

The Shropshire Bird Report 2019

Shropshire Ornithological Society



A simplified birdwatcher's Code of Conduct

- The welfare of birds must always come first.
- Do not damage habitat.
- Keep disturbance to a minimum.
- Keep the sites of rare breeding birds confidential. If you feel protection is necessary inform the Society. We have close co-operation with the RSPB Regional Office.
- Do not harass rare migrants. Consider all the circumstances very carefully before making the sighting known. If necessary keep the sighting secret until the bird has moved on.
- Abide by the legal requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act at all times.
- Respect the rights of landowners.
- Obey the Countryside Code.
- Respect the rights of other birdwatchers and other countryside users.
- Keep records of important sightings and make sure the Society receives them via the County Recorder.
- When bird watching abroad behave as you would expect to behave in Britain.

The 2019 Shropshire Bird Report

**The 60th Annual Report of the
Shropshire Ornithological Society**

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Lapland Bunting, Long Mynd, 14 September 2019 (*Jim Almond*)

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Ringling Data:

Thanks to all registered ringers whose results are included in this report

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this report:

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASF	Allscott Sugar Beet Factory
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BB	British Birds
BBRC	British Birds Records Committee
BBS	BTO Breeding Bird Survey
BoCC	Birds of Conservation Concern
BOS	The Birds of Shropshire (County Avifauna)
BOU	British Ornithologists' Union
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
CBC	Common Bird Census
CVSVFC	Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club
CWG	Community Wildlife Group
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EEC	European Economic Community
EGM	Ellesmere Group of Meres
EU	European Union
IOC	International Ornithological Congress
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NR	Nature Reserve
RAS	Retrapping Adults for Survival
RBBP	Rare Breeding Birds Panel
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SBOG	Shropshire Barn Owl Group
SBR	Shropshire Bird Report
SF	Sewage Farm
SMAD	Shropshire Migrant Arrival Database
SOS	Shropshire Ornithological Society
SPG	Shropshire Peregrine Group
SRG	Shropshire Ringing Group
SRSR	Shropshire Raptor Study Group
STW	Sewage Treatment Works
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
TG	Tudor Griffiths Group
TTV	Timed Tetrad Visit
UC	Upper Clun
UK	United Kingdom
UOWG	Upper Onny Wildlife Group
VP	Venus Pool
WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Editorial

Opinions and comments in this column are those solely of the Editor, and are not those of Shropshire Ornithological Society

2019 will stand as a milestone year in Shropshire Ornithology thanks to the publication of the first County Avifauna (*The Birds of Shropshire* (henceforth BOS)) in November. Bringing together the rich ornithological history of Shropshire and the results from the latest Atlas project 2008–11 extended to 2013, it will stand as the baseline for the County avian fauna for the foreseeable future.

Leo Smith, as Editor and Chief Author, is to be congratulated on a monumental effort, together with his band of authors and co-opted management team. The quality of the final book has been emphasised by excellent reviews (e.g. *British Birds*) and it will stand as one of the best County avifauna's recently published. But it gives the County much more than an interesting and informative read. The data collected and collated in the course of the Atlas projects, BBS and WeBS surveys and from the bird recording effort in the County and summarised in BOS, gives us a base from which to inform future conservation efforts, target surveys, and help gain a better understanding of future changes in our avifauna.

Leo Smith has pulled together in this report the first-cut Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire as a direct outcome of BOS and the data collected. The first version of this assessment is limited to breeding species, although it is intended to extend this to winter visitors and passage migrants in the future. Most importantly, however, it provides, at a glance, an instant summary of the status of each breeding species and will guide conservation and project efforts in years to come.

Also, in this edition, John Hawkins gives an overview of the birds and birding at Wood Lane reserve, in the first of a series of site articles to come in future years. John Lightfoot and Glenn Bishton's long-term Barn Owl nestbox scheme has resulted in a real population increase in this species and shows what can be done with targeted effort. John and Glenn have detailed their project results since 2002. John Martin, the new County Recorder, has written up the first documented County record of the continental race of the Black-tailed Godwit with comprehensive notes on its identification features. Ornithologists with an interest in identification are urged to submit detailed accounts of their finds, including the key features which enabled their identification, whether this is of distinctive subspecies or of County rarities. Finally, John Reeves provides his finder's account of the Lapland Bunting on the Long Mynd in September 2019 and shows what can be found in the County if you keep an eye on what is happening nationally with bird movements and sightings.

The Editor wishes to extend his thanks to all of these authors who have provided articles for publication; they really do enhance the interest and quality of the report. As a key publication of our Society the content of this annual report is very much down to yourselves as members and the active birdwatching community in the County. Articles on aspects of ornithology which interest you would be considered for publication in future reports whether these are popular style articles on your favourite sites or species, identification features or more scientific articles detailing your birding projects, all will be welcome. Please contact the Editor if you have ideas for such an article before starting it.

Martin George has compiled the Ringing report over the last few years, pulling together the details of ringed birds and recoveries from BTO data published each year. Martin is keen, though, to get direct information from ringers about their own specific projects which can provide that extra level of fascination about birds using techniques and methods not available, of course, to most ornithologists. Ringers are asked to contact Martin to discuss their projects and to provide summary information for publication in future ringing reports.

Finally, this is being written as we, hopefully, emerge slowly and carefully from an unprecedented lockdown, thanks to Covid-19 which is affecting all our lives. One of the great things about natural history in whatever form is that wherever you are there is always something of fascination and interest to take you away from the concerns of everyday life and people have certainly found the natural world to be a great diversion from the recent pandemic. Safe birding.

Gerry Thomas

Rarities Committee Report

John Martin

Hello

I have recently taken over from Ian Grant as County Recorder, when he retired from the role in this strange lockdown spring of 2020. I am very grateful to Ian for helping me get to grips with the systems he and predecessors have developed to deal with bird recording, assessing rarities, archiving the records and the various other recorder duties. It might take me a bit longer to get to know the County again, having moved back last year after a 30-year absence!

2019 Highlights

January began with a long staying adult Bewick's Swan in the VP-Cound area from 1st; the only two Waxwings of the year in Shrewsbury from 3rd; and a Great Grey Shrike which remained in the Clunton Coppice, Clun, Purslow and Radnor Wood area until 3 March.

In February, a Mealy (Common) Redpoll was at Postensplain, Wyre Forest on 17th. Next day the County's third documented Greenland White-fronted Goose was found at Attingham Park, remaining in the area until 25 March, when it was last seen at VP. A beautiful Coue's Arctic Redpoll provided a fine end to winter when it was photographed at Church Aston on 7 March.

Later in March, there were signs of spring with Black-necked Grebe and Dartford Warbler both found on 24th. April was a busy month for County rarities with a White Stork over Wem on 6th; a Wryneck at Trefonen on 13th; a male Channel Wagtail (the intergrade Yellow × Blue-headed) at Noneley on 20th (which stayed for six weeks); and a rare spring Yellow-browed Warbler in the Wyre Forest on 21st. The only Bar-tailed Godwit record of the year concerned at least three, sound-recorded as they flew over Condover in the middle of the night on 23rd/24th.

May was as exciting a month as ever, beginning with popular Dotterels on the Long Mynd from 2nd and a Little Stint at Noneley Flood on 9th, which departed early on 10th. The 16th saw what presumably was a returning male Montagu's Harrier seen and photographed independently by two observers on the Long Mynd, and what appears to be the first documented Black-tailed Godwit of the nominate race *limosa* in the County, at Whixall canal floods.

Summer highlights included a singing Firecrest (might this species be overlooked?) and proved breeding of Long-eared Owls.

August's strangest record concerned an adult Gannet on a manure heap at Tibberton on 12th. Returning waders included a record-equalling six Wood Sandpipers at VP on 9th (six, possibly seven, were at Shrewsbury STW on 10 August 1961!). It might have been an even better year for this species if more records had been documented (can you help? – see below). The outstanding September rarities were a Lapland Bunting on the Long Mynd from 14th to 16th and a brief Stone-curlew at Albrighton on 19th.

In October, there was a Yellow-browed Warbler (now almost expected) at VP on 6th; five Common Cranes over Wyre Forest on 20th (whether these were from the Great Crane Project or not is a moot point); and two long-staying Black Redstarts on Titterstone Clee from 27th. There were also four different Caspian Gulls in October, and two more in November – a welcome resurgence.

The Black Redstarts on Titterstone Clee were joined by two Snow Buntings from November 7th to 9th. Also in November, a drake Green-winged Teal was at Wall Farm from 11th to 25th and a Red-necked Grebe at VP (on the Cound Fishery pool) from 12th to 27th. December remained busy with an impressive 17 Hawfinches at Horderley; two new Caspian Gulls; and both Long-eared Owl and Yellow-browed Warbler at Shifnal STW at the end of the month.

Undocumented and Unproven Records

The records listed below were either considered unproven on the evidence provided to the committee or remain unsubmitted (the latter are marked with an asterisk). Only in a few cases did the committee feel a mistake had definitely been made. Some of the undocumented records in particular are likely to be genuine so we would very much welcome details of any of them, be it in the form of photos, sound recording or a written description. In some cases, we would have tried to chase observers about these records, but this slightly fell through the cracks during the handover period.

2019:

Bewick's Swan, 1, VP, 8 Dec*

Common Scoter, 1, drake, Chelmarsh, 28 Jul*

Quail, 1, ,VP, 06 Jun*

Black-necked Grebe, 1, River Severn, Shrewsbury, 24 Feb*

Osprey, 1, Market Drayton, 15 Mar*

Osprey, 1, Leighton, 03 Apr*

Osprey, 2, Bridgnorth, 19 May*

Osprey, 1, VP, 19 Aug*

Golden Eagle, 1, Wrekin, 27 Jun

Marsh Harrier, 1, Preston Montford, 19 May*
Marsh Harrier, 1, Crudgington, 10 Aug
Hen Harrier, 1, Rhos Fiddle, Clun Forest, 08 Sep
Honey Buzzard, 1, Coxall Knoll, 17 Jul
Rough-legged Buzzard, 1, Shifnal, 5 Jan
Corncrake, 1, Highley, 6 Jun
Grey Plover, 1, Picklescott, 21 Mar*
Dotterel, 3, Minton Batch, Long Mynd, 3 May*
Wood Sandpiper, 2, Whixall floods, 5 Aug, up to 3 10th to 12th*
Wood Sandpiper, 1, Allscott Sugar Beet Factory, 11 Aug*
Black Tern, 1, Ellesmere, 28 Aug*
Caspian Gull, 1, Wood Lane, 2 Mar
Hoopoe, 1, Claverley, 21–23 Aug*
Nightjar, 1, Button Bridge, 6 Oct*
Yellow-browed Warbler, 1, Ironbridge, 27 Nov*
Dartford Warbler, 1, Bury Ditches, 15 Dec*
Black Redstart, 2, pair, Llanfair Waterdine, 19 to 23 July
Great Grey Shrike, 1, VP, 26 Feb*
Common Redpoll, 1, Church Aston, 10 Mar
Common Redpoll, 1, Wood Lane, 23 Mar*
Hawfinch, 2, Horderley, 24 Mar*
Hawfinch, 4, Whitcliffe, 16 Jul*
Hawfinch, 1, Whitcliffe Common, 29 Dec*
Lapland Bunting, 1, Titterstone Clee, 5 Nov*
Snow Bunting, 1, Long Mynd (Pole Bank), 4 Mar

Changes to the List of County Rarities

The Rarities Committee decided to remove the following species from the list of species where documentation (which may take the form of a photo or recording) is required for publication. The following were removed from the list on 1 Jan 2020:

Quail

Great White Egret

Osprey

Cetti's Warbler

Marsh Harrier for Whixall Moss only, where it is now regular (submissions still required for birds elsewhere)

Note: Common Scoter *is* a County rarity although it was not listed as such in the table Shropshire County Checklist in this Report in 2018.

Review of the Year

Bird Report Editor

Temperatures and rainfall measurements are based on the long-term meteorological data set from RAF Shawbury. Unless specified, comparisons are against the 54-year mean values from 1965–2018.

January

Unusually in recent years, January brought cold weather in general with temperatures below the 54-year mean. Significantly drier than normal, however, and particularly cold towards the end of the month.

A quiet month in general, bird-wise, with three scarce species staying on from 2018. The only **Bewick's Swan** of the winter remained in the VP/Cound area from 1 Jan to the end of March, accompanying the **Mute Swans**. The juvenile **Great Northern Diver** stayed at Chelmarsh all month while the **Cattle Egret** found at Christmas 2018 continued to roost at The Mere, Ellesmere throughout January and early February and periodically then until April. **Great White Egrets** were much in evidence with sightings from widely spaced localities; Crose Mere, VP, Aston-on-Clun and Fenemere, although it is difficult to estimate the number of individuals involved.

An adult **Caspian Gull** was found at Chelmarsh on 28th and a first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** at The Mere on 27th was the precursor of several records of different individuals here through to March. A couple of **Jack Snipe** found at Cole Mere and Market Drayton must be unrepresentative of the numbers in the County in the winter. Amongst the scarce passerines, two **Waxwings** found at Cockshutt on 3rd were the only confirmed birds of the winter. As is usual, a **Great Grey Shrike** was found at Radnor Wood, Clun and remained until March. Several wintering **Blackcaps** were found but only a single **Chiffchaff**, a species which remains very scarce here in winter.

February

A chalk and cheese month, February got off to a cold, dry start with north-easterlies for the first days, ground frosts in the first week and many sheltered water bodies frozen. The second half of the month, however, was one of the warmest February spells on record with a record daytime maximum of 21°C at Kew Gardens on 21st. In

Shropshire, average temperatures for the month ended up 4°C higher than the 54-year benchmark with plants especially responding to the mild conditions with Bluebells and Wild Garlic sprouting early.

Good birds remained thin on the ground. The best sighting was probably the **Greenland White-fronted Goose** at Attingham in the company of **Canada Geese**. Found on 18th it remained until 25 Mar.

A **Common Redpoll** was in the Wyre at Postensplain on 17th. **Golden Plovers** are more numerous in the County later in the winters these days and the biggest count of the 2018–19 winter was 1,100 birds at Wall Farm on 18th. The milder spell in the second half of the month tempted an unusually early **Swallow** to stray into our county on 22nd (Atcham) and a **Cetti's Warbler** was found out of range on the same date at Shavington.

The Mere at Ellesmere has traditionally been the site for **Common Gull** roosting in Shropshire, although numbers have declined considerably in recent years. Three hundred on 23rd was the highest count this winter but these dispersed quickly after this date and only seven were there by 6 Mar.

March

A change in March to a more typical westerly airstream, with the jetstream tracking to the south of the UK and a series of low-pressure fronts coming in from the Atlantic. These culminated in Storm Gareth around 13th with gale force north or north-westerly winds across much of the country, though we missed the worst in Shropshire. Further fronts accompanied by strong winds remained a feature of the month. March ended with average temperatures 2°C warmer than usual and slightly wetter, reflecting the mild but humid Atlantic airstream.

Early in the month the second County record of **Coe's Arctic Redpoll** at Church Aston was probably the star bird of March, although a **Dartford Warbler**, found on the Long Mynd on 24th and staying into April, ran it a close second.

Two adult **Mediterranean Gulls** in breeding plumage at The Mere on 8th tempted speculation about breeding locally but promptly disappeared. A pair of **Black-necked Grebes** graced Cole Mere on 24th with another or the same pair at The Mere into April. Both pairs moved on, disappointing those who fancy this species to colonise Shropshire.

The strong westerly airstream this month failed to deliver any obvious wind-blown birds to our County but nevertheless March is that exciting month with

the disappearance of wintering birds and the arrival of the first summer visitors. **Wheatears** appeared from 9th on The Long Mynd and the 18th on Clee Hill, **Ring Ouzels** from 21st at Ratlinghope with up to seven birds at Titterstone Clee, and **Tree Pipits** were here from 26th with a sighting at Westcott, and other birds found at Meaton Lane before the end of the month. An **Osprey** at Monkmoor on 31st was the first of the year, with the same bird or another at VP later the same day.

A single **Short-eared Owl** on 23rd was on the Long Mynd.

April

April conditions continued the wet early spring with temperatures a little above average. Relatively calm conditions prevailed for much of the month, but the remnants of Storm Hannah brought strong westerlies on 27th.

A busy month of birding in April with lots of interest. Good birds started with a **White Stork** near Wem on 6th. A group of seven **Little Gulls** at The Mere on 8th stayed for several days. Another **Short-eared Owl** appeared briefly on The Long Mynd on 12th and a **Wryneck** at Trefonen on 13th was an excellent spring record. Whixall started to hold **Marsh Harriers** from 17th. A **Channel Wagtail** was a good find at Noneley on 20th. A singing **Yellow-browed Warbler** in Wyre Forest on 21st was perhaps not entirely expected but in such an expanse of forest neither was it surprising.

Regular noemigging at Condoover was rewarded with three overflying **Bar-tailed Godwits** on 23rd. Storm Hannah may have been the culprit for the occurrence of four **Arctic Terns** at The Mere and at White Mere on 27th and a **Kittiwake** at Priorslee Lake next day, although both species are known to migrate overland to the North Sea in spring.

Meanwhile, the commoner spring migrants arrived in some force, starting with **Willow Warblers** from 1st (Telford), **Redstarts** from 3rd (at Clunton) and **Pied Flycatcher** from 7th (at Craig Sychtyn). **Garden Warbler** was first found at The Lawley on 12th whilst from 16th many first sightings of the year were obtained with **Sedge Warbler** at VP on this date: **Lesser Whitethroat** at Trefonen and **Cuckoo** at Tibberton on 17th, **Reed Warbler** (VP) and **Whitethroat** (three at Granville CP) on 18th and **Whinchats** on 21st at both The Long Mynd and at Whixall Moss, with **Wood Warblers** singing at Mortimer Forest on the same day. Finally, **Hobby** appeared on 27th with a bird at Silvington, with three at Maesbury Marsh next day.

The final **Brambling** record of the winter was also on 21st.

May

Anticyclonic conditions for much of May brought coolish conditions with average temperatures, very slightly warmer maximum temperatures but colder minimums. Very dry with 27mm of rain recorded for the month (54-year mean 57mm).

One of the most eagerly anticipated events of the annual birding calendar is the arrival of **Dotterel** on the Long Mynd, often in the last few days of April or first few days of May. In the recent decade this has become more sporadic, with no sightings in some years. This year two birds by the Burway on The Long Mynd on 2nd–3rd were the only sighting.

