goosander has increasingly colonised parts of the UK and its breeding range has increased in recent decades. All evidence of confirmed breeding involved birds on the River Severn and this river probably constitutes the main breeding ground of the goosander in Shropshire. The precise nest sites and breeding locations of goosander remain somewhat of an enigma in Shropshire despite the apparent continued increased presence of birds during the spring and summer. There was no direct record or description of nest sites during the 2009 breeding season, though crevices amongst boulders and old stone walls aligning rivers and tree cavities in the vicinity of rivers are likely sites. It would prove both interesting and of potential conservation value if nest sites could be precisely identified.

**RUDDY DUCK** *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Shropshire Status: Scarce and declining naturalised resident. Currently the subject of an official national eradication programme.

Conservation Status: Not assessed

Of the 29 records received, three were from Atlas work located to the tetrad only. The table below presents the monthly maxima at all six sites at which this species was recorded within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASF/Mirelake	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Monkmoor/SSF	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Priorslee Lake	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shavington	-	-	-	2	-	-	8	-	8	4	-	-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
VP	-	-	-	-	-	1-	2	1	1	-	-	-
Whitemere	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-

The only confirmed breeding record was from Shavington, where the eight birds included five recently hatched ducklings on 18 Jul and on 27 Sep five full grown juveniles were recorded with three adults.

There was a probable breeding attempt at Mirelake, ASF where a female was recorded on 19 Apr and a male was displaying to an unseen female on 12 May. Two males were at at Monkmoor SSF (26 May) and VP (3 Jul), with a juvenile (“*not thought to have bred here*”) also at VP 1-3 Aug. Two males and a female were also at Monkmoor SSF on 28 Aug.

No further records were received following four at Shavington on 18 Oct.

## **RED GROUSE** *Lagopus lagopus scotica*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Amber List

The red grouse population in the County has benefited from extensive habitat management on both the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones in recent years, by the National Trust and Natural England respectively. The condition and management of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) has been critical in this and has resulted in a steady increase in the number of grouse territories over the last 15 years. Nevertheless the effects of the warming climate and the isolated gene pool on its long-term survival in the County will be interesting to see over the years. This population of red grouse is the most southerly natural population in the UK.

A total of 41 records was received for the species in 2009.

Eight of the records were from just three tetrads on the Stiperstones ridge, between March and June and in September. It would be of benefit to hold an annual winter count here in a similar manner to that on the Long Mynd to get a more consistent annual estimate of numbers on the ridge. Display and other territorial behaviour were recorded in April and May and fledglings were seen in June.

On the Long Mynd, birds were recorded in all months of the year except June

and November. As usual, the annual winter survey was held in December and resulted in an estimated total of 34 territories, identical to the count in the previous year. Outside of the annual count, maxima of five birds were reported on 10 Apr and 17 Jul, with three juvenile birds on the latter date helping to confirm breeding on this plateau.

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**RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE** *Alectoris rufa*

Shropshire Status: Common naturalised resident

BBS: Present in 27% of plots, 42 birds recorded, an average of 3.2 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Not assessed

There was a total of 357 records of which 65% derive from Atlas work. Outwith Atlas records, casual records were received from 46 sites, not dissimilar to the numbers from reports in recent years.

The peak count was of 33 from Bowhills Dingle near Alveley on Boxing Day, followed closely by two counts of 32, the Rea, Upton Magna on 12 Nov (where the landowner is known to put down birds for the shoot) and 32 from tetrad SJ62D (south of Hodnet) on 28 Dec. There was one count in the 20s, of 26 in tetrad SJ30A (east of Rorrington) on 4 Dec. There were 26 counts of between ten and 19 birds.

Of the 81 breeding records, 12 were of confirmed breeding and a high figure (69) referred to pairs seen together, reflecting the tendency for this species to be seen in pairs.

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**GREY PARTRIDGE** *Perdix perdix*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common but declining resident.

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 6 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

As with most counties in the UK, the grey partridge has undergone a significant long-term decline in Shropshire. In the country as a whole, the decline has been estimated at 88% between 1970 and 2003 and latest figures show this trend continues. Forty-four records were received in 2008, rather fewer than the previous year despite the continuing Atlas work which has improved coverage of the County.

As a game bird, the true status of the bird in the wild in Shropshire is hard to determine because some shoots in the County continue to lay down birds, despite the fact that this is not now recommended by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and the fact that it has now become one of the scarcest of breeding species in the County.

No fewer than 34 of the records received this year were obtained in the course of Atlas work and those 44 records were reported from 40 different locations.

No confirmed breeding records were received. Most records were of paired birds in April, May and June, but seven birds were counted in a two-hour Atlas visit near Eyton-on-Severn (21 Jan). Four birds were counted in a one-hour Atlas survey near Gatten Lodge (23 Feb) and nine birds counted near Pim Hill (3 Apr) were also seen in a single Atlas visit. Three pairs were flushed at Preston-upon-the-Weald-Moors (28 Apr) and six birds visited a lawn at Waters Upton (28 Dec).

The annual spread of records is of interest. Grey partridge are traditionally easier to locate in spring when the territorial calls of the male are frequent especially early in the morning or in the evenings, and birds seem to be more active at this time of the year.

The table below shows the monthly distribution of records of grey partridge (from all sources) and the number of sites from which these records occurred during each month. This table clearly shows that birds are infrequently seen twice at the same site, and probably reflects a general lack of observer coverage of farmland where this species is most likely to be recorded.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. Records	3	8	0	7	12	7	4	0	0	0	2	2
No. Sites	2	7	0	7	12	7	4	0	0	0	2	2

Peak months for observation were February, April and May. The total lack of March records, when wild birds start to call and set up territories, could be considered unusual, but perhaps this is because March was not an Atlas survey month. Estates laying down birds for shooting would normally release coveys of captive-bred birds in late summer and the lack of any records at all between August and October perhaps signifies this practice is declining in the County.

Most shoots within the County do not seem now to lay down grey partridge or indeed shoot the species as per guidance by the GWCT, though a few still do include greys in their advertisements.

Recent research by GWCT recommends that if wild birds remain in an area, that conservation should be directed in assisting the wild birds to breed successfully by, amongst other things, establishing conservation headlands in fields by leaving field margins and not spraying herbicides in a 6-24 metre strip around the field periphery, and by controlling foxes, magpies and carrion crows. This habitat management is preferred, rather than by introducing captive-bred stock which have been shown to survive poorly and especially to be less successful in rearing young than wild birds.

If grey partridge are extinct in an area, the recommended method of re-introduction is to combine the laying down of captive-bred coveys in late summer with the fostering of captive-bred chicks by surviving birds laid down previously, though research is continuing to determine if this is a truly viable method of re-establishing the species in the wild. GWCT's guidance is not to shoot grey partridge at all unless the known population is at least 20 birds per 100 hectares; it seems unlikely, in light of SOS records over the last ten years, that any location in the County has anywhere near this number of birds.

Such is the scale of the decline of this bird that its removal as a game species must be under consideration by DEFRA.

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## **QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce summer visitor in erratic numbers

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Red List, RBBP

There were 15 records, four in June with the first heard on 1<sup>st</sup>, eight in July and three in August, the last being heard on 30<sup>th</sup> and one recorder (GTh) contributed six records.

Breeding was recorded as probable, with Atlas code 'T' (likely that of being heard in the same locality on two occasions over a week or more), at four sites. It was estimated (HMP), after he had talked to a number of farmers/landowners in the area, that there were at least six singing males within 3km south west of Prees.

All records were from the north of the County (SJ) with the exception of the first, which was perhaps moving north within SJ37U (north of Hopton Castle) on 1 Jun.

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**PHEASANT** *Phasianus colchicus*

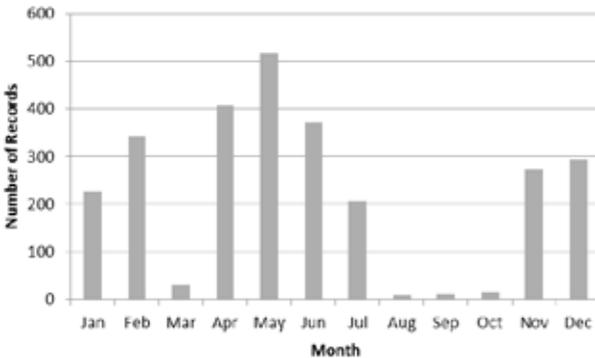
Shropshire Status: Abundant naturalised resident

BBS: Present in 88% of plots, 241 birds recorded, an average of 5.6 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Not assessed

The total number of records submitted from all sources was around 2,700 and their temporal distribution is instructive. The graph below plots their occurrence per month and shows that while they were well recorded for the Atlas (January, February, April to July, November and December) they are neglected by observers, for obvious enough reasons, during the other months.

It is known that some Atlas workers refuse to count what are sometimes very large numbers of pheasants, on the basis that they are so common and in effect farmed, but that is regrettable; comprehensive counting would pinpoint areas where keeping is most significant.



The three three-figure counts were of 160 (3 Jan) in tetrad SO38S (E of Walcot Park), 120 (19 Sep) at Buttercross on the Severn south of Hampton Loade, and 100 (28 Dec) in SO59R (between Shipton and Brockton).

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## CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Shropshire Status: Nominate Atlantic form *carbo* ('Atlantic Cormorant') probably a scarce visitor. European and south east British form *sinensis* ('Continental Cormorant') probably a fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Recorded in all months of the year.

BBS: Present in 10% of plots, 6 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Green List

The total number of records (415) from 58 sites (plus the 70 reports at the tetrad level submitted to the Atlas scheme) reflects a species ranging widely, especially around the north of the County and in the south close to the Severn. Away from the Severn in the south of the County (SO) came ten records from Walcot Park lakes where there were up to 12 birds (19 Dec) and two from Bromfield where there were up to five (8 Mar).

The proportion of records in the Atlas breeding season (April to July) changed from 15.0% in 2006 to 20.3% in 2009, a trend which may be significant and one to be watched as, perhaps, we move to breeding in the County. The only site with appreciable numbers in the May to July period was VP, perhaps the place to look out for signs of nesting in the future.

Monthly maxima at sites with more than ten records are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Recs
Chelmarsh Reservoir	33	12	12	3	1	4	2	2	6	13	5	17	24
Dudmaston	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	5	-	12
Priorslee Lake	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	9	19
Severn Valley Country Park	3	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	4	2	4	17
Shavington Big Pool	15	35	3	3	-	-	11	25	3	18	15	1	21
Trench Pool	6	3	1	2	2	1	1	-	2	3	3	5	25
VP	-	1	2	2	3	4	6	13	16	8	3	8	72
Walcot Lake (in SO)	9	19	6	4	1	-	1	-	4	10	6	6	16
Wood Lane NR	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	7	5	3	22

High counts in the 20s came from three sites; Blake Mere (29 birds, 23 Feb), Cherrington (27, 1 Dec) and Highley/Upper Arley (26, 7 Jan) while counts in the 30s came from Cole Mere (32, 21 Dec), Shavington Big Pool (35, 21 Feb) and

Chelmarsh Reservoir (33, 6 Jan). Overall peak counts were of 46 at The Mere (21 Sep) and 58 on Newton Mere (19 Jan).

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**BITTERN** *Botaurus stellaris*

Shropshire Status: Very rare winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, UKBAP, Red List, RBBP

The bird which was first reported at VP on 14 Oct 2008 remained into the New Year and continued to be seen, on and off, until 18 Mar. Singles were also seen at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 8 Jan (EGP), Priorslee Lake on 4 Mar (EJW) and at VP again from 9 Oct until 16 Nov (JA).

Four records in a year was exceptional and VP kept up its excellent record for this species. It is interesting to speculate if the bird seen in autumn at VP was the same individual as the one seen early in the year.

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**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

There were 120 records excluding Atlas submissions, with 16 additional records from Atlas survey work; the following considers them all (excluding duplicates on the same day) to generate a complete picture for this popular and ever-increasing species.

Of all the records, nearly two-thirds (86) were from VP; a star species impossible to miss at a well-watched site. Although VP is so well-watched, and generates records for that reason alone, it does appear to be an epicentre of little egret activity. Thus, from the time the first VP bird turned up on 3 Jul there was a steady stream of records from the site; the following day there were two and on 18 Jul three, the latter maximum through occasionally until 1 Sep, down to two until 13 Sep and from then on just one until the last record on 28 Oct.

Away from VP, records came from all over the County throughout the year from north east of Whitchurch down to Clun and the Stokesay area; they cannot hide, although Wood Lane NR missed out completely.

The highest counts were of four birds from east of VP (Cound Lake area, SJ50S)

(27 Jul) and Priorslee Lake (9 Aug), both of which could be seen as post-breeding dispersal peaks. The five records of three birds came from Priorslee Lake, Leighton/Buildwas and VP between 27 May and 1 Sep.

The monthly trend in records, sites and maxima suggests an increase in July but greatest interest will be generated when they start to breed with us, probably tacked onto a heronry, another good reason to monitor them.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Records	11	5	2	1	3	6	31	27	21	7	0	2
Locations	8	4	2	1	2	5	7	5	3	1	-	2
Maxima	1	2	1	2	3	1	4	4	2	1	-	1

### **GREAT WHITE EGRET** *Ardea alba*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant.

Conservation Status: RBBP

One was at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 23 Oct (ACrossm).

The bird was seen from the ringing hide as it lifted from the top pool beyond the scrape before flying past the observer in the direction of the reservoir. Unfortunately, despite a search it was not relocated so presumably continued south.

This is only the fourth County record, although, it has now been recorded in each of the last three years and, given the increase in records nationally, it seems likely that this increased frequency will continue.

### **PURPLE HERON** *Ardea purpurea*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant

Conservation Status: RBBP

One was at Pen-yr-Estyn on 9 Aug (DLC) and from 5 Sep until 11 Sep (AWH).

A juvenile, this bird was found along the Montgomery Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal on 5 Sep and news was quickly released, allowing many thankful observers to obtain excellent views over the next few days. The bird could be elusive,

sharing its time between canal side vegetation and the nearby Pen-yr-Estyn wetland. It became apparent that locals believed the bird to have been present for some weeks and, eventually, a report was received of it on the 9 Aug. It seems likely that it was present throughout.

This is the fourth County record, following the first at Prees in November 1995 and subsequent records at VP in September 2003 and Priorslee Lake in April 2004.

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**SPOONBILL** *Platalea leucorodia*

Shropshire Status: Very rare passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

One was at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 22 Aug (MO).

An adult, this bird was found by an observer who was undertaking the monthly WeBS count. It was thought to have dropped in around 09.30 but, at around 10.20, it took flight with gulls and flew south down the reservoir and out of view. It was not seen again.

There are just eight previous records. The first was seen to fly from Aqualate Mere into Shropshire in 1965 and the last was at Wood Lane NR and The Mere, Ellesmere in May 2003.

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**WHITE STORK** *Ciconia ciconia*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant

Conservation Status: Not assessed

There were two records. One was seen at Pen-yr-Estyn and Rednal between 13 Apr and 20 Apr (DP, TA-P) and the other at Caynton House, Edgmond in June (AGr).

The first of these occurred in much the same area as the purple heron described above but was more elusive and may well have ranged farther afield. The bird was found at Pen-yr-Estyn on 14 Apr (DP) and was still present the next day when the observer alerted the County Recorder and a small number of lucky observers managed to see it. Subsequently, records were received from a local resident at nearby Rednal on 13 Apr and 20 Apr (TA-P).

Unfortunately, the exact date of the Edgmond record is not known. The record only came to light in 2010 when the farm manager (AG) showed photographs taken in early June 2009 to an experienced observer (GTh) who understood the significance!

These are the third and fourth County records, although, it is of course plausible that they were the same individual.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

BBS: Present in 33% of plots, 19 birds recorded, an average of 1.2 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Green List

Of the total 661 records received, 310 (47%) were from Atlas tetrads. The 351 non-Atlas records derived from 81 widely scattered locations and only at four sites were sufficient records received (*i.e.* more than 20) to look for trends; records from these four sites are summarised in the below table. Only two sites, Chelmarsh Reservoir and Wood Lane NR, show apparent post-breeding peak numbers perhaps because of their proximity to breeding sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Records
Chelmarsh Reservoir	1	1	5	1	2	8	7	9	2	3	1	-	20
Dudmaston	2	1	2	-	2	1	-	2	3	3	2	1	20
VP	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	64
Wood Lane NR	3	2	3	4	4	4	8	4	3	3	2	2	21

The maximum count during the year was of 11 at The Mere on 23 Feb (perhaps at the colony there) and there were ten in SJ60 (River Severn at Buildwas) on 6 Dec. Nine were reported from a heronry (see below) and also at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 20 Jun and 22 Aug, while eight were reported from Chelmarsh again on 20 Jun and from Wood Lane NR on 4 Jul.

Shropshire's heronries remain under-recorded; there were eight substantive records for breeding sites, all but one via Atlas submissions and they refer to five sites with no reports from the colony at The Mere. In the south, a site near Skyborry was active on 27 Apr, the colony at Cleobury North held at least 2 juveniles on 27 Jul

and the site near the Camlad and Stockton had 11 nests on 12 Apr. Further north, the Halston Hall colony was active on 19 Apr and the site near Crudgington was reported four times with a maximum count of nine birds and a minimum of two juveniles present on 23 Jul.

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 3 birds recorded,

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 296 records was received from 41 sites (excluding records only to the tetrad), down by 48 records and eight sites on the comparable data from the previous year. The figure below shows peak counts at six sites, half with peak numbers at the end of the breeding season, the other half post-breeding/winter. The County maxima for the year are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cound Fishery	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	9
Monkmoor	-	2	2	3	2	-	-	4	-	2	-	-
Polemere	1	1	5	4	2	3	5	4	4	1	-	-
Priorslee Lake	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Trench Pool	4	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	4	3	3	4
VP	1	2	1	-	1	5	8	4	3	1	1	2
County maxima	4	6	5	4	2	5	8	4	4	3	3	9

Breeding was confirmed at six named sites plus apparently ten others supplied only as tetrads, none with more than a single pair. The named breeding sites were ASF, Monkmoor Pool, Shavington Big Pool, The Rea at Upton Magna, VP and Wall Farm. The seven additional breeding sites at the tetrad level in SJ were at or close to Llyn Rhuddwyn, Grimpro/Haughton, Tetchill, White Mere, Much Wenlcoek, Cherrington Moor and Sutton Hill (Telford), while the three in SO were Harp House Bicton, Totterton Hall and Stanton Lacy.

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**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Green List

Total of 530 records (duplicates removed) from 29 sites, respectively up by 146 and one on the previous year.

All records were from still waters, with the single exception of eight birds on the Severn at Buildwas (8 Aug). The sites were all north and east of the Severn with the exception of those from VP (92 records) and Cound Fishery (21 records) along with a party of 11 (2 Nov) in SJ70J (probably Upper Forge Gravel Pits south of Bridgnorth and almost adjacent to the River) and 11 again three days later about 16km west in SO59Q (south east of Shipton).

Double-figure counts occurred on 22 occasions and the five records of 20 or more came at the turn of the year from EGM peaking there with c.50 on 1 Jan. and 23 at White Mere in 21 Dec. Elsewhere there were 41 in SJ61L (north of Wellington) on 2 Jul.

The below table shows the month maxima counts from selected key sites for this species within the County.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Records
Chelmarsh reservoir	9	8	8	13	8	15	14	16	8	5	4	7	30
Colemere	6	3	12	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	2	3	11
Cound Fishery	1	7	5	-	-	-	-	1	5	5	7	10	21
Dudmaston	3	4	5	2	2	3	2	-	3	4	3	2	24
Priorslee Lake	11	5	9	3	6	6	5	-	5	8	1	8	31
Trench Pool	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	34
VP	2	2	4	4	3	4	4	2	3	2	2	3	92
Wood Lane NR	-	2	3	8	8	9	9	6	5	4	1	-	104

Breeding was reported from the following sites; Blake Mere (one pair, sitting only), Chelmarsh Scrape (one pair which moved their young onto the reservoir), Dudmaston (a single young recorded twice), Priorslee Flash (eggs in May but no

young until October, probably immigrants) and at Priorslee Lake (two pairs both raised young). At Trench Pool the single pair suffered their nest being flooded out, at VP seemingly two pairs but no reports of nesting and at Wood Lane NR up to five juveniles seen but no record of how many pairs were involved.

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**BLACK-NECKED GREBE** *Podiceps nigricollis*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

One was at Priorslee Lake from 8 Dec 2009 until the end of the year (EJW).

An adult in winter plumage, this long-staying bird was enjoyed by many observers and offered excellent photographic opportunities. It was the first at this site since two superb summer plumaged birds in April 2003. One record a year for the County is fairly typical and, since the turn of the new century, only 2005 and 2007 have been blank.

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**HONEY BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

Shropshire Status: Rare summer visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Just two records for the year. One was seen in suitable breeding habitat in the south of the County on 16 Jun, although no evidence of breeding was reported (RMS). The other, a passage migrant, was seen over Shawbirch, Telford on 12 Sep (AL).

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**RED KITE** *Milvus milvus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant and newly-established breeder.

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 3 birds recorded,

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Following the first successful breeding in the County in 2006, the number of records received has increased substantially, year on year, as the number and range of the welsh population has grown rapidly and expanded to this side of the border, joined by an increasing number of birds fledged from Shropshire nests.

There were a total of 141 casual records with 188 Atlas records, compared with 102 and 71 respectively in 2008.

The Atlas records in particular reflect an increase in numbers and an expansion of range: 45 in the first winter period and 28 in the second winter period, but a much larger number (109) in the breeding season. These breeding season records came from 77 different tetrads, of which 57 were in the south west quadrant of the County, indicating that kites are still largely restricted to the Shropshire Hills AONB. However, 18 breeding season records came from 16 tetrads in the northern half of the County (an increase from last year from 12 and nine respectively), but only three of these were from the north east quadrant.

Only 26 of the records came via Birdtrack, and the remaining 114 were casual records, 32 of which came from the northern half of the County, including one from Cressage of a bird heading towards Ironbridge (23 May), several from the Shrewsbury and Telford areas, and singles at Whixall (1 Feb), Newport (24 May) and Wood Lane NR (5 Jun). The eastward spread continued too, and kites were seen on Titterstone Clee on (31 Mar and 1 Aug), Alveley (3 May) and Aston Botterell (29 May). Seven casual records came from VP, and three of them reported two birds, while one, on 16 May, reported three birds. This compares with only four records (all of single birds) last year.

Sixteen records were of more than two birds, compared with only seven last year. Nine of them were of three birds, but Atlas workers found four birds on two occasions, and five, eight, 11 and 15 in one-hour timed tetrad visits in the south west, while a casual record of five came from Bury Ditches (16 Feb).

Records were received for every month of the year, but only 127 (38.6%) were from the three months March – May (compared with “*well over half*” last year), again indicating that kites are becoming well established as resident birds.

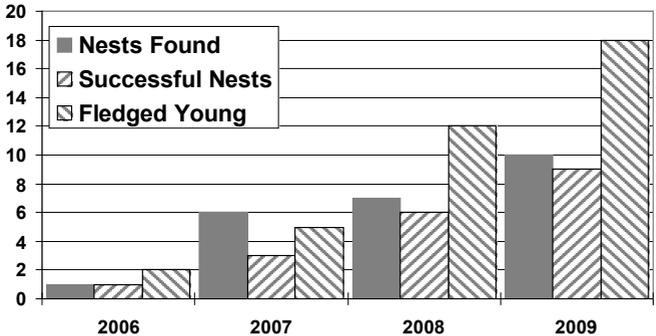
All these records indicate a continued expansion of range, and an increase in population. However, kites are still scarce, and they were seen in only two BBS survey squares (although three birds were present). As kites usually do not breed until they are two or three years old, and young birds wander widely, most of these sightings will probably be of non-breeding young birds, but they indicate the potential for a continued increase in the breeding population in future years.

Two observers reported nests, but no tags were reported. A description of wing tags was included in last year’s report.

The Welsh Kite Trust has been searching for nests in the County since 2003, monitoring the expansion of the breeding population on this side of the border. Ten nests were found, three more than last year, all in the south-west Shropshire hills, in 10-kilometre squares SO27 (Knighton), SO18 / 28 (Clun – four nests), SO38 (Lydbury North), SO39 (Norbury - two) and SO48 (Craven Arms - two). Three pairs used the same nest as last year, three moved a short distance, and four were at completely new sites.

Nine nests were successful, producing 18 fledged young, and 13 of the young were tagged in the nest. Productivity has continued to increase, and 37 young kites are known to have fledged from Shropshire nests since 2006.

The number of nests each year, and the outcome, is shown in the chart below.



Six of the breeding adults were already tagged. Four were at the same site as last year, one moved, and one was found in the County for the first time:

- The adult male at a nest near Craven Arms (orange/black “h”) came from a site just over the border in Herefordshire, and fledged in 2005. He was present at the same nest site in 2007 and 2008.
- The adult male (yellow/black “37”) was again at a nest site near Clun. His natal site was near Devil’s Bridge in 2004. In 2006 he nested north of Llangollen in Denbighshire (74 kilometres from his natal site), but failed. He was not found at a nest in 2007 but the current site is 53 kilometres from his natal site, and 63 kilometres from his Denbighshire nest site.
- The male at a site in SO39 (orange/black “J”) moved from a 2008 site two kilometres away. He fledged near Tregaron Bog in 2005 (distance travelled = 76 kilometres). The site he occupied last year was still occupied, by two untagged birds.

- The female again at the site in SO38 (orange/black “k”) fledged near Llandoverly in 2005 (distance travelled = 80 kilometres). This year she was paired with green/black “h”, a 2006 bird from the same Herefordshire site as orange “h”. Last year, this male bird nested near Beguildy just over the border in Wales. He was 40 km from his 2008 nest and 14 km from his natal site.
- Most interestingly, one of the first two kites known to fledge in Shropshire (green/black star - see photo in SBR 2006), from a nest in SO27, was found at an unsuccessful nest in SO28 (also near Clun), mid-way between her nest last year and her natal site.

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## **HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Red List, RBBP

Seventy-nine different records were received, although some appear to be duplicates. All were of wintering or passage birds, and all except 19 came from various parts of the Long Mynd (45 records) or Whixall Moss (15). Twelve of these 19 were Bird Atlas records, eight from the first winter or spring passage (including one on the Stiperstones on 12 May), and four from the second winter period (November and December).

Apart from the Stiperstones record, none were seen after 20 Apr until casual records of late passage birds, all ringtails, came from Little Stretton (20 Jul), Snitton (28 Aug), a “small ringtail, so probably an immature male, east of Ludlow fairly near to Titterstone Cleve” (also on 28 Aug) and The Rea, Upton Magna (4 Sep).

At VP, a male was seen on 13 Feb, and a female on 24 Mar. Other records of single birds from widely scattered locations include a ringtail at Battlefield, Shrewsbury near the A528 Ellesmere road (7 Jan), a “first year” at Brockton, Wenlock Edge (22 Feb), a ringtail at both Cressage and Cronkhill (23 Feb), a male at nearby Leighton (31 Oct), and at Anchor (2 Nov) (“*appeared slight - probably a juv. male*”).

There were only two records of three birds, and four of two birds, all from the Long Mynd in January. Only 13 records included specific identification of a male bird, but 44 referred to a female or ringtail. No male was seen in the first winter period after 13 Feb, and the only second period male was the one at Leighton.

The most interesting reports were of a female catching a pheasant at Callow Hollow (12 Apr), and chasing a pheasant near Pole Cottage, Long Mynd a week later.

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**GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP

There were 71 records of goshawk within the County during 2009, of these 31 were the consequence of Atlas monitoring work. Records were received during each month of the year, with the exception of June and October. The majority of records occurred during the early spring period, when this usually reclusive woodland dweller becomes more obvious as birds display above the canopy of woodlands in breeding areas. There were ten records during February, 24 in March and 11 in April.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites, with possible breeding noted at a further 17 sites. Although it is likely that a number of these records of possible breeding related to sub-adult, non-breeding birds, which will soar over suitable breeding habitat during the spring. In addition, the Forestry Commission monitored 18 sites, seven of which were occupied. Of these, one site was disturbed and the remaining six successful breeding sites produced 12 young. Two further sites had a single bird in territory.

There was just one record of a successful hunting foray; at The Rea, Upton Magna a female caught a woodpigeon (20 Apr).

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**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 18% of plots, 9 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 523 widely distributed records was received of this popular species and Atlas fieldwork produced breeding season records throughout the County. The table below shows the number of records by month; the absence of any specific Atlas fieldwork in March, August and September explains the reduction of records in these months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Total records	57	52	20	73	54	39	51	15	13	21	71	57

Often unfortunately lamented for taking birds from garden feeding stations, no records were received of such behaviour in 2009. At VP one was seen to catch a house martin (27 Jul), one killed a Pheasant poult at Upton Magna (5 Apr) and a female caught a woodpigeon at Harper Adams College (4 Oct).



Turtle dove, The Rea, 21 May 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Willow tit, Haughmond, 31 January 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Black-necked grebe, Priorslee Lake, 8 December 2009 (*Yvonne Chadwick*)



Common snipe, Venus Pool, 31 October 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Hawfinch, Brown Clee, 9 January 2009  
(*Jim Almond*)



Black redstart, Long Mynd, 11 April 2009  
(*Jim Almond*)



Iceland gull, Priorslee Lake, 4 January 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Kumlien's gull, Priorslee Lake, 20 February 2009 (*Peter Wilson*)



Glaucous gull, Priorslee Lake, 9 March 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Common redstart, Wyre Forest,  
June 2009 (*John Robinson*)



Corn Bunting, Eyton, May 2009  
(*Paul King*)



Lesser redpoll, Chelmarsh, January 2009 (*John Robinson*)



Fieldfare, Wyre Forest, January 2009 (*John Robinson*)



Spotted flycatcher family, Ellesmere, 2 July 2009 (*John Hawkins*)



Purple heron, Rednal,  
6 September 2009 (*Paul King*)



Common redshank, Ellesmere,  
23 March 2009 (*Paul King*)



Bar-tailed godwit, Venus Pool, 11 April 2009 (*Paul King*)



Wood sandpiper, Chelmarsh, 31 July 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Bittern, Venus Pool, 8 February 2009 (*Jim Almond*)

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**BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 82% of plots, 80 birds recorded, an average of 2 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Green List

It is fitting that the species at the centre of the Society's logo is still one of the best recorded in terms of both the number of sightings and locations, with a total of 2,100 records. However, it is no longer possible to make detailed comparisons with the accounts from previous years in the Bird Report. Observers have been engaged in fieldwork for the Bird Atlas, but the Atlas only requires one record in each season for each tetrad, whereas observers have been, and are still, encouraged to send all observations (including repeats) to the County Recorder. Although Atlas activity will have been roughly the same as last year, 1,447 Atlas records were received, compared with 2,000 last year. Birdtrack, BBS and WeBS contributed 304 records, and 358 were sent direct to the recorder, some of them duplicates of records also sent to the various other recording schemes. This is similar to last year's figure of 318, but substantially less than the 500 sent to the recorder in 2007, and similar numbers in previous years. The reduction in these casual records is a reflection of the increased recording for the Atlas, and use of Birdtrack.

Out of a total of 570 casual and Birdtrack records, 446 came from 67 different sites in the northern half of the County (compared with 473 (72.2%) from 149 different sites last year), with 95 records from 11 sites from the north-west quadrant and 351 records from 56 sites in the north east quadrant. Sixty six records came from 14 sites in the south-west, and 58 records from 12 sites in the south east.

Although the number of casual records, and sites, has decreased, the pattern is the same as that found in each of the last five years. Although it tends to reflect the distribution of observers, rather than birds, it does highlight the rapid spread of buzzards from their stronghold in the south west Shropshire Hills to all parts of the County since the publication of *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire* in 1992, highlighted in detail in the 2004 Report. The distribution maps that will be produced as part of the new Atlas, starting in 2007, will show the full extent of the expansion of range.

Until the Atlas map is available, the BBS, which covers randomly selected 1-km squares, perhaps gives a better indication of how widespread buzzards are now, and the still-increasing population. This year numbers were down slightly on last

year, but they were still found in 80% of the survey plots. It was not until 2000 that buzzards were found in more than two-thirds of the plots

There were nine records of ten or more birds together (compared with eight last year), from (in descending order): 27 at Crudgington (12 Oct), 25 at Bicton near Clun (26 Sep), 18 at Bettwys-y-crwyn (7 Aug), Diddlebury (6 Nov) and at Eyton Moor (9 Oct), 16 at Eyton upon the Weald Moors (9 December, Hodnet (17 May) and at Upper Affcot (30 Apr), 15 at Clunton Coppice (29 Mar) and at Stoke Upon Tern (8 Nov), 12 at Brown Clee (8 Oct), 11 at Candy Wood (16 Mar) and ten at Wrekin (11 Apr) and at Whitton Court (4 Nov).

In addition, there were also six counts of ten or more birds in one-hour timed tetrad visits for the Atlas: 19 in SO28S (Three Gates) (24 Feb), 16 in SJ62E (Hodnet) (17 May), 14 in SJ53F (near Wem) (24 Jan), 12 in SJ51R (Withington) (20 Feb), ten in SJ50U (Poynton Green) (4 May) and 10 in SO27N (near Llanfair Waterdine) (31 Jan and 10 Jul). Counts of 24 together in SO38L (Kempton) and 22 in SO48X (Corfton) were submitted as Atlas Roving Records. The biggest count on a BBS was only four birds, in SO58S (Clee St. Margaret).

There was a total of 91 casual records (including Birdtrack) of more than two birds, compared with 123 last year and 168 the year before. Again, the decline is believed to reflect the change in the recording patterns by observers, rather than any decline in the number of buzzards.

Breeding season records (169) came from 107 sites, more than the 95 sites last year. Buzzards are largely sedentary and they almost certainly breed within a kilometre or two of everywhere where they have been seen. However, behaviour was poorly reported, and breeding was confirmed only at ten sites: Chelmarsh Reservoir, Cherrington Moor, Coton Hall, fields to the east of Priorslee Lake, Rhiewes, SVCP, The Humbers, Tyrley Wharf, Market Drayton, Wood Lane NR, and Woodseaves near Market Drayton.

A buzzard was reported from Candy Valley stooping, on a daily basis, to try to get mallard chicks in the grass as they travelled from pond to river and vice versa. On 14 May it was successful and carried a duckling screaming into the distance. Another was seen carrying a rat in its talons at Wood Lane NR (18 May).

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**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Osprey is currently a passage migrant in Shropshire, though the expanding population elsewhere in Britain opens the possibility of eventual breeding here.

An excellent year produced 27 casual records (excluding duplicates), all of single birds, compared to eight records received in each of the last two years.

All except four were from VP, the exceptions being, in the spring passage period, one seen moving north from Herefordshire into Shropshire, “*beaten up by several territorial Buzzards on the way*” near Downton Castle (1 Apr) (DAc), and another flying north over Tibberton (17 Apr) (SJa); and, in the return passage period, one flying “*north up the Severn between Highley and Upper Arley, perhaps to Chelmarsh*” (23 Jul) (PGD), and “*one eating a large fish at the top of a dead tree in the very big field just up river from the Riverside Inn on the river side of the road*” (RH<sub>a</sub>), at Coundlane (swan field), less than two kilometres from VP (27 Jul).

At VP, five sightings were during the spring passage period between 1 Apr (DAc) and 28 Apr (PAK), including a bird which made six attempts before catching a medium sized roach (*Rutilus rutilus*) (27 Apr) (HJG). Return passage started on 11 Jul (HJG, JA), with records from 18 different dates up until 1 Aug (PAK) (only four dates in the period produced no records), with the final bird passing through on 12 Aug (Log Book).

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**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 16% of plots, 9 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Amber List

BTO surveys and the Bird Atlas again contributed a large number of records (430). Excluding these, but including Birdtrack, a total of 289 records from 155 different and widely scattered sites was received (very similar to the 359 records from 138 sites last year and 367 records from 119 sites in 2007). Again, records covered all months of the year.

Of these, 205 records came from 89 sites in the northern half of the County (50 from 25 sites in the north west quadrant, and 155 records from 64 sites in the north east quadrant); whilst only 23 records from 18 sites came from the south west quadrant and 61 from 25 sites in the south east. This pattern is similar to that in the previous four years, suggesting that kestrels are more common in the north east than elsewhere.

Kestrels are widely distributed, but not very common; they were recorded within only 16% of BBS survey plots (total nine birds).

There were only four sites with confirmed breeding: at VP (many records, including birds in the nest box, and then a female with one fledged young on 13 Jun); at Norton-in-Hales (13 Jun) and at Rhiews (4 Jul), a nest with young at both sites and a pair with three young at Long Mynd Gliding Club (11 Aug), while birds were seen carrying prey to a nest at Trench Pool (4 Jul), and another at Wood Lane NR (19 Jul).

Apart from the sites with confirmed breeding, there was only one record of more than two birds; three at Priorslee Lake (11 Jun). Very few observers reported behaviour or other evidence of breeding.

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### **MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

In total, 43 records from 20 sites were received (counting all the various locations on the Long Mynd as one site), compared with 67 records from 14 sites received last year. Nine of these were Atlas records, and three came via Birdtrack.

Nineteen were first winter records from 11 different locations: Wappenshall Moor (27 Jan), Long Mynd (30 Jan, 15/16/18 Feb and 2 Mar), The Rea, Upton Magna (4/9 Feb), VP (7 Feb and 8 Mar), SJ51S (near Roden) (15 Feb), SJ63H (Moreton Hall) (20 Feb), SO39Z (Gatten Lodge) (23 Feb), Cressage (27 Feb), SJ62Q (Tibberton) (27 Feb), Calverhall (6 Mar) and Whixall Moss (8/15/25 Mar).

There were ten breeding season records from Long Mynd between 7 Apr and 1 Aug, and The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project found one nest. The only breeding season records away from the Long Mynd came from Woolston nr Wistanstow, a male on 26 Apr, and SJ40I (Plealey) on 12 May. No records were received from the Stiperstones, or any other potential breeding area.

After the breeding season, wintering birds were seen at VP (31 Aug and 13 Oct), Long Mynd (25 Sep), Willowfields, Pulverbath (11 Oct), ASF (16/20 Oct), Whixall Moss (30 Oct), Wood Lane NR (7 Dec) and Maesbury Marsh (28 Dec). Atlas records came from SO58A (Hayton) (17 Dec), SO57 (near Ludlow) (19 Dec), and SJ32Z (near Wem) (27 Dec).

In summary, 16 of the records came from the Long Mynd – five before the breeding season, between 30 Jan and 2 Mar, ten during the breeding season, and one after the breeding season. Reports have reflected an increasing tendency for merlin to remain on the breeding grounds all year, as prey species are also remaining in increasing numbers, presumably as a result of milder winters. This year there were six records from the Long Mynd outside the breeding season (excluding Atlas records), compared with eight in 2008, and five in both 2006 and 2007.

The merlin population is increasing nationally, from a low point in the 1960s caused by the effects of organo-chlorine poisoning, and it has doubled in the last 25 years. However, the increase to two pairs at the traditional site in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2008, and three pairs in 2006 has not been maintained.

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## **HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant.

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 3 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP

A total of 114 records from 74 different locations included 31 Atlas and 16 Bird track records, a big reduction from 175 records from 95 locations, including 63 Atlas records from 49 different tetrads, in 2008 (perhaps because there is no requirement to report the same observation each year for the Atlas). A reduction in casual records was also evident, back to a similar level to the 60 records from 28 sites in 2007, and the 91 records from 29 sites in 2006.

However, three hobby were seen in three BBS squares, compared with two hobby seen in one BBS last year, and none in 2007.

The first sighting was during Atlas work in SJ23X (Weston Rhyn) on 13 Apr, followed by other singles at Whixall Moss (18 Apr), at VP (25 Apr), and at Priorslee Lake (30 Apr). Twenty-three records from 18 widely distributed locations were received for May, but only two of these records were of more than one bird, with two at Mirelake ASF (13 May) and in SJ30Y (Stoney Stretton) (20 May).

There were no reports of more than two birds at any time, except from one site in SO48 (Craven Arms area) with two fledged young. A hobby was also seen mobbing a red kite there on 9 Aug. Three other nests were found. Other evidence of successful breeding came from two other sites; a bird was seen carrying prey over All Stretton (21 Jul), and a juvenile was seen near Buildwas (1 Aug).

Hobby usually lay in early June, and young fledge in August, and 56 records relate to this period (excluding 23 Atlas records), compared to 66 (excluding Atlas records) last year, and only 37 in 2007, including 18 from VP (more than the 11 last year), five from Whixall Moss and six from Wood Lane NR. No other sites (apart from the nest sites) produced more than two records.

There were also only three records of hobby hunting hirundines (a possible indication of young in a nest nearby), at Ruckley (25 Jun), at Aston Eyre near Bridgnorth (14 Jul) and Ludlow Racecourse (11 Aug). No records referred to hawking for insects, and unfortunately almost all records contained no information about activity or habitat.

In early September, late pairs may still be feeding dependent young, or even nestlings (and there were reports of pairs still at three nest sites), but return passage is also underway, and eight records were received for September (compared with 11 last year, 11 again in 2007, and 21 in 2006), mainly of single birds, from Shawbury Airfield and Dudmaston (3 Sep), Whixall Moss (9 Sep), Mirelake ASF (12 Sep), Tibberton (18 Sep) ("*two very vociferous birds were over the village in the afternoon*"), VP (20 Sep), Wrekin (21 Sep), and, the last of the year, Crose Mere on 27 Sep (a clear view of a male and a female quartering the reed fringe catching mostly dragonfly, from about 12:45 to 13:40).

Hobby are undoubtedly the most elusive of our breeding raptors, given their tendency to nest very late in scattered trees on arable farmland, a habitat infrequently visited by birdwatchers, and they are almost certainly under-recorded. Hopefully the new Atlas will provide a clearer picture of the distribution and population of this graceful falcon. Already breeding has been confirmed in five tetrads, and probable breeding has been established in eight more.

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## **PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 2% of plots, 1 bird recorded

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

A total of 194 records was received – this included monitoring of 20 nest sites by the Shropshire Peregrine Group (SPG), and 66 Atlas records (42 records from 37 tetrads in the two winter periods, and 24 records from 22 tetrads in the breeding season) . The Atlas records were equally distributed between the northern and southern halves of the County in the breeding season, but there were slightly more of the former in winter. Several Atlas records, including four of confirmed breeding, duplicated those from SPG.

Of the 20 nest sites, 13 were in the northern half of the County. No eggs were laid at one site, and at another it was “*not known if eggs were laid but none hatched*”. At the remaining 18, at least 49 eggs were laid (there may have been more than the minimum number reported at four sites), 44 chicks hatched and all 44 fledged – an excellent breeding season.

Another 107 casual and Birdtrack records came from 59 sites, some of which again duplicated SPG records. The VP logbook notes birds seen on 15 dates in eight different months of the year, all singles except two on 17 May and on 18 Aug, while the Wood Lane NR log book contained six records, all of single birds, from four of the last six months of the year.

There was an account of one taking a woodpigeon at The Rea, Upton Magna (4 Feb) (“*very impressive*”), three accounts of conflicts with buzzards, another account of one chasing a dove over a back garden in the middle of a housing estate in Bridgnorth (13 Jul), and two accounts of unsuccessful stooping at mallards, at ASF on 10 Aug, and two attacks by a female on a group of seven at Cloveley Pool Moretonwood (4 Dec).

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## **WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce breeder and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

There were 159 records from 14 named sites, plus 14 at the tetrad level, logged

during Atlas monitoring, all from north or east of the Severn or very close to the river to its west. The well-watched reserves at Wood Lane NR and VP contributed 63 and 37 records respectively. At Wood Lane NR, they were reported almost daily in the first two months of the year (80% of the records there), not at all April to August with only four records in the last four months of the year. At VP, water rail were noted solely during the first three (11 records) and last four (26 records) months of the year.

The records below show the number of records logged by month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Records	40	32	19	0	1	0	1	4	9	16	9	28	159

Most records were of one or two birds. Four were calling at Chelmarsh on 18 Mar and three were recorded at four sites, most frequently at Wood Lane NR (eight dates between 8 Jan and 10 Feb), at Chelmarsh Scrape on 11 Feb, Shavington Big Pool on 31 Oct and Priorslee Lane on 17 Dec.

The only Atlas breeding season records (Apr-Jul) were of single bird on 12 May at a seasonally wet area of Granville Country Park, and on 29 Jul one at Chelmarsh Scrape, where they have been known to breed in the past.

Records are almost invariably of ‘squealing’ birds or those seen from hides in winter, this year’s exceptions being two “*performing a charming duet*” at VP (26 Oct) and one which “*scampered across the Wesley Brook footbridge*” at Priorslee Lake on 8 Dec.

## **MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 18% of plots, 15 birds recorded, an average of 1.7 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Green List

1,067 records were received from 86 named sites, along with 466 localities submitted as Atlas records to tetrad level only. 73% of the records came from SJ tetrads, the north of the County, which contains only 56% of the tetrads; the paucity of records from SO may be the result of the imbalance caused by the preponderance of wetlands in the north, or the paucity of recorders in the south.

The peaks in records per month are provided in the below table, although this is somewhat biased by the increase in survey effort during months of Atlas monitoring.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Records
Records	91	102	58	95	146	115	87	42	54	65	97	115	1,067

**COOT *Fulica atra***

Shropshire Status: Common resident and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 10% of plots, 15 birds recorded, an average of 1.7 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

886 records were received from 71 named sites, plus a further 265 records from Atlas records at the tetrad level.

The usual split is apparent - some sites have peak numbers Apr-Aug resulting from breeding, and some have numbers which peak in winter, notably Chelmarsh reservoir, Trench Pool and especially Priorslee Lake, see table below. After relatively low counts in January this year at Priorslee Lake numbers peaked in December (in other years the peak has been in January). Numbers exceeded 100 in September, were up to 232 on 22 Oct and in December were 327 on both Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The data from such intensive work as at Priorslee Lake deserves closer examination to look for correlations with weather patterns. A similar but less extreme build-up in numbers occurred at Trench Pool, through peaks of 111 in Aug to 194 on 19 Dec and as at Priorslee with fewer in January than in December. The Mere, Ellesmere, also provided some high counts including 340 on 23 Nov.

The County peak count was probably on 20/21 Dec, the period of the monthly WeBS scheme, when the total from all sites came to 768 birds, all counted on 21<sup>st</sup> with the exception of Trench Pool on 20<sup>th</sup>. Wernham *et al.* (2002) in *The Migration Atlas* present Coot ringing recoveries showing the broadly westward movement of continental breeding birds into Britain during winter from as far as 1,900km, the trend perhaps contributing to the increase in numbers during January and February. However the County Atlas of 1992 suggested a Shropshire population of 1,000-2,000 pairs so if that population persists now then immigration is probably not the explanation for our peak.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh Reservoir	166	90	48	16	19	12	41	62	75	34	65	80
Dudmaston	17	15	14	9	9	18	10	5	9	10	7	17
Polemere	53	42	42	16	14	20	32	13	12	11	36	43
Priorslee Lake	122	27	-	34	9	34	40	54	134	236	40	327
Trench Pool	119	81	63	56	33	62	92	111	136	164	149	194
VP	22	31	23	10	13	59	77	89	10	13	6	11
Walcot Park lakes	-	1	2	8	2	5	2	4	-	-	-	-
Total birds at the seven sites	499	287	192	149	99	210	294	338	376	468	303	672

Breeding was well reported, as reflected in the Atlas data above, with 73 of the 131 breeding records (56%) being of confirmed breeding; not surprising for a species whose young are so evident on open water, and breeding was confirmed at 32 of the named (non-Atlas tetrad) sites.

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## COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Shropshire Status: Rare summer visitor/passage migrant

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Most of the records received were of two birds. The first sighting was at Muckleton on 27 Mar (JLi) followed by a record at Mire Lake ASF (17 Apr) (AL) and then near Colemere village (24 Apr) (RV). The next records were from Whixall Moss on 2 Jul and 9 Jul (HMP) and Wood Lane NR from 30 Jul until 6 Aug (JHaw). Two were then seen at Kynnersley on 10 Aug (CB) with the final records coming from Wood Lane NR where four were seen here on 13-14 Aug (JHaw), with two on 21 Aug (BP).

It seems likely that most if not all the records relate to a single pair which moved around the area, being joined by two more at Wood Lane NR in August. It also seems a strong possibility that this pair was the same birds which summered in the Eyton Moor area in 2008. That pair favoured flooded potato fields and the fact that no similar habitat existed in 2009 may have resulted in them ranging more widely.

No sign of breeding activity was reported. However, the presence of summering birds two years running does bode well for the future, although the habitat available in Shropshire does not seem to be ideal for this species which favours extensive, undisturbed reed beds.

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**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. Rare in second winter period.

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 277 records occurred during the year; rather fewer than in 2008, although 78% of records were from just two locations, Wood Lane NR and VP.

As usual, oystercatchers first appeared in the County this year in late January with a single bird at Wood Lane NR on 23<sup>rd</sup>. More records were received in February when there seems to have been an influx of birds especially after 9<sup>th</sup>. Up to seven were at Wood Lane NR in February (23<sup>rd</sup>), with one or two at VP from 11<sup>th</sup> and a single at Howle on 21<sup>st</sup>. In March, birds were present daily at Wood Lane NR with up to seven again present (16<sup>th</sup>) and a pair was recorded on 13 dates during the month at VP. Other March records were from Eaton Mascott with two on 7<sup>th</sup>, up to three birds by the Severn at Buildwas, and pairs at Mirelake, ASF, Chelmarsh, Dudmaston, Crosemere and Bromfield.

Breeding pairs seem to have been settled by early April at the latest but one or two birds were also recorded at Hadley Pool near Whitechurch, Colemere, Chetwynd, Upton Magna and Upper Forge, Astley during the month perhaps indicating a continuing arrival in the County though no further breeding evidence was recorded at these sites.

The first incubating pair was noted at VP with a bird sitting on three eggs on 19 Mar. At least two pairs attempted to breed here. One pair failed at the egg stage at least twice, but this or another pair was seen with two hatched chicks on 3 Jun, though successful fledging was not confirmed. A pair continued to incubate a clutch until at least 22 Jun, though these apparently failed to hatch.

Other breeding attempts were recorded at ASF with three chicks hatching on 29 Apr and fledging successfully. Three young were seen at Wood Lane NR on 21 May of which at least two seem to have fledged. Fledged birds were also recorded with a pair by the River Severn at Buildwas / Leighton on 23 May and young were reported by the Severn at Cressage at the end of May. Additional pairs in May and June were reported from Howle, near Tetchill, near Northwood, near Wroxeter and at Shavington Park but no further evidence of breeding noted.

The wider spread of observations during the breeding season away from Wood Lane NR, ASF and VP suggests that breeding is at least attempted at a number of other sites in the County.

As is usual, small numbers were recorded at a variety of sites in June and July, but by the end of July birds had left the County with a few recorded at Wood Lane NR until 29<sup>th</sup>. Five birds at ASF on 12<sup>th</sup> were an unusual August record.

Further unusual records included an autumn bird or birds (the number was not recorded) at VP on 1 Oct and two birds at both Whixall Canal Floods on 29 Nov, and near Alberbury on 5 Dec. Autumn records are unprecedented.

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### **LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius dubius*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP

This is a popular species with observers, and because it occurs mainly at reserves (where habitat is often managed for its benefit) it is very well reported. Of the 158 records, 139 (88%) came from VP, ASF and Wood Lane NR, with birds seen at a further five locations.

The first arrivals were three at Bromfield on 27 Mar, this was 11 days later than last year but a more typical date. On 30 Mar three were at VP and a single was at Wood Lane NR, the other regular site for these birds, ASF, had its first report on 10 Apr when three were present. Five birds were present at VP on several dates in April, these are likely to include a succession of passage birds as well as those choosing to remain to breed.

Displaying birds were seen at VP on 2 Apr but sitting birds were not reported here until 22 May. Fledged young were noted by the River Severn at Leighton the next day and a nest with eggs was seen further down river the following day. Breeding was also confirmed at Wood Lane NR and probably occurred at ASF, Chelmarsh and Bromfield. An estimated 11 to 17 pairs may have attempted to breed within the County.

Birds continued to be reported from the main sites almost daily until 31 Aug when the final bird was noted at VP. The maximum recorded during this late summer period was five at Mirelake, ASF on 9 Jul.

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**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Amber List

Twenty two reports were received from four sites during 2009.

Spring passage was confined to May and began with a single at VP on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, then two birds on 13<sup>th</sup>. Four at Wood Lane NR on 8<sup>th</sup> was the highest number and the final spring bird was here on 18<sup>th</sup>. Mirelake ASF held a single on 10<sup>th</sup> and two on 14<sup>th</sup>, while Chelmarsh also had a single the following day. A total of between 11 and 13 birds was recorded during this period.

Birds tend to loiter for longer periods on return passage making it more difficult to estimate numbers but between nine and 19 birds may have passed through at this time. The first was at Mirelake ASF on 13 Aug and three were present here on 26<sup>th</sup>. A single was at Wood Lane NR on 16 Aug and the only other site to record autumn passage was VP which supported singles on 25 Aug and 30 Aug and the final bird of the season on 15 Sep.

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**GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List

Britain and Ireland are one of the main winter haunts of golden plover, with perhaps all of the breeding population of Iceland wintering here with high numbers, too, from Scandinavia. Recent declines in wintering numbers have been attributed to birds remaining on the continent as winter temperatures have been generally milder recently. In Shropshire too, wintering flocks seem to have declined in size and abundance with flocks occurring at traditional wintering sites in the County only irregularly.

87 records were received in 2009, a similar number to that in the previous year.

A flock of 250 at Walcot (19 Jan) was by far and away the largest gathering in the first winter period. In excess of 100 were also counted near Bayston Hill (2 Jan) and near Lower Lacon, Wem (24 Jan). Otherwise, flocks in double-figures were seen only at these sites on other dates in January and at Ollerton Airfield (11 on 1 Jan) and

at VP where 13 birds were present on 6<sup>th</sup>. Single-figure counts were reported at ten other locations in January and February, until 30 flew over the Boiling Well, Long Mynd on 28 Feb, and a single bird was recorded from Little Drayton the next day.

No records were received from 2 Mar until a flock of 50 birds including some individuals in breeding plumage were noted at Mount Bank on 25 Mar. These may have been true passage migrants rather than wintering birds. Twenty birds were recorded nearby at Black Mountain on 29 Mar and a flock of 80 birds occurred at Thresholds near Picklescott from 31 Mar to 9 Apr. Forty-Six at Kent's Bank, Llanllwyd on 20 Apr may have been the flock seen at Mount Bank in March. One or two birds in summer plumage were on the Long Mynd from 26 Apr until the last bird of the spring period on 29 Apr.

An unusual record of a single bird was reported from Whixall Canal Floods on 5 Jul.

Eyton Moor held the first returning birds in autumn with 250 in the company of lapwings on 1 Oct; these remained until at least 10 Oct. One hundred were at VP on 2 Oct and large numbers were reported from this site through until 16 Dec. Counts at VP included 150 on 27 Oct, rising to 400 on 28 Oct and then to over 1,000 on 31 Oct. Between 100 and 600 birds were counted on numerous dates in November with fewer in December, until 150 on 16<sup>th</sup>. These birds ranged over several locations nearby at were reported from Cross Houses, Frodesley and Berrington.

Perhaps another flock frequented ASF from 15 Oct when 24 birds were seen to 19 Nov when 180 were counted.

Fewer large flocks were reported in December, but birds were located at a greater number of locations, perhaps suggesting some dispersal or movement during this month. Sixty birds were near Much Wenlock on 20<sup>th</sup> with 50 over Priorslee Lake on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Counts of 30 were received from Leebotwood on 25<sup>th</sup>, near Brockton on 28<sup>th</sup> and Baschurch on 31<sup>st</sup> with 20 at both Aldersey and Muxton on 21<sup>st</sup> and at Child's Ercall on 30<sup>th</sup>. Wem held ten birds on 21<sup>st</sup> and birds were reported in December from Lower Wain, Llanfair Waterdine, Dowke Hill Newcastle on Clun, Weston Hill near Clun, Leaton, Longden-on-Tern, Uffington and the Long Mynd.

The first record of the second winter period at the traditional Bayston Hill site was of 200 birds on the final day of the year.

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**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Shropshire Status: Rare passage migrant

Conservation Status: Amber List

One was seen at Upper Affcot on 25 Apr (DPe).

An adult in summer plumage, this bird was found feeding in a field of short grass with three lapwings. It was continually mobbed by carrion crows and was twice forced to circle round before re-settling, but finally it flew north east.

This record is fairly typical and the species remains difficult to find in Shropshire. Most records are on single days, with birds not lingering long. Occurrences are less than annual and, since the turn of the century, grey plover has been recorded in five of the ten years. The previous record was also a summer plumage bird at Whixall Moss on 20 May 2007.