Thanks to high water levels there was a nice wader passage at Whixall canal floods, with up to four **Greenshank**, seven **Redshank**, a **Ruff**, continental **Black-tailed Godwit** and two **Grey Plovers** on 15th–18th. A spring **Little Stint** is a most unusual record and one at Noneley on 9th–10th was a popular visitor. There was a nice movement of **Black Terns** early in the month, with up to five at Cole Mere and Chelmarsh on 7th, followed by seven at White Mere and a single at VP on 8th.

Quail were heard at Noneley on 10 May, with up to four here through to July. Other May records were from Aldersey and Shifnal. A sprinkling of May **Great White Egrets** was interesting, presumably non-breeders but perhaps the vanguard for future breeders in the County?

Marsh Harriers were at Whixall Moss and Choulton while for the second year running a male **Montagu's Harrier** was seen briefly on 16th on The Long Mynd but not seen thereafter.

Amongst the passerines, **Grasshopper Warblers** were around at Whixall Moss, the Stiperstones and Lydbury North. **Spotted Flycatchers** put in their usual late first appearance at Earls Hill and The Wrekin from 11th whilst a great find was a singing **Firecrest** in Plowden Woods on 30th.

June

June more than made up for May, rainfall-wise, with an enormous 115 mm falling in the month, double the usual amount. The wetter weather meant the temperatures were a little lower than average and sunshine hours only two-thirds of normal.

Perhaps the best record of the month was the confirmed breeding of **Long-eared Owls** at Prees Higher Heath; not the first sighting in this location and surely not the only breeding pair in the County.

An **Osprey** at VP on 8th was thought to be a non-breeding bird and was certainly a little late for a migrant. A **Nightjar** was found on Haughmond Hill. The first adult **Green Sandpiper** of the autumn period was already on the move at VP on 25th.

July

Not as warm as 2018, July temperatures were just 1°C above average, although there were occasional very warm days. Much drier than normal.

Once the breeding season is over, July often proves to be an interesting month with birds starting to move. Continued high-water levels at Whixall canal floods proved attractive with up to three **Green Sandpipers** here and 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** on return passage on 7th. An adult **Dunlin** was here on 14th, with the first juvenile found at VP on 29th.

An eclipse drake and a female **Garganey** were at Whixall canal floods from 25th when the male was heard singing. Overland passage of **Common Scoter** was evident on 28th with four birds on The Mere.

July gull-watching is always worthwhile, with the southern species starting to disperse from breeding grounds in eastern and southern Europe becoming more frequent. The more unusual species are not swamped by the larger numbers of common species quite this early, so it is a good time to get familiar with these species. **Yellow-legged Gulls** appeared from 8th (at Spoonley) but 12 were at Chelmarsh on 29th. A juvenile **Mediterranean Gull** at White Mere on 29th might have been from further south or east in the UK but could equally have been raised relatively locally.

August

Undistinguished weather-wise, but continuing the slightly warmer trends of recent years, about 1°C above normal, but also slightly wetter and more humid.

Waders continued to provide most interest in August, again with Whixall a focus. Up to six **Green Sandpipers** here (9th) and five at VP 5th) were not unexpected. VP also held six **Wood Sandpipers** on 9th, part of an influx into the UK. One to three **Ruff** were here from 21st into September. Wood Lane had a **Turnstone** on 11th–14th.

The most unusual autumn record was probably the adult **Gannet** on a manure heap at Tibberton on 12th. An **Osprey** was at VP on 15th and **Marsh Harrier** here on 26th.

By the end of the month, **Meadow Pipits** were already flocking in good numbers on The Long Mynd.

September

Another very wet month with long spells of rain culminating in a doubling of the 54-year average. Marginally warmer than normal; continuing on the windy side.

Some interesting records this month of which perhaps the most unexpected was a **Stone-Curlew** at Albrighton on 19th. A juvenile **Lapland Bunting** on the Mynd from 14th was a good one, replicated elsewhere in the UK at this time. The first **Golden Plovers** of the autumn were found on the Mynd on 14th with **Hen Harrier** here next day.

Whixall canal floods had a light passage of **Ringed Plovers** with a maximum of four birds on 8th–9th. **Meadow Pipit** passage peaked at 90 birds at New Works, near Telford on 4th, 60 on The Long Mynd on 14th and 40 at Whixall Moss on 28th.

October

The first air-frosts of the winter were recorded towards the end of the month, as is usual. But overall, the wet conditions of September continued for another month with yet another doubling of the usual monthly rainfall amount. 1°C cooler than average.

A variety of the expected scarcer species this month kept birdwatchers' interest, with perhaps the scarcer gulls the most rewarding. **Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked with 18 individuals in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10th, with up to four at Chelmarsh during the month. **Caspian Gulls**, too, were found with up to three different individuals at The Mere from 10th–19th and a single was reported at Priorslee Lake.

A **Scaup** at The Mere on 19th was the only record of this species. Five **Cranes** were a good find at Meaton Lane on 20th.

The late autumn passerine migrants proved interesting with **Yellow-browed Warbler** at VP on 6th. One or two **Black Redstarts** on Titterstone Clee from 27th and **Ring Ouzels** here peaked at eight on 16th. **Meadow Pipits** continued to move with a high count of 200 at Cantlogrove on 12th. The first autumn **Brambling** was on the Long Mynd on 16th.

November

Less rainfall than in September or October, nevertheless the rainfall remained above the 54-year mean. The cooler spell starting in October continued with cloudy conditions for much of the month and an overall mean temperature 1°C less than normal.

A **Red-necked Grebe** at VP and the adjacent Cound Fishery was the good bird of November from 12th, although a drake **Green-winged Teal** at Wall Farm was also a good find on the previous day.

Common Gulls returned in numbers this month with a decent roost count of 300 at The Mere on 24th. A **Snow Bunting** on Titterstone Clee on 2nd–8th was the only record this year on a typical date, whilst a **Firecrest** was caught for ringing at Shavington Park on 30th.

December

Rainfall levels returned at last to normal levels this month, temperatures marginally above the long-term mean.

A **Long-eared Owl** at Shifnal STW on 1st was not the only good find here, with the latest County record of **Yellow-browed Warbler** on 29th and a roost count of 200 **Reed Buntings** on 1st being other site highlights. **Hawfinches** are more and more sporadic in normal years, so 17 birds at Horderley on Christmas Day were most welcome.

Wood Lane Nature Reserve

John Hawkins



Wood Lane Nature Reserve was created 22 years ago by Mr Bill Griffiths and me. This was in response to the interest shown by local birdwatchers who watched the area from the roadside and recorded their sightings in a book in a tin box on an Oak tree.

The area was originally a quarry which had then been put back to farmland and which in spring attracted Lapwings and Little Ringed Plovers on passage. Under the supervision of Mr Griffiths, Tudor Griffiths Group did the work to create a shallow scrape and a slightly deeper pool with three islands on the site.

The reserve is now managed by Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) in conjunction with TG Group. Together, they initially built two hides, Shelduck and Lapwing. Five years



Wood Lane aerial view 3 Sep 2007 (*John Hawkins*)

ago, a new hide (Heron) was built overlooking the larger of the pools and the Shelduck hide has now become a geological field station. Another hide (Oak), was donated by Sue Tuerena in 2017, in memory of her husband, and is situated in the woodland, which is part of Forest School, an area used by the educational side of SWT.

The site is maintained by TG Group and SWT volunteer work parties of which there are two a year.

Wood Lane plays an important role in SWT's educational programme as it attracts over 1,000 children from local schools each year. They not only learn about conservation, but also the working side of the site through a tour of the landfill and recycling activities that are still carried out in the adjacent areas, teaching them how their waste is dealt with.

The reserve itself attracts some scarce species for the County, with Avocets and Pectoral Sandpipers being among several waders recorded over the years. Gadwall occasionally breed and Shelduck also nest in the quarry, gathering on the wetland pre- and post-breeding. The site boasts the first (and so far only) recorded Shropshire breeding of Mediterranean Gulls.

2019 saw three pairs of Oystercatchers and a pair of Little Ringed Plovers fledging young as well as a Reed Warbler colony of 12 pairs. The Black-headed Gull colony produced a good number of young and the Sand Martin colony, having moved to the new quarry site, had a more successful breeding season, attracting Hobbies daily.

In autumn, a feature is the number of Curlews that visit – sadly nowhere nearly as many as fifteen years ago but with a few juveniles in 2019. Some winters, Lapwings can peak at over 1,000 and large numbers of Snipe are also attracted. A Kingfisher bank has been created and up to four birds have been seen.

The site is watched regularly, on virtually a daily basis, by a dedicated group of birdwatchers who record their sightings and maintain the bird feeders with seed provided by SWT. The records are sent to SWT by Brian Purslow. In 2016 a pair of Bearded Tits was recorded as arriving in October and staying until the end of April.

Work on the wetlands to deal with the invasive *Crassula* weed is an ongoing task. Weather depending, the relining and gravelling of the islands is also scheduled for 2020 as is the removal of scrub and trees to expand the reed bed. A review and upgrade of signage will also be undertaken to make the site more welcoming.

Access to Wood Lane is free, although a permit from SWT is needed for the hides, which have coded locks. An application form is available from the Shrewsbury office or the website. No dogs are permitted on site.



Water Rail, Wood Lane, 29 Jan 2006



Greenshanks, Wood Lane 26 Sep 2017 (*John Hawkins*)

Identification of Black-tailed Godwit of the continental race, *Limosa l. limosa* at Whixall Moss in May 2019

John Martin

Introduction

I was at Whixall canal floods on the evening of 16 May 2019 with Janette Martin, mainly to see the Grey Plover(s) – we only saw one, but in fine summer plumage. The site looked in excellent condition for waders, so I was pleased to hear a Black-tailed Godwit calling and watch it fly in and land at about 20:05 hrs. The evening light was slightly fading already but it was obviously a fairly dull looking bird with rather long legs, especially above the ‘knee’ and a longish and bright orange bill with a darker tip. The possibility of it being of the much scarcer nominate race *limosa* did cross my mind (trying to find this subspecies at my former patch in Avon, amongst the many regular *islandica*, had been quite a thing for me over the past c15 years – I had eventually found a juvenile, as well as several juveniles at nearby Slimbridge, Gloucestershire) so I tried to grab a few shots of it. Later that evening, John Reeves posted a photo of the same Godwit on the Shropshire Bird News ‘WhatsApp’ group and suggested it looked very much like a ‘continental’ (i.e. *limosa*). While I find the



Black tailed Godwit *limosa*, Whixall Floods, 16 May 2019 (*John Martin*)

fresh juveniles of the two subspecies relatively easy to identify, the older birds are much more variable and I really struggle with them, so credit to John for suggesting this publicly. Unfortunately, the bird was not seen again.

Identification

Knowing the difficulty of identifying non-juveniles I sent my photos to a friend I knew to be familiar with the form and interested in its identification. He expressed some qualms about the bird, considering that the impression was not quite right for *limosa*, both structurally (bill and loral length) and plumagewise (perhaps too many dark markings below, on the wing coverts and in terms of the tertial pattern) and it was more likely to be my old nemesis of a second calendar year *islandica*. I was slightly surprised and disappointed, but more or less gave up on it at that point.

Later in the summer, however, a Tweet drew attention to a new Black-tailed Godwit identification paper on *limosa* by Mark Golley, based on thousands of hours of scrutiny at Cley, Norfolk, of countless *islandica* but also many (including a minority of colour-ringed) *limosa*. On reading this I regained some confidence ... it might be *limosa* after all, but the odd dark centred wing covert and a single 'summer patterned' tertial still concerned me. I sent my photos with some brief background to the sighting to Mark for comment. I was absolutely delighted with his swift and very positive response. He accounted for the features I was still worried about and was unequivocal that the bird was indeed a *limosa*!

The following analysis is entirely Mark's, although I have condensed and paraphrased the original longer version:

I would call it an adult male: it is definitely a male and I see nothing to suggest it's a younger bird.

Overall appearance

1. Even though it looks a little dark in your shots, it is bang-on in terms of colour tone for spring male *limosa*. I have always likened the colour to a tomato soup tone, subtly different (to my eyes at least) to the harsher, brighter tones of a striking male *islandica*.

2. Structurally it's perfect. The bills on males are never as long as those of females (either form) and I like the rather thick base to the bill (especially again on a male), which almost looks like it's stuck on with *limosa*, whereas it tends to be better proportioned at the base on male *islandica*. The leg length is spot-on for *limosa*. Male *limosa* will never look as gangly, gawky and awkward as females (*limosa*

markedly so, but that look can be ‘replicated’ by some big female *islandica* – it is a pitfall, but less so for males). Your Shropshire bird is a great example of the longer-legged-than-people-think look of male *limosa*, with both the tibia and tarsus being rather long-looking.

Plumage

Head pattern:

I have seen many *limosa* with a broader supercilium, but this is perfectly acceptable. It’s nice and long, rather broad in front of the eye (on the lores especially), nice and white, and all bordered with a dark, broad half-length eyestripe.

Upperparts:

It’s May and look how sparsely patterned your Shropshire *limosa* is, again, typical of the form. It’s pretty much in full summer plumage. The summer feathers within the bird’s upperwing all show the classic pattern seen on countless (though not every) summer *limosa* – the patterns are so subdued as to barely be noticeable and the feather centres look small and blackish toned, with barely any colour to the tips or fringes.

With *islandica*, although sometimes showing only a few summer-patterned feathers, these have highly contrasting patterns with lots of rich rusted orangey-red (the dominant colour) at the base and on the tip. *Limosa* will almost always show only a dull straw-yellow colour to any of the fringes and tips of any summer-patterned feathers.

The tertials are also all spot-on the Shropshire *limosa* has (by the look of it) one summer tertial. Often they show nothing other than plain brown tertials but when they do have summer tertials, this is the pattern I’d expect: subdued patterns and colour tones that are far removed from Icelandic birds.

The handful of summer coverts (two or three) is also no problem. While some male *limosa* show no summer-patterned coverts, even in ‘high season’, this one shows a handful, but importantly with subdued-looking patterns. It’s a giveaway when looking at an adult in May.

Underparts:

The colour tone, as mentioned already, is spot-on. The colour appears to be at the more extensive end of the variation of *limosa*. The amount of dark barring is right where you would want it to be for *limosa*. The extent of it, in an ad hoc format,

along the flanks and central belly is textbook. Icelandic birds rarely, if ever, show the extent of bars that male *limosa* does.

Bare part colours:

The bill colour is that lovely scallop coral orange that is so familiar on photos of *limosa* on the breeding grounds. Icelandic birds can show similar colour tones on the bill, but I never think they have that almost vibrant quality of male *limosa*.

Status in Shropshire and conclusions

Black-tailed Godwit is a scarce passage migrant and very rare winter visitor in the county (Harris, in Smith, 2019). They have been regular in small numbers since the 1960s and annual since 1988 with a big upturn in records from the mid-1990s. This reflects the huge increase in the population of the Icelandic subspecies, which winters in Britain and now numbers over 40,000. In contrast, the British population of nominate *limosa* is struggling with only around 50 breeding pairs and these mainly winter in Africa. The vast majority of Shropshire records, certainly in recent years, relate to *islandica*, indeed there appear to be no published records of nominate *limosa* in the County, so technically this is the first Shropshire record. It is clearly worth checking every 'Blackwit' for *limosa*, which is likely to be rare but is also easily overlooked. In particular, early (from late June) fresh but dull buff-toned juveniles (as opposed to immatures) are likely to be readily identifiable from the fresh bright orange-toned returning *islandica*, likely only from a month or more later. The threatened British breeding population of *limosa* is being intensively studied and many are ringed, which would make identification of at least some of them easy. For the rest, careful study of Mark Golley's paper, an updated version of which is due to appear in British Birds, will be invaluable.

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Acknowledgements

Huge thanks to Mark Golley for sharing his time, expertise and enthusiasm on Blackwit identification, without which this bird would have remained unidentified.

Finder's Account – Lapland Bunting on the Long Mynd

John Reeves

On the evening of 13 September, I was struggling to decide where to go birding the following morning. Bored with visiting the same disappointing local wetlands and with nothing worth twitching further afield I needed to do something different. In recent days I had noted there was a decent arrival of Lapland Buntings in the UK and thought there must be an outside chance of one of the Shropshire hills. So I decided on walking the top of the Long Mynd, then maybe on to the Stiperstones; in the likely event of seeing nothing unusual, at least I would get some exercise!

I arrived at the parking area by Robin Hood's Butts, at the north end of the Long Mynd, just after first light on a lovely clear morning. As I slowly got ready for my walk, I had a heard-only Tree Pipit go over, a Merlin darted past and I could hear Red Grouse calling nearby.

As I started walking down the path towards the shooting butts, I flushed a brown passerine off the path from not far in front of me. I didn't really get anything on plumage and it didn't call but I had a strong hunch it may be something interesting as it didn't appear to be any of the usual suspects, e.g. Skylark or Meadow Pipit, and my mind was already wondering what it would be.

The bird flew away down the path but came down again, unfortunately back on in the shade and a bit far off for bins, but a quick turn of its head shouted out Lapland Bunting, without getting enough to confirm this.

I slowly edged forward to get within range to see it properly and after what seemed like an eternity I got within range and saw it properly to confirm its identity! It was here that the excitement and disbelief kind-of got in the way of my thinking! I knew I was looking at a Lapland Bunting as I see them most years, but my brain went blank to what the key features actually were! So I took a few videos on my phone handheld to my bins and sent them to a couple mates just to double-check I hadn't gone mad and then put the news out on the Shropshire WhatsApp group.

Whilst I was waiting for the first birders to turn up the bird was performing brilliantly and got closer to me. There were a couple of scares as the first of many runners and dog walkers came past but despite putting the bird up, often calling, it would just fly around and then come back down to the same general area of the path. Thankfully, it stayed in place for the first people to arrive and I could then go back to the car and get my scope for better video and pictures!



Breeding Success of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* In Shropshire 2002–19: a report by the Shropshire Barn Owl Group



John Lightfoot & Glenn Bishton

1 Introduction

This report summarises the breeding success of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* in Shropshire during the period 2002–2019. The Shropshire Barn Owl Group (SBOG) is a voluntary group which has been working since 2002 to increase the breeding population of Barn Owls by providing nestboxes in areas of suitable habitat and working with farmers and other landowners to improve and conserve their habitat. Four-hundred and thirty nestboxes have been installed across Shropshire to provide new breeding opportunities and to replenish natural nest sites lost to decay and development. In total, 2,932 nestbox and natural nest site inspections have been completed under a Schedule 1 licence from the British Trust for Ornithology.

2 Egg laying and clutch size

Barn Owls are well-established on their breeding sites in February and most eggs are laid in late April and May. To avoid disturbance of incubating females, SBOG does not ordinarily commence nestbox monitoring until June so data on laying dates and clutch sizes is anecdotal. The earliest date of the first egg was 7 Mar, in 2007, a particularly productive breeding season. 2014, another successful breeding season, also produced an early laying date of 15 Mar. The latest first egg date was 5 May in 2004. Clutch sizes ranged from one to seven.