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**LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common, though declining, resident and common passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 35% of plots, 54 birds recorded, an average of 3.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP, Amber List

The Atlas Project has continued this year to provide a high number of records of this species with 1,081 submitted, many via the Atlas project or Birdtrack. This has helped to again increase the number of breeding season records.

As usual the early winter period produced flocks into three figures at a number of localities especially along the Severn valley and in the north of the County.

The table below shows monthly maxima at selected sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ASF/Mirelake	150	-	-	-	2	2	26	-	-	300	-	-
Chelmarsh Scrape	-	-	-	4	4	15	67	-	-	-	-	-
VP	18	140	44	4	5	15	150	120	60	400	300	300
Whixall, canal floods	90	21	13	-	6	-	4	300	-	-	400	200
Wood Lane NR	500	300	150	10	11	108	156	800	300	157	400	500

Flocks of over 100 birds were reported in January, with 120 at Crosslanes, Meverley Green on 4<sup>th</sup>, 250 at Shottaton on 16<sup>th</sup>, 350 at Knockin Heath on 18<sup>th</sup>, 180 at Walcot on 19<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Charlton on 21<sup>st</sup>, 400 near Lyth Hill on 22<sup>nd</sup>, 140 at Lower Lacon near Wem on 24<sup>th</sup>, 500 at Long Lane on 26<sup>th</sup> and 360 near Balmer Heath on 31<sup>st</sup>. Fewer reports of smaller flocks in February probably indicated some emigration or dispersal to breeding sites so the 250 birds reported from near Kelvington on 22<sup>nd</sup> was the largest flock seen during the month. Other flocks or high Atlas counts included 200 near Ightfield on 12<sup>th</sup>, 200 near West Felton on 13<sup>th</sup> and 150 near Cantlop on 18<sup>th</sup>. Thereafter, smaller flocks were reported into March. At Wood Lane NR 150 birds on 1 Mar decreased to 100 by 10<sup>th</sup>, 48 by 15<sup>th</sup> and only ten by 18<sup>th</sup> when it is thought only breeding birds remained.

Proven breeding records (*i.e.* nests with eggs, newly hatched or recently fledged young), were received from 38 sites with probable breeding reported from a further 46 locations.

Confirmed breeding was reported from Norbroom Marsh (with at least nine young fledged), VP (four young), Wood Lane NR, Cressage, Cound, Little Wenlock, Randlay, Meverley, Sutton-on-Tern, Atcham, Kempton, near Hadnall, Balmer Heath, Stanton Lacy, Allscott, Brockton, Shavington Park, Lydbury North, Trefonen, Preston Brockhurst, Clive, Alveley, Shelve, Rhydycroesau, Stanwardine-in-the-Fields, Leaton Heath, near Whitemere, Hopstone, Chelmarsh Scrape, the Knolls at Stiperstones, Rednal, Whixall Canal Floods, Lower Hordley, near Wollaston, Pool Hall, Wall Farm, Baggy Moor and Pentre Modoc, RSPB surveys at Baggy Moor and the Weald Moors recorded 33 and 14 pairs respectively attempting to breed at each site.

Post breeding flocks gathered at Wood Lane NR in June with 30 birds also at Adeney by the month's end. Numbers built up in July, though decent flocks were only reported from Wood Lane NR (max. 156 on 15<sup>th</sup>), VP (max. 150 on 21<sup>st</sup>), Chelmarsh Scrape (max. 67 on 16<sup>th</sup>), and Mirelake ASF (max. 26 on 8<sup>th</sup>).

Birds were more widely dispersed in August, with flock sizes at well watched locations increasing, though a large influx in the last week of August was only reported from Whixall Canal Floods and Wood Lane NR in the north of the County.

Numbers were maintained rather than increased during September, until the largest flock of the year of 1,000 birds was reported from Eyton Moor on 1 Oct. This increased to 1,500 by 10 Oct but was not recorded thereafter. Other locations recorded reduced numbers at this time.

Over 400 birds flying into VP on 31 Oct, together with increased numbers at Wood Lane NR and Whixall Canal Floods in the first weeks of November, potentially

indicated further influxes. Other sizeable flocks this month included 100 birds near Cross Houses (10<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>), 200 at Broughton, Claverley (19<sup>th</sup>) and 350 near Stoke Heath, Market Drayton (28<sup>th</sup>). However, there is no doubt that numbers increased in December with flocks in excess of 100 birds including 600 at Hayes Farm, Alberbury (5<sup>th</sup>), 350 near Berrington (7<sup>th</sup>), 100 near Cleobury Mortimer (17<sup>th</sup>), 200 at Calverhall (21<sup>st</sup>), 100 at Chirbury (27<sup>th</sup>), 100 at Onibury (30<sup>th</sup>) and flocks of 130 at Bromfield and 200 near Burwarton on the last day of the year.

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**KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Amber List

Two records for the year. The first was at the Mirelake ASF on 14 May (AL) and the second at Wood Lane NR on 27 May (DM).

The bird at the Mirelake ASF was an adult in summer plumage whilst the Wood Lane bird retained its rather more subdued winter colours. After last year's bumper show when four were seen, two records are more usual. Knot is not seen annually in the County but has now been recorded three years in succession. However, there have been four blank years in the last ten.

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**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Green List, RBBP

Only one bird recorded in 2009; a single at VP on 14 May was a typical date.

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**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Green List

The single record this year was of one bird at ASF on 15 Oct (MGG).

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## **CURLEW SANDPIPER**

Shropshire Status: Rare autumn passage migrant. Very rare spring migrant

Conservation Status: Not assessed.

A summer plumaged individual was at ASF on 5-6 Jun (AL); the first record in the County since 2006 and only the second spring record in the last 20 years.

Curlew sandpipers are generally much scarcer in spring in the UK than in autumn, with an easterly bias to their spring migration in Europe and the Middle East.

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## **DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Red list

68 records of between one and 12 birds were received this year; an average year.

Small numbers were recorded in both winter periods and larger numbers during a restricted period on spring passage and over a more extended period in the autumn.

Between January and March, the only records were at VP with one bird on New Year's Day and two 16-19 Feb.

A single bird in April appeared at VP on 18<sup>th</sup>. Analysis of spring passage over a number of years has indicated a very small number of birds appear in the County in April before the main passage in May. The usual main spring passage started on 5 May and continued until about 7 Jun. Four birds at Wood Lane NR on 5 May stayed until at least 7<sup>th</sup> with two on 8<sup>th</sup>, one on 13<sup>th</sup> and two on 14<sup>th</sup>. At VP a number of records were received of one or two birds from 6-16 May with a peak of three on 9<sup>th</sup>. ASF held larger groups with 11 on 9 May, 12 on 14 May and smaller numbers on a further five dates until one on 7 Jun. The only other site from which dunlin were recorded was Chelmarsh where two birds on 15 May were followed by a single on 23 May.

An unusual batch of records on 27 Jun could have been either late spring or early autumn records. One bird was at ASF, two at Wood Lane NR and three recorded close to a farm pond during Atlas Monitoring in SJ72G (near Puleston).

Male dunlin guard and care for the young, so the seven adults which appeared at ASF

on 21 Jul starting the autumn passage through the County, were possibly females which leave breeding grounds shortly after laying. At least three of presumably the same individuals were still present on 25- 27 Jul.

As usual, autumn passage was more extended than that in spring with smaller peak numbers. Between 1 Aug and 16 Sep, one to three birds were recorded at ASF on seven dates; Wood Lane NR held one to three birds on nine dates and singles were seen on two dates at VP. A single bird was at Priorslee Lake on 6 Aug.

After a gap of about a month, four records in October were from ASF with two birds on 12<sup>th</sup>; and singles at Wood Lane NR on 15<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

In November, one bird was at Wood Lane NR on 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> and singles were at ASF on 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

Small numbers in December included one at VP from 9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> with two on 12<sup>th</sup>; one at Hayes farm Alberbury on 20<sup>th</sup> and two birds at ASF on 31<sup>st</sup>.

No attempt was made in 2009 to assign a subspecies to any of the records.

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### **RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Red List, RBBP

Despite its status as a scarce passage migrant, the first 2009 record was of a bird at the Whixall canal floods on 17 Jan. The next report was of three birds at Wood Lane NR on 14/15 May (the highest count of the year, all other records being lone birds), with a further bird there on the 27 May.

After that, there were no reports until August, with singles at Wood Lane NR on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. On the 13 Aug, one was reported at ASF and at the nearby Mirelake ASF. Singles at Mirelake ASF on the 12 Sep and 29 Sep marked the end of autumn passage.

The second winter period produced five December records, possibly of the same bird, on the Whixall canal floods or the Moss on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

In total, 17 records were received, from six sites.

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**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

2009 was a rather better year than recently for this species, with 16 records, which were evenly spread between the north and south of the County. Ten were in the first winter period, with the others between October and December.

Six records came from Chelmarsh scrape: one (14 Jan), two (14 Feb), one close to the hide (16 Oct) and four (15 Nov). Singles were also near the reservoir (6 Jan and 11 Feb).

Singles were also at Hampton Loade (22/25 Dec). On New Year's Day singles were reported from Grafton and Mirelake ASF .

Other birds reported from the north were at Whixall Moss (23 Feb, 30 Nov and 8 Dec). At VP one was with three common snipe (27 Jan). Another at Moreton Say flew from a ditch with a common snipe (6 Feb) and on the same day one was seen in SJ63I (northwest of Market Drayton).

In winter, it is always worth checking common snipe for accompanying jack snipe.

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**SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant and scarce and declining breeder.

Conservation Status: Amber List



**Shropshire Snipe Survey Summary: Interim Report**

**Introduction**

Snipe is a target species in the Shropshire BAP.

A breeding season snipe survey was carried out in the South West Shropshire Hills in 2004. The BAP includes a commitment to repeat the survey every five years. Therefore, a survey was carried out in 2009 covering the sites where snipe were found in 2004. It was not considered necessary to revisit any of the other sites visited in 2004, if snipe had not been found there.

In addition, in view of the countywide commitment in the BAP to reverse the decline of snipe, the survey also covered five sites in North Shropshire, selected on the basis that breeding season records have been received by SOS since 2000.

**Results in South West Shropshire Hills**

The results in the South West Shropshire Hills are summarised in the table below.

Site	Estimated Population	
	2004	2009
Long Mynd	7-9	2-3
Stiperstones	0	1
The Hollies Farm	1	1
Stapeley Common	1	2
Rhos Fiddle	3	4
Black Mountain	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13-15</b>	<b>10-13</b>

It can be seen that the decline on the Long Mynd has continued, and snipe appear to have disappeared from Black Mountain, whereas the populations at Rhos Fiddle and Stapeley Common have increased, and snipe were also found on the Stiperstones, whereas none were found there in 2004.

**Results in North Shropshire**

One or two snipe were recorded at Pen-yr-estyn on the first two site visits (29 Apr and 18 May). Chipping was heard on both dates, but no territorial drumming was heard. No Snipe were recorded on the third visit. It is intended to revisit this site in 2010 to clarify the position.

Several sites around Newport, where snipe have been recorded in the breeding season in previous years, were included in the survey. However, no snipe were recorded during survey fieldwork visits.

However, a Natural England Farm Adviser flushed a snipe from a nest with eggs, on a farm north of Newport, but within Shropshire, on 14 May. It is intended to visit this site in 2010 to clarify the position.

No Snipe were recorded on any of the three survey visits to:

- Whixall Moss
- Wood Lane NR
- Wall Farm

## **Further Work**

In the course of the survey, some additional potential sites were identified, and some sites need to be revisited to clarify results. It has therefore been decided to extend the survey and undertake additional work in 2010. This Interim Report summarises the results in 2009. A full report will be produced in 2010.

## **Other Reports**

Four hundred and ninety-three records were submitted for 2009, from 137 sites. As in previous years the two sites that generated the most records were Wood Lane NR (161) and VP (95), with a further 111 records arising from Atlas fieldwork. After these the Mirelake/ASF complex produced 24 records (21 and three respectively), Chelmarsh Scrape/Reservoir 22 (14 and eight respectively) and Whixall Moss/canal floods 17 (13 and four respectively).

The highest counts reported were of 40, from SJ53F (near Whitchurch) (24 Jan) and Norbroom Marsh (East) (20 Feb). The first winter period also produced counts of 30 and 34 from Mirelake, ASF (14 Jan and 26 Jan), 29 and 32 from Chelmarsh Scrape (11 Feb and 14 Feb), 28 from Norbroom Marsh (East) (6 Feb) and 22 and 26 from Wood Lane NR (2 Feb and 11 Feb).

Wood Lane NR held the highest number in the second winter period; 30 on 18-19 Dec. The highest count from VP in 2009 was 15 (4 Apr). There were no records of snipe from VP in May, June or July. Wood Lane NR supported birds in every month with the exceptions of June and August.

There were no confirmed reports of breeding, but ten Atlas squares yielded signs of probable breeding (pair in nesting habitat in breeding season, repeated territorial behaviour in presumed permanent territory, or courtship and display), of which eight were in the southern half of the county. Reports of possible breeding (in breeding season in suitable nesting habitat) came from four sites, of which one was in the south. These figures compare favourably with the 2008 report in which there were four records of probable breeding and two of possible breeding, although there was also one confirmed breeding record in that year.

Clearly the significant increase in observer effort arising from Atlas fieldwork is reflected in the 2009 data, and these figures need to be considered against a background trend of continual decline in numbers since the early 1980s.

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**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor and scarce breeder

Conservation Status: Amber List

A further increase in records for this species was evident during 2009 (2009: 122; 2008: 101; 2007: 98), presumably at least partly accounted for by work for the Atlas. Woodcock were reported from 104 sites, but there were no confirmed records of breeding despite twelve records from the months of March to July. Of these, the highest level of certainty were three records of birds that were observed “*in breeding season in suitable nesting habitat*”, which equates to possible rather than probable breeding. There were no records of displaying or roding birds. Two of the reports were from the extreme south east of the county (SO77, Bewdley). The third was from SJ40K (west of Longnor), a tetrad that is technically in the northern half of Shropshire but lies adjacent to the SJ/SO line that separates north from south.

No records were received for August and September and just two for October. As may be expected, the bulk of records were associated with the winter periods; January-38, February-26, November-12 and December-32. Late December (17<sup>th</sup> onwards) saw extreme winter conditions that extended into late January 2010, making it the coldest January in England since 1987. It will be interesting to see what effect the ice and snow had on woodcock in the first winter period of 2010.

As in 2008, the number of records from the more populous northern half of Shropshire (SJ grid references) was only slightly more than that from the southern half of the county (SO grid references), with 64 from the northern half compared with 58 from the south, which may suggest that the southern half is more important for the species. Woodcock are famously cryptic birds, usually only seen when flushed during the day, flying out of woodland at dusk, or daytime foraging in periods of severe cold, so they are undoubtedly under-recorded. Resident birds are joined by individuals from further north and east in Europe every winter. It appears that the wintering population may be faring better than the resident Shropshire breeding population.

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**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa*

Shropshire Status: Icelandic form *islandica* ('Icelandic black-tailed godwit') a scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor. Nominative European and British form ('continental black-tailed godwit') likely to be a very scarce passage migrant.

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, UKBAP, Red List, RBBP

A poor spring passage produced just two records, the first a lone bird at Wood Lane NR on 20 Mar and the second a group of four at VP on 19 May.

There were eight records in June, starting with a single bird at Mirelake ASF on the 6<sup>th</sup>. On the same day two were at VP, with one bird being reported there from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn passage was fully underway in July with 13 records, the maximum a count of nine from the Whixall Moss area on the 5<sup>th</sup>. August saw 18 records, all from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup>, with a maximum of five reported from VP (29<sup>th</sup>). Just two birds were reported in September, singles at Wood Lane NR on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Finally, in October, there was singleton at VP on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

In total, there were 45 records for 2009 from five sites, all but two of them coming from Mirelake (12), VP (19) and Wood Lane NR (12).

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**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*

Shropshire Status: Rare passage migrant

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Two were seen, both at VP; the first, a winter plumage bird was found on 10 Apr and was last seen on 15 Apr. It was also recorded, nearby, on a small pool at Berrington on the 13 Apr. It was seen by many observers but the original finder is not known. The second record was of a fine summer plumage adult on 15 May (JBu).

Bar-tailed godwit is not annual in Shropshire, although it has now been recorded four years in a row. However, there have still been four blank years in the last ten.

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**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

Shropshire Status: Nominate British and Scandinavian form and Icelandic form *islandica* scarce passage migrants

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Red List, RBBP

Another poor year for this species, with just seven records from five sites, all of single birds, and with just one record from the autumn passage.

The first report was of a bird that flew over VP on 14 Apr without landing. May provided five of the seven records, with reports from Whixall canal floods (2 May), an overflying bird at Wellington (3 May), and singles at Loppington, Noneley and VP (all on 9 May).

The final record of the year was at VP on 17 Jul.

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**CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 12% of plots, 28 birds recorded, an average of 2.3 per plot.

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP, Amber List

With a few notable exceptions, mainly traditional winter sites around the Severn/Vymwy confluence, curlew are absent during the winter months, with heavy spring passage starting in early-March and lasting until late-April, and the heavy return passage starting towards the end of June, reaching a peak at the end of July and beginning of August, and finishing by the end of October.

In January and February, only 30 records were received from 21 sites (nine of which were Atlas records, and another nine came from VP and Wood Lane NR), but all except six were of ten birds or less. The exceptions were seen at Hayes Farm, Alberbury (46 birds), Melverley (26), Cae Howel (13) and Whixall canal floods (13), all during WeBS counts on 22 Feb. Curlew remained at these sites in March, when WeBS counts of 15 at Ponthen, 18 at Cae Howel and 30 at Hayes Farm, Alberbury were made on 15 Mar.

Migration through VP and Wood Lane NR illustrates the pattern through the County. There were records on only two dates at VP (three on 17 Feb and five on 21 Feb)

right through until 1 Mar, when 16 were seen. Curlew were seen on 14 dates in March, including 26 on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 29 on 8<sup>th</sup>, 26 on 9<sup>th</sup>, 28 on 10<sup>th</sup>, and 24 on 13<sup>th</sup>, dropping to 18 on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, and 17 on 19<sup>th</sup>, then a gap until 18 on 29 Mar, and two on 30 Mar, then only a single bird on 14<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May, 13 Jun and 16 Aug. Unlike last year, there was no autumn passage, and inspection of records from previous years shows that autumn passage records are less frequent, and flock sizes are smaller, than during spring passage.

At Wood Lane NR there were no records until two were seen on 16 Jan, and then only records on six more dates until 4 Mar (all of one or two birds, except four on the last date). There were then flocks on ten dates between 6 Mar (15 birds) and 10 Apr (three birds), with double figure counts of 20 on Mar, ten on 17 Mar, 13 on 28 Mar and 12 on 2 Apr.

After that, there were no records until June, when one to three birds were recorded on five dates and then there were five on 27 Jun, followed by an influx of 32 on 29 Jun., with records on another 65 dates until 7 Nov, and none after that. There were records on 51 separate dates of more than ten birds between July and November, and the last double-figure count was 22 on 31 Oct. One bird, seen on 7 Nov, was the final record for the year.

Monthly maxima were 59 on 27 Jul, (with 50+ on four other dates), 76 on 5 Aug (with 70+ on four other dates), 62 on 4 Sep (with 40+ on three other dates) and 40 on 30 Oct.

A similar pattern at these two reserves has been reported in previous years.

There were 59 records from eight sites in the last five months of the year (51 from Wood Lane NR, and one from VP, discussed above). Two were late breeding season Atlas records, and a single bird was seen at The Rea, Upton Magna (8 Sep) and two other records came from Mirelake ASF (one bird on 12 Oct and three on 19 Nov).

WeBS counts on 22 Nov found 72 at Cae Howel and 31 at Ponthen.

Breeding season records, 232 between 1 Apr and 31 Jul, came from 128 widely scattered sites, and included 151 Atlas records, 14 of which were confirmed breeding. Other records included pairs at Long Mynd, Nedge Hill and Sundorne Farm, but no confirmed breeding. Three pairs were found on Baggy Moor, and two pairs on the Weald Moors, by the RSPB Shropshire Moors Breeding Wader Survey.

Two surveys in the south west Shropshire hills recorded curlew. The Upper Onny Wildlife Group found an estimated 35 – 36 pairs in a survey area of 122 square kilometres between the Long Mynd and the Welsh border, but an assessment of

survey results and distribution maps since 2004 estimated a decline of four pairs (10%). The Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group found 20 – 22 pairs in 2007, but only 10 – 12 pairs in 2009; a decline of over 40% in just three years.

The results of both surveys are summarised within the “Research Papers & Survey Results” section in this Annual Report.

Growing evidence of the decline of curlew as a breeding species was summarised in the 2005 Bird Report, and substantial recent declines have been found in both the Upper Onny and Upper Clun areas since then. It is therefore likely that the decline is continuing.

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**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Rare in winter

Conservation Status: Amber List

The first records of the year were single birds were reported in the first winter period from the River Severn at Leighton/Buildwas on 11 Jan, 25 Jan and 15 Feb, with another singleton at Buildwas on 1 Mar. A further lone bird was reported at Whixall canal floods (16 Mar), before spring passage got underway with a spate of records from 30 Mar onwards.

Birds were reported in every month from April to October, with a maximum count of nine from VP (2 May), but there was no evidence of breeding. The final records of the year all came from Wood Lane NR, with the last sighting on 13 Oct.

In total, 112 records were received from 23 sites.

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**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

Birds were reported in every month of the year, with a minimum of four records (May) and a maximum of 63 (August). First winter period records mostly came from traditional sites such as River Severn at Leighton/Buildwas, Mirelake ASF, Whixall canal floods, VP, and Wood Lane NR. Fourteen birds were at Mirelake on 12 Jan,

with a minimum of eight present two days later.

Spring passage consisted of birds moving through in ones and twos, but return passage from late-June saw a predictable rise in numbers with up to eight birds at Mirelake from 25 Jun and nine there on 21 Jul and 25 Jul. August's peak count of eight birds was also from Mirelake ASF (5<sup>th</sup>) as was September's with 11 on reported there on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Autumn passage continued into October (28 records compared with 35 for September) and birds were still moving through in November with 11 records. Mirelake ASF again held the greatest numbers with ten on the 16<sup>th</sup>, nine on the 19<sup>th</sup> and eight on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

In total 210 records were received from 28 sites.

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**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP

Thirty-five records were received from five sites, covering the months of May to September. It was a poor year for this species with maximum counts of just three birds, at VP (12 May) and at Mirelake ASF in August (12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>).

Spring passage was light with just three records in May, all from VP between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Returning birds were first reported from VP, with a single bird on 26/27 Jun, and then a trickle of reports from the main sites of VP, Mirelake, Wood Lane NR and the River Severn at Leighton/Buildwas. The final record was of one at Mirelake on 21 September.

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**WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Eighteen records of this species were received in 2009, from three different sites. A single bird was present on Chelmarsh Scrape on 7 Jun (AL). Four were at Mirelake, ASF on 27 Jun (AL), with a single bird reported the following day, two on the 29<sup>th</sup>, one on the 30<sup>th</sup> and finally two on 1 Jul.

The final record was for one bird present at Chelmarsh Scrape from 26 Jul to 2 Aug.

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**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

Shropshire Status: Nominate British and continental form a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Icelandic form *islandica* ('Icelandic redshank') presumably a rare passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Amber List

As in 2008, reports for this species were received during every month of the year except September, with a total of 64 records from 13 sites. Two sites, Mirelake ASF and VP, accounted for more than half of all records. March produced the highest number of records (12) with almost as many (ten) in October.

Most sightings were of one or two birds but six were at Mirelake ASF (12 Jan and 26 Jan), with six also being reported from VP (28 Jan). Mirelake ASF also held five birds on the 19 Jan and 21 Jan with 'four plus' being reported there on the 14 Jan.

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**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident, scarce breeder and very common winter visitor

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 18 birds recorded, an average of 6 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

Including Atlas records, a total of 579 records of this species were reported from many widespread sites across the County. Despite the number of reports, it still represents a vast under-recording of a species many of us take for granted outside of the breeding season. The below table summarises the peak counts from selected key sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh	900	225	120	1	-	20	42	1250	500	300	60	900
The Mere	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	150	-	-	-	-
Priorslee Lake	-	380	400	3	-	17	49	35	65	142	150	3000
Priorslee Flash	-	550	-	-	1	2	1	-	31	291	100	350

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
VP	120	90	135	50	6	36	26	33	260	130	136	63
Dudmaston	1250	-	160	-	-	-	-	-	40	-	-	-
Trench Pools	109	291	80	-	1	6	6	74	4	71	70	254
Wood Lane NR	500	300	200	11	8	68	100	200	220	200	300	300
Chetwynd Park	63	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	55	120
Whixall Moss/floods	5	-	-	150	9	-					153	3

The 1,250 birds recorded in hard weather at Dudmaston on 8 Jan was the only four-figure count in the first winter period, although a total of 29 three-figure counts were recorded between January and March, mostly from the tabulated sites, but within several Atlas squares also, Monkmoor Pool and Cole Mere also topping this mark.

Breeding behaviour was first reported from Whixall Moss when a count of 20 birds on 2 Apr included birds on nests with 150 birds (number of breeding pairs not reported) there on 11 Apr. A pair at Wall Farm on 14 Apr was displaying territorial behaviour and at Mirelake ASF a single pair was observed nesting on 5 Jun.

At VP, two pairs were on eggs on 20 May with a further pair nest-building on 3 Jun. Thereafter, numbers slowly increased, with 35 adults present on 13 Jun including “several” pairs with nests. Twenty-six adults were noted on 3 Jul with several chicks and juveniles, and several well-grown young were still present there on 31 Jul.

Early autumn counts included 42 at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 16 Jul increasing to 400 on 6 Aug, 750 on 12 Aug, and 1,250 on 22 Aug. Forty-nine were at Priorslee Lake on 22 Jul with 74 at Trench Pool on 7 Aug, 200 at Wood Lane NR on 22 Aug, and 150 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 27 Aug.

Numbers slowly increased throughout the County as autumn progressed into winter with the highest counts during this period occurring at Butter Cross (600 on 21 Sep), Dudmaston (210 on 21 Nov), Priorslee Flash (291 on 22 Oct), Wood Lane NR (300 on 3 Nov and 9 Dec), Brown Moss (101 on 22 Nov), Trench Pool (187 on 20 Dec), and Priorslee Lake (where consistently high numbers peaked at 3,000 on 19/20 Dec).

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**LITTLE GULL** *Larus minutus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

An adult reported at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 6 Jan during severe weather conditions was the sole record during the first winter period.

A poor spring for this species ensued, with the only records concerning a single adult at Mirelake ASF on 16 Apr where six adults were seen the next day.

A first-winter bird was at VP on 14 Nov with an adult at Priorslee Lake on 10 Dec.

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**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** *Larus melanocephalus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

The first winter period produced just a single record of this attractive gull species when an adult in winter plumage was in the gull roost at Priorslee Lake (15 Jan).

The next record involved a ringed adult bird in summer plumage at Mirelake ASF (14 Jul), later seen flying east towards Telford. Then followed two autumn records from VP with another (or the same?) ringed adult in winter plumage on (24 Sep) and a ringed 1st-winter bird (1 Nov).

The second winter period produced two records with a roving record from SJ43G (EGM) (6 Dec) with the same observer recording a first winter bird on The Mere, Ellesmere two days later.

The number of breeding pairs in the U.K is increasing dramatically so we should expect more records in the near-future, perhaps even a breeding pair or colony of our own.

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**COMMON GULL** *Larus canus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Amber List

Reported in all months of the year, although scarce in spring and summer. The largest concentrations during the first winter period as follows: 29 from SJ71F (northeast of Priorslee) (23 Feb), 23 from SJ71K (north of Shifnal) (22 Feb), and 20 at Wood Lane NR (22 Jan). The only other site to register a double-figure count during this period involved 12 birds from SJ33Q (east of Oswestry) (16 Feb).

The peak count of spring concerned four birds at VP (19 Apr) whilst an unusual record involves an immature bird reported from Chelmarsh Reservoir (23 Jun).

Numbers slowly started to pick up from late August although the only double-figure count in the second half of the year was an Atlas record from SJ71B (northeast Telford) when 12 birds were counted (16 Nov). Small numbers were reported during the second winter period from Wood Lane NR, Whixall Moss, Blake Mere, Priorslee Lake, Pen-y-Lan, Oss Mere, and VP, in addition to several Atlas records.

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**RING-BILLED GULL** *Larus delawarensis*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant

Conservation Status: Not assessed

An adult in winter plumage was at Priorslee Lake on 29 Dec (DFa).

This bird, which was well described, was seen by a keen gull enthusiast who was visiting the County from Suffolk. Further reports were received up to 6 Jan but the situation became clouded by the presence of a smallish herring gull and reports of a ring-billed gull x herring gull hybrid. The Records Committee consider it likely that the reported hybrid was in fact the smallish herring gull and confusion with this bird made claims of the ring-billed gull on dates after 29 Dec unsafe.

It is of course possible that the ring-billed gull was present for a few days subsequent to its discovery and, no doubt, some observers will remain confident of their identification and retain it on their personal lists!

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**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*

Shropshire Status: Common winter visitor and passage migrant, very common in winter

BBS: Present in 7% of plots, 47 birds recorded an average of 6.7 per plot.

Conservation Status: Amber List

The commonest large gull in the County, present throughout the year, although numbers typically dwindle between mid-March and June, as shown in the below table

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max.	425	750	700	30	110	275	400	3,000	350	500	2,000	2,000
Site	Chelmarsh Reservoir	Priorslee Lake	Priorslee Lake	Wood Lane NR	Wood Lane NR	Chelmarsh Reservoir	Wood Lane NR	Chelmarsh Reservoir	Chelmarsh Reservoir	Priorslee Lake	Wood Lane NR	Priorslee Lake

Other sites supporting counts of 200+ comprised Dudmaston (*e.g.* 220 on 13 Jan), Priorslee Flash (*e.g.* 450 on 23 Feb), Mirelake ASF (350 on 21 Jul), Hayes Farm, Alberbury (200 on 20 Sep), and Waters Upton (200 on 15 Oct).

A potential ‘Baltic’ gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* was reported from Priorslee Flash on 26 Feb and described as “*very small, (dark) black back and very tapered shape*” (SD).

A colour-ringed adult at Priorslee Lake (28 Dec) was ringed at South Walney, Cumbria on 5 Jul 2003 and subsequently re-sighted at Gloucester landfill site in September 2003, Oviedo, Spain on 12 Apr 2004, A Coruña, Spain on 22 Jan 2006, and at Cannock (Staffs) and Stubber’s Green (W. Mids) in 2006 and 2008.

Two ringed adults were sighted at Priorslee Lake on 29 Dec. The first bird (bearing an orange ring with the inscription 4BG) was ringed at Gloucester landfill site on 26 Jun 2000 and has been noted wintering in the UK every year since 2001. The

second bird (donning a black ring with the yellow inscription R5MG) was ringed as a 30-day old juvenile at the Ribble Estuary colony in Lancashire on 24 Jul 2003, and subsequently re-sighted at Badajoz, Spain on 18 Jan 2005 and Blaringhem, Nord, France on 24 Jun 2004.

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus*

Shropshire Status: British form *argenteus* a scarce passage migrant and common winter visitor. Nominate northern European form ('Scandinavian herring gull' (*argentatus*)) presumably a scarce winter visitor

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List (*argenteus*) and Amber List (*argentatus*)

Typically, the majority of records were from well-watched water-bodies but a complete lack of records from traditional roost sites such as Chelmarsh Reservoir and the meres suggest that the records received reflect far from accurately the true status of this species in the County. During the first winter period, away from the tabulated sites, the only double-figure count was an Atlas record of 50 birds made from SJ60N (west of Horsehay) on 3 Jan. Monthly maxima at selected sites (number of records in parentheses):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Priorslee Lake/Flash	20	176	70	-	-	-	-	-	3	8	-	102
Wood Lane NR	100	100	4	-	1	3	50	20	2	2	18	6
Trench Pool	1	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	6

Numbers typically dwindled as spring progressed, with none recorded in April and only very small numbers in May and June. As high summer slipped into early autumn, a total of four double-figure counts were made from Wood Lane NR, but only two records came from elsewhere and included two at Oss Mere on 25 Aug. A peak autumn count of 80 birds feeding on a ploughed field was made from Hopton Heath on 19 Sep.

The year's peak count was made during the second winter period when 102 birds were at Priorslee Lake on 8 Dec.

An adult bearing an orange ring with the inscription 0908 was at Priorslee Lake on 28 Dec having been ringed as an adult at Gerrard's Cross landfill site near Slough, Buckinghamshire on 2 Jan 2004. At the same site on the same day a presumed *argenteus*, having been ringed at Vest-Agder, Norway on 2 Mar 2003 and re-sighted

in Finnmark, Norway on 12 Jul 2009 was also present. The next day (29 Dec) a bird in its 3rd-winter bearing an orange ring with the inscription 1768 having been ringed at Seamer Carr landfill site, Scarborough, North Yorkshire was also present at Priorslee Lake.

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**YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** *Larus michahellis michahellis*

Shropshire Status: Scarce all-year visitor, most common in winter; rare in spring.

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

The traditional New Year's Day birding produced records from three sites: two individuals at Priorslee Lake, two at VP and three at White Mere. Thereafter, records during the first winter period came from Priorslee Lake only, when one or two adults were present intermittently up until 9 Mar.

Typically, no records were received during the spring, with the first of the birding autumn, an adult, appearing at Wood Lane NR on 19 Jul. An adult at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 9 Aug was surprisingly the only record received from this site during 2009. Thereafter, small numbers of reports were received from Wood Lane NR and Trench Pool until the year's end. At Priorslee Lake, careful observation revealed what was considered to be a total of 14 different individuals (including nine adults) over two days – 28-29 Dec.

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**CASPIAN GULL** *Larus cachinnans*

Shropshire Status: Rare vagrant

Conservation Status: Not assessed

There were two records, one at each end of the year. An adult type, probably a fourth year, was at Priorslee Lake on 2 Jan (DEB and PW) and two adults were seen at the same site on 29 Dec (DFa) with a single on 30 Dec.

Caspian Gull was first recorded in Shropshire in 2006 and another was seen the following year. None were seen in 2008 so these constitute the third and fourth County records. All have been seen at Priorslee Lake or the nearby Granville Landfill Site. Despite the blank in 2008, with increased observer awareness and knowledge of the identification criteria, it seems likely that Caspian gull will prove to be an annual winter visitor in small numbers. However, with just four accepted records so far, its current status remains as a rare vagrant.

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**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucoides*

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor

Conservation Status: Amber List

Following on from a bumper year in 2008, an astonishing number of records were received, part of a huge national influx. At Priorslee Lake and Flash, second winter birds were reported from 2 Jan (JA) until 2 Mar, whilst juvenile or first winters were reported between 8 Jan (PAK) and 4 Mar. Elsewhere, a juvenile was seen at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 8 Jan (EP).

It is impossible to know how many birds were involved but the Records Committee considered it safe to say that at least two juveniles and one second winter were seen at Priorslee and that the Chelmarsh bird may well have been different. However, from analysis of the records and consideration of reports from nearby roosts in Staffordshire, a case could be made for many more. In such circumstances, observers are asked to carefully record and report the age of all birds seen and, wherever possible, to submit photographs.

**Kumlien's Gull** *L.g.kumlieni*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant

Conservation Status: Not assessed

Even more exciting was the identification of two birds of the sub-species which breeds in arctic northeastern Canada. The first of these was an adult at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 08 Jan (EP). This was followed by a third calendar year (second winter) at Priorslee Lake on 20 Feb (DEB and PW). Both were found by very experienced observers and were well described. Photographs were submitted of the bird at Priorslee Lake.

These records represent the first Shropshire records of this sub-species.

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**GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus*

Shropshire Status: Very rare winter visitor

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

Records of juvenile or first winter birds were received from Priorslee Lake, Priorslee

Flash and Granville Waste Disposal Site from 17 Jan (AL) until 14 Mar. Later in the year, a juvenile was at Wood Lane NR on 20 Nov (PBu) and what may have been the same bird was reported at Polemere three days earlier on 17 Nov (MFW).

All records in the Priorslee area were of single birds and most of the records and all photographs appear to relate to a single long-staying individual. From the records submitted, it is unclear if more than one bird was involved and the Records Committee found no compelling evidence to suggest this. However, some observers believe there to have been a second bird and reports from nearby roosts in Staffordshire suggest that this is quite possible.

Good photographs were obtained of the bird at Wood Lane NR which was clearly a juvenile. However, only brief details were received of the bird Polemere which the observer thought to be in first summer (second calendar year) plumage. Given the dates and the information supplied, however, it is possible that both reports relate to the same bird.

An interesting first winter bird was at Priorslee Lake (5 Feb) which some observers believed to be a glaucous gull x herring gull hybrid. Opinion was divided with some thinking it was just a rather pale herring gull. Big pale herring gulls are not uncommon and maybe most have some glaucous gull DNA in their ancestry. The Records Committee was divided but, by majority, accepted it as a hybrid. However, those who favoured herring gull are unlikely to be convinced.

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## **GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor

Conservation Status: Amber List

Thirty-nine records were received in 2009 including 12 in January, seven in February, 12 in November and two in December.

An unusually large count of ten birds was reported from Granville Landfill Site on 2 Feb and small groups or singles at nearby Trench Pool, Priorslee Flash and Priorslee Lake in January and February may have been birds commuting to and from Granville.

Groups of six birds were at Priorslee Lake on 5 Jan and Trench Pool on 28 Jan with smaller numbers reported from these locations and at Priorslee Flash from 3 Jan until 2 Feb. Only three records specified the age of birds seen but included full adults and first winter birds.

Birds were also reported from Wood Lane NR at this time with singles on 1 Jan, 19 Jan and 25 Jan and on 5 Feb, 7 Feb and 20 Feb and a count of five birds here on 6 Jan.

A single un-aged bird reported from Garmston on 16 May was very unusual.

Single immature birds, perhaps the same individual, were at Wood Lane NR from 23 Jun to 27 Jul.

A bird in first winter plumage was at Priorslee Lake on the early date of 16 Sep and one was at Trench Pool on 4 Oct.

More regular reports came from 3-30 Nov with between one and three birds at Wood Lane NR on nine dates in the month and singles only at Priorslee Lake on 13 Nov and 22 Nov and Priorslee Flash on 21 Nov.

The two December records were reported from Wood Lane NR on 6<sup>th</sup> and Pen-y-Llan on 21<sup>st</sup>.

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**BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP

Another quiet year for this charismatic species, with a total of four records, two each from the spring and autumn. Mid-May saw singletons at Mirelake ASF (13-14 May) and Chelmarsh Reservoir (15 May).

Four were at VP on 1 Aug, with the year's final record from Chelmarsh Reservoir on 22 Aug.

Black tern used to be a regular breeder in the UK, particularly in the East Anglian Fens, but it was lost as a breeding species as these wetland areas were drained for agriculture.

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**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List

19 records of between one and 16 birds were received this year.

Common terns are steadily increasing their breeding range and numbers in Central and Southern England, and in 2009 this species bred for the first time in Shropshire at Trench Pool, Telford, an account of which is included within this report..

A single at Priorslee Lake on 17 Apr was the first of the year; a typical date. Other April records were of one to two birds at Mirelake ASF on 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> and a single at VP on 27<sup>th</sup>.

A group of eight birds was reported from Chelmarsh on 5 May but did not stay, with a single at Colemere on the next day. An unusual record of one bird on floods at Eyton Moor was reported on 12 May and other May records of single birds were from Priorslee Lake on 16<sup>th</sup>, Mirelake ASF on 17<sup>th</sup> and again 21<sup>st</sup>, and VP on 28<sup>th</sup>.

A single bird was at Chelmarsh reservoir on 28 Jun and 29 Jul, with an adult and juvenile present on 5 Aug and a juvenile on 17 Aug. These may have been wanderers from breeding sites in Worcestershire or Staffordshire, or may be suggestive of local breeding at an undiscovered site in the vicinity.

There was an unusual record of one bird recorded in the course of an Atlas TTV survey near Tilstock on 13 Jul.

Definite passage took place on 31 Aug when a group of 14 birds dropped in briefly at VP and 16 birds were at Mirelake ASF on the same afternoon.

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**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List

A very lean year with just two records received. The sole spring sighting involved a bird at Mirelake ASF on 17 Apr, whilst the only autumn record was at the same site on 29 Jul.

This species is listed as Amber in the Birds of Conservation Concern, due to a recent breeding range decline (1969-2007). The current UK summering population is estimated to be 53,000 pairs.

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**FERAL PIGEON** *Columba livia*

Shropshire Status: Common naturalised resident

BBS: Present in 14% of plots, 39 birds recorded, an average of 5.6 birds per occupied plot

A bird probably ignored by most observers, with relatively few records. The highest numbers were in urban areas and at the sites where birds are regularly fed. There were 50 birds counted during Atlas work in tetrad SJ61C (near Longdon-on-Tern) (15 Dec), 28 in tetrad SJ73V (near Oswestry) (13 Jan) and 21 in tetrad SO67S (near Cleobury Mortimer (27 Jan). Small numbers could be seen regularly at Priorslee Lake and Priorslee Flash.

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**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 47% of plots, 67 birds recorded, an average of 2.9 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

Reported throughout the County and in every month of the year, but most records were single-figure counts. The highest count was 55 found during Atlas work in tetrad SO59J (near Acton Burnell) (9 Nov). As expected most records were from open country, but a few occurred in private gardens.

There is an upward trend in the population of this species both locally and nationally.

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**WOODPIGEON** *Columba palumbus*

Shropshire Status: Abundant resident

BBS: Present in 98% of plots, 1,123 birds recorded, an average of 23.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A very common bird seen at all times of the year in all parts of the County.

Large flocks are frequently seen in the agricultural parts of the County but small numbers are also seen in suburban gardens.

Most counts were of single-figures but there were several flocks of more than 500. An interesting observation was of a flock of 1,400 feeding on parsnips put out for sheep fodder at Upton Magna (9 Feb).

This is a very successful bird with a strong upward trend in its population, both locally and nationally.

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**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Shropshire Status: Common naturalised resident

BBS: Present in 35% of plots, 85 birds recorded, an average of 3.1 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

During 2009, 1,157 records were received of which a remarkably high 1,036 (90%) were the result of Atlas monitoring, indicating that this species is almost entirely ignored by casual observers. There were 37 double-figure counts, with the maximum count of the year being 34 birds at The Rea, Upton Magna (2 Sep).

Atlas monitoring confirmed breeding within 28 tetrads, 21 of which were SJ tetrads (located in the north of the County).

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**TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce, and declining, summer visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Red list

Turtle dove continues to show a County-wide decline in terms of numbers and distribution, with a total of only 17 records from seven distinct sites (compared to 29 birds and ten locations in 2008). The maximum count was three individuals on three occasions, two at The Rea, Upton Magna, and one near Bromfield, all in May. Reports covered the four months between April and July, with the earliest and latest sightings on 29 Apr and 15 Jul, respectively.

Confirmed breeding evidence is absent for 2009 although nine reports of calling birds, one of a pair in suitable habitat and one holding a territory for at least a week suggests the potential for successful breeding. As concluded in this report last year, the picture for this species in our County is far from encouraging and appears to reflect national and European trends in this bird's status, which show one of the strongest declines of any species.

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**RING-NECKED PARAKEET** *Psittacula krameri*

Shropshire Status: Naturalised in the UK. Rare winter visitor.

Conservation Status: Not assessed

The first record of the year related to a bird reported from SJ71C (near Muxton) as an Atlas Roving Record (6 Jan). This was followed by a male present in a Stoke St. Milborough garden from at least 23 Mar until 6 Apr; this bird was reported to visit feeders '*infrequently in the morning or more regularly late afternoon*'. Two birds were observed in flight heading south west over Heath Farm Estate, Shrewsbury on 30 May; this being the sole record during 2009 of more than a single bird. Two further records occurred with single birds logged in SO38F (Clunton) and SJ74 (Madeley area) during Atlas monitoring work.

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**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common, though declining, summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 16% of plots, 10 birds recorded, an average of 1.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

Records of this popular bird numbered just 180 in 2009, down from 215 during 2008. These came from all parts of the County but with a slightly higher density in the Shropshire Hills region.

An early-arriving individual was observed on Catherton Common on 16 Mar but there was almost a month between that sighting and more widespread observations from the second week of April onwards. The species was then recorded in all months up to the last observation of a flying juvenile on 2 Aug at Ellerton. May showed the largest number of records, with 117. Counts were overwhelmingly of single birds with just a few pairs. Records of three individuals came from Stanmore, near Bridgnorth (22 Apr), Bicton and the Wyre Forest (9 and 23 May, respectively, both of two males with one female) and Whixall Moss (30 May). The only locations with five or more records of cuckoo are the Wyre Forest (nine), the Church Stretton area and adjacent Long Mynd (nine), the Whixall area (seven), VP (five), and Chelmarsh (five).

The nature of this species' breeding strategy renders evidence of breeding hard to acquire; of the 180 records, only 15 evidenced probable breeding. Juvenile birds were observed at Bayston Hill (3 Jul), VP (17-19 Jul), Chelmarsh Scrape (29 Jul) and Ellerton (2 August). Species observed acting as hosts to young cuckoos were dunnock (Bayston Hill) and reed warbler (Chelmarsh Scrape). Calling adult birds were observed from 12 Apr until 11 Jun.

## BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, LBAP, Amber List

### The Shropshire Barn Owl Group Nest Box Scheme

Two hundred and ninety nestboxes were available at the start of the 2009 breeding season; 41 supported breeding pairs of barn owl and 18 were occupied by roosting birds at some point in the year. Table 1 includes both successful and unsuccessful breeding attempts. The occupancy rate of 23% by breeding barn owls in 2009 was above the average occupancy rate of 14% and the overall nestbox occupancy rate of 34% by both breeding and roosting barn owls was marginally below the average occupancy rate of 33%.

The average yearly nestbox occupancy rate for the seven years 2002-2009 is 33% and is greater for tree nestboxes, 35%, than building nestboxes, 30%, and pole nestboxes, 28%.

Table 1 Nestbox occupation by barn owls (2002-2009)

Year	Total No. nestboxes monitored	Tree				Building				Pole				% of nestboxes occupied by breeding pairs	% of all nestbox types occupied B and R birds
		No.boxes	Breeding	Roosting	%	No. boxes	Breeding	Roosting	%	No. boxes	Breeding	Roosting	%		
2002	13	6	1	0	16	7	0	3	42	0	0	0	0	7	30
2003	48	22	1	6	31	26	2	4	23	0	0	0	0	6	27
2004	97	51	4	14	27	41	4	5	21	5	0	4	80	8	31
2005	135	76	13	18	40	48	9	10	39	11	0	3	27	16	39
2006	160	85	2	22	28	63	0	20	31	12	1	2	25	1	29
2007	187	101	25	14	38	74	15	10	33	12	2	1	25	27	35
2008	185	105	21	22	40	74	6	7	17	6	1	1	33	15	31
<b>2009</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>
Total	996	567	95	108	35	373	48	65	30	56	5	11	28	14	33

## Breeding Success

The SBOG confirmed barn owls breeding in nestboxes monitored by the group at Allscott, Aston Eyre, Attingham, Bagley, Bishops Castle, Bryn Shop, Childs Ercall, Clive, Chipnall, Colehurst, Crudgington, Ellesmere, Kynnersley, Longden Wood, Lyneal, Marchamley, Oldfields, Peaton, Pickstock, Rhosygadfa, Soundley, Spoonley, Sutton, Tunstall, Welsh Frankton, Whitchurch, and Whixall. Breeding in natural nest sites monitored by the SBOG occurred at Adderley, Aston on Clun, Berrington, Betton, Corfton, Eaton upon Tern, Edgton, Ellerdine, Ellesmere, English Frankton, Great Oxenbold, Hanwood, Haughton, Moreton Say, Pikesend, Pipegate, Purlogue, Treflach, Wappenshall, Weston Lullingfields

Table 2 summarises the breeding success of barn owls in 2009 in nestboxes and at natural sites in Shropshire. These data are confined to those pairs successfully producing chicks. The total number of chicks produced in all sites monitored by the SBOG was 137; 105 chicks were produced in the nestboxes and natural nest sites produced 32 chicks.

Breeding began with the first egg produced around the 13 Apr (12 Apr in 2008) and clutches ranged from one to five eggs. Broods ranged from one to five chicks (mean 2.6). Young were last recorded in a nest site on 17 Sep and the latest fledging date was estimated to be in early October. One chick ringed at Ellesmere in July 2009 was recorded in Warwickshire 90 days later having travelled a distance of 122 km.

Six hundred and twenty one barn owl chicks have been produced in nest sites monitored by SBOG since 2002, 415 in nestboxes and 206 in natural sites. Nestboxes have produced an average of 3.0 chicks per nest site and natural nest sites 2.9. Productivity is highest in pole mounted nestboxes at 3.4 chicks but the sample is small and the data should presently be treated with caution; pole mounted nestboxes are specifically installed within optimal barn owl habitat, where the absence of suitable trees has prevented barn owls from occupying the site, and this may promote higher productivity.

Internal nest sites, including both nestboxes and natural sites in buildings, have produced a mean of 3.2 chicks in the last eight years and do appear to be marginally more productive than external sites, both tree mounted nestboxes and natural cavities, which have produced 2.9 chicks. The mean number of chicks produced per brood in Shropshire for the eight years 2002-2009 is 3.0. Studies elsewhere suggest that a long-term average productivity of about 3.2 young per pair is required to maintain viable populations. SBOG's policy of targeting nestboxes at farms enrolled in agri-environment schemes with extensive areas of grassy margins and siting networks of new nestboxes near to existing pairs to allow for occupation by dispersing young is

intended to assist the creation of viable populations of barn owl within the County.

Table 2 Number of chicks produced according to type of nest site

Year	Tree nestbox		Building nestbox		Pole nestbox		Tree cavity natural		Building natural		Other natural		Total No. chicks	Mean No. chicks
	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean		
2002	4 (1)	4.0	0 (0)	0	0	0	20 (6)	3.3	0 (0)	0	0	0	24 (7)	3.4
2003	2 (1)	2.0	6 (2)	3.0	0	0	18 (8)	2.2	2 (1)	2.0	0	0	28 (12)	2.3
2004	12 (4)	3.0	12 (4)	3.0	0	0	14 (5)	2.8	5 (1)	5.0	0	0	43 (14)	3.0
2005	40 (12)	3.3	27 (8)	3.3	0	0	39 (12)	3.2	6 (2)	3.0	0	0	112 (34)	3.2
2006	0	0	0	0	3 (1)	3	4 (2)	2.0	0	0	0	0	7 (3)	2.3
2007	92 (26)	3.5	56 (15)	3.7	8 (2)	4.0	44 (12)	3.6	17 (4)	4.2	3 (1)	3.0	220 (60)	3.6
2008	34 (16)	2.1	11 (4)	2.7	3 (1)	3.0	2 (1)	2.0	0	0	0	0	50 (22)	2.2
<b>2009</b>	<b>65 (24)</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>37 (12)</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3 (1)</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>24 (11)</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>5 (3)</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>3 (1)</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>137 (52)</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Total broods	84		45		5		57		11		2		204	
Total chicks	249		149		17		165		35		6		621	
Mean No. chicks	2.9		3.3		3.4		2.8		3.1		3.0		3.0	

## Barn Owl Road Casualties

Three road casualties were recorded in the months of February and March of 2009, well down on the 23 recorded in 2008. This is probably linked to the relatively low number of young produced in 2008 and consequently fewer young birds dispersing from their natal site.

92% of casualties occur on ‘A’ roads with relatively few birds found dead on ‘B’ roads. The A5 is the most serious threat to barn owls. 70% of the road victims relate to the winter period October to March. This period correlates with the dispersal of juveniles from the natal site and adults extending their hunting range in winter.

Table 3 Barn owl road casualties

Road	Male	Female	Month												Total	
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		
A5 Telford–Shrewsbury–Oswestry	7	4	1	6	5	3	1				2	1	2	8	3	32
A49 Ludlow–Shrewsbury–Whitchurch		1	1	3	4		1					3	2			14
A53 Market Drayton Bypass	1			1	1	1						3	1			7
A483 Pant–Oswestry	3	1		3	2				1					1		7
A41 Albrighton–Whitchurch		2	1	1	2			1					2	1		8
A458 Halfway House–Bridgnorth		1		1		1							2	2		6
A495 Oswestry–Whitchurch		3		1			1		1					2		5
A442 Alveley–Telford–Prees				1	1											2
Other A roads	1	1		3	2							3	1	1		10
B roads						4			1	1			1			7
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>98</b>	

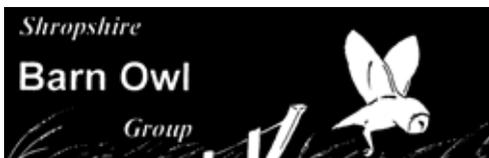
## Other Reports

In addition to data provided by SBOG, 184 records were produced by the SOS, BTO Birdtrack and Atlas recorders (96 of the records related to Atlas records) from 39 sites plus additional Atlas tetrads. Barn owls were recorded in every month except October.

Observations of barn owl in the winter period invariably related to single birds perched on fence posts, on tree branches or in hedgerows and probably engaged in perch-hunting. Examples included ASF on 1 Jan, Charlton 8 Jan, Shipton 14 Jan, Preston Brockhurst 25 Jan, Chetwynd Park 30 Jan and Hilton 24 Feb. A barn owl perched on a fence beneath a lamp post in a residential area of Wem on 12 Apr was unusual. Flight hunting was observed at Sleaford on 26 Jan where one barn owl hunted over a field, one over marshland and grassland at VP on 1 Feb and one flew over a road at Leebotwood on 8 Feb. Most records of hunting barn owl were made at dusk or later but one was hunting in daylight at Childs Ercall airfield on 28 Dec. A barn owl was pursued by a buzzard at Tedsmere on 4 Feb.

Evidence of the potential commencement of breeding activity came from the observation of two barn owls sitting on the SBOG nestbox at VP on 13 Jan and one calling at Ightfield on 6 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in several Atlas tetrads between 13 Apr and 15 Nov, many of these records relating to SBOG records already referred to above.

The long-term population trend of the barn owl in the UK is one of decline and the barn owl is a target species in the Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP). The indications are that the SBAP targets are likely to be met. The conservation of permanent, rough tussocky grassland is essential in providing hunting habitat for the barn owl. More records by SOS members of barn owl pairs during the breeding season and confirmed or suspected natural breeding sites in trees or buildings would be welcomed by SBOG to assist the targeting of nestbox schemes and the conservation of threatened sites. SBOG regularly conducts site surveys and will inspect old trees and other potential nest sites at the request of SOS members and the general public.



*Providing nestboxes for barn owls  
and promoting the conservation  
of their habitat in Shropshire*

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**LITTLE OWL** *Athene noctua*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common naturalised resident

BBS: Present in 2% of plots, 1 bird recorded

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 169 records was received from 19 locations across the County. Birds were recorded in all months except March and October and most records related to single birds, but two were noted on five occasions and four were noted at Ightfield (4 Jan). Records related to little owl heard calling, particularly during the breeding season between April and July, or observed perched on wires, telegraph poles, farm buildings, a tree or in hedgerows. No prey items were noted.

Male little owl were first noted issuing territorial calls at Hodnet on 25 Apr but a bird was noted visiting a probable nest site at Coalport on 10 Apr. Breeding was duly conformed on 25 Apr near Ludlow and subsequently in a number of Atlas tetrads in May. Fledged young were noted near Clunbury (26 Jul) and two adults with at least two juveniles were recorded at Wistanstow (13 Aug). The final fledged little owls were noted on 15 Aug near Norton in south Shropshire.

Habitat occupied typically comprised lowland farmland and associated buildings and hedgerows but one bird was noted on higher ground at Brown Clee (10 Jan).

The BBS trend for little owl in the UK shows fluctuations but there has been a long-term decline since 1995 of 29% which has continued in recent seasons. Analysis of records from the last twenty-five years shows an even higher decline of 60%. Trends are poorly known because the species has large territories and is difficult to detect except by dedicated surveys. More evidence of territorial birds, the regular monitoring of known breeding sites and additional habitat details would be invaluable in determining the requirements and status of little owl in Shropshire. A dedicated nestbox scheme targeted at little owl might also help stem the decline.