3 Breeding success in nestboxes and natural sites 2002–2020

In total, 20,607 Barn Owl chicks have been produced in nest sites monitored by SBOG since 2002. Table 1. Some additional records since 2015 provided by the Upper Onny Community Wildlife Group and independent recorders are included in the data. The mean number of chicks produced per successful brood in Shropshire for the eighteen years 2002–2019 is 2.9. Studies elsewhere suggest that a long-term

average productivity of about 3.2 young per pair is required to maintain viable populations so the long-term productivity rate for Shropshire’s Barn Owls appears to be viable and the population is probably self-sustaining.

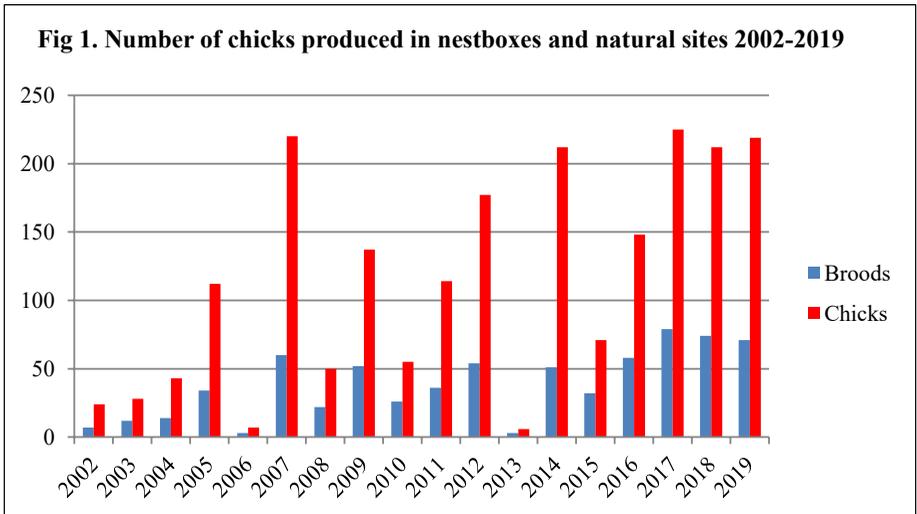
Table 1. Breeding success according to type of nest site 2002–2019

Shropshire Barn Owl Group							
	Tree nestbox	Building nestbox	Pole nestbox	Tree cavity natural	Building natural	Other natural	All sites
Total Broods	423	143	19	84	16	3	688
Total chicks	1255	452	57	239	47	10	2060
Mean No. chicks	2.9	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.9	3.3	2.9

3.1 Nestboxes

In total, 1,764 Barn Owl chicks have been produced in nestboxes (Table 1 and Fig 1). Eighty-five per-cent of broods and 85% of chicks were produced in nestboxes. The increase in the availability of nestboxes year on year and the firm establishment of existing new pairs at nestbox sites means that they produce a significantly greater proportion of chicks compared with natural sites. It is highly probable that nestboxes are now the predominant nest site for breeding Barn Owls in Shropshire.

Fig 1. Number of chicks produced in nestboxes and natural sites 2002-2019



The average lapse time for the occupation of a nestbox by a breeding pair from a sample of records is 17 months. Roosting Barn Owls have been enticed to use nestboxes even quicker: for example, a pole box succeeded in attracting a roosting Barn Owl within 28 days, and tree nestboxes have been occupied by roosting owls within two months. A nestbox installed at Burlton only on the 1 May 2016 had an adult female with at least two chicks about ten days old on 9 Aug – probably SBOG’s quickest occupation by a successful breeding pair.

From the onset, the lack of natural cavities appeared to be restricting the breeding potential of the Barn Owl in Shropshire and an intensive programme of nestbox installation was identified as a priority. Tree nestboxes are substantial structures comprising an ‘A’ shaped box with a flat apex to provide a platform on which young owls can settle and exercise prior to fledging. Large, mature isolated trees in the middle of fields or along hedgerows, are the preferred option on which to site them. Male and female Barn Owls roost apart for much of the year and often two tree nestboxes or a tree nestbox and an internal tea-chest are installed in close proximity, perhaps less than a few hundred metres apart, to provide both nesting and alternative roosting sites. Where a lone tree nestbox has been intermittently occupied by Barn Owls but has been taken over by a Stock Dove, for example, another nestbox sited close by has succeeded in providing a permanent Barn Owl site.

Modified tea chests are installed in internal sites, usually affixed to wooden beams in traditional barns and outbuildings or to girders and walls in modern agricultural buildings. Where a barn or similar structure is to be converted to a dwelling, SBOG has in several cases been able to construct an owl window and loft space in mitigation. A small entrance hole is retained or fashioned in an outer wall behind which an enclosed box of around one square metre, fully insulated and enclosed but accessible for inspection, is constructed. Where hunting habitat exists but there are no suitable trees available, SBOG resorts to fixing large, rectangular, nestboxes to a reclaimed telegraph pole. This has the advantage of inserting the nestbox directly within a field of prime foraging habitat.

Additional species that have utilised nestboxes include Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Feral Pigeon *Columba livia domestica*, Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*, Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* and Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*.

3.2 Natural tree nest sites

Two-hundred and ninety-six Barn Owl chicks have been produced in natural sites (Table 1 and Fig 1). Data on the location and number of tree sites is limited due to

their inaccessibility. SBOG will identify some tree sites on surveys but those lying on private land to which SBOG has not had access are reliant on being brought to SBOG's attention by landowners or other recorders.

Four tree species have been utilised as breeding sites – Ash, English Oak, Sycamore and Black Poplar. Ash (48%) and English Oak (48%) were most frequently utilised. Trees utilised for breeding were situated in hedgerows within fields, hedgerows along the roadside or in isolated trees in fields: trees at the edge of woodland were ignored. It is unlikely that Barn Owls prefer any particular tree species but will utilise those trees that are predominant in the landscape and have a propensity to form holes large enough to support a brood of Barn Owls.

Most tree nest sites comprise a cavity in the tree trunk with some in a branch and most are in live trees. Examination of some trees indicated that the cavities in the tree trunks comprised a hole or gash which had exposed the heart wood to infection and rot. Nest sites in branches were located at some point along the branch where part of the branch had snapped off or where the branch adjoined the trunk and the whole branch had fallen away, again exposing the heart wood to decay. The height of the nest hole above ground ranges from three to ten metres. The actual nest platform inside the cavity can be some depth below the entrance and in one instance where the nest hole was 10 metres above ground level the nest platform within the tree trunk was at ground level. English Elms were historically important before Dutch Elm disease killed most of them.

3.3 Natural building nest sites

Natural nest sites in buildings are discovered intermittently and have comprised a cavity behind a block wall in an old farm building, a gap between bales in a Dutch barn, the floor of a ceiling in a disused chapel, an old water tank in a disused farm building and another in a World War Two ammunition store building, the chimney of a ruined building and the apex of a roof in a derelict industrial building.

The reason for the recorded low occupancy of buildings is unlikely to be due to building nest sites going undetected by site surveys. Nearly 400 surveys have been conducted and whilst not all sites supported suitable outbuildings, where they did they were surveyed. It is feasible that occupancy of buildings in Shropshire has never been significantly prolific compared with trees, or that farmers with Barn Owls breeding in buildings are keeping the sites confidential and many remain undisclosed. It is highly probable that suitable farm buildings are now relatively scarce or those that remain are unsuitable for breeding Barn Owl.

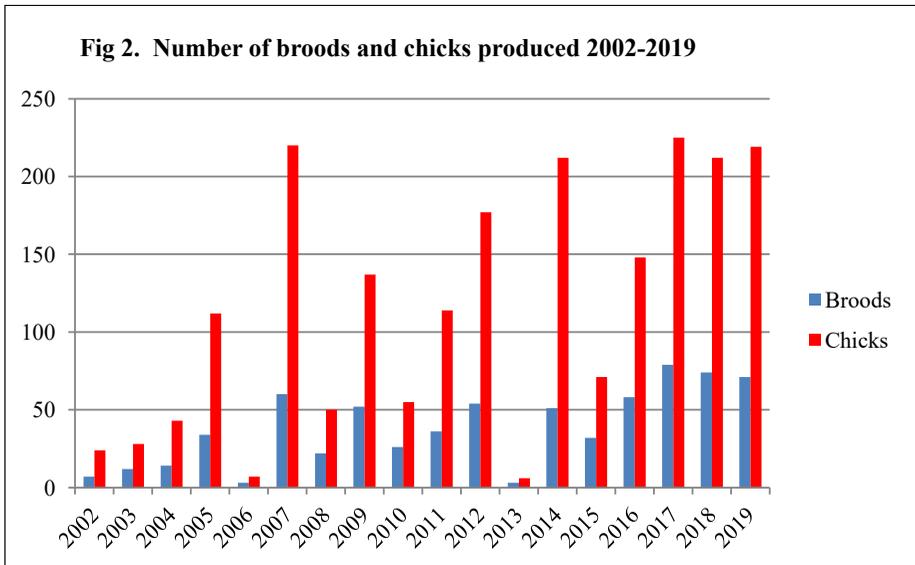
Although most breeding occurs in tree nestboxes, internal sites, whether nestboxes or natural sites within buildings, are marginally more productive than tree nestboxes and nests in natural tree cavities. Perhaps environmental factors such as increased exposure to reduced temperatures or higher predation has a greater impact on external nest sites. Natural cavities other than trees or buildings appear to be the most productive but the data is limited.

3.4 Other natural nest sites

Breeding occurred for the first time in 2007 in a natural site other than a tree cavity or building when a pair successfully produced three young in a disused quarry. The nest site was in a rockface fissure, 10 metres above the quarry floor. The site was subsequently occupied in 2009 and 2011.

4 Why the peaks and troughs?

Fig. 2. shows the number of broods and chicks produced for the years 2002 to 2019. The steady rise in the number of Barn Owl broods and chicks since 2002 is attributable to the annual increase in the provision of nestboxes and the number of new breeding pairs established at nestbox sites and not any change in the monitoring effort: around 200 sites are checked each year. A cycle of peaks and troughs in breeding productivity is increasingly evident but has been less notable in the last three years.



4.1 Peak years

Peak breeding seasons producing a notably high number of young following a poor breeding season, occurred in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Brood sizes were notably larger than those in trough years with an average of 3.1 chicks, range 2.5 to 4.1. The increased breeding activity and success was probably in relation to the cyclical nature of the Barn Owls primary prey, the Short-tailed Field Vole, which tends to peak every three years and then decline. This means that the vole population will increase in one year, peak in the second and then decline in the third. This cycle is not synchronised across the UK but varies from county to county. Breeding in peak years is typified by early laying dates, a high number of broods and chicks and second broods. Many nestboxes in 2005 were occupied by breeding pairs for the first time and at one site Barn Owls bred for the first time in over twenty years in a nestbox installed by SBOG in the previous year. The 2007 breeding season began early with the first egg produced on 7 Mar and the first chick on 6 Apr. The season also extended later in the year than normal with young still in one nest in late October and probably fledging as late as 18 Nov, the latest fledging date in SBOG's records. Thirteen pairs were double-brooded, five of which were in the same nest site as the first brood.

Laying also began early, around 12 Apr in 2012 and eight pairs were double-brooded, usually on sites with two nestboxes closely situated to each other. In one case, it appeared that when the chicks reached around ten weeks old the female laid a second clutch in a second nearby nestbox while the male continued to provision the young in the original nestbox. Young Barn Owls were still present in one nestbox when monitored on 19 Oct. Eleven second breeding attempts were made in 2014 of which nine successfully produced 27 chicks. Six of the second breeding attempts were in the same nestbox as the first attempt. The latest estimated fledging date from a brood was 27 Oct. Bigamy was suspected for the first time when one male was believed to pair with two females which bred in nestboxes separated only by a field. It is highly probable that bigamy may be more frequent in peak breeding seasons.

Two-hundred and nine chicks in 2017 was the highest number of chicks recorded and followed a productive breeding season in 2016. However, brood sizes were relatively low, averaging 2.8 chicks, and the high number of chicks was driven by the highest number of broods, 79, recorded. The year was then proceeded, unusually, by another peak year in 2018, although monitoring of nestboxes in July 2018 indicated that Barn Owls were feeding their young predominantly on Wood Mouse, suggesting that Field Vole were in short supply; it proved to be the fifth most productive breeding season.

Similarly, 2019 was another peak breeding season which unusually followed two previous successful breeding seasons, with no notable dip associated with Field Vole

cycles as in some previous years. The 219 young successfully produced was the third highest. Unfortunately, 48 chicks were lost in the nest, possibly due to predation but most likely due to starvation as a result of heavy and persistent rainfall in June which impeded feeding by the adults with first broods. Three pairs proceeded to have second broods in July and August: one of the three first broods of these pairs was successful and all three second broods were in the same nestbox as the first breeding attempts and all succeeded. By the end of August, 13 nestboxes contained small young, which was unprecedented, with young in the nest noted into late October. However, the loss of so many chicks in 2019 and an impending fall in the vole cycle will most probably impact the 2020 breeding season.

4.2 Trough years

Trough years are characterised by pairs not attempting to breed or abandoning attempts, low clutch and brood sizes and high egg failure and chick mortality. The average brood size in trough years was 2.1, range 2.0 to 2.3 chicks. Two years, 2006 and 2013, were exceptionally poor breeding seasons with only seven chicks successfully produced from three broods in 2006 and six chicks from three broods in 2013. Both years typically proceeded and preceded peak years. It is likely that environmental factors contributed to the decline of voles as well as the crash in vole numbers. Below average temperatures in March 2006 probably inhibited the growth of fresh grass, depleting the Field Vole population, and above average rainfall in May 2006 will have made hunting difficult for Barn Owls.

Two nests produced clutches which subsequently failed to hatch, suggesting pairs may have abandoned breeding activity due to a lack of prey and the consequent failure to sustain breeding condition. At one site, an unusual predominance of stashed young rats further pointed to a paucity in the availability of voles. The possibility that pairs remained alive but not breeding is supported by direct observations made by SBOG: in the two instances of failed clutches, both members of the pair were recorded alive and roosting in the nest site or adjacent cavities on a subsequent site visit.

For the first time no chicks were recorded in natural nest sites in 2013 and nestbox monitoring revealed caches of predominately secondary prey items in the boxes, shrews and Wood Mice. Several pairs produced eggs which subsequently failed, probably due to a reduced food supply and the consequent inability of the adults to maintain weight and remain in breeding condition.

Breeding productivity in some trough years was less severe than the extremes of 2006 and 2013 but still much reduced. For example, several nestboxes in 2008 were found to support non-breeding pairs which were utilising the nestboxes for roosting

purposes. Similarly, in 2010 nine nests failed at the incubation stage either due to desertion by the adults or predation and this, together with the low productivity of successful nests and the occupation of several sites by non-breeding pairs, suggests that Barn Owls struggled to maintain breeding activity and to feed their young or deferred breeding altogether. This low breeding activity may have been partly attributable to low rainfall in January and February which resulted in poor grass growth across Shropshire, which probably impacted vole numbers at a time when Barn Owls were attempting to attain breeding condition. Infertile eggs, desertion and predation appeared to be factors in the poor breeding season of 2015. Non-breeding pairs were noted at five sites and no second broods were recorded.

5 Are the nestbox programme and conservation measures working?

5.1 The current breeding population of Barn Owl

In 1932 there were 287 breeding pairs of Barn Owl in Shropshire. By the time of the 1992 Atlas the population was substantially reduced to around 140 pairs. The decline continued, SBOG estimating the population at 121 to 140 pairs in 2002, a loss of around 150 pairs in just over 70 years. Three hundred and ninety site surveys, 2,392 nest site inspections and 430 nestboxes later there are signs of a definite increase in the Barn Owl population – an estimated 200–220 pairs in Shropshire following the 2008–2013 Atlas survey.

The indications are that whilst SBOG survey work and data collection has undoubtedly contributed to a better knowledge of the Barn Owl in Shropshire, the sustained effort to replenish the loss of natural cavities by the siting of nestboxes in areas of prey-rich habitat has promoted a real increase in the number of pairs. New pairs have been established across Shropshire. For example, in the north-east around the rivers Roden and Tern where none were recorded in the 1985–90 Atlas, and the policy of targeting nest sites in areas of good habitat and in close proximity to known breeding pairs to allow for occupation of nestboxes by dispersing juveniles has been effective on The Weald Moors, north of Telford, where Barn Owls increased from one to nine pairs between 2002 and 2005 following the provision of 29 nestboxes.

5.2 What Barn Owls need now

Barn Owls are not territorial but occupy a breeding range in which they require a minimum of four hectares of permanent, rough, tussocky grassland with a deep litter-layer averaging not less than 7 cm and capable of supporting Field Vole. Suitable habitat on farmland is now often confined to field margins – arable headlands, hedgerows, fence lines, banks, ditches and riverbanks – and the conservation of these habitats is of paramount importance. Grassy margins sown around arable fields

under the agri-environment schemes are an increasing and valuable hunting habitat and grassy banks of wetlands, young plantations, old airfields, heathland, country lanes, roadside verges, railway embankments, brownfield sites and other unmanaged grassland, provide good foraging habitat. Intensively grazed pasture, rough grazing and paddocks are not suitable.

Ideally, farmland margins should be six metres wide. The structure of the grass is important and should comprise a thick sward 20–40 cm high and remain largely unmanaged to allow the dense thatch to develop at the base of the tussocks. Suitable tussock-forming perennial grasses include False Oat grass, Timothy Grass, Cocksfoot, Meadow Foxtail and Yorkshire Fog. Grass headlands can be topped but not mown as this will destroy the thatch of leaves at the base.

In the farmed landscape the signs are encouraging. When SBOG started out, farms enrolled in agri-environment schemes and affording grassland habitat suitable to Barn Owls as part of their farm conservation plans were limited. Since then there has been a definite expansion in grass margins and headlands on arable farmland. As they mature and are colonised by Field Voles, and as long as the nestbox programme remains in place, SBOG is optimistic that Barn Owls can continue to recover.