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## TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 3 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 240 records was received, including Atlas records in 2009. Records were received from 41 locations across Shropshire and in every month of the year. Most records related to one or two birds, either members of a pair communicating to each other or two males proclaiming territories but three were noted at Shavington Big Pool (24 Jan) and four at Snailbeach (27 Dec). Birds were recorded typically after dark, but also at dusk and dawn. Perched birds were noted in roadside trees, along a canal and other watercourses and on telephone poles and in a yew tree and habitat occupied comprised large, mature broadleaved woodland, farm woodland, wooded areas around lakes, and in and around gardens. A tawny owl at 22:30 hours (2 Jul) at Upton Cressett was observed hanging inverted under the eaves of a barn predated a house martins nest. There were no other references to the type of prey taken.

Tawny owl typically commence breeding activity early in the year and although birds were recorded in January, the first reference to a calling territorial male tawny owl was one at Haughmond Hill on 1 Feb. A pair was noted calling to each other at Edgmond Marsh on 11 Feb and individuals were frequently heard in early March at sites including Market Drayton, Highley, Buttercross, SVCP, Much Wenlock and Whixall Moss. Tawny owls at Whitton Court called on 4 Nov and were noted as being heard almost every night all year. Breeding was confirmed at Hanwood (25 May) and Eaton Constantine (30 Jun). Breeding was also confirmed in several Atlas tetrads between May and July with the last evidence of breeding activity comprising fledged young near Claverley on 25 Jul.

Tawny owls frequently suffer mobbing from other bird species at their roost site and one was mobbed by two blackbirds, two chaffinches, two blue tits and a dunnock in a creeper covered holly in a garden at Edgmond at 09:15 hours on 24 Sep. A tawny owl in a yew tree at Ightfield on 25 Dec was probably using it as a roost site.

There are slight indications from BBS of a shallow downward trend since the 1970s, which has continued in recent years, but the long-term population in the UK is stable. As a nocturnal species, the tawny owl is relatively poorly covered by the BTO's monitoring schemes. Tawny owls are actively territorial in winter and more records of calling birds at this time, and of breeding sites and fledged young would be invaluable in determining the status of the tawny owl in Shropshire.

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**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce resident

Conservation Status: Green List, LBBP

There were three records for the year. The first was at Horderley on 10 May (MWi). This was followed by a maximum of three seen at a site in the south of the County between 3 Jul (DPe) and 13 Jul. Finally, one was seen at Waters Upton on 10 Jul and 20 Aug (KBe) and again 10 Oct (PBr).

The bird at Horderley was submitted by the observer as a short-eared owl but the description of the bird and the habitat suggested long-eared owl and it was accepted as such by the Records Committee. At the second site, breeding was proved when an adult was seen with two young on 3 Jul, with subsequent reports up to 13 Jul. There was then a gap before the final report of one on 29 Aug. The bird at Waters Upton was seen in a field near the village and photographed by residents in a private garden.

Although not seen annually, long-eared owl has now been recorded during each of the previous four years and in seven of the last ten. However, it is no doubt under-recorded and maybe more widespread than records suggest.

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**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Annex 1, Amber List, LBBP

There were seven records for the year which is well above average, although this is a species which is being seen with increased frequency.

Over-wintering birds, first seen in 2008, continued to be reported at two sites. At Whixall Moss, a maximum of two were recorded, on and off, between 28 Feb and 11 Apr, whilst one was seen on the Long Mynd on 2 and 26 Jan.

Further records from the Long Mynd on 17 Apr (YC) and 21 Apr (DPe) may have been the same bird, although, the lack of records in the intervening period suggest it was a different individual and, given the date, perhaps a passage migrant. Elsewhere, a single was seen on the Weald Moors on 27 Jan (JBak).

In the second winter period there were three records. Singles were seen at the Long Mynd on 25 Sep (ML), Pentre on 19 Nov (RFa) and Whixall on 27 Dec (RJH).

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**NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Shropshire Status: Rare summer visitor

Conservation Status: Annex 1, UKBAP, Red List

2009 was a good year for this species, with birds reported at three sites.

At the site near Clun where nightjar has been reported for the previous three years, a female was found on 12 Jun (AL) and was seen again the next evening. A male was seen in good breeding habitat, at a site in the Church Stretton area, on several dates from 7 Jul (RMS) until 29 Aug. Finally, one was seen in the Trefonen area from 31 Jul until 6 Aug (CWad and DWad).

Nightjar has now been recorded in seven of the last ten years and records seem to be on the increase. Careful searching of clear-fell and newly planted areas in coniferous woodland might reveal further sites.

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**SWIFT** *Apus apus*

Shropshire Status: Very common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 33% of plots, 58 birds recorded, an average of 3.6 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

Five hundred and ten records were received from 71 sites.

The first record of a migrant swift was an unusually early record of three at Acton Scott on 3 Apr. None were then recorded for over three weeks when between one and five birds were recorded at Ightfield, Ludlow and VP on 25 Apr, followed by other individuals at Monkmoor Pool and Newport on 27 Apr and 28 Apr respectively. The first large gatherings of swift were over water and included 50 at Mire Lake, ASF on 29 Apr and the same number over VP on 5 May.

A total of 18 records was received in April compared with 170 in May, clearly demonstrating that most swifts arrive in Shropshire in May. Thirteen were at Bromfield (8 May), ten at Market Drayton (9 May) and flock sizes over wetlands increased in early May, with 200 at Mirelake ASF (12 May) and 100 over VP on the same day. Forty were hunting over the River Severn at Monkmoor (15 May), 30 at Trench Pool (21 May) and 20 at Hampton Loade (27 May). Swifts continued to

hunt regularly over wetlands throughout May and June and 20 were at Trench Pool (3 Jun), 30 at VP on the same day with 50 there on 5 Jun and 25 at SVCP (18 Jun).

Large numbers in May over potential breeding sites included 14 at Newport (20 May) and 15 at Brockton (24 May). Breeding was first noted near Lydham on 18 May when four swifts were observed entering possible nest sites and subsequently on 20 May when birds were noted entering the eaves of a church at Newport. Birds were entering occupied nest sites in Shrewsbury (23 May) and breeding was also confirmed in St. Georges Church, Telford (12 Jun) and at Jackfield (4 Jul) when fledged young were noted. Breeding was also confirmed in several Atlas tetrads and 30 birds recorded at Market Drayton (3 Jul) were suspected nesting there. The last occupied swift nest was recorded on 14 Aug near Clun.

By July swifts were clearly massing in post-breeding flocks and large numbers in addition to those noted above included a substantial 954 at Tee Lake, Telford (2 Jul), 100 feeding over crops at Kingslow (4 Jul), 75 at Mirelake ASF(22 Jul) and 40 at Wellington (31 Jul). Records of swift in August were less frequent as birds departed for their wintering areas but included 30 at The Old Canal, Sundorne (3 Aug), 50 at VP(5 Aug) and ten at Mirelake ASF(30 Aug). Swifts were recorded on one occasion in September, the final record of the year comprising six birds at Mirelake ASF on 6 Sep.

The UK swift population has declined by 31% since 1995. A possible cause of this decline is the loss of suitable nest sites available to swifts, particularly in old buildings as they are either demolished or renovated and access becomes impossible. Swifts are also purposefully denied access to some buildings and SOS members should be vigilant and proactively work with owners to offer advice on securing access for breeding swift. Reports of low-level screaming parties or of swifts entering buildings should be obtained and submitted to the RSPB's national swift inventory. This will promote the protection of existing breeding sites and inform local authorities and developers where renovations, roof repair and other work is planned. Oxford University, Swift Conservation and Swift Research Project also operate well established breeding studies of swift and can provide practical conservation advice.

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**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 2% of plots, 1 bird recorded

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List

A total of 372 records was received and kingfisher was recorded from 61 locations across Shropshire and in 95 Atlas tetrads in every month of the year. Aquatic habitats comprised rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, meres, reservoirs, pools, ponds and canals.

69% of the total winter records which identified a specific site related to observations of kingfisher on lakes and pools, particularly VP and Wood Lane NR, but also Priorslee Lake, White Mere, Tittenley Pool, Colemere, Trench Pool, Fenemere and Crose Mere, and Chelmarsh Reservoir. This suggests that there is a marked movement by kingfishers away from their breeding grounds of flowing rivers and streams to open standing water in winter, perhaps as a result of the proliferation of stocked fisheries within the County. Untamed rivers such as the Severn are prone to large rises in their water level and flooding in winter which undoubtedly makes it difficult for kingfisher to catch their fish prey.

Most records of kingfisher on pools in the winter period comprised one individual and occasionally two. Wintering sites other than pools comprised mainly rivers and streams including the Rivers Severn and Teme, and Dowles Brook.

Records of kingfisher on their wintering sites began to decrease during late winter, suggesting that movement began around that time back to breeding areas. The first indication of breeding activity involved a pair excavating a nest hole on the bank of the River Severn at Monkmoor on 18 Mar. No further indication of breeding was made until 10 Apr when a pair was noted at Market Drayton. Subsequent pairs, suggestive of breeding, were noted at Borle Brook, Highley (28 Apr) and Aston Eyre (22 May). Breeding was confirmed at two sites, on the River Severn at Monkmoor (15 May) when two adults were observed carrying fish and entering a nest hole, and at Wood Lane NR where an adult with one young was noted. Breeding was suspected on The Weald Moors (24 Jun) and confirmed in 13 Atlas tetrads between 29 Apr and 1 Jul.

Birds began returning to pools and lakes in July from which they had been noticeably absent during the summer period. Possible returning birds included one on Trench Pool (4 Jul), one on Priorslee Flash (20 Jul) and one on Priorslee Lake (22 Jul), the latter noted by the observer as the first post-breeding record.

Amber-listed due to their unfavourable conservation status in Europe, the UK waterways population is fluctuating with no long-term trend, but recent declines are evident. Threats to kingfisher are ever present and include severe winter weather and associated increased mortality, flooding of riverine breeding habitat in summer making fishing difficult, disturbance and water pollution, especially contamination of water as a result of agricultural run-off. SOS members should remain vigilant, and more breeding records of kingfisher would create an improved database of regular breeding sites and allow intervention to assist their conservation at specific sites, should threats arise.

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**HOOPOE** *Upupa epops*

Shropshire Status: Very rare passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, RBBP

Just one seen, a single at Titterstone Clew on 19 Apr (LMu)

This bird was seen only briefly from the car, flying across the road as the observer descended from the summit but, unfortunately, it could not be relocated. Hoopoe is becoming more regular in Shropshire and 2000 was the only blank year so far this century. By comparison, it was only recorded in three years during the 1990s.

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**GREEN WOODPECKER** *Picus viridis*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 20% of plots, 14 birds recorded, an average of 1.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 478 observations of this species occurred during 2009, about 65% of the previous year's total. Occurrences were well distributed across the County, with clusters along the Severn south of Telford and between Church Stretton and Shrewsbury. Green woodpeckers were reported in all months of the year, with the largest number of occurrences in April (78). The largest numbers per record (four or five individuals) were all for the SVCP.

Based on records with confirmed breeding evidence, of which there were 14, the breeding season for this bird extends from 1 May (Wyre Forest) until 29 Jul

(Trefonen) in Shropshire. Sightings of young birds occurred between 4 Jun and 29 Jul.

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**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 73% of plots, 72birds recorded, an average of 2birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

This common woodpecker was reported in all months of the year, with the largest totals being in June (237) and May (224). The 2009 annual total of 1,463 was about 20% lower than in the previous year. The largest individual count was of eight birds from the Wyre Forest (5 Mar). Other large counts of five or more individuals were reported from Cheney Longville, Whitchurch, Newcastle, Haughmond Hill, Ruyton-XI-Towns, Wem and Leaton.

The distribution of reports was uniform across the County, but large numbers of records were derived from the Severn Valley south of Hampton Loade (78), and from VP (52). The breeding season, as evidenced by signs of confirmed breeding, extended from early May until late July, with a total of 141 records of confirmed breeding.

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**LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos minor*

Shropshire Status: Scarce and declining resident

Conservation Status: Red List, LBBP

A total of 46 observations of this elusive bird were recorded in 2009 (just 65% of the count for last year). Records occurred in every month except September, with February (nine records), March (eight) and April (seven) providing the largest monthly totals. Observations (none of which exceed two individuals) were widely, but sparsely, scattered across the County, with none from the extreme west or east, or from the rectangle defined by Much Wenlock in the north, Ludlow in the south, Church Stretton in the west and Bridgnorth in the east. Sites with the largest number of reports were the Wyre Forest (ten) and Haughmond Hill (four).

Birds exhibiting territorial behaviour were recorded in the Wyre Forest (1 Jun).

Confirmed breeding was reported in the same area on 28 Apr (a nest with eggs), 29 Apr (an occupied nest), 26 May and 1 Jun (both nests with young).

A lesser spotted woodpecker was observed associating with a group of tits on the Wrekin (2 Nov) and a dead adult male was retrieved from a garden pond in Ellesmere (9 Jun).

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**GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius excubitor*

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Not assessed

There were five records for the year.

The first was found at Brown Clew on 8 Jan (JBU) and was still present next day. This was followed by one at Whitcott Keysett on 16 Jan (MFr). One was then reported at Whixall Moss on 15 Mar (RMS), remaining until 25 Mar. This bird, typically, ranged over both Whixall Moss and Fenns Moss and it is thought likely that it was the same bird seen here in December 2008. Finally in the early part of the year, a passage bird was seen at The Lees, Walcott on 2 Apr (PGD).

In the autumn, one was again found at Whixall Moss on 29 Oct (HMP) and this bird, possibly the one from the previous winter returning, was seen on and off into the New Year.

Although recorded annually in Shropshire, this was an above average showing, with one or two records more typical.

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**MAGPIE** *Pica pica*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 86% of plots, 140 birds recorded, an average of 3.3 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

This well-known species was reported from all parts of the County at all times of the year. Most records were of one or two birds but there were some larger gatherings. Twenty-eight were counted during Atlas work in tetrad SJ60Y (near Dawley) (25 Jan) and 20 were noted roosting in SVCP (20 Oct).

There was a record indicating the feisty nature of this species when a pair was seen mobbing a cat and actually jumping on it and pecking it when the cat was distracted by an observer at Priorslee Lake (25 May).

The population of this species is showing a slight decrease nationally and locally.

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**JAY** *Garrulus glandarius*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 39% of plots, 25 birds recorded, an average of 1.3birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A well recorded species present in all parts of the County. Most reports were of one or two, but eight birds were found during Atlas work on tetrad SJ32A (near Maesbrook) (4 Apr)

Although primarily a woodland bird, there were several records from gardens. An interesting record was of two adults and two young on a peanut feeder in Leebotwood (15 Jul).

The population of this species is stable both locally and nationally.

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**JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 82% of plots, 614 birds recorded, an average of 15.3 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

Most records were of less than ten birds but there were some sizeable counts. The highest count was of 1,100 near Pulleston Common at a pre-roost gathering (4 Jan). Another impressive count was of 1,000 birds noted during Atlas work in tetrad SO68M (near Wrickton) (13 Dec). Some evidence of passage movement was noted when 344 birds flew over Priorslee Lake (20 Oct) and 339 over the same site the next day. The species was noted throughout the County and was regular in some private gardens.

The population trend of this species is of a moderate increase both locally and nationally.

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**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 65% of plots, 506 birds recorded, an average of 15.8 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

As expected for such a gregarious bird, many records were of flocks. There was a large count of 432 birds noted during Atlas work in tetrad SJ61T (Kynnersley) (16 Apr), and 400 were also noted during Atlas work in tetrad SO59I (near Plaish) (26 Feb).

Active rookeries were reported from various parts of the County including Prees Green, Chetwynd and Kynnersley. The rookery at Kynnersley had 168 nests (24 Apr).

The population trend for this species is an increase.

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**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 94% of plots, 646 birds recorded, an average of 14 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

Most records were of one or two birds but there were some larger counts. The highest count was of 204 during Atlas work in SO39Z (near Snailbeach) (17 Jul). Typical behaviour was noted in Church Stretton when an adult bird fed the contents of a woodpigeon egg to one of its young (9 May).

The species was noted throughout the County, mainly in open country but sometimes in gardens.

The population trend for this species is a rapid increase.

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**HOODED CROW** *Corvus cornix*

Shropshire Status: Rare vagrant

Conservation Status: Green list

One was reported at the Long Mynd on 28 May (JTay).

This bird was seen close to the car park near the top of The Burway and was feeding with carrion crows and jackdaws. Whilst the Records Committee was satisfied that the bird showed characteristics of this species, but it is considered that the possibility of it being a hybrid could not be ruled out.

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**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common and increasing resident

BBS: Present in 22% of plots, 27 birds recorded, an average of 2.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List



The “charismatic corvid” continues to provide a good number of records – 427 from 113 different sites (similar to 332 and 105 respectively last year), including 116 Birdtrack records from 55 sites (similar to 129 and 54 respectively last year). Records were fairly evenly spread over the year, but, as usual, with a marked peak in March and April when the territorial behaviour of nesting pairs is conspicuous.

Atlas surveyors recorded raven in 222 tetrads in the two winter periods, and 177 tetrads in the breeding season (with confirmed breeding in 64 tetrads).

There was a big decline in the number of large flocks reported, and in the size of these flocks. Only three separate reports were received of flocks of more than ten birds in 2009, compared with ten in 2008, seven in 2007, three in 2006, ten in 2005 and 20 in 2004. These three flocks during 2009 were 15 on the Stiperstones (13 Mar) and 13 in the same place on 12 Apr; and 12 over Pontesbury (10 Jul).

Counts of more than ten in one-hour TTVs reported via the Bird Atlas may also have been in single flocks: 60 in SO38R (near Kempton) (30 Jan) and the same number in SJ50R (near Cressage) (22 Feb), 38 in SO39S (near Bridges) (5 Apr) and the same number in SJ30M (near Minsterley) (17 Nov), 20 in SO28C (Rhos Fiddle) (1 Jul), 13

in SJ22J (west of Oswestry) (27 Jan) and the same number in SJ30Q (Stiperstones) (12 Apr), ten in SO27N (Llanfair Waterdine) (31 Jan) and the same number in SO39Z (Gatten Lodge) (23 Feb).

The previous largest counts (over 50 birds) were 93 (4 May 2008) (the largest flock ever recorded), 74 on or around the summit (3 Apr 2008) and 50+ (4 Apr 2008), all near The Lawley, 84 at Stowe Hill, Bucknell, (4 Oct 2004) and 55 at Cefn Coch (10 Apr 2004); 53 on the Long Mynd (July 2000) and around 50 at Oaker Wood, near Aston on Clun, (November 2002).

Observers are specifically requested to report flocks of ten or more ravens.

Nests were reported only from Hawkstone Park (nest with young on 18 Apr), Callow Hollow (one fledged, two in nest, on 4 May) and Rhiews (fledged young on 4 Jul).

The records continue to reflect the recent expansion of range, with a good proportion coming from the eastern half of the County, though direct comparison with previous years is difficult because of the increased number of Birdtrack and Atlas records. However, adding together the records sent to the Recorder, plus Birdtrack records (*i.e.* records from sites chosen by the observer, rather than Atlas records which aim to achieve systematic coverage), well over half the records (252 records/59%) came from 57 sites in the northern half of the County (compared with 51% from such sites last year, and 57% in 2007), while only 64 came from 30 sites in the southwestern quadrant (compared with 55 from 30 such sites last year, and 67 from 31 in 2007), which is undoubtedly still the species' stronghold.

There were only five records from VP; one or two birds on 28 Jan, 20 May, 9 Jun, 12 Aug and 20 Sep.

However, raven have continued to consolidate their position near Wood Lane NR, where 140 records spanned every month of the year (whereas last year 46 records spanned every month except May), with up to four birds recorded (on six dates)

Though less complete than the Atlas data, another indication of the increase in population and range, and continued spread from the stronghold in the southwest hills, is the BBS result. Raven were found in 22% of survey plots, total 27 birds, average 2.4 birds per occupied plot, very similar to last year's result (found in 23% of survey plots, total 25 birds, average 2.1 birds per occupied plot). However, BBS counts were much lower than in 2007, when ravens were found in 39% of survey plots, total 48 birds, average 2.1 birds per occupied plot.

The Shropshire Raven Study Group concentrated on monitoring colour-ringed ravens, and then the time-consuming task of reading the two-letter code on the ring.

The last birds to be colour-ringed fledged in 1999, so it is unlikely that any such birds will join the breeding population for the first time now. Therefore most effort was concentrated on the 20 sites where 25 colour-ringed birds were found in 2008. Only three of these birds were missing, a high survival rate. The unique two-letter code on the colour-ring of all 22 surviving birds was read, so they have been individually identified, and their age and natal site is known.

One of the 27 birds ringed in 1994 (the first year of the project) was located in the breeding population near Church Stretton in 2009 as a 15-year-old bird, none of the 67 ringed in 1995 were found, but two of the 130 ringed in 1996 were found as breeding 13 year olds. All 22 of the surviving birds are at least 10 years old.

The Study Group's work since 1994 was summarised in the 2005 Bird Report. The Group estimates that the breeding population increased from around 50 pairs in 1990 to 175 pairs in 1999 and to around 250 pairs in 2003. No concerted effort has been made to find new sites since 2003, but, even so, several have been found, and reports from the northern part of the County summarized above show that there are more to find. This suggests that the breeding population is continuing to grow. Reports of new nests are welcome (contact details below).

A revised population estimate will be made when the Atlas is concluded. Further information about the Group's work can be viewed on the Society's website ([www.shropshirebirds.com](http://www.shropshirebirds.com)), or be obtained from the Group, c/o The Bryn, Castle Hill, All Stretton SY6 6JP (Phone: 01694 720296 Email: [leo@leosmith.org.uk](mailto:leo@leosmith.org.uk))

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### **GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 12% of plots, 13birds recorded, an average of 2.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

Just 348 records were received in 2009, a little over a third of the total (1,000) received in 2008. Over 75% (263) of the total number of records received were logged during Atlas monitoring work, suggesting that this species is largely ignored by casual observers. As the majority of records occurred during Atlas work, the monthly distribution of records is more a reflection of survey effort during these monitoring than abundance; between 29 and 35 records were logged during each month of the year with the exception of March (two), August (four), September

(zero) and October (zero). The maximum site count during the year was of nine birds within SO69C (near Monkhopton) and SO77C (east of Cleobury Mortimer).

Only a single behavioural observation was received, involving a bird feeding on fat balls in a garden in Church Aston.

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**FIRECREST** *Regulus ignicapilla*

Shropshire Status: Scarce visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

There was just one record for the year: one was found at the Wrekin on 4 Nov (AL) and continued to be seen until 12 Dec. Whilst appearing to favour a relatively small area of the woodland, it was often elusive; however, with patience and persistence it was seen by many observers.

One or two records a year is typical for this species, which is almost annual to Shropshire, with 2008 being the only blank year this century. Whilst the records show firecrest can occur in any month, November and March offer the best opportunity of finding one.

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**BLUE TIT** *Parus caeruleus*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 94% of plots, 469 birds recorded, an average of 10.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 2,530 records was received during 2009, 2,171 (86%) of which occurred as a consequence of Atlas monitoring work. This total number of records is a slight reduction compared with the previous year's 3,247 records, of which 2,728 (84%) were the result of Atlas monitoring.

There were 878 counts of ten or more birds, with three counts of greater than one hundred birds with tetrads during Atlas monitoring. These occurred within SO38A (west of Clunton) (101 birds), SO28H (northwest of Clun) (104 birds) with the peak count of the year (110 birds) within SO78G (Highley). Excluding Atlas monitoring work, there were 22 counts of ten or more birds, with the maximum of 30 birds

*'including many young'* being logged at VP.

An interesting breeding recorded occurred at Priorslee Lake, where a pair were observed *'using the manmade hole of an ill-fitting cover at the base of one of the lamps in Teece Drive'* (EW)

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## **GREAT TIT** *Parus major*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 94% of plots, 274 birds recorded, an average of 5.9 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

Including Atlas monitoring, 2,298 records were received during 2009; this compares with 2,838 records in the preceding year. Of the total number of records, 1,965 (86%) occurred as a consequence of Atlas monitoring work.

The maximum tetrad count during Atlas monitoring work was of 89 birds within SJ52U (east of Wem) (23 Apr. There were 206 further counts from all sources of ten or more birds, of which 183 occurred during Atlas monitoring. There were 23 casual records involving double figure counts, these occurred at Haughmond Hill (two records, maximum of 20 birds), Hazler Hill (17 birds), Pontesbury Hill (11 birds), Ridgwardine (12 birds), VP (15 records, maximum of 30 birds), Whitton Court (ten birds), Wood Lane NR (two records, both of 12 birds).



Great scaup, Dudleston,  
15 March 2009 (*John Hawkins*)



Curlew sandpiper, Mire Lake,  
6 June 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Goldeneye, Ellesmere, 6 January 2009 (*John Hawkins*)



Kingfishers, Tetchill, 24 September 2009 (*John Hawkins*)



Whooper swan, Venus Pool, 9 October 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Kestrel pair, Venus Pool, 1 November 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Peregrine falcon juvenile, (undisclosed),  
23 June 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Short-eared owl, Whixall Moss,  
15 March 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Willow warbler, Stiperstones, 2 May 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Lesser whitethroat, Venus Pool, 14 April 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Osprey, Venus Pool, 13 July 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Red kite, Stokesay, 8 March 2009  
(*Jim Almond*)



Whinchat, Long Mynd, 2 May 2009  
(*Jim Almond*)



Cuckoo, Venus Pool, 18 July 2009  
*(Jim Almond)*



Yellow wagtail, 29 April 2009  
*(John Hawkins)*



Rose-ringed parakeet, Stoke St Milborough, 26 March 2009 *(Jim Almond)*



Dunlin, Venus Pool, 6 May 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Black-tailed godwit, Venus Pool, 7 July 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Greenshank, Venus Pool, 27 June 2009 (*Jim Almond*)



Common scoters (x19!), Colemere, 11 April 2009 (*Mike Pollard*)

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**COAL TIT** *Parus ater*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 43% of plots, 53 birds recorded, an average of 2.5 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

From all sources, a total of 1,001 records was received during 2009, 797 (80%) of which were the result of Atlas monitoring work.

There were five double-figure counts, three of which occurred during Atlas monitoring; ten were within SJ62E (Hodnet) (14 Jun), 12 were within SJ63R (southwest of Market Drayton) (7 Feb) and 13 were within SO77C (southeast of Cleobury Mortimer) (1 May). There were two casual records of ten or more birds; 12 were present at Dudmaston (13 Feb) and the maximum count of the year (15) were at Whitton Court (4 Nov).

Atlas monitoring work indicated that this species is a widespread breeder within the County, with confirmed breeding records from 57 tetrads. One nest box containing breeding coal tit was reported from Craig Sychtyn, the nest contained seven eggs from which six young fledged successfully.

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**WILLOW TIT** *Parus montanus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 2 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List, RBBP

This species was recorded at 59 sites within the County during 2009, with just 88 records received, compared to 109 records in the preceding year. Based on the records received during 2009, Priorslee Lake would appear to be the most reliable location to see this species within Shropshire, with 18 (21%) records occurring from this location. These included two adults with birds in song occasionally noted and juveniles on one date (4 Jun), indicative of local breeding.

Records were received during all months of the year, with the maximum (17) occurring in February and the minimum (two) in September and March.

The maximum site count was of five birds recorded within SO67Q (southwest of Bayton) during Atlas monitoring work. There were also four counts of four birds in SJ54W (west of Burleydam), SJ70J (west of Shifnal), SO38B (north of Clun) and SO47P (Onibury)), all occurring during Atlas survey work.

Atlas monitoring work confirmed breeding within four tetrads (SJ40K (west of Longnor), SJ70J (west of Shifnal), SO37D (north of Knighton) and SO69H (Monkopton)).

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**MARSH TIT** *Parus palustris*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 14% of plots, 10 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

Three hundred and sixty-five records were received during 2009, with records during each month of the year. In excess of ten records were received during each calendar month, with the exception of August (nine records). The greatest number of records occurred during February (52), followed by January (50). There were eight counts of five or more birds, with the maximum occurring within SJ40K (west of Longnor) during Atlas monitoring, and involving an unspecified number of recently fledged juveniles.

Atlas monitoring work confirmed breeding within 16 tetrads. Perhaps surprisingly only one observer (GTa) reported this species visiting garden feeders, in Willowfields, Pulverbatch (11 Oct).

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**SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 69% of plots, 141 birds recorded, an average of 4.1 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Red List

A total of 999 records was received from 106 sites and birds were recorded in every month of the year.