5.3 The future

Habitat loss and degradation, decay of old tree nest sites, the renovation and dilapidation of farm buildings, adverse winter conditions, climate change, rodenticides and road casualties, will all continue to impact the Barn Owl population. Urbanisation continues to encroach on hunting habitat and the disturbance and development of buildings known to support breeding Barn Owls continues. We must remain vigilant. Some of these factors can be mitigated but it is a sobering thought that, according to one estimate, three quarters of Britain's Barn Owl population now use nestboxes for breeding. But there is a caveat. Aside from the inherent problem of maintaining sufficient funding to continually install and replenish nestboxes, existing habitat must be safeguarded. Continued funding, targeted through agri-environment schemes following the UK's exit from the EU, is essential for grassy headlands and margins to secure the Barn Owl population. Reduced mowing of the miles of road verges along quiet country lanes where Barn Owls are unlikely to fall victim to car collisions when hunting will enhance their feeding habitat further and compliment the farmland margins. In the longer term, Oak and Ash trees continue to be lost due to decay and there is an urgent need for a hedgerow tree planting programme to ensure a sustainable supply of natural nest and roosting sites in the distant future.

July 2020

Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire

Leo Smith, August 2020

Introduction

This Red and Amber List of *Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire* is based on local evidence of reductions in population and/or distribution, but also includes species that only breed at a few sites and are considered vulnerable. The lists are based on local, not national, data collected over 35 years and summarised in *The Birds of Shropshire* (Smith, 2019), referred to subsequently as BOS.

At present there is only robust data for assessing change in the County population and distribution of breeding species, and these lists therefore only cover these species. Compilation of the lists takes the same approach as that used to produce the national lists published in *Birds of Conservation Concern 4* (BoCC4 -Eaton *et al*, 2015), although they are based on less extensive data and use fewer criteria. The cut-off for data used in BOS was December 2014 although, where relevant, data from ongoing surveys has been used up until the end of 2019. The scope of the local data does not allow the same approach to be used for non-breeding species and these will be addressed shortly using different criteria. The lists will be reviewed regularly, as outlined in the final sections of the paper.

The lists will help shape conservation priorities and activities in the County. The national Red and Amber Lists in BoCC4 also apply in Shropshire and the two are complementary. Both will be considered when determining conservation priorities.

General Criteria

There are three criteria:-

- 1 Disappearance from large parts of the County, measured by changes in tetrad occupancy shown in the two County atlases (“*An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire*” (1992), based on fieldwork 1985–90, and BOS, based on fieldwork 2008–13)
- 2 Reduction in population, measured by local results from the BTO’s national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), or assessed in the species accounts in “*The Birds of Shropshire*”
- 3 Species whose population is vulnerable as it only breeds at a few sites.

Abundance is not a criterion in itself; common species may occur in large numbers in almost all tetrads, in spite of evidence of a severe population decline. Conversely, scarce species may not be abundant, although they have a stable or growing population. The definitions of abundance used in BoS are shown in Appendix 1 for ease of reference.

The tables in Appendix 3 show changes in breeding species since 1950, i.e. species that no longer breed here and species that have bred for the first time. It is not appropriate to include species in the lists that no longer breed here, or breed only sporadically, but if any should return and become established they would automatically be included on the Red List under the “few breeding sites” criterion. Most of those that have bred for the first time since 1950 are thriving, but some still have less than 10 breeding pairs,

Naturalised non-native species have not been included.

For ease of reference, the red and amber lists summarise all the different criteria and identify the criteria under which each species qualifies.

Disappearance from large parts of the County (Reduction in Distribution)

Appendix 2 reproduces the table in BOS page 481, where the right-hand columns show breeding species that have been lost from more than 50 tetrads between 1985–90 and 2008–13. These are candidates for the red and amber lists. However, 50 tetrads is a low proportion of the distribution for the more common species, but a high proportion for scarce species. For example, some species like Whinchat have disappeared from former strongholds without quite reaching the 50-tetrad threshold. Therefore, the table of tetrad occupancy included in BOS for all species has been reviewed, and the percentage of tetrads where the species has been lost since 1990 has been calculated. This percentage has been used to apply this criterion.

All three categories of breeding evidence were included in defining tetrad occupancy in BOS, and this paper does the same. However, there are a few species where the proportion of confirmed + probable breeding records has gone down considerably, and the proportion of possible breeding records has gone up considerably, which suggests that breeding has become more difficult to prove because a smaller number of pairs was encountered. A large decline in the number of tetrads with confirmed + probable breeding only has also therefore been taken into account.

The result is shown in Appendix 4. Species with no confirmed or probable breeding records in 2008–13 (Black Redstart, Redshank and Ring Ouzel) have been excluded.

Data from the two Atlases is not comparable for Black-headed Gull (foraging birds were often given “possible” breeding status in 1985–90, and colony counts fluctuate but show no major change in total population); while Quail numbers fluctuate from year to year. These species are therefore not included on the lists under this criterion, and they are not included in the table in Appendix 4 either. Black-headed Gull, and the issue of species that no longer breed here, are discussed below.

The Red List includes all species that have disappeared from 50% or more of the tetrads they occupied in 1985–90, using all categories of breeding evidence, or confirmed and probable breeding only.

The Amber List is similarly calculated but using disappearance from 25–49% of tetrads.

Reduction in Population

The most important data for judging this criterion is the local results from the BTO Breeding Bird Survey. In the BTO *Annual Report of The Breeding Bird Survey, Population Trends of the UK's Breeding Birds*, trends are only calculated for species occurring on average in 30 squares or more over the whole period. BOS contains BBS charts for 25 species which meet this criterion for the period between 1997 and 2014: Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Pheasant, Robin, Rook, Skylark, Song Thrush, Swallow, Willow Warbler, Woodpigeon, Wren and Yellowhammer.

Trend lines are shown on the BOS charts, and only four of these species, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Willow Warbler and Yellowhammer, show a strong decline. Chaffinch and Greenfinch show a strong decline from 2005 onwards, attributed to the disease of trichomonosis, while Willow Warbler and Yellowhammer have declined over the whole period.

BBS has continued since, and data is now available up to and including 2019. The BBS charts for these four species have been updated, and the population change between 1997 and 2019 has been calculated using the trend-line equation generated by Microsoft Excel. The results are in the tables in Appendix 5.

The decline of Chaffinch (52%) and Greenfinch (66%) since 2005, when losses due to disease first became apparent, and Willow Warbler (63%) since 1997, all greater than 50%, justify their inclusion on the Red List, and Yellowhammer (46.2%), with a decline greater than 25% since 1997, has been included on the Amber List.

Other data for judging this criterion in BOS, is a comparison of the estimated population in the 1985–90 Atlas with the 2008–13 estimate (based on national estimates, and a calculation of the Shropshire proportion, based on TTV counts). In many cases, the earlier estimate may not be reliable, as there was little up-to-date local information on which to base an estimate, and applying national assessments included in the BTO Breeding Atlas 1968–72 (Sharrock 1976), interpreted in the light of Population Trends in British Breeding Birds (Marchant 1990), had to suffice. However, in some cases the estimate was derived from reasonable assumptions based on Atlas data, and sometimes the Shropshire count from BTO surveys, and these cases are considered under species-specific data below.

Appendix 6, Tables 1 and 2 shows this calculation for every species on the lists generated by the reduction in distribution criterion. It should be noted that this criterion covers only disappearance from previously occupied tetrads. It takes no account of the thinning out of the population in tetrads where it was still found in 2008–13, although that would have almost certainly occurred in many cases.

The calculation of the percentage decline of the populations of species on the Red List supports them all being placed on that list, except Tree Pipit, but there is evidence in the BOS species account that it has “thinned out” in several former strongholds.

The calculation for the Amber List species is less conclusive, but it justifies the listing for most of them, and suggests that declines of over 50% occurred for Kestrel, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Yellow Wagtail and Yellowhammer. The first two are considered under the species-specific data below. The future trends for the other three species should be monitored to see if the case strengthens for them to be placed on the Red List.

Species Limited to Few Breeding Sites

This criterion might apply to either colonial or rare species. Of the colonial species, Black-headed Gull bred at eight colonies in 1985–90, but only six in 2008–13. The population fluctuates, with no obvious trends, but it is clearly vulnerable to any future loss of any of the colonial sites.

Merlin is known to have bred at only two sites since 1990. There have been only one to two breeding pairs on Long Mynd in most years, but none in the last two, and none on Titterstone Clee since 2011. Merlin is therefore very vulnerable as a breeding species and is placed on the Red List.

Two species – Pochard and Turtle Dove – have been included on the Red List, although there were no confirmed breeding records of either in the recent Atlas period, or subsequently, but there were probable breeding records.

Appendix 3 lists all the species lost or gained since 1950. Most of those gained have become well established, and do not qualify for inclusion on the lists.

Four native species bred for the first time in the Recent Atlas Period (2008–13):

- Common Tern bred once at Priorslee Lake, and at Chelmarsh in 2014
- Firecrest bred at Kempton in 2014
- Lesser Black-backed Gull bred at Ludlow in 2012 and Battlefield in 2014.
- Mediterranean Gull bred at Wood Lane in 2008

However, of these, only Lesser Black-backed Gull is now established as a regular breeding species, at two sites, and is included on the Red List.

Several waterfowl – Shoveler, Teal, and Gadwall – have small populations, but there were probable or confirmed breeding Atlas records from more than 10 sites. Only Teal occupied regular sites throughout the Atlas period (Whixall Moss and VP). This species is therefore apparently threatened by potential loss of breeding sites. The other two do not qualify under this criterion, but Shoveler qualifies for the Amber List on the reduction of distribution criterion.

Species that breed regularly at fewer than five sites have been placed on the Red List, and at fewer than 10 sites on the Amber List.

Persecuted Species

Some species still suffer persecution here, particularly Goshawk and Peregrine. Their populations, although small, are growing, so they are not of “conservation concern”, and are not included on either list. They are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Non-native Species

Egyptian Goose, Feral Pigeon, Little Owl, Red-legged Partridge and Ruddy Duck (which has been eradicated), would qualify for the lists on the criteria used, but none of them have been included as they are non-native species.

Species-specific data

In addition to the three general criteria used above to determine which species should appear on which list, there is additional data for a few species which justify moving them from the Amber to the Red List.

i Kestrel

Kestrels are conspicuous, and were numerous in the greater Telford area, where large areas of land were left fallow awaiting development. Most observers live in the north-east, and a reasonably accurate estimate was made, of 2–3 pairs per tetrad in the east with confirmed and probable breeding, less in the west, giving an estimate of one to two pairs in each tetrad where it was recorded, a total of 700–1400 pairs in 1990. Since then, BOS shows a decline for many species in the east and north-east, due to more intensive arable farming and loss of hedgerows and field margins, there has been a loss of rough grassland, and very few Kestrels are now seen hunting over road-side and motorway verges, which used to be well-frequented. Comparing the mid-points in both population ranges shows a decline of 69%. Even taking the lower figure in the 1990 range, rather than the mid-point, with the 2014 estimate in BOS, gives a decline of 54%. The decline has continued since. While Kestrel is found in too few BBS squares to generate a county trend, in the West Midlands, which includes Shropshire, the decline 1995–2014 was 28%, but this has increased to 35% over the period 1995–2018.

ii Snipe

Snipe appears on the Red List as calculated, but this is partly due to the number of probable and possible breeding pairs being over-estimated in 1985–90 (a lot of passage migrants were given breeding codes, with two together being counted as pairs). However, this listing is justified, as confirmed breeding records show a decline of 82%. Surveys of all known breeding sites every five years found only five drumming males at four sites in 2014, and nine at only three sites in 2019. Just one of these surveyed sites, the Long Mynd, held 20–25 breeding pairs annually in the course of the Long Mynd Breeding Bird Survey 1994–98.

iii Starling

Including a species due to a reduction in the breeding population measured by BBS requires that the species be found in an average of 30 squares over the period of the survey. However, species in steep decline are found in fewer and fewer squares, so this criterion becomes increasingly more difficult to meet. Starling was found in more than 30 squares every year except one between 1997 and 2005, and an average of 30 squares every year up to 2010. In those 14 years,

the population declined by 46%. Over the whole period to 2019, Starling was found in an average of 27.8 squares, but the population has continued to decline, by 71%. This is considerably more than the 50% criterion for Red Listing. The BTO BBS report for 2019 shows that Starling has also declined 1995–2018 by 70% in the West Midlands, 61% in England and 53% in the UK, and it is on the national Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern.

iv Swift

Largely as a result of changes in Atlas methodology, specifically the introduction of the “F” category, and tighter validation, Swift shows only a 20% decline using all breeding codes, but a 33% decline using confirmed + probable, and would be included in the Amber List on this criterion. However, it shows a 52% decline in confirmed breeding records only. There are not sufficient BBS observations to produce a valid Shropshire trend, but BBS for the West Midlands shows a 56% decline 1995–2018. The species account in BoS documents the loss of several large breeding colonies since 1990.

v Tawny Owl

Comparing the mid-points in the 1990 and 2014 population ranges suggests a decline of 69%. Fortunately, the population estimate was recalculated to 1,200 pairs following a BTO species-specific Tawny Owl survey in 2005. Even if the population was unchanged between 1990 and 2005, the decline from 1,200 to 530 pairs estimated in 2011 in BoS was 55.8%

Based on this species-specific data, all these five species have been included on the Red List.

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Bird Species

The Shropshire BAP, launched in 2002, substantially revised in 2005, and reviewed in 2010–12, is the nearest equivalent to a previous county Red List. The BAP species are listed in Appendix 7.

It will be seen that several of the BAP species have not satisfied the criteria for inclusion on these Red and Amber Lists, largely because their declines occurred before the baseline dates of the current lists. These species are included in the national Red and Amber lists, because they are based on data starting in 1970. This highlights the need to place these County lists in the context of the national list of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC4) when considering conservation priorities.

Relationship between the County and national Red and Amber Lists

There are many species on the national lists that breed in other parts of the UK, but not in Shropshire. The national lists are based on a far more extensive set of criteria, and there is no local data to make comparable judgements. Some of these criteria are based on international declines. Others require habitats that are not found here and could never breed here regularly.

There are others, like some of the BAP species referred to above, that declined massively, both nationally and locally, but before 1990.

The same applies to other species that suffered substantial declines before 1990, and again reference to the national Red and Amber Lists will be more appropriate in highlighting the conservation status of such species.

Of the 32 species on the County Red List,

- 18 are on the national Red List (Cuckoo, Curlew, Grasshopper Warbler, Grey Partridge, Lapwing, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Merlin, Pied Flycatcher, Pochard, Spotted Flycatcher, Starling, Tree Pipit, Tree Sparrow, Turtle Dove, Whinchat, Willow Tit, Wood Warbler and Woodcock).
- 10 are on the national Amber List (Common Sandpiper, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Nightjar, Snipe, Swift, Tawny Owl, Teal and Willow Warbler)
- four are on the national Green List (Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Long-eared Owl and Wheatear). Of these, the decline of the two finches has largely occurred since BoCC4 was assessed.

Of the 17 species on the County Amber List

- six are on the national Red List (Corn Bunting, Grey Wagtail, Marsh Tit, Mistle Thrush, Yellow Wagtail and Yellowhammer).
- four are on the national Amber List (Black-headed Gull, Dipper, Meadow Pipit and Shoveler)
- seven are on the national Green List (Garden Warbler, Great Crested Grebe, Green Woodpecker, Moorhen, Sand Martin, Sparrowhawk and Treecreeper).

The comparison is shown in Appendix 8.

The following species are on the national lists, and breed regularly in Shropshire, but are not included on the County lists

- Red List: House Sparrow, Linnet, Skylark and Song Thrush.
- Amber List: Bullfinch, Dunnock, Greylag Goose, House Martin, Mallard, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Red Grouse, Redstart, Reed Bunting and Stock Dove.

Of these, the BAP species referred to above all suffered their greatest decline before the County baseline was established in 1990; Dunnock, Mallard, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Oystercatcher and Stock Dove all appear to be increasing locally; there is no evidence for much change in the population or distribution of Redstart, and there is no evidence that the declines of House Martin or Red Grouse are as much as 25% since 1990. Although Red Grouse has declined by more than this since the 1970s, the population then had been supplemented by releases.

Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire

Based on this paper, the SOS Board has adopted the policy statement, incorporating the Red and Amber Lists, attached as Appendix 10.

Keeping the Lists Under Review

Any species that has bred here previously, but which has become locally extinct (listed in Appendix 2), which becomes re-established as a breeding species in future, and any other breeding species that becomes established here, will be added to the list if it meets the criteria.

Consideration will be given to adding non-breeding species (winter visitors and passage migrants) to the lists shortly, but additional criteria will need to be developed.

Any changes to the lists will be published in the annual Shropshire Bird Report. The list will be reviewed in full every five years, as part of the review of the status of all species in the County.

It should be noted that BBS between 1997 and 2019 shows a decline of 46% for Yellowhammer. If the decline continues at the current rate, it will exceed 50% in the next 2–3 years, and Yellowhammer will then qualify for the Red List.

Next steps – Conservation Action

The lists have a value in themselves, as they highlight the changing fortunes of locally-breeding species. They can be considered by other organisations, including

the planning authorities in Shropshire, and Telford and Wrekin, Local Authorities, and other bodies which influence land management.

However, the main purpose of these lists is to help prioritise the Conservation work of SOS. This will involve looking at all the species on the lists, to identify those whose status we may be able to influence, by habitat protection or improvement, or protection measures. Immediate priorities for Conservation Action will be identified, and Action Plans will be produced for them, and published in due course.

The status of locally occurring species on the national BoCC4 lists will also be considered, together with any similar assessments made by other local, regional and national bodies.

The County Red and Amber lists, and Qualifying Criteria

Red List	Qualifying criteria	Amber List	Qualifying criteria
Chaffinch	4	Black-headed Gull	12
Common Sandpiper	1,2,5	Corn Bunting	8,9,11
Cuckoo	1,2,5	Dipper	8,9,11
Curlew	1,2,5	Garden Warbler	9
Grasshopper Warbler	2,5	Great Crested Grebe	8,11
Greenfinch	4	Green Woodpecker	8,9,11
Grey Partridge	1, 2,5	Grey Wagtail	8,9
Kestrel	5,6	Marsh Tit	8,9,11
Kingfisher	2,5	Meadow Pipit	8,9,11
Lapwing	2,5	Mistle Thrush	9,11
Lesser Black-backed Gull	7	Moorhen	9
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1,2,5	Sand Martin	9,11
Long-eared Owl	1,2,5	Shoveler	8,9
Merlin	7	Sparrowhawk	9,11
Nightjar	1,7	Treecreeper	8,9,11
Pied Flycatcher	2,5	Yellow Wagtail	8,9,11
Pochard	1,2,5	Yellowhammer	10,11
Snipe	5,6		
Spotted Flycatcher	2,5		
Starling	5,6		

Swift	6
Tawny Owl	5,6
Teal	7
Tree Pipit	1,2
Tree Sparrow	2,5
Turtle Dove	1,2,5
Wheatear	1,2,5
Whinchat	1,2,5
Willow Tit	1,2,5
Willow Warbler	3,5
Wood Warbler	1,2,5
Woodcock	1,2,5

Qualifying criteria

- 1 Reduction in range >50% of occupied tetrads, all breeding codes
- 2 Reduction in range >50% of occupied tetrads, confirmed and probable breeding codes only
- 3 Reduction in population > 50% shown by BBS 1997–2019
- 4 Reduction in population > 50% shown by BBS 2006–2019
- 5 Reduction in population >50% between 1985–90 and 2008–13, shown by population estimates in BoS species accounts
- 6 Reduction in population >50% between 1985–90 and 2008–13, shown by species specific data
- 7 Less than 5 breeding sites
- 8 Reduction in range >25% of occupied tetrads, all breeding codes
- 9 Reduction in range >25% of occupied tetrads, confirmed and probable breeding codes only
- 10 Reduction in population > 25% shown by BBS 1997–2019
- 11 Reduction in population >25% between 1985–90 and 2008–13, shown by population estimates in BoS species accounts
- 12 Less than 10 breeding sites

Appendix 1 – Abundance criteria (taken from BOS page 62)

Abundance	Code	Definition
Residents and Summer Visitors (ie breeding species)		
Very rare	1	Less than annual
Rare	2	Annual and up to 10 Breeding Pairs
Scarce	3	11–100 Breeding Pairs
Uncommon	4	101–1,500 Breeding Pairs
Fairly Common	5	1,501–3,500 Breeding Pairs
Common	6	3,501–15,000 Breeding Pairs
Very Common	7	Over 15,000 Breeding Pairs

Appendix 2 – Species gained or lost from more than 50 tetrads between 1985–90 and 2008–13 (taken from BOS page 481)

Gained in More Than 50 Tetrads			Lost from More Than 50 Tetrads			
201+	101–200	51–100	51–100	101–200	201–400	401+
Buzzard (442)	Canada Goose	Blackcap	Corn Bunting	Feral Pigeon	Lapwing	Curlew (409)
Raven (385)	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Chiffchaff	Dipper	Green Woodpecker	Spotted Flycatcher	Little Owl (417)
		Goldfinch	Garden Warbler	Kestrel	Tawny Owl	Cuckoo (440)
	Greylag Goose	Goosander	Grey Wagtail	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Tree Sparrow	Grey Partridge (540)
	Nuthatch	Goshawk	Kingfisher		Turtle Dove	
	Siskin	Greenfinch	Mistle Thrush	Marsh Tit	Willow Tit	
		Mute Swan	Quail	Meadow Pipit		
		Red Kite	Sparrowhawk	Moorhen		
			Wheatear	Pied Flycatcher		
			Yellow Wagtail	Red-legged Partridge		
			Yellowhammer	Rook		
				Starling		
				Swift		
				Tree Pipit		
				Treecreeper		
				Willow Warbler		
				Wood Warbler		
				Woodcock		

Appendix 3. Changes in Breeding Status since 1950

Table1. Lost		
Species	Last Confirmed Breeding	
	Lost 1950–84	Lost Since 1985–90
Wryneck	1953	
Black Grouse	1954	
Red-backed Shrike	1954	
Woodlark	1957	
Corncrake	1975	
Nightingale		1990
Hawfinch		1991
Redshank		1998
Ring Ouzel		2003
Ruddy Duck		2009

Appendix 4. Disappearance from Large Parts of the County (reduction in distribution)

(Comparison of number of Occupied tetrads 1985–90 and 2008–13)

The table includes every species with at least one Confirmed or Probable breeding record in 2008–13 where the percentage change, on one or both of the two criteria, is at least 25%. Red shading shows species with a loss of at least 50%, amber shading shows a loss of at least 25%, on the relevant criterion. Shading in the species column indicates which list the species qualifies for, based on the criterion showing the highest percentage reduction. Non-native species are excluded.

Species	Occupied Tetrads							
	All breeding codes				Confirmed + Probable breeding codes only			
	1985-90	2008-13	Change		1985-90	2008-13	Change	
	No.	No.	No.	% of 1990	No.	No.	No.	% of 1990
Common Sandpiper	69	12	-57	-83	32	4	-28	-88
Corn Bunting	188	128	-60	-32	130	82	-48	-37
Cuckoo	783	343	-440	-56	462	88	-374	-81
Curlew	661	252	-409	-62	506	161	-345	-68
Dipper	202	135	-67	-33	166	104	-62	-37
Garden Warbler	644	556	-88	-14	461	290	-171	-37
Grasshopper Warbler	87	46	-41	-47	34	9	-25	-74
Great Crested Grebe	88	65	-23	-26	71	54	-17	-24
Green Woodpecker	490	353	-137	-28	286	169	-117	-41
Grey Partridge	623	83	-540	-87	530	51	-479	-90
Grey Wagtail	330	240	-90	-27	224	165	-59	-26
Kestrel	718	589	-129	-18	348	257	-91	-26
Kingfisher	254	163	-91	-36	137	68	-69	-50
Lapwing	743	400	-343	-46	660	323	-337	-51
Lesser Redpoll	88	60	-28	-32	40	34	-6	-15
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	215	38	-177	-82	108	12	-96	-89
Long-eared Owl	20	4	-16	-80	10	3	-7	-70
Marsh Tit	409	294	-115	-28	290	199	-91	-31

Meadow Pipit	243	127	-116	-48	156	87	-69	-44
Merlin	7	8	1	14	7	4	-3	-43
Mistle Thrush	784	713	-71	-9	683	495	-188	-28
Moorhen	718	607	-111	-15	655	493	-162	-25
Nightjar	11	5	-6	-55	2	4	2	100
Pied Flycatcher	259	150	-109	-42	198	91	-107	-54
Pochard	27	5	-22	-81	11	2	-9	-82
Sand Martin	117	99	-18	-15	82	60	-22	-27
Shoveler	23	16	-7	-30	15	9	-6	-40
Snipe	128	32	-96	-75	58	15	-43	-74
Sparrowhawk	597	526	-71	-12	276	207	-69	-25
Spotted Flycatcher	748	418	-330	-44	652	284	-368	-56
Starling	860	686	-174	-20	838	554	-284	-34
Swift	705	611	-94	-13	440	302	-138	-31
Tawny Owl	653	393	-260	-40	434	247	-187	-43
Teal	61	38	-23	-38	40	28	-12	-30
Tree Pipit	223	112	-111	-50	150	75	-75	-50
Tree Sparrow	508	265	-243	-48	394	187	-207	-53
Treecreeper	718	534	-184	-26	488	303	-185	-38
Turtle Dove	231	15	-216	-94	125	5	-120	-96
Wheatear	103	46	-57	-55	76	31	-45	-59
Whinchat	75	24	-51	-68	55	13	-42	-76
Willow Tit	337	68	-269	-80	223	33	-190	-85
Willow Warbler	849	712	-137	-16	772	457	-315	-41
Wood Warbler	225	72	-153	-68	139	38	-101	-73
Woodcock	159	17	-142	-89	108	4	-104	-96
Yellow Wagtail	316	235	-81	-26	234	150	-84	-36

Appendix 5. Breeding Bird Survey population change 1997–2019, calculated from the trend-line equations

A trendline can be fitted to a chart showing the annual index (calculated by dividing the average number found per survey plot in each year, divided by the number found in 1997. By definition, the index in 1997 is 1.00).

The chart, in an excel spreadsheet, will generate a linear equation in the format $Y = MX + C$, where Y is the index for each year, M is the rate of change in the index (the slope of the line), X represents the year, from 0 to 23, and C is the value where the trend line crosses the Y axis (i.e. the value in 1997). Note that, although the index in 1997 is 1, by definition, the trendline is the best fit for all the data points, and it will calculate a value for year 0 (1997), which is rarely equal to 1.

The first Table below shows the index value in 1997, the annual rate of change, the index value in 2019 and the percentage decline over the 23-year period for the three species that qualify, all calculated from the trend-line equation.

The second table shows similar data for Chaffinch and Greenfinch, from 2005 onwards.

Species	1997 value (Y = C)	Rate of Annual Change (“M”)	2019 value (Y = MX + C)	Decline over 23 years (%)
Starling	0.8786	0.0272	0.6256	71.20
Yellowhammer	1.1454	0.0232	0.5336	46.59
Willow Warbler	0.8621	0.0237	0.5451	63.23

Species	2005 value (Y = C)	Rate of Annual Change (“M”)	2019 value (Y = MX + C)	Decline over 14 years (%)
Chaffinch	1.14	0.042	0.588	51.6
Greenfinch	1.65	0.08	1.06	64.5

Appendix 6. Comparison of estimated populations in 1990 and 2014, taken from the Species Accounts in the Atlas (1992) and BOS (2019) respectively

There was little up to date data on which to base the 1992 estimates. Often only guesstimates of national populations and breeding density published in the national BTO Atlas (Sharrock 1976) were available, interpreted in the light of *Population Trends in British Breeding Birds* (Marchant et al, BTO 1990). There were no comparable local counts to the TTV data in 2008–11. Therefore, many of the estimates were educated guesses, and the uncertainty often resulted in a large range. Estimates for common / numerous species were probably less accurate than those for the less common ones. They were, however, considered realistic when published.

The tables show the percentage change in the mid-point of the population range published in the two Atlases, for the Red and Amber lists.

Estimated Population Change – Red List					
Species	1990		2014		% decline
	Species Account	Mid-point	Species Account	Mid-point	
Chaffinch	140,000	140,000	86,400-87,700	87,050	37.8
Common Sandpiper	20-40	30	5-10	8	75.0
Cuckoo	175-350	263	90-95	93	64.8
Curlew	700	700	160	160	77.1
Grasshopper Warbler	90-180	135	20-25	23	83.3
Greenfinch	9000-10000	9500	18,000-19,500	18750	-97.4
Grey Partridge	2500	2500	350-400	375	85.0
Kestrel	700-1400	1,050	300-350	325	69.0
Kingfisher	140-350	245	68-170	121	50.6
Lapwing	3000	3000	800	800	73.3
Lesser Black-backed Gull					
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	250-500	375	30-60	45	88.0
Long-eared Owl	20	20	0	0	100.0
Merlin					
Nightjar	0-5/6	3	1-3	2	33.3
Pied Flycatcher	2000	2000	500	500	75.0
Pochard	2-4	3	0	0	100.0
Snipe	200-300	250	15-20	18	93.0
Spotted Flycatcher	2000	2000	445-465	455	77.3
Starling	27000-54000	40000	11800-12200	12000	70.0

Swift	1400	1400	1,700-1,850	1775	-26.8
Tawny Owl	900-1800	1,350	530	530	60.7
Teal	5	5	3-4	4	30.0
Tree Pipit	900-1800	1350	600-900	750	44.4
Tree Sparrow	5000	5000	1850-2000	1925	61.5
Turtle Dove	250-600	425	16	16	96.2
Wheatear	180-300	240	90	90	62.5
Whinchat	110-275	193	75	75	61.0
Willow Tit	1400-2800	2100	140-200	170	91.9
Willow Warbler	40000	40000	13500-13800	13650	65.9
Wood Warbler	375-750 (400)	400	100	100	75.0
Woodcock	150-300	225	68	68	69.8

Estimated Population Change- Amber list					
Species	1990		2014		% decline
	Species Account	Mid-point	Species Account	Mid-point	
Black-headed Gull	100-200	150	65-190	130	13.3
Corn Bunting	400-900	650	400	400	38.5
Dipper	160-480	320	210	210	34.4
Garden Warbler	1600-2600	2,100	4,000-4,200	4,100	-95.2
Great Crested Grebe	150-200	175	110-150	130	25.7
Green Woodpecker	500-1000	750	390-400	395	47.3
Grey Wagtail	250-500	375	390-410	400	-6.7
Marsh Tit	1750-3500	2,625	1,600-1,700	1,650	37.1
Meadow Pipit	2500-5000	3,750	1,500-2,000	2,250	40.0
Mistle Thrush	4800-5500	5,150	2,400-2,500	2,450	52.4
Moorhen	3500-7000	5,250	4,000-4,200	4,100	21.9
Sand Martin	4,000	4,000	2,500	2,500	37.5
Shoveler	<=3	2	<=5	3	-50.0
Sparrowhawk	600-1800	1,200	530-1600	665	44.6
Treecreeper	5000-10000	7,500	3,000-3,100	3,050	59.3
Yellow Wagtail	1150-2300	1,725	350-500	425	75.4
Yellowhammer	35,000	35,000	13,900-14,300	14,100	59.7

Note that the population estimate in BOS is headed 2014. This is true where the species account author made an assessment based on local knowledge. However, most of the estimates are derived from TTV data for the period 2007-11, applied to the Shropshire proportion of the national population estimate published in Musgrove *et al* 2013.

Note also that the percentage change is a measure of decline i.e. a decline is a positive number. Where negative numbers occur in the tables, this implies that the population has increased, not declined. This is unlikely to be the case, suggesting in these cases in particular that the estimate in 1990 was too low, for reasons explained above.

Appendix 7. Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Bird Species

The Shropshire BAP, launched in 2002, substantially revised in 2005, and reviewed in 2010–12, is the nearest equivalent to a previous county Red List. The data on which it was based has been superseded by the adoption of these Red and Amber Lists.

The BAP contained action plans for Barn Owl, Curlew, Dipper, Lapwing, Ring Ouzel, Snipe, Song Thrush, and a suite of farmland seed-eating Birds. The BAP species are still given special status in county planning policy.

Of these species, Curlew, Dipper, Lapwing, Snipe and some of the farmland birds are included on either the Red or Amber List, as appropriate.

Barn Owl has increased because of the work of the Shropshire Barn Owl Group in accordance with the BAP, but Ring Ouzel has become locally extinct.

Song Thrush had a BAP of its own, because numbers breeding on farmland in Britain declined by an estimated 66% between 1972 and 1996. The *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Shropshire* confirmed that a similar decline has also taken place here. However, the substantial decline had largely occurred before the 1985–90 Atlas, so the proportionate decline since then has been relatively small, and insufficient to include it on these lists.

Similarly, the Farmland Seed-eating Birds were included because of a large decline over the same period.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Common Bird Census shows that the UK population of these species declined very significantly between 1972 and 1996:

Tree Sparrow	- down 76%
Reed Bunting	- down 40%
Corn Bunting	- down 74%
Linnet	- down 40%
House Sparrow	- down 64%
Skylark	- down 75%
Yellowhammer	- down 37%
Bullfinch	- down 62%

Of these, Bullfinch, House Sparrow, Linnet, Reed Bunting, and Skylark are not included in these Red or Amber lists, largely because their substantial declines occurred before the 1985–90 Atlas, so the decline since then has been relatively small.

These species have been included in the current Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire in a separate list, County BAP species whose substantial decline occurred largely before 1990.

There is no basis for quantifying the local decline of many other species prior to 1990, to see if they qualify for inclusion on the lists.

Appendix 8. Comparison of the Shropshire and National Lists

For each species in the two county lists below, the right-hand column shows the species status on the national (Birds of Conservation Concern 4) list. R = Red List, A = Amber List and G = Green List

Shropshire Red List	BoCC4 list	Shropshire Amber List	BoCC4 list
Chaffinch	G	Black-headed Gull	A
Common Sandpiper	A	Corn Bunting	R
Cuckoo	R	Dipper	A
Curlew	R	Garden Warbler	G
Grasshopper Warbler	R	Great Crested Grebe	G
Greenfinch	G	Green Woodpecker	G
Grey Partridge	R	Grey Wagtail	R
Kestrel	A	Marsh Tit	R
Kingfisher	A	Meadow Pipit	A
Lapwing	R	Mistle Thrush	R
Lesser Black-backed Gull	A	Moorhen	G
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	R	Sand Martin	G
Long-eared Owl	G	Shoveler	A
Merlin	R	Sparrowhawk	G
Nightjar	A	Treecreeper	G
Pied Flycatcher	R	Yellow Wagtail	R
Pochard	R	Yellowhammer	R
Snipe	A		

Spotted Flycatcher	R		
Starling	R	R = Red List	
Swift	A	A = Amber List	
Tawny Owl	A	G = Green List	
Teal	A		
Tree Pipit	R		
Tree Sparrow	R		
Turtle Dove	R		
Wheatear	G		
Whinchat	R		
Willow Tit	R		
Willow Warbler	A		
Wood Warbler	R		
Woodcock	R		

Appendix 9. References

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Appendix 10. SOS Policy Statement



Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire

This Red and Amber list of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire has been adopted by Shropshire Ornithological Society. It is based on local data and observations collected over the last 35 years, culminating in the publication of *The Birds of Shropshire* by Liverpool University Press in 2019. The approach largely follows that used to produce the national lists published in *Birds of Conservation Concern 4* in 2015. The County and national lists are complementary, and both will be used to determine local conservation priorities.

Three main criteria have been used to select the species listed:

- 1 Disappearance from large parts of the County (from more than 50% of the survey squares they occupied in 1985–90, to qualify for the Red list, and from more than 25% for the Amber list)
- 2 Big reductions in the County population (by more than 50% to qualify for the Red list, and 25% for the Amber list, over the same period)
- 3 The population is vulnerable because it only breeds at a few sites.

A detailed explanation of the criteria, how they have been applied, and supporting references, can be found in a paper in the *Shropshire Bird Report 2019*. The lists will be reviewed regularly. Although only breeding species have been considered so far, non-breeding species will be addressed shortly.

The lists highlight those native species that are under greatest threat in the County. They will steer SOS's conservation efforts and encourage other organisations to adopt the same conservation priorities.

The County Red and Amber lists

Shropshire Red List
Chaffinch
Common Sandpiper
Cuckoo
Curlew
Grasshopper Warbler
Greenfinch
Grey Partridge
Kestrel
Kingfisher
Lapwing
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Long-eared Owl
Merlin
Nightjar
Pied Flycatcher
Pochard
Snipe
Spotted Flycatcher
Starling
Swift
Tawny Owl
Teal
Tree Pipit
Tree Sparrow
Turtle Dove
Wheatear
Whinchat
Willow Tit
Willow Warbler
Wood Warbler
Woodcock

Shropshire Amber List
Black-headed Gull
Corn Bunting
Dipper
Garden Warbler
Great Crested Grebe
Green Woodpecker
Grey Wagtail
Marsh Tit
Meadow Pipit
Mistle Thrush
Moorhen
Sand Martin
Shoveler
Sparrowhawk
Treecreeper
Yellow Wagtail
Yellowhammer

Research Reports List and Summaries for 2019

Leo Smith

There are several groups or projects undertaking monitoring and conservation of individual species. These groups produce information and annual reports which are summarised in the appropriate Species Account in the Systematic List.