Skylarks were typically recorded in flocks during January and February, some of the largest gatherings comprised 40 over Condover (2 Jan), 75 at Little Wenlock (3 Jan), 35 at Alberbury (18 Jan), 13 at Sutton upon Tern (18 Jan), 51 at Buildwas (7 Feb), 27 at Little Bolas (7 Feb) and 15 at Bourton (22 Feb). The 2009 data suggests that cereal stubble is an important feeding habitat for skylark during the winter period and birds feeding in this habitat included 20 at Bayston Hill (1 Jan), 17 on Birch Moors (9 Jan) and 25 at Farmcote (24 Jan). Flocks gradually began to breakup or possible winter migrant skylarks departed as February progressed, with the latest double-count figures of 18 near Brockton on 22 Feb and 12 near Atcham on 25 Feb.

Territorial behaviour began early with sporadic bursts of song from single male birds on 17 Jan at Morville and subsequently at SVCP (11 Feb) and Tetchill (15 Feb) and singing males were regularly recorded from March. Over three male skylark were issuing territorial song at Albrighton (2 Mar) and three at Nedge Hill (2 Apr), after which song and territorial activity was increasingly in evidence. Twenty-six skylarks at Norton (10 Apr) comprised mainly singing males and suggested a high breeding population density. Other dense breeding populations noted included 12 on Brown Clee (18 Apr), 20 at Waters Upton (19 Apr), 13 near Pulverbach (23 Apr), 15 at Eardington (29 Apr) and 16 Sutton upon Tern (2 May).

Records of confirmed breeding by skylarks were minimal and the first confirmed on the Clee Hills on 3 May, where a nest containing young was noted. Breeding was subsequently confirmed or suspected in several Atlas tetrads throughout May and into July, the last breeding record relating to fledged young on the Long Mynd on 17 Jul.

Skylarks were recorded on two occasions at only two sites in August and birds increasingly congregated in flocks in September with 30 on Baggy Moor on 10 Sep followed by over 11 birds at VP on 28 Sep. and 15 at Shavington Big Pool on 10 Oct. Increased movement of skylark was noticeable as October progressed with 35 moving west at Prees 17 Oct, 15 over Hampton Loade 19 Oct and 20 passing over VP 28 Oct. 57% of the October records specifically related to skylarks passing over a site, suggestive of a marked movements of birds in that month.

By November skylarks appeared to be more settled in feeding flocks with 35 at Sutton Upon Tern (12 Nov), 27 at Rushton (14 Nov), 25 at Bishops Castle (2 Dec), 40 Northwood (13 Dec), 92 at Little Wenlock (19 Dec) and 74 near Brockton (28 Dec).

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**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 3 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Amber List

Sand martins first arrived in the County during 2009 on 14 Mar with three records from VP. By the last week of the month, groups of birds in excess of 30 individuals were not uncommon. The last departing birds (a flock of 30) were observed on 16 Sep at Wood Lane NR. The species was present throughout the months between, with April and May showing the largest number of records (64 and 62, respectively).

The 246 sightings of sand martins across Shropshire were not uniformly distributed, but reflected the courses of the major rivers, particularly the Severn, Tern, Corve, Onny, Teme and Clun, and the area of meres south east of Ellesmere. Of the 16 records of 100 birds or more, 15 were from Wood Lane NR: the remaining record was from ASF. Wood Lane NR was also the site with the largest number of records of sand martin in the County, with a total of 67, followed by VP with 43.

The earliest confirmed record of breeding was on 12 Apr near Chirk Bank where 12 occupied nests were observed. Other occupied nest counts were 28 at Llanymynech (26 Apr), 15 at Wroxeter (4 May) and eight near Treflach (16 Jun). The earliest fledged young were observed on 1 Jun (near Colemere) and the last record of confirmed breeding (a nest with young) was near Highley on 24 Jul.

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**SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 94% of plots, 339 birds recorded, an average of 7.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

Barn swallows were widely, but not uniformly, distributed throughout the County during the 2009 breeding season. The sites with the most frequent reports of this species were VP (41), Priorslee Lake and Flash (29), Alveley (20) and Wood Lane NR (19). The species was present in Shropshire from 25 Mar (two records from VP and Whixall Moss) until mid-October, with the last two records being from

Church Stretton on 19 Oct and ASF on 20 Oct. Swallow were present during all months between these dates with the largest number of records occurring in May and June (351 and 295 reports, respectively). Nine records involved flocks of 50 birds or more: these were from Stanton upon Hine Heath, Tibberton, Lower Wood, Chelmarsh Reservoir, Priorslee Lake, Pennerley, Cole Mere, English Frankton and Leebotwood.

Securing confirmation of breeding is relatively easy with this species and 314 confirmed breeding records were obtained. The first report of an occupied nest was 1 May (Morton Common) and adults were still collecting mud for nest construction on 29 May (Adenay). The first confirmed record of a fledgling was on 24 May at Easthope. The last confirmed breeding record was on 9 Sep at The Rea, Upton Magna. Flocks congregating for the autumn migration were observed from 31 Aug until 19 Oct, with the last flock consisting virtually entirely of juveniles.

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## **HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 43% of plots, 192 birds recorded, an average of 9.1 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

There were 711 records of house martin in Shropshire during 2009. Observations were generally well distributed over the County but large numbers of records were received from VP (31) and Priorslee Lake and Flash (22). Flocks of 100 birds or more were reported from Hampton Loade (140 on 27 May and 120 on 14 Aug) and Ludlow (100 on 20 Sep).

The first bird of the year, a singleton, was observed on 15 Mar at Molverley. House martin was then recorded each month until the last observation on 8 Oct at Knuck Wood near Cefn Einion, with May providing the largest number of records (191).

At Whixall, house martins were described as visiting past nesting sites on 11 Apr. Reports of occupied nests across Shropshire began on 9 May, with 17 nests observed at Showell Mill on 29 May. Of interest is a record of a house martin nest in a sand martin burrow at Wood Lane NR on 19 July. The presence of young in nests was evident from early June onwards and fledged young were reported from the middle of that month. By late August, large flocks of birds showing behaviour consistent with imminent departure became evident. One such flock attracted the interest of an adult

hobby on the Wrekin on 21 Sep. However, nests containing young were still evident on 17 Sep (Bridgnorth) and 20 Sep (Upton Cressett).

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**CETTI'S WARBLER** *Cettia cetti*

Shropshire Status: Very rare vagrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP

A juvenile was ringed and photographed at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 30 Oct (DWF) and continued to be seen or heard irregularly until 5 Dec.

This record follows the long-staying bird at Monkmoor Pool NR which was seen between Oct 2007 and Jul 2008. The first Shropshire record was at Fenemere in 1975. There are three other published County records, all from Chelmarsh, which are subject to review, although, it is understood at least one of these was also ringed and photographed.

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**LONG-TAILED TIT** *Aegithalos caudatus rosaceus*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 45% of plots, 54 birds recorded, an average of 2.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 948 records was received during 2009, with observations during all months of the year as would be expected for this gregarious resident species. In excess of 100 records were received during half of the months of the year, a summary of all records by month is provided in the below table. As would be expected, high (i.e. >ten birds) site counts predominantly occurred during the winter months when this species form flocks, often accompanied by other species, and are vocal and visible while moving along hedgerows and within trees. During July, a noticeable increase in the number of double-figure counts and the mean count is evident which presumably relates to recently fledged juveniles with their parents. This species typically lays between eight and 12 eggs, with recently fledged juveniles being fed for up to two weeks by their parents.

Atlas roving records and some Birdtrack records do not provide the total number of birds observed; rather just confirm that the species was present. Within the analyses

in the below table, these ‘zero counts’ have been omitted where relevant.

	<b>Total Number of Records (number excl. Zero)</b>	<b>Peak Site Count</b>	<b>Mean Count (excl. zero)</b>	<b>Number of Double Figure Counts</b>	<b>% of Records (excl. zero) = Double Figure Count</b>
Jan	133 (109)	35	6.0	13	12
Feb	149 (127)	15	3.3	2	2
Mar	39 (22)	6	2.6	0	0
Apr	101 (75)	8	2.3	0	0
May	115 (86)	11	2.7	3	4
Jun	83 (66)	21	3.9	4	6
Jul	53 (45)	25	3.8	6	13
Aug	9 (4)	5	3.3	0	0
Sep	10 (7)	14	7.2	2	29
Oct	15 (10)	15	6.5	6	60
Nov	123 (89)	32	5.5	16	18
Dec	118 (98)	49	6.7	30	31

The persistence of one observer (KB) during Atlas monitoring is worthy of note; within SO78K (Upper Arley) it took the observer 17 visits to find this species within this tetrad during the winter survey period.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 5 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

This enigmatic species produced just 41 records from 20 sites during the three months from 21 Apr (SE of Clun) and 20 Jul (Pentre Hodre) in which they came, bred and went again back to equatorial Africa where they seem to virtually disappear. While they are probably under-recorded in the County the population does appear to be declining.

From the remaining stronghold in the south-west came four records from Clunton Coppice where there were three or four singing males on 16 May along with 12 records from 12 sites centred within around 10km of Clun with one as far north of Pennerley.

Away from the south-west came records from Harton on Wenlock Edge (16 Jul) and further north from the Wrekin/Ercall woods on five dates between 1 May and 6 Jun. A further four reports came from another historical stronghold, shared with Worcestershire, the Wyre Forest (where they are known to be in decline), with four records between 4 May and 25 Jun.

The only record from the north-west of the County, where they were well-represented during the period of the 1992 Atlas, came but one record of an apparent nest in SJ33 (Rhyn, Trevor Blackshaw).

Breeding was confirmed at only two locations with occupied nests in Radnor Wood (16 May and 22 Jun) and by fledged young in SO77N (in Wyre Forest) (1 Jul).

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### **CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant, very scarce in winter

BBS: Present in 80% of plots, 145 birds recorded, an average of 3.7 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 1,119 records was received from all sources, with observations occurring during every month of the year, with the exception of January. The first record of year occurred on 7 Feb, when a bird was reported in Castlefields, Shrewsbury where the observer (RV) reported that it '*went along the front gardens of all the houses nearby, at each house it hovered by the windows seemingly picking off insects on each window sill*'. Perhaps this is a small insight into how this small insectivorous passerine survives the harsh British winters. There were four further records during February, all of which occurred during Atlas monitoring work.

From mid-March onwards the regularity of records, and the numbers of birds included in each record gradually increased, with a total 55 records during the month and a maximum site count of four birds (Henley Common). During April, birds arrived in abundance, with 299 records received, with the maximum site count of 20 birds at Shavington Big Pool; this site also provided the highest count of the year (40 birds, 15 Aug). After April, the number of records received dwindled each month, with 154 records in July being the final month of triple-figures. Just 38 records were received in August, although as noted previously, this month also provided the highest site count.

Towards the end of the year two records of wintering birds were logged in November, with both records occurring at Chelmarsh Reservoir (15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>). The final record of the year was of one bird within SJ31Q (south of Nescliffe), on 2 Dec.

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**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 59% of plots, 94 birds recorded, an average of 3.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

Five hundred and eight records were received; 350 were via the Atlas scheme and 50 through Birdtrack.

First recorded at Priorslee Flash on 1 Apr and next in SO48P (Acton Scott) on 3 Apr, while the records over the weekend of 4 Apr (two) and 5 Apr (three) probably signalled the main arrival dates. By the following week-end of 11/12 Apr records were up to nine and 11 respectively.

Breeding records, so often neglected in the past, were well represented thanks to the Atlas scheme, with almost half (46%) of the 325 records referring to confirmed or probably breeding.

Of the 14 counts of ten or more birds, eleven came from TTVs for the Atlas scheme, being the number of birds recorded on the 2km morning walks, with the following frequencies 14 birds (one), 12 birds (four), 11 (three) and 10 (three).

The seven records in September were on 1<sup>st</sup> (one), 6<sup>th</sup> (one), 7<sup>th</sup> (two) and 13<sup>th</sup> (one), closing the year with the very last at Battlefield, Shrewsbury, on 19<sup>th</sup>.

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**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Shropshire Status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant, very scarce in winter

BBS: Present in 73% of plots, 126 birds recorded, an average of 3.5 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

The grand total of all records received was 798, of which 576 (72%) were Atlas records at the tetrad level, with 222 records from 92 non-Atlas sites.

A summer migrant' for which there are also early and late winter Atlas records – a total of 28, besides which are the casual records, some seven relating to the November/December and 25 January/February periods. Work on the Historical Ornithology of Shropshire (online, available via the SOS website) suggests that the first wintering record for the County was in 1916 when a bird of the year was caught and ringed at Kingsland, Shrewsbury on 6 Dec, "*rare in winter, and not previously recorded at that season in Shropshire*", (Source: Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club, Record of Bare Facts (1916)).

In winter, outwith the Atlas records, came 15 records, seven from January and February and 18 from November and December, all of just one or two birds with the notable exception of no fewer than eight, "*five males and three females regular in garden at Portland Crescent (Shrewsbury)*" noted on 8 Feb (C&HM).

As usual, the separation of the arrival dates of migrants was confused by the presence of over-wintering birds. To try and pinpoint the main arrival dates the number of records submitted per day was examined; birders like to report their 'first of the year'. The counts cycled during seven weeks and invariably peaked on Sundays. The number of records (including Atlas submissions) on seven consecutive Sundays is given below and suggest that the main arrival was around 19 Apr.

	April				May		
Sunday	5th	12th	19th	26th	3rd	10th	18th
Number of records	0	12	25	22	8	16	1

Departure dates are even more obscure but the reporting rate decayed rapidly in September with three reports on 17 Sep and then only one report in Oct (on 8<sup>th</sup>) after which the few wintering birds were noted from 1 Nov. One was in full song at The Rea, Upton Magna on 9 Oct, the observer commenting "*day length same as it is in the spring?*" suggesting that perhaps the bird was seasonally confused.

The estimation of the County population will have to be left for the Atlas results, with the attendant issue of the potential for confusion between the song of this species and that of the garden warbler.

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**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 31% of plots, 29 birds recorded, an average of 1.9 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 289 records was received, of which 229 (79%) came from the Atlas or BirdTrack.

The first bird of the year was logged on 3 Apr, with a bird in tetrad SO48P (south of Acton Scott), followed a few days later on 8 Apr by one at Priorslee Lake.

The last records of the year occurred in August in SO78K (south of Highley) (9<sup>th</sup>) and at VP (27<sup>th</sup>), with the very last from Tibberton on 3 Sep.

Breeding, as submitted to the Atlas/Birdtrack, was confirmed by only 14 instances among the total of 192 records of breeding at all levels.

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**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia corruca*

Shropshire Status: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 12% of plots, 8 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 176 records was received during 2009, 96 of which occurred as the result of Atlas monitoring work.

The first records of the year related to the lesser whitethroat, considered likely to be of one of the eastern races, present in a number of Shrewsbury gardens in close proximity from 21 Dec 2008. This bird was first reported during 2009 on 18 Jan, and remained in the area until 7 Apr.

The above record apart, the first returning bird of the year occurred at VP on 14 Apr; this site proved to be a reliable site for this species with 17 records in total, and up to two birds present concurrently. The peak site count of the year was of four birds which occurred at SO49Z (Leebotwood) (7 May), Chelmarsh Reservoir (24 May), SO39 (west of Church Stretton) (25 Jun) and SVCP (16 Jul).

The final record of the year occurred on 7 Sep at Whitcott Keysett.

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**COMMON WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 53% of plots, 81 birds recorded, an average of 3.1 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

This year common whitethroat records were greatly up at 559 observations, with the majority from Atlas work. The first arrivals were at SO48P (north of Craven Arms) (3 Apr) followed after a gap by three birds at SJ62Q (north of Tibberton) and singles at SJ63N (north of Ternhill), Rhiews and ASF all on 19 Apr. Two days later there were six at Chelmarsh. There was then a steady stream of arrivals of between one and three birds noted at more than fifty sites by the end of April.

During May there were over 200 records and by the 10<sup>th</sup> numbers increased to 16 at SJ61Z (Tibberton) and 11 at SJ70I (east of Telford). June generated 175 sightings, peaking with 16 birds within SJ30N (northwest of Minsterley) (15 Jun). July saw a reduction in numbers with most counts of less than four birds.

Breeding categories were given for the majority of observations with singing at around 150, territory held at 75 and confirmed breeding at 40 sites.

The final records of the year were of singles at Telford Town Park (1 Sep), Priorslee Lake (3 Sep) and lastly VP (7 Sep).

It is difficult to compare these results directly with earlier years but almost 560 observations suggest we have a healthy population of common whitethroats within the County.

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**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce, and declining, summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 2 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

Records were received from 16 sites during 2009, with a total of 23 records received either as casual records or through survey work. All records involved single birds, with no confirmed breeding records.

The first bird of the year occurred on Titterstone Clee Hill on 12 Apr, this was followed by a reeling male on and off at Pole Cottage (Long Mynd) between 17 Apr and 1 May. Further casual records were received from ASF (21 Apr, 24 Apr), Old River Bed (Shrewsbury) (28 Apr), Tibberton (29 May), Pen-yr-Estyn wetland (2 Jun), Wild Moor (10 Jun), Whixall Moss (13 Jun), Maesbury (26 Jun) and Dothill Pools (3 Jul).

Atlas monitoring work provided records within SJ40F (north of Ratlinghope) (23 Apr), SJ30B (East of Marton) (29 Apr), SO47Z (northeast of Bromfield) (11 May), SO37D (northwest of Bucknell) (29 May), SO49H (wets of Church Stretton) (27 Jun), SO49I (east of Ratlinghope) (27 Jun). The final record of the year occurred within SJ43X (Whixall Moss) on 5 Jul.

### **Correction**

The 1965 Annual Report (pg 21) stated that eight grasshopper warblers were present at Ludford (11 May 1965). This location was incorrect, the observation occurred at Bringewood Chase

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### **SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 2 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Green List

There were 115 records of which 45 were for the Atlas and were mainly identified by tetrad. Of the rest, 26 were from Wood Lane NR, 18 from VP and eight from Chelmarsh.

Wood Lane NR had the first arrivals between 11 Apr and 13 Apr. Maximum counts were of eight at VP (22 Jun) and Wall Farm (23 Jun).

Breeding was recorded at most of the Atlas sites in categories S and T i.e. possible/probable. Ten records of fledging young were received in June and July.

The Atlas survey efforts produced large increases in breeding data compared with recent years. Interpretation of trends will await more years' information.

The latest record of the year was of a bird was at Wood Lane NR on 11 Aug, earlier than recent years.

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**REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*.

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Green List

There were 112 reports from 32 sites within the County. Six of these were from well-watched locations and had between four and 21 visits. First reported arrivals were at Priorslee Lake and ASF (17 Apr) with four other sites having birds by the end of the month.

Priorslee Lake provided twenty-one records, with numbers increasing from two (17 Apr) to six (29 Apr), nine (1 May) and peaking at twelve (18 Jun). Other sites where five or more occurred were ASF (five), SJ20W (Marton) (nine), Chelmarsh Scrape (seven) and Shavington Big Pool (ten).

Breeding was confirmed with a nest at SJ70I (south of Priorslee) (10 May) and fledglings at SJ53Q (Prees) (16 May), SO49Z (Leebotwood) (5 Jun and 12 Jul), SJ33Q (southwest of Ellesmere) (22 Jun), SJ70J (Priorslee) (27 Jun).

Twenty records in August were mainly of one to three birds at Chelmarsh, Wood Lane NR, SVCPC and Priorslee.

Final sightings were at Priorslee Lake (2 Sep) and Chelmarsh Reservoir (9 Sep)

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**WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

Shropshire Status: Irruptive late autumn and winter visitor, in some years absent.

Conservation Status: Green List

Waxwing were reported from nine locations within the County during 2009. The first record of the year occurred on the first day of the year at Stokesay where the two birds, also present at the end of 2008, remained. These birds favoured the churchyard, feeding on pale *Sorbus* berries until 2 Jan. On 2 Jan and 3 Jan, three birds were also reported feeding on *Sorbus* in a garden in Felhampton. Twenty birds were present in gardens along Hampton Road, Oswestry on 4 Jan.

The next two records of the year involved two flocks that remained faithful to the same areas (in Telford and in Ludlow) for a more prolonged period, allowing many observers within the County the opportunity to catch up with this attractive and irruptive species. Up to ten birds were present intermittently between 5 Jan and

11 Jan in Donnington Wood, Telford. These birds were reported to be feeding on rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) berries, and regular confrontations with the local mistle thrushes, protective of their winter larder, were reported. From 15 Jan until 10 Feb up to 45 birds (the highest count of the year) were regularly reported. These birds were predominantly found along Parys Road, Ludlow, although the flock was noted to be very mobile and was reported at a number of other locations in the immediate vicinity during their stay. Again, and typically, these birds were feeding rowan berries.

Four birds were present in Clun on 24 Jan, again these birds were reported to be antagonising the local mistle thrushes. Twelve were present in a garden on Croft Way, Market Drayton (19 Feb), 15 were seen in flight over Tilstock and the final report of the year was of ten at Oakley Park, Bromfield.

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**NUTHATCH** *Sitta europaea*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 43% of plots, 33 birds recorded, an average of 1.6 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

Nine hundred and thirty-five records of nuthatch were received, 736 (79%) of these records were the result of Atlas monitoring work. The maximum count of the year occurred at Colemere (20 Jan), when ‘at least ten’ were present.

Atlas monitoring work confirmed breeding within 65 tetrads. There were two casual records of successful breeding; at Willowfields, Pulverbatch five juveniles successfully fledged from one brood and four birds, including juveniles, were observed at Hawkstone Park.

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**TREECREEPER** *Certhia familiaris*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 22% of plots, 15 birds recorded, an average of 1.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

There were 393 records of treecreeper received during 2009, of which 287 (73%) were the result of Atlas monitoring work. Records were received during each calendar month, with in excess of ten records during all months except August (seven), September (three) and October (five). The maximum number of records (64) occurred during January.

The maximum count of the year was or four birds, logged within four tetrads: SJ63Q (south of Market Drayton), SJ60X (west of Madeley), SO77N (west of Bewdley) and SJ32J (east of Oswestry), during Atlas monitoring. Four birds were also reported from Shavington Big Pool on three occasions as casual records, including a report of successful breeding.

Atlas monitoring confirmed breeding within 19 tetrads.

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### **WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 92% of plots, 429 birds recorded, an average of 9.5 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

There were 1,874 records of this species received during 2009, of which 1,578 (64%) were the result of Atlas monitoring work. During this monitoring, the maximum tetrad count was of 23 birds logged within both SJ63V (south of Market Drayton) and SJ63A (southwest of Ternhill). Excluding Atlas work, the maximum site count of this typically solitary species during the day was of six birds logged at both VP (2 Jan) and at Longhills Road, Church Stretton (10 Jan).

Atlas monitoring confirmed breeding within 104 tetrads.

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### **STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 49% of plots, 241 birds recorded, an average of 10 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

There were 1,096 reports from all sources throughout the year. Of the eight months covered by the Atlas work each had approaching 200 records while the other four months provided less than twenty.

The first winter period contained thirty counts of above 200 birds, of which five exceeded 1,000. The maximum was an ‘*amazing*’ 30,000 at Donnington (27 Feb) which reduced to 15,000 (28 Feb). Other high counts were 2,500 at Birch Moor (9 Jan), and 2,000 at Ludlow (Feb 25).

The early breeding season provided 208, mainly Atlas, records. April counts were generally of less than ten birds. Breeding was confirmed at five sites with birds ‘on nest’ within SJ53V (east of Prees) (17 Apr), SJ22R (Pant) (18 Apr), SJ52N (south of Hawkstone Park) (20 Apr), SJ33W (Ellesmere) (21 Apr) and SJ40L (west of Dorrington)(22 Apr).

Flocks started to build in August with 55 at Priorslee Lake (6 Aug) and 200 at Waters Lane, Upton (30 Aug). Ten reports occurred in September including 200 at Upton Magna (16 Sep). October yielded a count of 250 at Priorslee (21 Oct) and 400 at Shawbury Airfield (23 Oct) and Edgmond Marsh (28 Oct).

During the late winter there were many counts in the hundreds, but few as high as the first winter period figures. November provided estimates of 1,000 from three sites Whixall (5 Nov), Stoke on Tern (8 Nov), Wood Lane NR (8 Nov and 24 Nov) and the highest of 3,100 at Edgmond Marsh (4 Nov). In December, a count of 1,000 occurred at Chelmarsh (5 Dec), while ten sites supported between 250 and 610 birds.

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**DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

Conservation Status: LBAP, Green List

Reported in every month, with 61 records from 25 different sites, rather less than the 91 records from 25 different sites last year, but similar to the 56 records from 20 sites in 2007, 53 records from 25 sites in 2006 and 43 records from 26 sites in 2005, and a similar number of records but considerably fewer sites than in 2004 (87 from 40 sites). However, the decline in records this year is almost all due to a reduction in Birdtrack records from Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest, down from 44 to 19.

Breeding was confirmed at Candy Valley, where a pair bred successfully for the eighth successive year (one of the adults “*met its demise*”, “*the brood hatched and*

*has been fed by the lone parent.*” and then *“the calls from youngsters being fed moved up the river so ... they have fledged”* on 12 May). Confirmed breeding also occurred at Longnor, where several records of a pair were followed by them feeding three fledged young (30 May), Alveley (fledged young on 26 May) and Maesbury (successful breeding on a section of the River Morda near the Village).

Nineteen different Birdtrack records from Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest between 3 Jan and 2 Nov (maximum five birds on 27 Mar) included two more confirmed breeding records; an adult with juvenile on 10 May, and two adults near the old youth hostel, collecting food.

There were no other records of more than one pair, but another pair was seen at Pen-y-Llan (13 Jun)

An independent juvenile was seen in front of the National Trust Tea Room in Carding Mill Valley (27 May). Dipper used to breed in Carding Mill Valley, but have not done so for many years.

Reports came from only seven sites in the northern half of the County; two in the Oswestry uplands (Candy Valley and Pen-y-Llan), Maesbury, Longnor, Cound Stank, and the headwaters of the River Tern at Market Drayton. Although dipper returned to breed on the River Tern for the first time in more than 15 years in 2007, there were no reports of a similar event this year or last year.

In addition, dipper were recorded during Atlas work in 33 different tetrads in the two winter periods, and in 66 different tetrads in the breeding season (Confirmed Breeding in 35, and Probable Breeding in 14). The large number of Confirmed Breeding records is due to the nest box and ringing project.

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group started a nestbox scheme for dipper on the Rivers East and West Onny in 2005. The project was extended to the Upper Clun in 2006, and by 2007 it had been linked to a resumption of monitoring the population at around 70 winter roost sites in the River Teme catchment, initially carried out from 1987 to 2000. By the 2009 breeding season, 120 boxes have been installed at almost 100 locations in the Teme catchment since 2005 (not counting replacements), including a number on the Redlake, and 71 of them were used. Nests of 27 other pairs were also found. Nests of 12 pairs were found in the Upper Onny area (and at least eight of these pairs successfully raised young), and 14 in the Upper Clun (and at least ten of these pairs successfully raised young). Nests of five pairs were also found on the lower Clun, and the Redlake (four in boxes, four successful nests altogether, in each stretch of river).

Comparison of results obtained at winter roost sites 2006 - 09 with those from the 1980s and 1990s initially showed an overall decline in the number of dippers present, a much greater decline on the lower reaches of the rivers than on the upper reaches, and a deterioration in the condition of the birds (measured by average body weight). This is attributed to a loss of food as a result of reduced water quality in the rivers, primarily due to pollution from, and silting up by, agricultural activities. However, the nest box scheme has enabled additional territories to be occupied, and higher productivity, so by 2009 the total dipper population was back to the numbers of 20 years ago, although numbers were still less than they were on the lower reaches of the rivers.

The full results are set out in the report *Dippers (Cinclus cinclus) In the River Teme Catchment 2009*, submitted to the funding bodies: Natural England, the Shropshire Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund, and the Severn Rivers Trust. The report can be found on the Shropshire Dippers Project part of the Trust’s website, [www.severnriverstrust.com](http://www.severnriverstrust.com)

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**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

Shropshire Status: Very scarce passage migrant, formerly bred

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP, Red List

Fourteen records from six sites were received, compared with 25 from six sites last year, 30 records from six sites in 2007 and 17 records from ten sites in 2006; most were March or April records of spring passage birds.



As usual in recent years, more records came from Titterstone Clee than elsewhere, and it is now the most favoured spring passage site in the County. These included the first of the year (a male on 22 Mar), followed by three on 24 Mar, four (three males and a female) on 30 Mar, one on 31 Mar and three on 12 Apr. There was also a male on Yew Tree Bank (Long Mynd) on 8 Apr, a female at Whixall Moss on 8 Apr and 18 Apr, a male at Bowhills Dingle near Alveley on 24 Apr and at Brown Clee on 25 Apr, the last of the year.