Species covered in this way in this 2019 Bird Report are

- Red Kite
- Peregrine
- Red Grouse
- Curlew
- Snipe
- Dipper
- Barn Owl
- Swift

In previous years, there were reports from the Raven Study Group as well, but the last of these was in 2016, when no colour-ringed birds remained at known nest sites.

The Shropshire Raptor Study Group was founded in 2010, to monitor in particular Hobby, Merlin and Goshawk, and support the Welsh Kite Trust in monitoring Red Kite. SRSG records for these species are included in the individual species accounts. More information about SRSG can be found on the SOS website, www.shropshirebirds.com.

Several Community Wildlife Groups are monitoring Lapwing, Curlew and other target species important in their own area.

A pilot project, Whinchat Conservation on the Long Mynd, funded by Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund via Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons, and National Trust, was undertaken. It aimed to test and evaluate proposals for a three-year study, to be included in the Delivery Phase of the Commons project 2020–23. The report can be found on the SOS website <http://www.shropshirebirds.com/index/bird-conservation/>

Apart from the above, there were no Research surveys with published reports undertaken in 2019. The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project started a repeat multi-annual survey of several species in 2017.

A summary of the Community Wildlife Group surveys for 2019 is as follows:–

Community Wildlife Group Bird Surveys

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group has carried out a Breeding Bird Survey annually since 2004, concentrating on Curlew and Lapwing. By 2016, five further Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs) had been established, all of which also carry out an annual Lapwing, Curlew and other birds survey. The areas covered, other species surveyed, and Pied Flycatcher, Barn Owl and Dipper nest box schemes were described in SBR 2015.

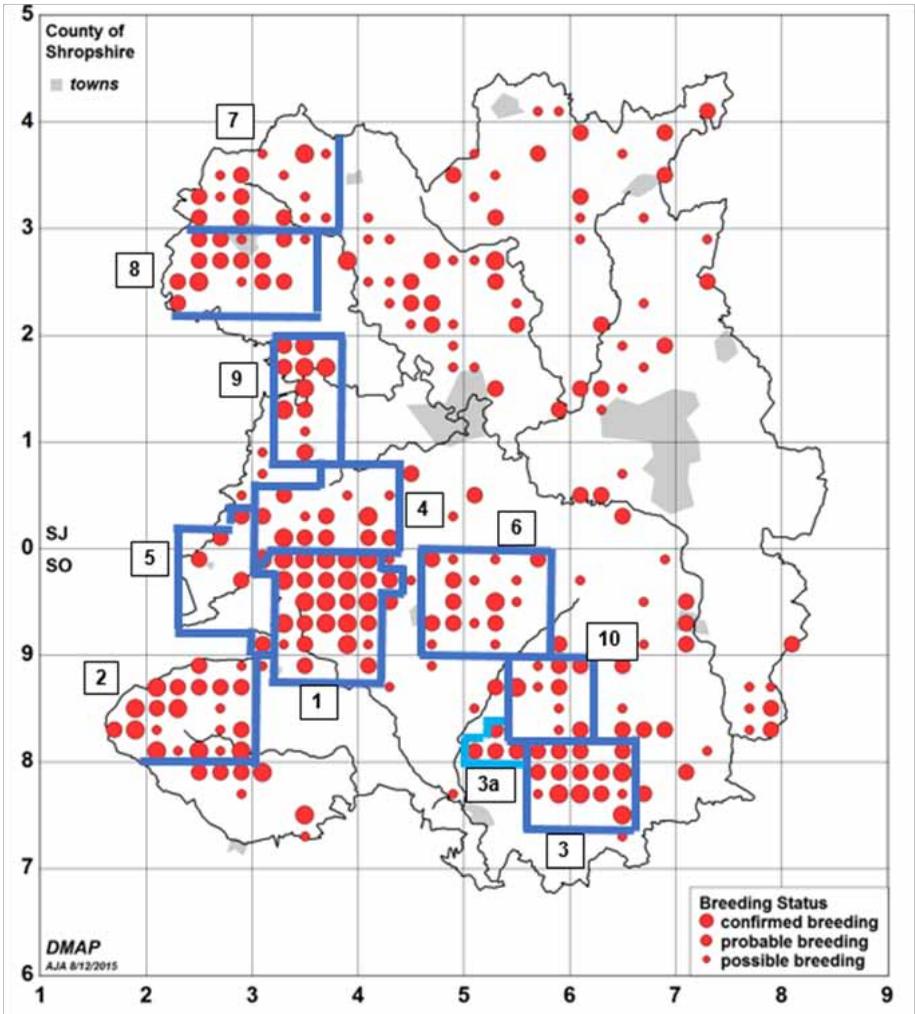
In 2017, the Three Parishes CWG was established, covering Weston Rhyn, Gobowen and St Martins (28 tetrads north and north-east of Oswestry), and the Strettons Area CWG, formed in 2011, started a bird survey in 30 tetrads east of Church Stretton.

In 2018, as part of the SOS/SWT “Save our Curlews” Campaign, the areas covered by the CWGs were superimposed on the Curlew distribution map from the 2008–13 Bird Atlas, and it was decided to promote two new CWGs, one covering the area south and south-west of Oswestry (the Tanat to Perry CWG) and the second to cover the Severn–Vyrnwy Confluence. A separate local initiative led to the formation of the Abdon CWG, to the west of Brown Cle.

The resulting areas covered by CWGs in 2019, overlain on the Curlew distribution map, are shown on the map.

Few breeding pairs of Lapwing and Curlew have been found, although Lapwings are more numerous in the north-west, where arable farmland is widespread. It must be stressed that groups have largely been established in areas that still have a Curlew population, and the results for Lapwing are less representative for the County as a whole.

In areas where the surveys have been undertaken for several years, the trend shows that the populations of both species have declined substantially. The table shows the estimated number of pairs in 2019, and the approximate percentage declines since CWG monitoring began. The figures for the Camlad area relate only to the 11 tetrads mainly in Shropshire.



Map 1. Curlew Distribution 2008-13, and Community Wildlife Group areas, 2019

Group	Area		First Year	Lapwing			Curlew			No. of Participants
	Survey squares (tetrads)	(sq. kms.)		Breeding Pairs (2019)		% decline since First Year	Breeding Pairs (2019)		% decline since First Year	
				Min	Max		Min	Max		
1 Upper Onny	31.5	125	2004	7	7	63	27	32	31	31
2 Upper Clun	31	110	2007	0	0	100	6	10	60	51
3 Clee Hill	20	80	2012	5	5	-67	7	7	46	22
3a Clee Hill (extension)	4 *	16	2019	0	0	n/a	6	6	n/a	1
4 Rea Valley	25.5	102	2014	3	4	36	9	10	20	24
5 Camlad Valley	11 **	44	2014	0	0	100	3	3	0	18
6 Strettons area	30	120	2017	5	7	n/a	5	8	n/a	45
7 Three Parishes	28	107	2017	29	32	n/a	3	4	n/a	21
8 Tanat to Perry (Oswestry south)	43	172	2018	42	51	n/a	15	19	n/a	65
9 Severn-Wyrnwy Confluence	27	108	2018	5	5	n/a	5	6	n/a	20
10 Abdon	16 *	64	2018	9	11	n/a	8	10	n/a	22
Total	267	1048		105	122		94	115		320

Table 1. Community Wildlife Groups – Lapwing & Curlew Surveys 2019

Notes

- 1 Kemp Valley CWG does not appear on the map, because no Curlews have been found during its surveys. No Lapwing survey was carried out in 2019
- 2 Orange highlight = 3 CWGs in “Curlew Country” area (76 tetrads)
- 3 ** Camlad Valley CWG comprises 20 tetrads, 11 mainly in Shropshire, and 9 mainly in Wales. The latter had 2–3 pairs of Curlew in 2014
- 4 Green highlight = 3 CWGs established in 2018 to extend coverage of Curlew
- 5 Negative figures in % decline column = a percentage increase

The Lapwing population in the Upper Onny area increased from 19 pairs in 2004 to 31 pairs in 2009, as a result of a Lapwing Recovery project, and very wet weather in 2007, but by 2014 numbers had declined back to the same as when monitoring started. The total in 2019 of only seven pairs was the lowest since UOWG started. The population is restricted to only four to five farms in the whole area.

The Curlew population has steadily declined from 38 pairs, by almost one-third since 2004. Even so, losses elsewhere in Shropshire have been much quicker, and the Upper Onny may now hold a fifth of the County population.

Lapwing numbers in the Upper Clun have been in steep decline for many years, and there have been none since 2013. The Curlew population was similar to last year, but it has declined by well over half since 2007.

Curlew was a target species in the Kemp Valley area, but none have been found there.

The Lapwing population has fluctuated over the years, but the two pairs in 2018 was the lowest recorded, and the survey was discontinued in 2019.

Monitoring in Clee Hill started in 2012, but it takes some years for a new group to develop a thorough knowledge of its area. The Lapwing population has fluctuated, and there was no evidence of breeding in 2015 or 2016, but there were two to four pairs in 2017 and 2018, and five pairs at one site in 2019. Coverage of Curlew was better than usual in 2016, and for the first time it was then possible to identify all the remaining territories. Making the reasonable assumption that pairs are site faithful, so pairs returning each year occupy the same territories, it was also possible to determine occupancy in each previous year. There has been a net loss of six pairs (46%) from the estimated population of 13 in 2012

Four tetrads known to have Curlew populations were added to the Clee Hill survey area in 2019, and six pairs were located.

Coverage in the Rea and Camlad valleys has been incomplete, and comparison between years is difficult, but the range of both species has declined considerably, compared with the relevant part of the maps in *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire* (1992). Again, it has taken time to develop an understanding of the numbers and distribution of both species. Although Lapwing in Rea Valley has shown a slight increase in comparison with the under-recording in the first year, more thorough surveys in the next two years found nine or ten pairs in 2016, with a subsequent decline. Detailed analysis of Curlew records in the Rea Valley CWG annual report shows that two long-established pairs have disappeared from the area, a minimum loss of almost 20% in only five years. In the Camlad, Curlew numbers have been stable, but Lapwing have apparently disappeared altogether, although two squares that have occasionally held Lapwings were not surveyed..

The five CWGs established in 2017 or 2018 are still establishing baselines for their areas, and it is too soon to establish trends. It will be seen that, not surprisingly, the Lapwing population is much higher in the CWG areas in the north-western part of the County, but the areas covered by CWGs do not include a high proportion of the County population, only about 15%.

Collectively, 320 individuals helped with the 10 CWG Curlew surveys, covering 267 tetrads, and they spent almost 2,400 hours on the surveys.

Comparison of the Curlew distribution and population estimate in the Shropshire Breeding Bird Atlas (1992), based on fieldwork between 1985 and 1990, with results from the 2008–13 Atlas, published in *The Birds of Shropshire*, suggest a disappearance from 62% of tetrads over the 23 year period, and a population decline

of 77%, from about 700 pairs in 1990 to around 160 pairs in 2010. If the declines in the Upper Onny, Upper Clun and Clee Hill areas are typical of the County as a whole, the population has declined by a further 24%, to only 120 pairs, in 2019.

It will be seen that between them, the CWGs found an estimated 94–115 pairs of Curlew, the vast majority of the County population.

All the CWGs produce an Annual Report, and each has concluded that breeding success of both Lapwing and Curlew was again poor, and insufficient to sustain the population. Both species are threatened with local extinction, and swift and radical action is needed to improve and re-create suitable habitat and combat predation.

The Upper Clun and Clee Hill CWGs worked with the SWT/SOS Save our Curlews campaign on a nest finding and protection project. Four nests were found and fenced in Clee Hill, and one nest was found in Upper Clun, but permission could not be obtained to fence it. Two of the nests in Clee Hill were successful, six chicks were radio-tagged and tracked, and a brood of three all fledged, an excellent result. SWT withdrew from the campaign in November 2019, but it is continuing under the auspices of SOS. Further details of the work carried out in 2019, and plans for the campaign in 2020, can be found on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

The Annual Reports, and more information about each CWG, can be found on the Community Wildlife Groups website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk The annual reports include more detailed results of the bird surveys and the nest box schemes. All these groups would welcome new helpers.

Venus Pool Nature Reserve Report 2019

Helen J Griffiths

It was a quieter year on the reserve this year after the stir caused during 2018 by visits from not one but two rarities (Pine Bunting and Black-crowned Night Heron), with a total of 139 species reported.

Contractors undertook more scrub clearance around the pool during the winter, continuing the agreed programme, and as well as the routine day-to-day jobs which need to be done, we held a two-day work party in November, at which we cleared islands and removed smaller scrub. We also used our hired tractor and toppler in several areas around the reserve, concentrating on the fen area at the back of the pool, the area in front of the hides and the north marsh. The hay fields were mown late in the summer after the flowering plants and grasses had dropped their seeds, with both small and round bales being made, and the fields were then after-math grazed into the autumn by the neighbour's cattle. The arable field again proved popular with buntings and finches during the winter.

Bird highlights included a Bewick's Swan on several dates between 1 Jan and 11 Mar, a Greenland White-fronted Goose on 25 Mar, Ospreys on at least six dates in April, June and August, six Wood Sandpipers on 9 Aug, a Yellow-browed Warbler on 6 Oct, and a Red-necked Grebe on the adjacent Cound Fishery from 12 to 27 Nov. A Mediterranean Gull was present on 5 Aug, a Common Tern on 9 Aug and two Black Terns on 8 May.

Breeding success was, as usual, rather mixed. Many of our resident species, including Canada Goose, Mallard, Little Grebe (at least one pair), Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen, Song Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Wren, Blue and Great Tits, Robin, Dunnoek, Chaffinch and Greenfinch were successful, as well as several summer visitors, including Reed Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Blackcap and Chiffchaff. Two pairs of Shelduck were thought to have bred just off the reserve, but there were no records of young this year. Although Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Little Ringed Plover all made attempts to breed, none were thought to have been successful. Just outside the reserve, a pair of Great Crested Grebes bred on the adjacent Cound Fishery.

Although not breeding on the reserve, hirundines and Swifts were, as usual, present throughout the summer, feeding over the fields and water each day, in large numbers of 50+ at times, and breeding in nearby buildings and sandy banks. Sand Martins

are usually the first summer migrants to arrive and, this year, the first were reported on 22 Mar, with the first Swallow on 31 Mar and the last on the 5 Oct. House Martins arrived on 5 Apr and the first Swifts were reported on 5 May. The reserve is an important resource for these birds, both during the breeding season and as an important feeding area before they undertake their autumn migration; it is close to their nest sites, provides plenty of building material, and has an abundance of invertebrates, thanks to our grazing animals.

Thirteen species of duck were recorded during the year, with maximum counts of 72 Shoveler in March and 74 in November, and of 90 Wigeon in January and 42 in December. Gadwall were present in all months with a maximum count of 42 in February, and Pintail present in both winter periods with three drakes on 2 Jan, a pair on 16 Feb and two pairs present in early December. The highest count of Teal reported this year was of 92 on 2 Dec. The maximum count of Pochard was 23 in March, and of Tufted Duck, 22 in January and 27 in December. Tufted Duck successfully bred this year; a duck was seen with four ducklings on 20 Jul and with 'two half-grown, downy chicks' on 2 Aug. Wood Duck, Mandarin, Goldeneye and Goosander were also recorded.

Sixteen species of wader were recorded on the reserve this year, including a pair of Oystercatchers, a pair of Little Ringed Plover and two pairs of Lapwing, which were present for much of the spring and early summer, although no evidence of successful breeding was reported. There was one record each of Woodcock on 29 Jan and of Whimbrel on 11 Aug, with a Ruff reported on five dates in late September and October. Single Black-tailed Godwits were recorded on six dates, with seven present on 30 Jun. Two Curlew were present on 17 Feb, one of which was colour ringed as an adult female at Llanrhystud, Ceredigion (south of Aberystwyth) on 8 November 2017. Three were found on 25 Feb and also on 1 Nov but otherwise only single birds on six dates were noted. Lapwing were present throughout the year, with a maximum count of 580 on 16 Feb.

There were reports of nine species of raptor this year: Osprey on six dates in April, June and August; Sparrowhawk (all reports were of one bird); Marsh Harrier on 26 Aug; Red Kite was reported on eight dates, and Buzzard were reported regularly, with a maximum count of six together on both 14 Apr and 7 Sep. Kestrel was reported on 42 dates, most records being of one female which was a regular at the reserve during the year. Single Merlins were reported on 18 Mar and 13 Nov. Hobby was noted on just on six dates between 27 Jun and 21 Sep, whilst single Peregrines were found on only eight dates, with two seen together on 8 Jan.

Sadly, we lost two more of our Hebridean sheep this year, within ten days of each

other. They died of natural causes, a combination of old age and extreme weather conditions, during a very hot, humid and extremely wet few days in June ... RIP 41 and 50.

Correction to the 2018 Venus Pool Report: The first sentence of the first paragraph should read “The North and Memorial hides remain ‘for SOS Members Only’ with keypads fitted to both for entry, and the extended Main hide remaining as a public hide”.

2019 Ringing Report

Martin George

1 Introduction

In 2019, 35 ringers were registered in Shropshire (nine more than in 2018), with a further five ringers from outside the County operating in the County, mostly on specific studies such as Coot or nest box pulli.

In total, 13,776 birds of 87 species were ringed for the first time in 2019, of which 2,632 were pulli (nestlings). A further 3,366 birds were retrapped or recovered. This compares with the 2018 total of 14,042 birds of 86 species (2,741 nestlings) and 3,225 birds retraps/recoveries.

The five most ringed species in 2019 (2018 data)

Blue Tit	3,190	(3,124)
Great Tit	1,631	(1,836)
Pied Flycatcher	1,008	(1,064)
Goldfinch	667	(899)
Greenfinch	506	(418)

Species of which only one bird was ringed in 2019 (2018 data shown in brackets)

- Mallard (1)
- Long-eared Owl (0)
- Carrion Crow (0)
- Firecrest (1)
- Mistle Thrush (0)
- Spotted Flycatcher (0)
- Wheatear (0)

The information that has traditionally formed the bulk of the annual ringing report is now easily accessible in the *Online Ringing and Nest Recording Report* on the BTO website, so we have changed the format for this year's Shropshire report in an attempt to make it of greater interest to non-ringers. The annual totals (Table 1) are a popular component which has been retained, but to do better justice to the many

recoveries (111 in 2019) details of exceptional recoveries will now be included in the species accounts within the main body of the report.