Intriguingly, a pair was seen gathering nesting material above the former Gatten Plantation on the Stiperstones on 7 Apr, and again on 14 Apr when “*the pair appeared to be collecting nest material from nearby woodland and flying to a section of thick heather*”. A male, perhaps the same one, was feeding and singing in the

nearby Brook Vessons area on 12 Apr. Subsequent attempts to relocate the pair, by the original observer and others, were unsuccessful. These probable breeding records probably reflect a failed nesting attempt, the first known in the County since 2003, but the pair may have been engaged in pair bonding while still on migration.

In the years 2004–08, the Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project made a systematic search of almost all sites where breeding was observed between 1994 and 2003, and also carried out a full Long Mynd survey in 2006–08. Project fieldwork located no ring ouzels, and none were seen or heard by National Trust staff, in any of these five years. The species is now apparently extinct as a breeding bird on the Long Mynd. This systematic project work was not continued in 2009.

The national Ring Ouzel Study Group ([www.ringouzel.info](http://www.ringouzel.info)) is promoting a number of colour-ringing schemes. Observers are requested to check any ring ouzel they see for colour-rings

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### **BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 100% of plots, 714 birds recorded, an average of 14.6 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Green List

This species, the commonest of the thrushes (as indicated by the BBS data) which occur in the UK, was reported on 2,636 occasions (from all sources) during 2009, of which 2,299 (87%) were the result of Atlas monitoring. During this Atlas monitoring the maximum tetrad count was of 60 birds within SJ61D (southeast of High Ercall). The maximum site counts of the year, excluding Atlas monitoring, was of 25 birds which occurred at four sites; Lightwood (11 Jan), Shavington Big Pool (28 Nov), Mickley (13 Dec) and VP (31 Dec).

At ASF (14 Oct) five birds were observed associating with a large movement of redwings. The resident British population of blackbirds is augmented in the winter with birds from Scandinavia, the Low Countries and western Germany. Blackbirds from southern Scandinavia cross either directly to Britain or may arrive indirectly, having first moved south through Denmark, northern Germany, or Helgoland. These birds at ASF may well therefore have travelled a considerable distance, with their redwing cousins, to the County.

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**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

Shropshire Status: Common passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 11 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP

There were 755 reports from all sources of this migratory thrush during 2009. Of these records, 554 (73%) were generated as a result of Atlas monitoring, with a maximum tetrad count of 500 birds which occurred within SJ32U (East of Oswestry) (29 Jan) and SJ50U (east of Atcham) (2 Feb). Excluding Atlas data, there were 22 triple-figure counts with the maximum site count of 500 birds at The Rea, Upon Magna (4 Feb).

The final record of the first winter period occurred on 24 Apr within SJ72A (west of Newport), with the first returning birds observed at Battlefield (Shrewsbury) and at Ightfield on 15 Oct.

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**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

Shropshire Status: British form *clarkei* ('British song thrush') a common, though declining, resident. Nominate continental form ('continental song thrush') presumably a fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 88% of plots, 175 birds recorded, an average of 4.1 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP, Red List

There were 1,465 records of this species from all sources, 1,215 (83%) of which were a consequence of Atlas monitoring. The maximum tetrad count during Atlas monitoring was of 18 birds present within SJ53C (Whixall Moss) (19 Jun). The maximum site count, excluding Atlas data, was of ten birds present at VP (2 Jan) and at Hampton Loade (8 Jan).

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**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

Shropshire Status: Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Red List, RBBP

A total of 656 records of redwing was logged during 2009. Of all records, 473 (72%) were the result of Atlas monitoring; during this monitoring 13 tetrads provided triple-figure counts with a maximum of 212 birds logged within SJ60H (Buildwas) (7 Feb). Excluding Atlas monitoring data, the maximum site count was of 321 birds noted to be ‘*mainly flying over*’ Hampton Loade (16 Oct), there were three further triple-figure counts; Acton Round (150, 21 Jan), ASF (147 flying over, 14 Oct) and Market Drayton (100, 21 Nov).

The final record of the first winter period occurred at Brook Vessons NR (12 Apr), with the first record of the second winter period occurring at Dothill Primary School, before flying high to the east (5 Oct).

Interestingly, the lack of fixed wintering areas is a notable feature of redwings’ migration. Only a few ringing recoveries demonstrate year-to-year winter site fidelity, and there are many recoveries to show that birds may winter in widely different localities in different winters. For example, many birds ringed on Britain have been recovered in subsequent winters in Italy, Greece and localities even further to the south and east. With the rapid advancement in satellite tracking technology, perhaps this species warrants study in the future.

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**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 41% of plots, 27 birds recorded, an average of 1.3 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

There were 728 records of mistle thrushes in Shropshire during 2009, 613 (84%) of which were the result of Atlas monitoring. During this Atlas monitoring the maximum tetrad count was of 12 birds within SO79W (east of Bridgnorth) (24 Jan). Excluding Atlas monitoring data, there were seven double-figure counts with a maximum of 25 birds observed feeding within a newly cut hay field at Cound Stank (10 Oct).

Two adults were observed with three chicks in a nest at Woolston (nr. Wistanstow). Mistle thrushes typically nests in a stout branch against the trunk of a tree or on a fork of a horizontal branch, and lay three to six eggs.

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**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

Shropshire Status: Scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 8% of plots, 8 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

In 2009, 176 records of spotted flycatcher were received, 121 of which were logged during Atlas monitoring work. This compares with 211 records in the preceding year for this species which is currently undergoing a worryingly rapid national decline.

The first bird of the year occurred within SO37S (Bucknell) (two birds) and SO38G (Clunton) on 10 May. Regular records started to occur from 16 May, with a total of 41 records in May, 49 in June, 70 in July, 12 in August and four in September. The final record of the year occurred on 21 Sep at Butter Cross (Alveley). Breeding was confirmed at 54 locations.

Three site counts in excess of five birds were received; at Leebotwood six birds including four juveniles were logged (12 Jul), six were also present within SJ23H (Knockin) (6 Aug) and the highest count of the year (eight) were logged at Burford (13 Aug) including at least three juveniles.

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**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 98% of plots, 409 birds recorded, an average of 8.5 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

There were 2,480 records of this species received during 2009, of which 2,114 (85%) were the result of Atlas monitoring. During Atlas monitoring the maximum tetrad count was of 28 birds present within SJ60F (14 Apr) and breeding was confirmed in 169 tetrads.

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**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Amber List, RBBP

There were three records for the year. A male was at Pole Cottage, Long Mynd on 11 Apr (MWebb), a female was seen at Pipegate, near the Staffordshire border on 27 Apr (GD) and, finally, a male was at Myddle from 8 to 10 Nov (MM).

News of the fabulous male at Pole Cottage was quickly released and, despite staying just the one day, it was seen by many appreciative observers and gave excellent views and photographic opportunities. The second bird was found perching on security fencing and feeding on short grass and bare ground on the site of a demolished factory building. The bird at Myddle was seen in private gardens and the observer thought that two birds may have been present.

It was a fairly typical showing for this species following a blank year in 2008; black redstart has now been seen in seven of the last ten years.

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**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 27% of plots, 31 birds recorded, an average of 2.4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

Out of the 238 reports, 174 were tetrad records from the Atlas, the remaining came from 35 named locations.

The Wyre Forest provided the first record of the year on 7 Apr, with multiple records then occurring on 10 Apr (Bucknell, Nedge Hill, The Old Racecourse, Oswestry and The Hollies, Snailbeach) after which time birds became widespread and records were received daily. Apart from another record from Nedge Hill and a few from the Wrekin and Hawkstone, all the other spring records were from the south and west of the County.

Breeding was confirmed in 44 tetrads, with the same distribution pattern as the spring records.

The highest numbers came from two hour TTVs; 17 in SO27I (near Llanfair Waterdine) (23 May) and ten in SJ22J (near Pentregaer in the Oswestry hills) (3 Jun).

Records were received almost daily throughout April (70), May (66) and June (68) with 85% of the records coming from this period. Reports began to dwindle in July with 19 in the first half of the month and nine in the second. Three records in both August and September included likely passage birds at Tibberton (12 Aug), VP (16 Aug) and Lower Frankton (9 Sep), the other records at this time were from breeding areas but were probably also passage birds including the final one at Mason's Bank on 9 Sep.

Numbers in the County appear stable but the sample size is small due to their restricted distribution.

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**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

Shropshire Status: Scarce, and declining, summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 2% of plots, 10 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Amber List

This increasingly scarce summer visitor now appears to be restricted to breeding sites on bracken covered slopes in the South Shropshire hills. Very few records have been received in recent years, and almost all come from The Long Mynd. This year there were only 29 records in total, and, apart from several records of return passage through VP, there were only two records from elsewhere. The exceptions were a migrant near Newcastle on Clun (25 Apr), the first of the year, and a singing male at Whixall Moss on 19 Jul. As there have been virtually no reports of whinchat from this site in recent years, it is considered likely that this bird was visiting from the welsh part of the Moss, rather than having a territory in Shropshire.

Observers are requested to send in records of all sightings of this colourful chat.

After the first of the year, there were then 19 records between 26 Apr (two males) and 19 Jul, four of which were Atlas records, all from Long Mynd. These included three pairs plus two other males (one carrying food) (24 May) and a pair plus a male in Ashes Hollow (28 May), and a family party in SO49H (Light Spout Hollow) (24 Jun). Apart from these reports, little information was provided about breeding evidence.

Whinchat were seen on both visits to the BBS 1-kilometre transect in Callow Hollow,

seven on 6 May and ten on 10 Jun, but they were not seen on any other BBS survey.

Apart from a “*present, not counted*” Birdtrack record from Little Stretton (31 Aug), all the records after 19 Jul were of passage birds at VP (one on 10 Aug, two on 13/14 Aug, three on 30/31 Aug, three on 3 Sep and two on 7 Sep).

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**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

Shropshire Status: Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 8% of plots, 6 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Amber List

The 124 reports were received, split evenly with half being tetrad records from Atlas monitoring and the remainder originating from 27 locations.

From 1 Jan to 9 Mar, records were received from a wide range of sites. Ten sightings were made at VP between 2 Jan and 5 Mar, the remainder were split between the northeast (11 records) and the southwest (eight records) quarters of the County, many of these birds will be resident birds that have remained in their breeding territories. Just three reports came from the northwest and two from the southeast, apart from four at Whixall Moss (7 Mar) and three at Prees Heath (9 May) all were of singles or pairs. Whixall Moss is a regular breeding site and although birds are not thought to have bred at Prees Heath the area of suitable habitat is increasing as heathland restoration continues so it may be just a matter of time.

From mid-March to the end of August all but three of the 71 records were from the southern hills. Numerous nests were located at Titterstone Clee as part of the BTO Re-trap Adults for Survival (RAS) project and 34 birds were reported there on 2 May. Seven pairs and four other males were noted on The Long Mynd on 24 May and along with Clun Forest these locations provided the bulk of the nine confirmed breeding sites. During this period the maximum number elsewhere was five.

A single at Whixall on 29 Sep was the only record for that month. A further 16 records were received before the end of the year, six of these were from Whixall Moss including the final bird on 28 Dec. Records were split as in the early year, between the northeast and southwest with a single record in both the northwest and southeast.

The national population fell slightly this year and the number of pairs found by the RAS project at Titterstone Clee also fell slightly. Despite this fall, the long term trend is an upwards one.

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**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 8% of plots, 9 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Amber List

Of the 95 reports, 44 were tetrad records from the Atlas, with the remaining records originating from 31 named locations.

The first bird was at Wild Moor, Long Mynd on 15 Mar and was a couple of days earlier than usual. Two were at Titterstone Clew the next day and three the day after, including a colour ringed male. This bird was ringed as a pulli at Random Corner in 2006 and re-trapped at a nest at Dhustone in 2008 when the colour rings were added. A passage bird was seen on Mynydd Myfyr, west of Trefonen (18 Mar), four were at Nedge Hill (21 Mar) and two were at Sleaf airfield (22 Mar). Spring passage is quite prolonged for this species and migrant birds continued to be recorded until 10 May when one was at Harper Adam's College. If conditions are right migrants can occur in good numbers, ten were at The Wyke, Shifnal (10 Apr) and 12 were at The Dukes Drive, Kynnersley (26 Apr).

Breeding was confirmed on The Long Mynd and Titterstone Clew. Several nests were reported from Titterstone Clew and several double-figure counts were made at this site, 17 (30 May) being the maximum. Only two June records were received, both of nests at Titterstone Clew, a late nest was also recorded there on 4 Jul.

After May, reports dropped considerably June (2), July (7), August (2) and September (7). One was of a passage bird at Baggy Moor on 10 Sep, all the remaining records were from the southern hills, these probably included many passage birds but they could relate to local breeding stock. The last report was of a female on the Stiperstones on 26 Sep.

Although in long term decline, UK numbers showed an increase in 2009. However the Welsh population continued to decline and the fortune of our birds is likely to be closely tied to those over the border.

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**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 2% of plots, 2 birds recorded.

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 154 records was received during 2009, of which 115 occurred as a result of Atlas monitoring work; this compares with a total of 189 records in the preceding year. The first record of the year was logged within SO39Y (southwest of Ratlinghope) on 12 Apr, where three birds were present. Infrequent reports were received until 16 May following which reports became more regular. Atlas monitoring confirmed breeding in 27 tetrads, eight of which were 'SJ' tetrads (north Shropshire) and 19 were 'SO' tetrads (south Shropshire). During Atlas monitoring 33 tetrads returned counts of ten or more birds, with the maximum (91) being logged within SO28H (northwest of Clun). There was one further double-figure count, logged through Birdtrack, of 14 adult and 44 young birds on the Wrekin recorded during nestbox monitoring.

The final record of the year occurred on 31 Jul, within SO49R (Church Stretton).

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**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*

Shropshire Status: Very common resident

BBS: Present in 92% of plots, 204 birds recorded, an average of 4.5 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Amber List

1,854 records were received. Dunnock was recorded from 94 locations across Shropshire and in every month of the year.

Birds were usually recorded as singles or twos, but four were recorded at Wood Lane NR (1 Jan). Dunnock commence territorial activity and singing in January but the first territorial activity in 2009 was noted near Ludlow on 25 Feb, involving a number of male birds in song and pairs were first noted on 27 Feb around Worthen. Territorial activity increased during March and included two males engaged in wing-flicking in the presence of a female at Shrewsbury (18 Mar) and displaying birds at Pentre (21 Mar) and Highley (22 Mar).

Nest building was noted unusually early (20 Mar) at Ellesmere and breeding will undoubtedly have been widespread across Shropshire, but was evident from only a few records. Breeding was confirmed at Cold Hatton (22 Apr) when an occupied nest was recorded. Breeding was again confirmed near Marshbrook (3 Apr) where adults were noted feeding young. Birds continued to increasingly engage in song and territorial behaviour in April and breeding was regularly recorded at various sites in May, including Church Stretton (15 May) and VP (22 May). Breeding was subsequently noted throughout June and July and the last reference to breeding activity was on 10 Aug when recently fledged young were recorded at Telford.

Large populations of dunnock comprised 20 at Market Drayton (5 Oct), 15 (31 Dec) and 20 (12 Dec) at VP.

The dunnock has possibly the most complex social system of any British bird. As well as breeding in conventional pairs (monogamy) other strategies include two or more males and a female (polyandry), one male two females (polygyny) and two males and one female (polygynandry). Records of singing males will not therefore necessarily reflect the true breeding population compared with species breeding in conventional pairs. Research has shown that the dunnock in Shropshire requires mature, overgrown hedgerows with outgrowths of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and dog rose (*Rosa canina*), for breeding and foraging purposes. Given the long-term decline of the dunnock, mainly on farmland and in woodland, more direct evidence of breeding and the type of habitat occupied might prove a useful tool in the conservation of this intriguing bird.

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## **HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

Shropshire Status: Common but declining resident

BBS: Present in 69% of plots, 403 birds recorded, an average of 11.8 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Red List

Of the 1,845 records received, 1,663 were collected as part of the ongoing Atlas work and located to tetrad only, with the remaining 182 submitted as casual records from 82 sites.

In the first winter period, there were 15 counts of 40 or more birds with the three highest being 86 in SJ20W (Marton) (15 Feb), 73 in SJ31I (Milverley) (14 Jan) and 70 in SO47S (west of Ludlow) (20 Feb). During the second winter period 21 records

of 40 or more birds were received. Of these, 72 birds were in SJ53L (Quina Brook) (20 Nov), 67 in SJ63B (Mickley) (13 Dec) and 66 in SO47T (west of Bromfield) (31 Dec). However, the highest count for the year was 115 birds at Alveley (17 Jul) no doubt including a number of juvenile birds.

Some 409 records of confirmed breeding were received with most collected as part of fieldwork for the Atlas. They show that house sparrow breeds across the County.

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**TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 14% of plots, 25 birds recorded, an average of 3.6 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Red List

A total of 320 records was received during 2009, of which 183 were the result of the Atlas fieldwork (109 tetrads) and 137 were casual records spread across 47 sites.

The highest counts came from the two winter periods, with 30 at Brockton on the Wenlock Edge (22 Feb) and 28 in SJ31I (Melverley) (14 Jan) during the first period, and 25 in SO39Q (Whitcot) (20 Nov), 25 in SJ50C (west of Condover) (9 Dec) and 23 at Polemere (28 Dec) during the second.

Thirty-six records of confirmed breeding were received, the majority (75%) from the northern half of the County.

Only 44 records were received from VP, with a maximum count of six birds and only one report confirming breeding. These are low numbers when compared to recent years and are indicative of a decline in this species at the Society's reserve.

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**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Shropshire Status: British form *flavissima* fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

181 records were received, 66 of which related to Atlas records. Records were received from 53 locations, up on 32 locations in 2008.

The first record of this attractive summer migrant was of one bird on 7 Apr at Upton Magna, followed by one at VP on 10 Apr, two there on 12 Apr, one at Cae Howel and two at Worfield on 19 Apr. Singles were subsequently recorded at Hampton Loade (24 Apr), Bromfield (28 Apr) and Eardington (29 Apr). Three were at Honnington (30 Apr). Yellow wagtail peaked at five at VP on 25 Apr, whilst an unusually high number of 30 yellow wagtail were feeding in a recently sown field alongside 12 wheatear at The Duke's Drive on The Weald Moors (26 Apr). Five were also in a recently ploughed field at Pen-yr-Estyn wetland with a small flock of pied wagtail (29 Apr).

Yellow wagtail continued to arrive at new sites in early May, including Rosehill and Sutton Tern (2 May), Adeney (3 May), Kynnersley (6 May), ASF (9 May) and Edgmond (10 May). Fourteen were at Mirelake ASF (13 May,) indicating the continued arrivals and after that date most records related to one to four birds.

The yellow wagtail's breeding distribution in Shropshire has a marked affinity to the north Shropshire plain and the eastern sandstone plain. 92% of records (excluding Atlas records) of yellow wagtail came from sites located in northeast Shropshire, notably north of the River Severn: 44 of these records related to The Weald Moors and 31 to VP. Breeding was first confirmed in an Atlas tetrad near Marchamley Wood on 23 May. Two pairs were reported breeding at Norton (13 Jun) and subsequently confirmed in a cereal field at Edgmond (28 Jun) and in a potato field at Pulleston Common (5 Jul). Probable breeding also occurred at Eyton Moor where eight singing males were noted (23 Jun) and at several other sites were pairs were observed between May and June. Breeding was last noted on 7 Aug at Upton Magna, when a pair with three fledglings was recorded.

Breeding had largely ceased by early August, with yellow wagtail only recorded at six sites, the largest number comprising seven in stubble at Cherrington (27 Aug). Passage movement was well underway by September with records from six sites. The last yellow wagtails of the year were two at Wood Lane NR on 12 Oct.

The yellow wagtail is one of several long-distance summer migrants from Africa in severe decline, exhibiting a decline of 71% in the UK in the last 25 years, alarmingly higher at 93% along waterways, which shows no signs of abating. As a result, the yellow wagtail was red-listed in 2008. Research by the RSPB suggests that the rapid growth of autumn-sown cereals is limiting the breeding season and the choice of nest sites available to arable nesting yellow wagtail with birds nesting near crop 'tramlines' where access to the ground is better but exposure to predators higher. Later breeding attempts from June onwards show a shift to spring-sown crops such as beans, peas and especially potatoes.

Because of the large scale landscape issues involved, conservation measures targeted at the yellow wagtail by individuals is probably limited but the SOS and members can do much to highlight the problems faced by the yellow wagtail on farmland and promote agri-environments schemes at every opportunity, including the creation of water features, fallow plots, invertebrate rich headlands, 'skylark plots' and beetle banks in autumn-sown cereals. The new Atlas will prove invaluable in highlighting the breeding distribution and hot-spots of the yellow wagtail in Shropshire and should assist the targeting of agri-environment schemes to improve the breeding population of this wagtail.

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**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 8% of plots, 5 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Amber List

During 2009, 324 records of this strictly riparian wagtail were submitted, of which 232 records were received as a consequence of Atlas monitoring work. Recorded during every month of the year, with the maximum number of records received in May (53), and the minimum in October (nine), although this minimum count is a reflection of there being no Atlas surveying during this month rather than being a reflection of the actual number of birds present. In fact, during months when Atlas monitoring took place the number of records were remarkably consistent across the year (minimum 28, maximum 53, mean 38), which is likely to indicate that birds remain faithful to the tetrad within which they are logged and are highly detectable.

As would be expected, the vast majority of records involved one or two birds, counts of five or six birds (with all records including juveniles) were logged with the following tetrads; SO38Z (east of Bishop's Castle), SO39H (east of Churchstoke), SO39Y (west of Ratlinghope), SJ50C (east of Conover) and SJ50S (Cound). Atlas monitoring work confirmed breeding within 35 tetrads.

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**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba yarellii*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, summer visitor and passage migrant. BBS: Present in 47% of plots, 43 birds recorded, an average of 1.9 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 946 records was received during 2009, in comparison with 1,290 records during the preceding year. The peak monthly count occurred during May, when 149 records were received from all sources, in excess of 100 records were also received during November (127) and December (130). This compares with just 12 records during October; although no Atlas work was completed during this month.

By far the highest count of birds during the year was logged on 26 Jan, when 300+ were recorded coming into roost on a supermarket roof in Corve Street, Ludlow (WM). No further counts in excess of 100 birds were received, although 35 counts of ten or more were logged. Roosts were also noted in Shrewsbury at Harlescott and Meole Brace, with both roosts occurring on the roof of a retail premises.

Noteworthy counts of birds in flight were recorded over Priorslee Lake on 11 Aug (31 birds), 7 Sep (42 birds) and 10 Sep (38 birds) with all records involving birds flying in a northerly direction. It would appear likely that these records related to birds leaving a local roost site.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant.

Conservation Status: Green List, RBBP.

The Icelandic population of white wagtails, augmented by birds from eastern Greenland, migrate south to Ireland, Britain and western Iberia to their wintering grounds in West Africa. The spring passage through Britain begins at the end of February, continuing through March and peaking during April and the first two weeks of May. Return passage begins in mid-August, peaking in September, with stragglers continuing through the country until mid-November.

Just four records were received during 2009, a meagre count compared to previous years. This is presumably a reflection of a lack of observer coverage of sites favoured by this species during migration. Improved coverage of upland sites and waterbodies with suitable margins (mud or concrete) during the spring (when identification is relatively straightforward), combined with increased observer

awareness of the identification features during autumn of this sub-species, would no doubt lead to a significant increase in the number of records received.

All records during 2009 occurred during the spring migration period; the first record of the year occurred at VP (one bird, 27 Mar), followed by records at Brook Vessons Nature Reserve (two birds, 12 Apr), VP (one bird, 17 Apr) with the final record of the year occurring within SJ50C (east of Condover) (one bird, 1 May).

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common summer visitor

BBS: Present in 2% of plots, 3 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

The first bird of the year was logged within the Wyre Forest on 5 Apr, when two birds were present. The next record occurred on 12 Apr, with single birds observed at Ashes Hollow, Brook Vessons Nature Reserve and on the Stiperstones. Eleven further records were received during April, with all observations occurring at typical upland sites and within the Wyre Forest. The maximum site count of the year occurred during this month, with ten reported as present within Ashes Hollow, Long Mynd (26<sup>th</sup>).

During May, 18 records were received, with 13 in June and 11 in July. The final record of the year, and the sole August record, occurred on 8<sup>th</sup> when one was logged within SO77P (nr. Kinlet).

Atlas monitoring accounted for the majority of received records with 36 of the total of 58 records received via this source. During this Atlas monitoring work, breeding was confirmed within six tetrads.

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**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 39 birds recorded, and average of 3.9 birds per occupied plot.

Conservation Status: Amber List

A total of 374 records was received, covering every month of the year, included 257 Atlas records.

The winter season accounted for 173 of the Atlas records, from 139 tetrads. The distribution had a strong northerly bias, and a slight westerly one; 50 of the occupied tetrads were in the north west quadrant and 44 in the north east, but there were only half those numbers in the south (24 in the south west, and 21 in the south east). There were 31 counts of ten birds or more during Atlas work, 23 from the northern half and only eight from the southern half (and only two of those from the south west). The breeding season accounted for 83 records from 46 tetrads, but there was a strong south westerly bias; 29 tetrads, compared with eight in the north west, five in the north east and only four in the south east.

Thirty-seven of the records, from 28 sites, came via Birdtrack, four were from BBS counts (from only two survey plots) and 76 were casual records from 35 sites sent as casual records. Priorslee Lake accounted for eight of the casual records, VP 12, and Wood Lane NR 19, all from winter months except a passage flock of 20+ at VP (20 Apr). Including this passage flock, and other early April records, only 16 were from the breeding season.

Taken together, this distribution of records shows a large influx of winter visitors, mainly into north Shropshire, whilst the smaller breeding population is concentrated in the southwest.

Counts of ten or more birds were reported from nine sites in the first winter period (in descending order) - Stiperstones (50 on 13 Mar), Little Bolas (26 on 7 Feb), Moelydd (26 on 22 Mar), Wood Lane NR (20 on 28 Feb), VP (20 on 5 Mar, 12 Mar, and 19 Mar, and 12 on 28 Mar), Cound Fishery (15 on 24 Jan), Nedge Hill (12 on 22 Mar), Pulleston Common (11 on sheep-grazed root crop on 4 Jan) and Black Mountain (11 on 29 Mar).

Excluding Atlas records, only 16 from eight sites (less than last year and the year before) were during the breeding season (April – June), and 11 of these (including 20 birds at VP (6 Apr) and at Brown Clee (18 Apr)) were April records which may have been passage birds. Five May to June records (none in July) came from the Wrekin, Whixall Moss and three different Long Mynd sites. No behaviour indicative of breeding was reported. However, the Atlas records included 25 tetrads where breeding was confirmed, and counts of 15 (6 May) and 22 (10 Jun) were made in the BBS survey square on Callow Hollow and Minton Hill.

After the breeding season, post-breeding or possibly passage flocks of more than ten were reported from Long Mynd (Robin Hood Butts - 150 on 24 Sep), Folly Bank (45 on 14 Sep), Baggy Moor (40 on 10 Sep), Cwm ffrydd, Clun Forest (40 on 16 Sep), Mason's Bank (30 on 9 Sep) and Whixall Moss (ten on 29 Sep).

Large early winter gatherings were reported only at The Ford (100 on manured cereal stubble on 13 Dec), Wood Lane NR (30 on 9 Oct), Sutton upon Tern (29 on 12 Nov), Hoarstone near Bletchley (28 on 13 Dec), Wollerton near Hodnet (16 on 28 Dec), Alveley (12 on 23 Dec), Tibberton (12 on 29 Dec) and Tuckhill (10 on 23 Dec).

Only two records, described above, contained any information about the habitats being used.

Comparing the maximum flock sizes reported in recent years with those included in Shropshire Bird Reports from around ten years ago suggests that the population is declining.

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**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

Shropshire Status: Very rare passage migrant

Conservation Status: Green List

Only one record for the year, a single was seen at Titterstone Clee on 30 Mar (PBa).

This interesting bird was found feeding around puddles on the car park below the summit and was at first thought to be a water pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*). However, after studying the literature the observer changed his view and submitted the record as a rock pipit of the Scandinavian race (*A.p.littoralis*) and it was accepted as such by the Records Committee.

Scandinavian rock pipit breeds in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway; wintering from south western Sweden to Portugal, although the main wintering areas are thought to be in Britain and the Netherlands to Northern France

Both rock pipit and water pipit are difficult species to find in Shropshire. This is just the fourth rock pipit in the past ten years, during which time just three water pipits were recorded.