For some appreciation of the diversity of movements, life histories and longevity data generated in a typical year do visit the “Recovery summaries - by Area” of the online report. Highlights for 2019 include

- a colour-ringed Mute Swan in its twelfth year since being ringed as an adult;
- a Golden Plover that had its colour rings read 1,500 km away in Iceland;
- a Woodcock that was shot 2,400 km away in Russia;
- colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls from Germany and Poland;
- a Coal Tit that died in its eight year;
- a juvenile Blue Tit that travelled 234 km from Attingham Park to Redcar and Cleveland within 51 days;
- two Sedge Warblers that travelled almost 600 km from Shropshire to France;
- a Nuthatch, a Starling and a Dipper that were retrapped eight years later;
- a Chaffinch ringed in Belgium and found dead in Bridgnorth, 500 km away.

The space saved by not devoting several pages of this report to a selection of recoveries allows us to include short reports from ringers that aim to give an insight into some of the many types of study that are being undertaken in the County. Please contact me (martin@thegreenfuse.net) if you would like to have your ringing project included in the 2020 Shropshire ringing report.

Ringing relies on the help of birdwatchers and members of the public who kindly report details of colour-ringed birds or rings found on casualties. If you find a ringed bird, or see one carrying a colour ring or other mark (such as a leg flag, wing tag, or collar), please report the sighting via www.ring.ac You will receive details of the place of and date of ringing, and will be part of the process that helps us all to learn more about the lives of the birds that live in or visit Shropshire.

Reference

Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. (2020) *The Online Demography Report: bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2019*. BTO, Thetford (www.bto.org/ringing-report).

Table 1. Birds ringed or retrapped in Shropshire in 2019

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019 Total	Retrap	Recovery
Mute Swan	3	25	10	0	38	4	7
Mallard	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Sparrowhawk	0	0	7	0	7	1	0
Goshawk	3	0	0	0	3	0	0
Red Kite	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
Coot	0	0	5	0	5	2	1
Lapwing	33	0	0	0	33	0	0
Golden Plover	0	58	60	0	118	5	6
Curlew	15	0	4	0	19	8	4
Woodcock	0	13	19	0	32	0	1
Jack Snipe	0	3	4	0	7	3	0
Snipe	0	4	1	0	5	0	0
Stock Dove	2	1	1	0	4	0	0
Woodpigeon	3	0	5	0	8	2	0
Collared Dove	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
Cuckoo	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
Barn Owl	171	0	11	1	183	4	9
Long-eared Owl	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Short-eared Owl	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Swift	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
Kingfisher	0	15	1	0	16	2	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	36	21	0	57	27	0
Green Woodpecker	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Kestrel	22	0	0	0	22	1	1
Hobby	3	0	0	0	3	0	0
Peregrine	11	0	0	0	11	0	1
Jay	0	4	8	0	12	1	0
Magpie	0	3	2	0	5	0	0
Jackdaw	6	13	4	0	23	2	0
Rook	0	3	0	0	3	1	1

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019 Total	Retrap	Recovery
Carrion Crow	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Coal Tit	15	55	67	0	137	121	2
Marsh Tit	13	18	8	0	39	50	1
Willow Tit	0	4	0	0	4	0	0
Blue Tit	388	2,130	672	0	3,190	1,017	8
Great Tit	241	1,095	288	7	1,631	555	9
Skylark	0	4	6	20	30	0	0
Sand Martin	0	54	35	0	89	1	0
Swallow	206	0	54	0	260	0	1
House Martin	0	0	97	0	97	0	0
Cetti's Warbler	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	0	33	62	185	280	88	1
Willow Warbler	0	31	27	0	58	2	0
Chiffchaff	0	224	97	1	322	31	1
Wood Warbler	12	0	1	0	13	0	0
Sedge Warbler	0	50	29	0	79	49	3
Reed Warbler	0	81	56	0	137	86	1
Blackcap	0	368	101	0	469	32	1
Garden Warbler	0	55	19	0	74	2	0
Lesser Whitethroat	0	2	1	1	4	0	0
Whitethroat	0	54	7	0	61	7	0
Firecrest	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Goldcrest	0	76	18	1	95	14	0
Wren	0	139	44	5	188	47	1
Nuthatch	10	17	37	26	90	60	0
Treecreeper	0	10	10	17	37	20	0
Starling	0	153	137	4	294	5	1
Blackbird	13	124	117	1	255	67	3
Fieldfare	0	23	21	0	44	0	0
Redwing	0	150	64	0	214	0	0
Song Thrush	4	29	16	0	49	5	0
Mistle Thrush	0	0	1	0	1	0	0

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019 Total	Retrap	Recovery
Spotted Flycatcher	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Robin	8	209	74	0	291	102	2
Pied Flycatcher	877	0	131	0	1,008	115	35
Redstart	116	5	19	0	140	1	0
Whinchat	25	0	3	0	28	0	0
Stonechat	119	0	30	0	149	31	2
Wheatear	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
Dipper	245	15	17	0	277	94	28
House Sparrow	22	65	52	10	149	89	60
Tree Sparrow	7	0	0	0	7	0	0
Duncock	0	187	62	6	255	141	0
Grey Wagtail	11	9	2	0	22	1	0
Pied Wagtail	7	13	5	0	25	1	0
Meadow Pipit	13	74	11	1	99	0	0
Chaffinch	0	46	152	0	198	9	0
Brambling	0	0	75	0	75	1	1
Bullfinch	0	20	30	0	50	7	0
Greenfinch	0	326	179	1	506	45	3
Linnet	0	2	2	0	4	3	0
Redpoll	0	0	34	0	34	0	0
Lesser Redpoll	0	211	173	2	386	14	6
Goldfinch	0	298	369	0	667	105	7
Siskin	0	0	206	0	206	9	5
Yellowhammer	3	0	6	0	9	1	0
Reed Bunting	1	145	170	0	316	52	7
Grand Total	2,632	6,792	4,062	290	13,776	3,145	221

2 RAS (Retrapping Adults for Survival) studies of House Sparrow

Bob Harris

“and lecherous as a sparrow”. Chaucer; Canterbury Tales

Once considered common, the gregarious House Sparrow is now red-listed as a species of conservation concern. In the 1970s there were in excess of 12 million pairs in the UK and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) actively discouraged any ringing of the species. Then, in the late 1970s, populations started to decline in both rural and urban settings. Nowadays, population estimates put levels at around 5.3 million pairs. The reasons for the decline are still being teased apart but are considered to be a combination of food availability, lack of nest sites, pollution, disease and predation.

In 1993 all restrictions on ringing were removed and active monitoring and surveying since then has been undertaken by the BTO, RSPB and others. One survey undertaken is the Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) study, which requires surveyors, under licence, to capture, mark, release and re-sight/recapture as many individuals as possible annually. Typically, ‘marking’ of individuals is the placement of a unique metal ring onto the leg of the bird which can be reread on recapture. However, once caught, House Sparrows are notoriously difficult to recapture and so colour rings are used in addition. The colour rings are inscribed with a combination

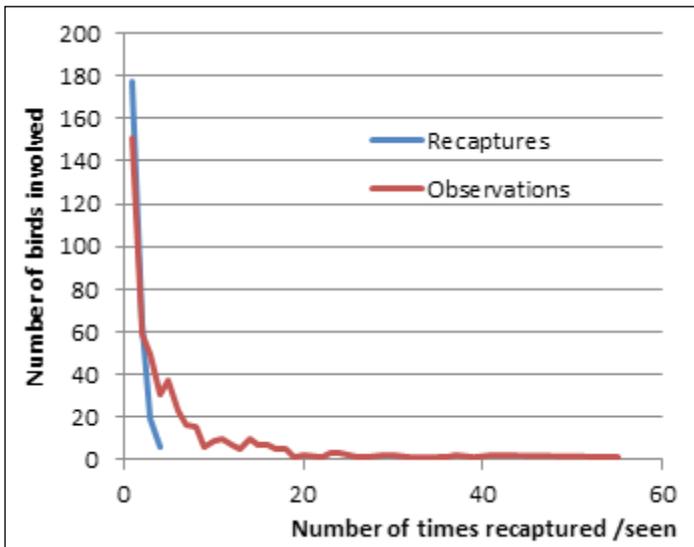


Table 1. The frequency of recapture or resighting.

of three letters and/or numbers and can be read using binoculars while bird are typically at feeding stations, so the need to recapture is no longer necessary.

Nationally, sixteen RAS schemes for House Sparrow are registered and used for survival estimates, and two of these are in Shropshire. Since January 2009, at a site near Whitchurch, over 1,027 new birds have been caught and ringed and, of these, 222 have been actively recaptured, c80% only once (20% more than once, the maximum capture being only four times). For colour-ringed birds, 331 have been resighted, with 68% resighted more than once and c40% of the total more than four times (with one being resighted 55 times up till now; see Table 1).

All results are submitted annually to the BTO and, from this, survival estimates for adults can be calculated on a year-by-year basis within the different habitats under which the studies are performed. These data added to data from other sources such as the nest record scheme helps to give a fuller picture on the population trends for this sparrow.

To date, the oldest birds on site are male 6yrs 237 days and female 6yrs 115 days [The oldest individual recorded in the UK is a male from Pontypool of 12 years and 12 days of age].

3 A RAS Study of Marsh Tits (*a study by the Shropshire Ringing Group*)

Gerry Thomas

Marsh Tits are red-listed due to the significant decline in the UK breeding population (40% in 25 years up to 2014 and 70% since 1969). As a result, the species is a target for ringing and other studies, trying to give clues as to the causes of the decline. It is a priority species for the RAS (Retrapping of Adults for Survival) project, assessing the survival of full-grown birds from one breeding season to the next. So, the key objective is to identify all the individuals present each year.

For a species whose main habitat is deciduous woods with a well-developed shrub layer, Shropshire ought to be good Marsh Tit territory. There are good populations in The Wrekin and the Ercall, the Wenlock Edge and the Wyre Forest, but the extensive tracts of conifer plantations in the south of the County and of farmland further north, break up the preferred deciduous woodland habitat. Marsh Tits are poor dispersers, so do not move far, and our County populations are centred on the larger tracts of deciduous woods. In north Shropshire especially, the small size and extent of many woods seem to be limitations for the species and probably make it difficult for young birds to find new territories of sufficient extent to enable their survival and subsequent breeding.

The Shropshire Ringing Group (SRG) has access to Shavington Park, a private estate in the north-east of the County. The estate is one of the largest blocks of woodland in this area and Marsh Tits are one of the prominent members of the estate's avifauna. SRG has established a RAS study for the species at Shavington. Between 2017–19, the group had 199 'encounters' (captures or field observations of colour-ringed birds), of 72 individuals, so this is a promising start to the project.

Our methods are a little heavy on effort and a big commitment in time. As Marsh Tits tend to hold territories or remain in a core area year-round, our technique is to establish temporary feeding stations around the woods on an approximate 200 metre grid. They are temporary in that the stations are baited for a week before a capture attempt and then the site is mist-netted, before moving on to the next location. The assumption is that such temporary feeding will not influence the species survival. The technique has the added advantage of having large by-catches of other tit species and of woodland birds such as Nuthatch and Woodpeckers, so we are steadily building up a lot of data on the retrap rates and survival of all these species.

All Marsh Tits are colour-ringed to aid individual identification in the field, and field surveys are made in March and April using sound lures to track down the individuals each breeding season.

We have found that the period February through mid-April is usually the most productive for locating individual birds as they are vocal and exhibit territorial behaviour at this time. Once eggs are laid and incubation is underway, birds are much more difficult to find and the catch rate at feeding stations drops dramatically, not really recovering until after the chicks have fledged and then, not surprisingly, not reaching the catch rates of late winter and early spring. To improve the results of the study, we do need to get better at locating nesting pairs to track down all individuals in the time window allowed for RAS.

A fascinating project which is also giving some interesting inter-species comparisons with other titmice.

Introduction to the Systematic List

Records used in the systematic list

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

Birdtrack (BTO)

Birdtrack is an online bird recording system developed through a partnership between BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland. The system uses data from birdwatchers' records to support species and site conservation at local, national and international scales. Results produced by BirdTrack include mapping the distribution and chronology of bird observations throughout the country. All Shropshire records submitted to BirdTrack can be accessed by the County Recorder provided the observer gives his consent. In recent years, most Shropshire observers have submitted their records to the Birdtrack system. It has many advantages in that it enables the observer to submit records wherever the birds were seen in the UK and know that the records would be made available to the County Recorder(s). In addition, the system allows an observer to retain a history of observations and analyse these by location, species or date. Observers who do not yet use the system are encouraged to do so.

Records submitted directly to the County Recorder

Records can be submitted to the County Recorder on an *ad hoc* basis. This involves additional work, however, and has more manual intervention and therefore the possibility of error. The County Bird Recorder uses features of the Birdtrack system to upload all records sent directly to the Recorder into Birdtrack. So, all records received are ultimately deposited in the Birdtrack system, and this is therefore the master database of bird records for our County.

Birdguides Data

Data submitted via the Birdguides web pages have been used in this report, unless a County rarity which has not been accepted by the County Rarities Committee. Birdguides do not pass on the identity of observers, so if a description of a County rarity has not been submitted elsewhere, it is impossible for the County Bird Recorder to trace the original observer and therefore such records will be recorded as 'unproven'. Observers submitting records to Birdguides are asked to send descriptions of County or national rarities to the County Bird Recorder.

Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)

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

The BBS was launched in 1994 to provide more representative habitat and regional coverage than the Common Bird Census (CBC) which it replaced completely in 2000, after a period of overlap. This was to ensure that the results were compatible, enabling long-term trends to be calculated from 1960 to the present using data from both schemes.

Increased uptake of the BBS, which requires two survey visits per year, enables trends to be compiled for common and widespread species for individual counties and regions in the UK and for specific habitats. Since 1997 when the number of plots surveyed in Shropshire increased significantly, it has been possible to calculate local trends for those species which are regularly found in 40 or more 1 square km. survey plots. For these species the County trend index for 2019 is given in the relevant species account. The 1997 index is set to 1.0 so a current index of 0.6 indicates a decline of 40% and a current index of 1.6 indicates an increase of 60% since 1997, the annual change from the previous year is also provided. If Shropshire BBS data are not given, then no birds of this species were recorded in the BBS survey in the County in 2019. An index is given if sufficient data was collected for the species to calculate a statistically robust index for the year; where insufficient data is available this is indicated for that species.

51 plots were surveyed in 2019. The percentage of plots where a species was present and the number per occupied plot is also given, for less common species this gives a crude indication of how widespread they are, and for some, the change in this percentage since the BBS began can indicate an increase or decline in range.

Full details of the BBS can be found at: www.bto.org/bbs.

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

Wetland Bird Survey (BTO)

The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) is administered by the BTO in partnership with the WWT/RSPB/JNCC. WeBS monitors all water bird 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 species; (3) detect changes in locations of populations; (4) compute species thresholds for sites of UK and international importance and (5) identify 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. Records submitted in Shropshire are used in the species accounts.

Nomenclature and order

The official British list is maintained by the British Ornithologists’ Union (BOU). From time to time the list changes, as knowledge on the relationships of birds develops and new species are accepted to the list. The latest version is the ninth edition. The formal citation is ‘*British Ornithologists’ Union (BOU). 2017. The British List – A Checklist of Birds of Britain (9th edition)*’ *Ibis* 160: 190–240 by McNerny *et al.*

As at 1 January 2018 the BOU decided to conform to the taxonomic decisions and of the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) and therefore all taxonomic decisions made by the IOC are currently automatically adopted by the BOU, so as at this date the BOU list follows the latest *IOC World Bird List* (version 10.1).

New editions are published approximately every five years, but, in the interim, changes may be made as new species are accepted, or changes to the category classification of a species are determined (see below). Interim updates to each edition have appropriate version numbers allocated and are published on the BOU web site, www.bou.org.uk/british-list. As of 1 August 2020, the latest version is *BOU_British_List_9th_report_51.v2_2020-01-24*.

The order and nomenclature of all species in the systematic list follows this version. Species names adhere to the British (English) vernacular names within this list.

This version contains significant changes especially to the taxonomic order of non-passerine families.

Species in the list are included in various categories according to their British status:

Category A – species which have apparently been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1 January 1950

Category B – species which would otherwise be in Category A but have not been recorded since 31 December 1949

Category C – species that, although originally introduced by man either deliberately or accidentally, have established self-sustaining breeding populations

Category D – species which would otherwise occur in categories A or B except there is doubt that they have ever occurred in a natural state

Category E – species recorded as introductions or escapes from captivity and whose breeding populations are not thought to be self-sustaining

The species accounts within the Systematic List in this report all fall into Categories A, B or C. Any species recorded which are currently included in Categories D or E are included in the list of escapees.

National and county rarities

All occurrences of national or County rarities are published if they have been accepted by the relevant rarities committee(s). Rejected or not yet accepted occurrences of rare species are listed in the appendices.

Observers are urged to report rare birds promptly to the County Recorder, either directly or via Birdtrack, and submit a Rarities Description with supporting evidence, eg photographs.

Species accounts

A summary of key indicators is given at the start of each species account. These include Shropshire status, results of BBS surveys for the year, Shropshire BBS index if enough data exists, and both national and County conservation status. The author for each species account is also given.

Shropshire Status

2019 was notable for the publication of the first county Avifauna, (*The Birds of Shropshire by Leo Smith*) in November. During the significant effort in the production of this volume, the status and abundance of individual species within the County's Avifauna was re-assessed, based on the latest information provided by the Atlas project 2007–13 which underpinned the Avifauna, together with the results from the latest County surveys, especially the Breeding Birds Survey (BBS).

- As a result, as from 2020 the revised status and abundance assessments provided by the Avifauna, are now included within each species account.

The new status definitions from the Avifauna are listed below and each species is allocated the same definition as used in the Avifauna:-

Resident:	Breeds and present all year
Summer Visitor:	Mainly occurs as a breeding visitor in summer
Winter Visitor:	Mainly occurs as a visitor throughout the winter
Visitor:	Can appear at any time during the year; with no obvious pattern as to when it occurs
Passage Migrant:	Mainly passes through in the spring and/or autumn; this category is only used when it is the predominant status for the species
Vagrant:	A very rare bird well outside its usual range
Naturalised:	Introduced deliberately or accidentally by man and now breeds in the wild
Irruptive:	Occurs sporadically, or in very variable numbers, in response to severe food shortages within its home range
No Modern Record:	A species that has only previously occurred before 1 January 1950
Has Bred:	Species that have bred before 2008; either regularly or infrequently, but no longer breed. They may have another status now
Breeding Species:	Species that breed in low numbers and not always annually.

The abundance definitions below are used in the headers to the species texts. The definitions vary depending on the status of species. For a full description of how these definitions have been determined, see pages 61–62 of the Avifauna. In general terms, the abundance of residents and summer visitors is based on the estimated breeding numbers per annum; abundance of other species on their frequency of occurrence both temporarily and spatially during the latest Atlas period (2007–13).