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**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

Shropshire Status: Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 98% of plots, 606 birds recorded, an average of 12.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A massive 2,365 records were received for this species. Of these, 2,008 (85%) were the result of Atlas fieldwork,

As might be expected, the highest counts came from the two winter periods. Of the nine winter counts recording over one hundred birds, six were in January, two February and one in December. The highest of these came from SJ22G (Llanyblodwel) where 260 were counted (31 Jan). Elsewhere, 247 were in SJ50J (Chilton) (14 Feb), with 190 in the same tetrad five days later. At the end of the year, 100 were at VP (28 Dec).

A total of 208 records confirming breeding were received from across Shropshire.

A bird re-trapped in Newport (25 May) had originally been caught at the same site nearly three years (1,065 days) earlier.

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**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List

Only 154 records were received for this winter visitor, 90 as a result of ongoing Atlas work and 64 as casual records. Overall, it would appear that 2009 was not a 'brambling year'.

In the first winter period, the highest count was of 60 birds in SO47X (west of Ludlow) (4 Jan). In the same period, a flock in Tibberton peaked at 49 (12 Feb). The final reports for this species before they returned north to their breeding grounds were of two birds at Park Hall, Oswestry on 21 Apr and at least two birds in SJ52C (Clive) on 26 Apr.

The first returning birds of the year were reported on 17 Oct, with one in Prees, followed by one at Tibberton, on 22 Oct. The largest counts for this period were ten

in SO58E (near Munslow) (17 Nov) and eight in SJ61A (Overley) (15 Dec).

A brambling ringed at The Rea on 3 Apr was retrapped in Shrewsbury (6km) eight days later.

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**GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 61% of plots, 141 birds recorded, an average of 4.7 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 1,461 greenfinch records was submitted during the year, of which the majority (1,216) were associated with the ongoing Atlas fieldwork.

Only ten counts of 50 or more birds were received, one from January, and five from September, with the rest from the remaining three months of the year. The January record related to 50 birds in SO79H (north of Bridgnorth) (20 Jan). In September, 50 were at The Rea, Upton Magna, whilst in the same month four counts of birds leaving a roost at Priorslee Lake recorded 58 on 4<sup>th</sup>, 62 on 6<sup>th</sup>, 134 on 7<sup>th</sup> and 131 on 10<sup>th</sup>. The number at The Rea, Upton Magna had risen to 150 by 28 Oct, 58 were in SJ51R (Withington) (6 Nov), 50 at VP (24 Nov) and 100 in SJ40N (Longden) (31 Dec).

Records confirming breeding show that this species is widespread and common across the County.

Sixteen ringing recoveries were reported, the majority being local movements of up to 10 km. Of the others, one re-trapped at Cross Lane Head had originally been ringed in Kingsteighnton, Devon on 27 Oct 2008 some 154 days earlier, having moved 237km. Other birds ringed at Cross Lane Head and The Rea, Upton Magna were retrapped at Sleaford, Lincolnshire (488 days/ 138km) and Thorndon, Suffolk (113 days/259km) respectively. Finally, a bird found dead in Bishops Castle on 15 Apr had first been ringed in Shrewsbury (29km) on 4 Sep 2004, some 1,319 days previously.

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**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

Shropshire Status: Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

BBS: Present in 71% of plots, 182 birds recorded, an average of 5.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: Green List

Another well reported species, with 1,655 records submitted. The majority, 1,335, were collected through Atlas fieldwork, with only 320 submitted as casual records.

Unlike most of the other finches, the largest counts came from the late summer/autumn period when recently fledged juveniles flock together with the adults. As a consequence, 300 were at VP (18 Aug) with over 150 at the same site on 26 Sep. One high count did come from the second winter period with 140 birds in SO59P (Church Preen) (27 Dec). Also of interest is a record noting that 61 birds were caught and ringed in the arable field at VP on 28 Dec.

Records confirming breeding were received from 83 sites/tetrads spread across the County.

Nine ringing recoveries were reported for the year. Whilst six relate to relatively short movements (6 – 61 km), the other three indicate how far this species can travel; one bird ringed at Cross Lane Head on 9 Jan was re-trapped after 401 and 425 days at La Neuville, France a distance of 444 km. A second ringed at The Rea, Upton Magna, was seen 646 days later at Usk Reservoir, Powys, a distance of 110 km, whilst a bird ringed at East Grinstead, Sussex on 16 Jan 2006 was re-trapped at The Rea on 20 Mar (429 days) having travelled 253 km.

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**SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus*

Shropshire Status: Scarce passage migrant and breeder and fairly common winter visitor

BBS: Present in 6% of plots, 3 birds recorded

Conservation Status: Green List

A total of 645 siskin records was received during the year, of which 347 were associated with Atlas fieldwork and 298 were casual records. The species was reported in every month of the year, although only four reports came from August

and September, one of which was of a retrapped ringed bird.

The largest counts came at either end of the year. During the first winter period, 100 birds were in SJ53V (near Hawkstone Park) (25 Jan) with 60 in SO38A (Clun) (14 Feb). During the second period 60 were in SJ30J (Vennington) (11 Dec) with the same number in alders along the canal adjoining Whixall Moss (28 Dec).

There were nine reports of confirmed breeding, the majority of which were of fledged young, although one nest with young was located. Most of these records came from the south and west of the County, the exception being a report of recently fledged young from near Telford.

Interestingly, all 18 ringing recoveries related to the Society's Chairman, Peter Deans. Of these, only two involved birds moving between Cross Lane Head and Chelmarsh (9 km) with the remainder being longdistance movements. Ten were to or from Scotland with one bird being originally ringed in Harpsdale, Highland, a distance of 661 km in 427 days. Other birds came from Ballchraggon near Kilary, Highland (587 km, 45 days), Inverness (557 km, 22 days), Carphairn, Dumfries and Galloway (316 km 30 days) and Woodhouselee, Lothian (372 km, 16 days). Outside Scotland, birds moved from East Grinstead, Sussex (229 km, 14 days), Thetford, Norfolk (215 km, 338days) and the Isle of Wight (226 km 522 days) to Cross Lane Head. As can be seen, some birds can move quite long distances in only a few days whilst others have probably made the journey from Scotland to England and back at least once before they were recaptured.

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### LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 33% of plots, 84birds recorded, an average of 5.2 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Red List

A total of 588 records was received for this species of which 75% (443) were as a result of Atlas field work. Although recorded throughout the year, a total of only 23 records were submitted for the three months of August, September and October.

As might be expected, the largest flocks reported were during the two winter periods, although 110 were observed feeding on oil seed rape stubble near Pickstock (23 Aug). During the first winter period, the largest counts came from Rodway nr Crudgington (16 Jan) with 250 feeding on a wild bird crop and near Tibberton (2 Jan)

where 200 were counted in SJ62Q. In the second winter period, at least 300 birds were in SO79T (Folley) (28 Nov) and 110 in SO56E (Woofferton) (31 Dec).

There were 45 records of confirmed breeding, the majority from the southern half of the County.

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**LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis cabaret*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common winter visitor, scarce summer visitor and passage migrant

BBS: Present in 4% of plots, 29 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List

There were 285 records for lesser redpoll during the year, 165 of which were casual records and 120 associated with Atlas fieldwork.

Highest counts during the first winter period were 100 in Hawkstone Park (10 Jan), 70 in SJ50F (Betton Strange) (6 Jan) and 50 in SJ53Q (Prees Green) (14 Jan).

During the second period, however, the largest counts were much smaller than earlier in the year with only 30 on The Wrekin (2 Nov) and a similar number in Knuck Wood near Cefn Einion (28 Nov).

The only report of confirmed breeding consisted of recently fledged young in SO18W (north of Beguildy) (4 Jul).

Seven ringing recoveries were received during the year, five of which related to birds commuting between Cross Lane Head and Chelmarsh Reservoir, a distance of 9km. More interesting records were of a bird which had travelled 101km in 163 days from Ramsey Reservoir, Derbyshire to Shrewsbury (retrapped 29 Mar) and one retrapped on 17 Apr which had moved 299km from Sandwich Bay to Cross Lane Head in 164 days.

As well as associating with siskins and feeding on birch seeds, this species was also reported feeding on sunflower hearts and niger seed at feeding stations.

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**COMMON (MEALY) REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*

Shropshire Status: Scarce winter visitor (RBBP)

Conservation Status: Green List

Two were seen at Madeley on 10 Mar (PN).

A male and a female were present around the observer's garden feeding station for about thirty minutes. They were feeding on niger seeds with a small party of lesser redpoll.

This is the first record since 2005, but the species has been recorded in five of the ten years since the split with lesser redpoll.

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**COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*

Shropshire Status: Scarce, occasionally fairly common, resident and irruptive visitor in summer and autumn

Conservation Status: Schedule 1, Green List

A total of 36 records was received, of which 26 were casual records and ten as a result of the ongoing Atlas fieldwork. Five records came from the first winter period, no records were received during April and May, and the remaining sightings were from June through to December with 12 in July, six in November and seven in December.

During the first winter period there were two reports of seven birds; along the Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest (10 Jan) and at Clamp Pool, near Lizard Wood, Shifnal (2 Mar). In the second winter period, however, larger flocks were seen with 40 in SO78A (Kinlet) (17 Dec), and 35 at Blackgraves Coppice (21 Nov), with a similar number on Brown Clee (26 Dec).

Although reported as singing and being in suitable breeding habitat, there was no probable or confirmed evidence of breeding.

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**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Shropshire Status: Fairly common resident

BBS: Present in 24% of plots, 19 birds recorded, an average of 1.6 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Amber List

Of the 839 records received for this species, 234 were casual records and 639 as a result of Atlas fieldwork. This species was recorded in every month, with sightings spread relatively evenly throughout the year.

Not noted as a flocking species, most counts were of six birds or fewer. The most notable exceptions to this being 16 in the SVCP (19 Oct) and 12 in SO59P (Church Preen) (27 Dec), although these may well have been bird distributed across the tetrad.

As well as numerous records indicating possible or probable breeding, there were 46 reports of confirmed breeding from across the County.

Birds were reported feeding on dock seeds and seeds of the prickly sow thistle.

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**HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Shropshire Status: Rare winter visitor

Conservation Status: UKBAP, Red List, RBBP

At Brown Clee, one was found on 5 Jan (YC) and, subsequently, a maximum of three were seen here until 1 Mar. These birds sometimes gave excellent views and photographs were obtained.

Elsewhere, singles were seen at Ellesmere on 4 Jan (DPF), Loppington on 2 Feb (PWi) and Cockshutford on 12 Apr (RBP,) whilst two were recorded at Aston Botterell on 25 Feb (AWG).

It was an excellent showing for this species, with records from five sites. Hawfinch was last reported at Whitcliffe, its former winter stronghold within the County, in 2004 so the birds at Brown Clee gave most observers their first opportunity for some years to see one in Shropshire.

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**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citronella*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 61% of plots, 121 birds recorded, an average of 4 birds per occupied plot

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Red List

Although reported in every month, only one was for October and very few in March, August and September as these months were outside Atlas survey periods. Monthly total records are detailed in the below table.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
68	108	16	139	216	199	148	9	4	1	47	74

There were 18 flocks of 20 or more birds in the first winter period, peaking at 100 birds at Wistantow (8 Feb). The second winter period had only six flocks of between 20 and 40 birds.

In the breeding season most records were in single-figures with exceptions of 13 at SO37E (south of Clun) (24 Apr), ten at SJ70F (south of Telford) (10 Apr), 11 at Wenlock Edge (24 May) and 10 at SJ61H (Admaston) (9 Jun).

Because of increased Atlas coverage comparison with previous years is limited. However on flock size figures are lower with only one of over 50 birds.

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**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Shropshire Status: Common resident

BBS: Present in 10% of plots, 9 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Amber List

Reed bunting were reported in every month of the year from 280 sites, well above the figures for recent years. There were only six reports for August and October and seven in September, although this is a reflection of there being no Atlas monitoring during these months. About one third of the results were from seven sites, with VP contributing most of the larger flocks. Maximum counts per month at named sites

(rather than tetrads) are detailed in the below table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
VP	83	10	20	4	2	2	-	2	6+	20	50	50
Chelmarsh	6	5	6	2	6	5	4	-	1	3	2	5
Wood Lane NR	2	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	-	1	-	-
Whixall	3	-	-	1	2	-	5	-	-	-	10+	18

Noteworthy counts during Atlas monitoring were as follows; 20 within SJ50N (VP) (Jan 2), 11 at SO78M (Alveley) (Jan 24), nine at SJ50J (north of VP) (Feb 19) and 30 at SJ50I (west of VP) (Dec 7).

Over 120 breeding records were received with the initial probable breeding within SJ53D (Whixall) (Mar 20) and subsequently at SO48G (Stokesay), Wall Farm, SJ71J (Edgmond) and SJ31B (Middletown). The first confirmed breeding was at Wood Lane NR followed five other sites in May, eight in June and ten in July.

As well as the monthly counts shown, there were 37 others at VP, 26 for Chelmarsh and 20 each at Wood Lane NR and SVCP.

### **CORN BUNTING** *Emberiza calandra*

Shropshire Status: Scarce and declining resident

BBS: Present in 8% of plots, 17 birds recorded

Conservation Status: UKBAP, LBAP (Farmland Birds), Red List

Corn bunting was reported at 28 sites during the year - this was substantially down on recent years when between 40 and 60 sites were involved.

Only 11 of the 42 records were of more than one or two birds, and the maximum counts of the year were of 13 at Tibberton (11 Feb) and 30 at Eaton on Tern (13 Apr).

Breeding was confirmed with three pairs feeding young in barley at Beckbury (2 Jul). Singing was recorded at only 11 sites with five on one kilometre of road at Lilleshall, four at Eardington (31 May) and four at Tibberton (1 Jun).

These figures suggest further reductions in numbers for this red listed species in Shropshire, although this species retains a presence at traditional sites such as Beckbury, Ercall Heath, Eardington, Isombridge, Kingslow, Lilleshall, Rednal Airfield and Tibberton, albeit in smaller numbers.

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## FERAL SPECIES

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### **Golden Pheasant** *Chrysolophus pictus*

On 2 Apr, one was present, walking along a road, at Woolston (nr. Wistanstow). This species is native to forests in mountainous areas of western China, but feral populations have been established in the UK and elsewhere. In England, they may be found in East Anglia in the dense forest landscape of the Breckland, although numbers are decreasing.

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### **Reeves's Pheasant** *Syrnaticus reevesii*

The Reeves's pheasant is endemic to evergreen forests of central and eastern China. Two birds were reported during 2009; a male was at Chemarsh Reservoir (6 Sep) with a further unsexed bird within SO39G (north of Bishop's Castle) (2 Nov).

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### **Harris's Hawk** *Parabuteo unicinctus*

The harris's hawk is a bird of prey which breeds from the southwestern United States south to Chile and central Argentina. It is a popular species in falconry and occasional escapes occur. One bird was observed within SJ51E (north of Shrewsbury).

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### **Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus*

There were 22 records during 2009, the majority were of single birds, although four were observed at Cross Lanes, nr Molverley Green (18 Jan). This species breeds mainly in the south east and south west regions of Australia and was hunted to extinction in New Zealand, but later reintroduced. It is commonly kept in wildfowl collections in the UK, and all records relate to escaped birds.

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### **Eastern Rosella** *Platycercus eximius*

The eastern rosella is native to the south east of the Australian continent and to Tasmania and is kept as a cage bird in the UK. One bird was reported in Monkmoor, Shrewsbury (4 Jan).

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## **HYBRIDS**

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### **Greylag Goose x Canada Goose**

Reported from Priorslee Flash (14 records) and from VP (four records).

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### **Mallard x Pintail**

A drake was reported from Trench Pool, noted to be returning for at least its 6<sup>th</sup> year on 8 Dec.

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### **Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull ('Viking Gull')**

A possible 1st winter 'Viking gull' was present at Priorslee Lake, reported six times between 5 Feb and 11 Feb. This bird was accepted as this hybrid by the records committee, although the possibility that it was a large pale herring gull could not be ruled out.

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## **Officers and Management Committee** April 2008 to March 2009

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Vice Presidents: Hugh Blofield, Molly Donoghue, Chris Whittles, Colin Wright

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### **Management Committee:**

Chair Conservation Sub-committee: Graham Walker

Chair Development &  
Publicity Sub-committee: Sue Brealey

Other Elected Members: Jim Almond

Non-elected Member: Annie Andrews (Membership Secretary)

### **Other representatives:**

County Bird Recorder: Geoff Holmes

Field Trip Co-ordinator: Development & Publicity Sub-committee

Indoor Meeting Co-ordinator: Jude Duffy

Editor of "The Buzzard": Richard Camp

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## List of Observers

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Mr D C Ackland	Mr D Blanning	Mr P G Copestake	Mr B Fahey
Mr M R Adlam	Mr W G Blumsom	Mr R Corbett	Mrs B Falconbridge
Mr W Alexander	Miss K Boswarva	Mr R A Corfield	Mr M H Fallon
Mr J Almond	H Bowler	Mrs J Cowley	Mr R Farmer
Mrs S A Amies	Mr S Boyes	Mr S Cowper	Mr D Fairhurst
D Andrew	Mr C Bradley	Mr D L Cox	Mr D P Farncombe
Mr B Andrews	P G Bradley	Mr L Cox	A J Ferris
Mr J K Andrews	Mr C Brandon	Mr D Cragg	Mrs J Finney
Mr S E Andrews	Mrs C Brandon-Lodge	Mr P Cragg	Mr S Fogarty
Mrs A Andrews	S Brealey	Mr A Cross	A A Ford
Mr A J Arnfield	Mr A C Breed	Mr A Crossman	Mr B Ford
Mr J Arrowsmith	P Breeze	R Crowther	Mrs S Foster
Mr P Arrowsmith	Mr P Brewster	Mrs A C Cummings	Mr S Fowkes
Mr D Arthur	Mr P Bridges	Mr A Dale	Mr S France
Mr B R Ashley	Miss E J Broad	Mr E Davies	Mr R D Franklin
Mr P Ashworth	Mr J Bronner	Mr M J Davies	Mrs M Frater
Mr R Atkinson	Mr G Brown	Mr P Davies	Mr D W Fulton
W J Baber	Mr I Brown	Mr S Davies	Mr R Fussell
C S Backshall	Mr J R Brown	Miss C Davis	Mr R P Fussell
Mr J Bacon	Mr J Buckley	C Davis	G&S Wall
Mr I Baggley	MR P Burgess	J Davis	Mrs M Gardner
Mr M A Baigent	Mr M Burman	G Davison	Miss S Garforth
Mr J Baker	Mr D W Burns	Mr A P Dawes	Mr A W Gaunt
Mrs K Ball	Mrs B E Burns	Mr C S Dawson	Mr M George
Miss D E Balmer	Mr B Calder	Mr P Dawson	Mr L J Gibbons
Mr M Bannister	Mr R Camp	Mr T Dawson	S Gibson
Mr L Barber	Mr I Carrington	Mr P G Deans	Mr D L Gifford
Mr D Barnes	Mr M J Carson	Mr P K Dediccoat	Mr L Gifford
Mr D Barrow	Mr J Carter	Mr J Dedman	Mr J G Gissing
J Barrow	Mr P Carty	Mrs J Dibnah	Mrs G Glover
Mr D W Bastin	Mrs D Cearns	Prof. D Dilks	Mr M Godfrey
Mr P Bateman	Miss Y Chadwick	Mr A Dixon	Dr P Golborn
Mrs C Bateman	Mr K A Chapman	Mr S G Dodd	Mrs S Gooch
Mr K Bates	Mr D G Chester -	Mr W R B Dodwell	Mr D Goodwin
Mr M F Beard	Master	Mr C R Doughty	Mrs S Gorton
Mrs K Bedford	Mrs J Chidlow	Mrs J Duffy	S Gould
Mr A P Bell	Mr M Chorley	Mr C Dunkerley	Mr A Gouldstone
Mrs M Bell	Mr D Churchill	J Dunkling	Mr M G Grant
Mrs K Bennett	Mr S Churchill	Mr R Eardley	Mr H Green
Mrs M Bennett	Mr J Clarke	Mr T W Edwards	Mr N Green
Dr J Bent	Miss S Coates	Mr W E Edwards	Prof. J Greenwood
Mr R Berry	Mrs A Coggon	Mr G Egarr	Mr F Gribble
Mr C Biddulph	Mr S Coney	Mr I Ellis	Mr I Griffin
T Birch	Mr D Cookson	Mr A Emery	Miss H J Griffiths
Mr G C Bird	Mr M Cooper	Mr D Evans	Mr P J Gruar
Mr G Bishton	Mr T Cooper	Mr T Evans	Mrs C A Hadfield
Mr T Blackshaw	Mrs B Cooper	Mrs M Evans	Mr C Haigh

Mr R J C Halahan	Mrs L Jones	Mr J R Muller	Mr D Reynolds
Mr M Haley	Mr P Jordan	Ms L Munday	Mr A Riden
Mr G C Hall	Mr R Jukes-Hughes	Mr J B Murry	Mr A Roberts
Mr G Hall	C Jupp	Mr N Nash	Mr P L Roberts
Mr T Halsey	Dr W Kani	Dr P Nicholls	Mr R Roberts
Dr J Hamlet	Mr J Kean	Miss A Nicholls	Mr C Roche
Mr P Hammersley	Mrs M Keeping	Mr D Nicholls	Mr D Rogers
Mr D Hampson	Mr P A King	Mr S Nichols	Dr P Rutter
Mr J Handley	Mr R P Kinrade	Mr P Nickless	Mr P Rutter
Mr G A G Hann	Dr P J Knights	Miss R Nock	E Sandilands
Mr D Hardgrave	Mr G Kruckow	Mrs L Norton	Mr J Sankey
Mr R Hardy	Mr A Kydd	Mr S Nuttall	Mr S Savage
Mr R J Harris	Mr C W F Lamont	Mr N Oaks	Mr D Scott
Mr A Harrison	Mrs F Lancaster	Mrs S O'Donnell	Mr R E Scott
Mr J Hawkins	Mr A Latham	Mr J O'Hanlon	Mr D M Seager
Mr S Haycox	Mr R Law	Mr T L Ostler	Mr J N Sears
Mr J A Hazell	Mr M Leach	Mr M Ab-Owain	S Sharpe
A Hazlehurst	Mr J Lewis	Mr D Owen	Mr K Sharrock
Mr S Healey	Mr S P Lewis	Mr M Owen	Mr J Shaw
Mr A W Heath	Mr D Lincoln	Mr I Owens	Mr G Shearer
Mr B Henning	Mr J Lingard	Mrs N Pacult	A Shepherdson
Mrs L Hickman	Mr J Lloyd	Mr R B Palmer	Mr G Short
Mr J Hingley	Mr M Loft	Mr S Pardoe	Mr M Shurmer
Mrs P A Holbourn-	Mr S Lowe	Dr R Parker	Mr J Shutt
Williams	Mr D Luckhurst	Mr P Parker	Mrs G M Silk
Mr A R Holder	Mr J H Luscombe	Mr D Parkes	Mr M Sillence
Mr G E Holmes	Mr C Mabbutt	Mr C Parr	J Simister
Mr A Hotspur	Mr D MacKenzie	Mrs M Parsons	Mr J Sirrett
P C Howse	Dr J Mackintosh	Mrs K Patrick	D Skidmore
D Hudson	M Markland	Mrs B Patterson	Miss A Skull
T Huggett	Mr W Marler	Mr S Payne	Mr L N Smith
Mr T Hughes	Mr J Martin	Mr D Pearce	Mr M Smith
Mrs E Hughes	Mr T Mason	Mr R Pearce	Mr R Smith
Mr C Hull	Miss D Matthews	Mr R Peart	Mrs M Smith
Mr D J Humphries	Mr D G May	Mr D J Perks	L Smith
Mr G Hunt	Mr D Mayfield	E Phillips	R G Smith
M Hurley	Dr T Mccann	Mr R Phillips	Mr P A L Souster
Mr J Isherwood	J Mccarthy	Mrs S Pittam	Mr M Southam
Mr M Isherwood	Mr K A Mcgee	Mr M Pittaway	Mr D Sparkes
J&A Morris	A Middleton	Mr J Porter	Mr S Spiers
Mr D Jackson	D Micklewhite	S Powell	Mr D Stafford
Mr S Jaggs	Mr C J Millard	Mr I Prentice	J Stanley
Mr J Jarrett	Mr H J Miller	Mr L Price	Mr D Starkins
Mr C Johnson	Mr J Milner	Mr H M Prince	Dr M Starr
Mr A Jones	Mr J G Milton	Mr K T P Pryce	Mr A Steele
Mr B A Jones	Mr J Mitchell	Mr R Pugh	Mr M Stewart
Mr D W Jones	Mr P Moore	Mr B Purslow	Mr M Stokes
Mr R Jones	Mr H Morgan	Mr R Rees	Mr R M Stokes
Mr W Jones	Mrs C Moss	Mr J Reeves	Mr P Straughan
Mrs J Jones	Mr J Mossman	Mr A P Reid	Mr A Straw

Mr B Stretch	Mrs L Tucker	Mr D Wilkinson
Mr R A Stuttard	Mr J Turner	Mr B Willder
Mr J H Swift	Mr R E T Turrell	Mr D W Williams
Mr R Swift	Dr S N Twigger	Mrs E A Williams
Mrs S D Swindells	Mrs P Twitchwell	H Williams
H Tarry	C Uff	Mr C S Williamson
Mr G Taylor	Mr R Vernon	Miss S Wilson
N Taylor	C Wade	Mr E J Wilson
Mrs J E Teare	D Wade	P Wilson
Mr A Thomas	Mr J Wain	Mr S Wilson
Mr F R Thomas	Mr A Walker	Mr M Wood
Mr G Thomas	Mr C Walker	Mr J Woodley
Mr S Thomas	Mr G J Walker	Mr A Woods
Mrs M Thomas	Mr M J Wall	Mr M P Wooton
Mr J Thompson	Mr T Wall	M Wootton
Mrs Thompson	Mr M F Wallace	Mrs J Worthington
A K Thorne	Mr G Waterman	Mr D Wrench
Mrs M Tipping	Mr W R Watkins	Mr C E Wright
Mr D J Tittensor	Mrs A Watkins	Mrs J Wright
C Todd	Mr/s C & A Waygood	Mr G E Young
Mrs J Tomkinson	Mr T C Weale	
Mr C Toms	M Webb	
Mrs C Travis	M Webster	
Dr P Treves	Mr J Wells	
Mr D Trowman	Mr D Western	
Dr M Tucker	Mr C J Whittles	
Mr I Tucker	M Wickenden	
Mr J Tucker	Mrs J Wilcoxon	

Every effort has been made to ensure that the names of all those people who contributed records during the year in question are included above. However, due to the increasing volume of records, and the number of sources from which these records originate, it is possible that some observers are omitted. Consequently, it has been decided to exclude the observer list from future annual reports.

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## Field Trips and Indoor Meetings 2009

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### Indoor Meetings:

7 Jan	Blue Tits: Raising a Family	David Tideswell
4 Feb	Birds of the Wetlands	Geoff Trinder
4 Mar	Islay: An Island of Birds	Gordon Langsbury
1 Apr	AGM, followed by: African Wildlife Adventures	Sue Brealey
7 Oct	A Century at Venus Pool	Jim Almond
4 Nov	In Search of Vikings	Trevor Gunton
2 Dec	100 Years of "British Birds" (The Journal)	Bob & Anne Scott

### Field Trips:

17 Jan	Ynys Hir RSPB Reserve	<i>Martin George</i>
15 Feb	Dearne Valley, South Yorkshire (by coach)	<i>Sue Brealey</i>
28 Mar	Titterstone Clee & Bury Ditches	<i>John Tucker</i>
19 Apr	Doxey Marshes, Stafford	<i>Sue Brealey</i>
9 May	The Stiperstones & Bridges	<i>Jim Almond</i>
24 May	Woolston Eyes, Cheshire	<i>Estelle Hughes</i>
7 Jun	Elan Valley	<i>Helen J Griffiths</i>
19 Jul	Prees Heath & Whixall Moss	<i>Estelle Hughes</i>
18-20 Sep	Weekend in Devon	<i>Sue Brealey</i>
18 Oct	Dee Estuary	<i>Andy Latham</i>
14 Nov	Conwy RSPB Reserve	<i>Sue Brealey</i>
13 Dec	WWT Wetland Centre, Llanelli (by coach)	<i>Sue Brealey</i>

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**Last year's page 169**

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