For breeding species:-

Very Common	Over 15,000 Breeding Pairs
Common	3,501 – 15,000 Breeding Pairs
Fairly Common	1,501 – 3,500 Breeding Pairs
Uncommon	101 – 1,500 Breeding Pairs
Scarce	11 – 100 Breeding Pairs
Rare	Annual and up to 10 Breeding Pairs
Very Rare	Less than annual

For winter visitors, passage migrants and rarities:-

Very Common	Found in 90 – 100% of tetrads
Common	Found in 40 – 89% of tetrads
Fairly Common	Found in 25 – 39 % of tetrads
Uncommon	Found in 10 – 24% of tetrads
Scarce	21 – 200 individuals per year
Rare	Annual or nearly annual and up to 20 individuals per year
Very Rare	Less than annual

National Conservation Status

The national (and international) conservation status of each species is also included within each species account. 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).
- Species monitored by the Rare Birds Breeding Panel (RBBP). 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.
- Red, Amber and Green Lists of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC), see below.

The RSPB periodically review the most up-to-date information on the status of birds in the UK and elsewhere within their range. These data are analysed, and birds are allocated to one of three lists; the Red, Amber and Green lists. The status of species published within the '*Birds of Conservation Concern 4*' (Dec 2015) has been used within this Annual Report.

64 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
- 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 recorded during BBS surveys. A total of 511km squares was surveyed in 2018. The number of birds per occupied plot, included in the species introduction text, refers to the mean number of birds within the plots where birds were present.

Shropshire Conservation Status

Following the publication of the County Avifauna, Leo Smith and the conservation sub-committee of SOS have completed an assessment of the conservation status of most of the breeding species in our County (See this report, *Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*). Details of the criteria used to assess this status for each species are given in this article and the status of each breeding species is given in each species account. (Red/Amber/Green). At this stage only the breeding species are included but it is the intention to assess the regularly occurring winter visitors and passage migrants in the future. For clarity, species not so far included in the assessment are listed as ‘not assessed’.

Species Account Author

The initials of the account author have been included within the species account heading data. The following SOS members have authored this year’s accounts: -

John Arnfield (AJA), Glenn Bishton (GB), Peter Carty (PC), Allan Dawes (APD), Michelle Frater (MF), Martin Grant (MGG), Jonathan Groom (JG), Bob Harris (RJH), Tom Lowe (TCL), John Martin (JPM), Josie Owen (JO), Rob Rees (RR), Mike Shurmer (MS), Leo Smith (LS), Gerry Thomas (GT), John Tucker (JJT), Graham Walker (GJW), Tom Wall (TM)

Location Names

Where the location of observations is given, the location or site names use the name provided by the recorder if it is on the Ordnance Survey maps at 1:25000 or 1:50000 scale.

Observer Details

Selected records within the systematic list are accompanied by the observer's name in parenthesis. 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

Ringling Recovery Details

Ring recoveries are listed under the relevant species account. Not all recoveries of birds ringed in or found in Shropshire in 2019 are given; instead those listed by the BTO's Online Ringing and Recovery Report are the more interesting movements or longevity records for the year in a national context. These are reproduced in the species accounts. The reason for listing is given, e.g. *The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):*

The 2019 Systematic List

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus scotica*

Shropshire status: Scarce resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: TW

The mould is broken. For more than 20 years the compiler for this species has been obliged to refer to records coming only from The Long Mynd and The Stiperstones, but on 7 Jul one was seen on Titterstone Clee; although known as a breeding location up until 1963, it is the first record there since 9 Mar 1980. After 1980 there was still a run of records from Brown Clee (a traditional haunt) and these continued until 1989. Next there were reports in 1990 from Muckleton, near Shawbury (a bizarre location), and the Clun Forest (an historic one); both were of singles. Then, in 1993 there was a record from Birch Coppice, assumed to be the place of this name near Preston Brockhurst; it is another unlikely location but the Bird Report omits all details of place, date and number. In 1997 two were spotted on Huglith Hill, near The Stiperstones, while Heath Mynd, from where there was a record in 2008, is, in effect, the southern end of The Stiperstones ridge.

With the notable exception of the bird on Titterstone Clee, the other 22 records were from the usual two localities and were spread fairly evenly through the year. The Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group carried out its annual and comprehensive survey of calling males in spring, when an estimated 54 were detected, down on the 64–66 of 2018 but otherwise similar to the numbers recorded in the previous five years. Meanwhile, on The Stiperstones there was a tally of 24–26 males, similar to the 21–24 of 2018, but both years were down on the period from 2014 to 2016 when counts were in the range 28–38. There were no late summer surveys at either site, so the success of the breeding season is unknown. Eight on The Stiperstones on 15 May would be very early for a brood, so perhaps this was a cumulative total rather than a single sighting, otherwise five here on 22 Jul and four on The Long Mynd on 7 May and 25 Sep were the disappointingly low maxima for the year.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon naturalised resident, population supplemented by annual releases of captive bred birds
Shropshire conservation status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 22% of plots; 29 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	TW

‘A rarity here – the first for what must be years’, commented a regular and diligent recorder on the sighting of two Frenchmen in his patch at Aston on Clun; such individuals are scarce in south Shropshire and these were the first there since 2012. Of the 101 reports over the year, only 29 were from southerly locations, those with grid references prefixed SO. This is the norm, and presumably those who release an estimated 120,000 in the County each year do so largely in the northern half, where arable farming predominates and Red-legs are most at home. These very substantial releases make it impossible to judge the strength of the naturalised population.

Despite these late summer releases, which mean that the population is at its height in early autumn, there were only seven records in the months August to October, as against 53 in the months March to May. This is typical however and is presumably because males are vocal at this time, drawing attention to their normally undemonstrative selves.

A brood at Dodecote, near Childs Ercall, in August, was the only breeding record and there were only four records in double figures, with 15, then 22, at Lower Upton, near Shifnal, in January and February, 12 at Clarepool Moss, near Cole Mere, in April and 30 at Ellerdine Heath, east of Shawbury, on the last day of the year.

A covey of six *Alectoris* partridges seen at Lady Halton, near Ludlow, on 29 Dec included two Chukar *A. chukar*, to which Red-legs are closely related. Birds with plumage suggestive of hybrids were recorded in this area in 2017 following reports of Chukar there in 2016.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident: population supplemented by occasional releases of captive bred birds
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: TW

Once aptly referred to as the ‘Common Partridge’, the epithet ‘Grey’ can now be applied not just to this bird’s name but to its status in the County. Does it still exist here as a wild bird, or are all sightings a consequence perhaps of releases? We don’t know. There were just 17 records from 10 locations falling within seven 10 km squares, five of which lay within a triangle running from Market Drayton south to Ironbridge and across to Shrewsbury. The outlying records were at Ellesmere and Trefonen, just west of Oswestry. Fifteen records were of one to three birds, with one report of five at The Rea, Upton Magna, on 24 Jul and one of 10 near Coalbrookdale on 4 Jan.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Shropshire status: Rare summer visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: TW

Required to conjure some worthwhile commentary from endless records of Pheasants, the game bird compilers of annual reports smack their lips when it comes to Quail – what excitement has this enigmatic little bundle conferred on the County’s birders this year? How many pulses have been quickened by its taunting call? Well, not many in 2019; just 10 we know of, although the anonymous contributors to Bird Guides may include a few more. The 32 records on 23 dates (seven in May, six in June, nine in July and one in August) embraced just five locations, and Noneley, near Wem (often a favoured spot) claimed all but five of the records, the others coming from Shifnal, Aldersey (near Prees), Prees itself and Brunslow, near Lydbury North, the last being the only location in the south.

An early birder caught the first of the year, two at 7am on 10 May at Noneley. The last report was of three calling in the same area on 2 Aug, where three had been recorded on three other dates, and four, the maximum for the year, had been recorded once, on 15 Jun. It is presumed that all reports were of birds wetting their lips. Habitat was mentioned twice only, with calls emanating from a field of cereals on

one occasion and from 'rough grassland' on another, but this was on 2 Aug when most cereal crops had been harvested.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Shropshire status:	Very common naturalised resident; population supplemented by annual releases of captive bred birds
National conservation status:	Naturalised, releases may have a negative impact on other species
Shropshire conservation status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 93% of plots; 291 birds recorded, an average of 5.39 per occupied plot and 5.02 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	1.59, annual change -0.17 (2018 Index = 1.76)
Author:	TW

I am told that Ratlinghope Ladies much enjoyed their Christmas lunch; it was Pheasant with mango chutney. Both ingredients may be found in the wild in parts of Asia, but birdwatchers might wish that the Pheasant had been left there rather than being introduced to the UK. Prodigious numbers are now reared and released here, with estimates running at 43 million per year, of which perhaps 850,000 in Shropshire. Even though only about 35% of them will get shot, the Ladies have a lot of eating to do.

One can only speculate as to the impact of these massive releases on the countryside and on other creatures. It seems probable however that Pheasants, whether as prey or carrion, are sustaining artificially high numbers of avian and mammalian predators, with knock-on effects on other species. Having fed on Pheasant through the winter months, to what do these predators turn in the breeding season when Pheasant numbers are at their lowest? Are they impacting then on ground nesting birds?

There were more than 900 records lodged over the year, but despite the huge numbers released, there were only 39 reports of 10 or more. Twenty-five were counted at Trefonen on 2 Jan, but that was the maximum in the early part of the year as numbers dwindled. Few of the 65% of released birds that are not shot survive, and it is telling that there was not a single report of nests or chicks. Indeed, on 14 Sep, one regular recorder noted a single bird near Aston on Clun as 'the first for ages'. But with the influx of newly released birds in the autumn there were four counts in excess of 25 with the maximum for the year of 50 at Brownheath Moss, near Cockshutt, on 24 Nov.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon naturalised resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 33% of plots; 96 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	GJW

A widely distributed species found throughout the County, although this goose is more prevalent in the north and east in both the breeding season and in the winter; perhaps a reflection on the availability of suitable habitat rather than any other factor.

As a relatively early breeder, pairs are beginning to form by March so larger flocks have usually dispersed by the end of February. This is reflected in the records with six counts of 300 or more birds in the first two months: over 400 at Bromfield on 6 Jan; 300 at Polemere on 11 and 13 Jan; 308 on the Severn Floodplain between Atcham and Wroxeter on 21 Jan with 398 at the same site on 18 Feb; and over 300 at VP on 25 Feb. By contrast, there was only one count of over hundred in March with c111 at VP on 1st.

Although 110 were still on Horsehay Lake on 22 Apr, the majority of counts from March through to June were of fewer than 20 individuals. Probable or confirmed breeding was observed at 28 sites across the County.

By mid-June, post-breeding flocks, comprising both adults and birds of the year, were beginning to form and this continued through July and August. In June, three groups of fifty or more were reported: 114 at Priorslee Flash on 15th, 57 at Walcot Hall Lakes on 16th and 168 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 17th. By July this had increased to five counts of 50+ from 4 sites with 104 at VP on 30 Jul being the largest. In August, there were 10 counts of 50+ from just three sites, all but two of which were at Venus Pool, although it did supply the highest count with 175 on 15th.

Early September saw an increasing number of large flocks with six over 150, including 250 at VP on 4th and 236 at Walcot Hall Lakes on 15th. By October, the first really big numbers of the autumn/winter period were being reported. Three hundred were at Lady Halton, near Ludlow on 6th, with an exceptional count of 1,000 at the same site three days later, and 303 were at Chetwynd Pool on 13th. In November, the highest counts were from VP with 340 on 3rd, 630 on 6th and 475 on 23rd. Elsewhere, 200 were on the Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence on 17th and 170 at Wall Farm on 29th.

By December, flock sizes had diminished considerably with only three of 150 or more: 160 at VP on 12th; 150 by the canal at Whixall Moss on 31st; and 210, again at VP, also on the last day of the year.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Shropshire status: Uncommon naturalised resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Naturalised, not assessed
Shropshire BBS: Present in 16% of plots; 38 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: GJW

The Birds of Shropshire (2019) showed that this species is much more restricted to the north and east of the County when compared with Canada Goose and this is reflected in the records.

Prior to the breeding season, the majority of counts are of fewer than 20 birds with only 15 reports of more than that. Four exceeded a hundred with 230 at Polemere on 13 Jan, 110 on Felton Butler Pool on 20 Jan, 173 on Chelmarsh Reservoir on 1 Feb and 104 at Lower Upton (SJ7506) on 21 Feb.

Probable or confirmed breeding was reported from just 14 sites which is almost certainly an underrepresentation of the true picture given the number of substantial post-breeding counts. Between the beginning of July and the end of September there were 30 counts of over a hundred, albeit the majority from VP. Sightings of marked birds in previous years have shown an influx from elsewhere in the country at this time but aggregating local breeders and birds of the year will almost certainly make up large proportion of these flocks. The highest count at VP during this period was 425 on 16 Sep, but numbers eventually built up to an incredible 580 on 3 Nov.

Elsewhere, 217 were at Polemere on 13 Oct, 380 at Smythemoor (SJ6333) on 19 Oct and 290 at Tittenley Pool on 9 Dec.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GJW

Although reported annually for the last few years, Shropshire is at the southern edge of the wintering range for this species and records usually relate to occasional, displaced stragglers or skeins passing over as they fly between East Anglia and Lancashire; 2019 was not unusual in this respect.

A Pink-foot was in the Shifnal area from 2 Jan until 21 Feb and singles were also reported from The Mere, Ellesmere on 20 Feb and VP on 31 Mar. It is conceivable that the Shifnal and VP birds were one and the same and may have been the individual reported at VP and Priorslee Flash at the end of 2018.

In the second winter period, approximately 60 were seen heading east, then south-east, over Ercall Heath on 12 Oct. A single flew north over VP on 28 Nov, whilst in December, 150 were in a stubble field at Walcot (near Telford) on 1st, an adult was at Middle Pool, Trench on 30th, and 80 were observed at Whitchurch on 31st. As mentioned above, the larger flocks are usually seen flying over the County so the sighting of 150 on a stubble at Walcot was quite unusual; the last report of a significant number on the ground was on 5 February 2004 when it was speculated ‘... that possibly up to 1,000 birds may well have been present on the (Melverley) floods’ (Shropshire Bird Report 2004).

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GJW

A single of the Greenland race *A. a. flavirostris* was on the Severn floodplain at Atcham from 18 Feb to 8 Mar (*TC Lowe*) and what was possibly the same bird was subsequently seen at VP on 25 Mar (*GE Holmes*).

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 10% of plots; 19 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: MGG

Widely reported from northern and central areas of the County (SJ Grid Refs.), but fewer sites in the south (SO grid refs.).

The table below presents the monthly maxima at sites where the species was regularly recorded in double figures.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cound Lane swan field	124	116	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EGM	6	9	5	8	13	10	21	14*	38	18	12	36
Marton Pool, Baschurch	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	96+	119+
Newport Canal	12	10	4	4	4*	4*	4*	4*	17	14	13	12
Polemere	8	4+	-	2	10	13	11	-	2	2	-	7
River Severn, Shrewsbury (Coton Hill to Weir)	4	10	8	6	4	-	5+	6	8	11	11	7
River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence	3	6	16	12	-	-	-	-	5	2+	40+	10+
River Severn flood plain (Atcham to Wroxeter)	5	-	10	75	14	32	8+	7	6	5	-	-
Shavington/Tittenley	2+	11	1	12	2	11	2	5	4	5	7	2
Venus Pool/Cound Fishery	117	62	71	50	67	69	15	13	4	9	11	81
Walcot Hall Lakes (Lydbury North)	90	70	52	60	57*	58*	75*	56*	56	62	54	55

*Counts not including cygnets: See confirmed breeding details below.

The count in the table above of 124 at Cound Lane swan field recorded on 8 Jan was a new record count for the County, the previous highest being 119 at the same site on 9 Feb 2014. With 90 this year, also, at Walcot Hall Lakes (Lydbury North) in January and in December, 119+ at Marton Pool Baschurch, 81 at VP and 55 at Walcot Hall Lakes it would appear what was thought to be a population peak in 2011 (*Ref: BOS*) has not yet been reached but is still increasing. The 117 at VP/Cound Fishery in January would be the same flock that graze the oil seed rape at Cound Lane in the day and roost at VP by night.

Counts in double figures in the north of the County, other than those sites in the table above, were 14 Lower Upton (near Shifnal) 3 Jan and 23 on 21 Feb. 10 were at Quarry Farm Howle on 19 Jan, 15 at Tern Hill floods on 17 Mar and 12 at Noneley on 22 Mar. Spring counts included 10 at Whixall canal floods on 19 Apr and 14 at Puleston on 26 May. Later in the year there were 26 at Leighton on 29 Sep and 30 on 1 Oct; 10 at Fenemere on 14 Oct; 22 at Eyton on Severn on 16 Dec with 36 at Crosemere on 28 Dec (EGM monthly maxima). Counts at Cross Houses of 71+ on 14 Dec and 62+ on 23 Dec

would most likely involve the same flock as those recorded at VP.

In the south of the County, 15 at Quatt 3 Jan was the only count in double figures other than the regular monthly counts in the table above from Walcot Lakes, Lydbury North.

Confirmed breeding was reported from 14 sites in the north (15 nests), fewer than in recent years, but with a total of 72 cygnets, rather more than in the recent past. In 2018 confirmed breeding here was from 16 sites (18 nests) with a total of 67 cygnets; in 2017 35 cygnets were recorded from 12 sites and in 2016, 51 cygnets from 18 sites. The two pairs this year at Newport Canal hatched nine and seven cygnets. successfully fledging 13. There was just one pair this year at Priorslee Lake, raising six cygnets.

Confirmed breeding in the south was received from seven sites (10 nests), including four nests at Walcot Hall Lakes in April with six cygnets in May, two broods of four and two cygnets in June, four and one cygnet in July, but only three surviving cygnets in August. An adult at Lydham Heath Pool (SO3490) had four small cygnets on 19 May. Also, in May pairs at Chelmarsh Scrape and on the River Teme at Ludlow had six cygnets with five surviving cygnets at both sites in September. The only other confirmed breeding pairs were at Delbury Hall (Diddlebury) where two cygnets were seen on 18 Jun; at Bow House Caravan Park where a pair had one cygnet on 23 Jun and at Linley Hall (SO3492) where a nest was occupied 24 Mar but no details subsequently reported. A possible breeding record was a pair at a regular site at Bicton, near Clun (SO2882) on 22 Feb.

A Mute Swan that had been ringed as a cygnet at Newport Canal on 17 Sep 2014 and reported at RSPB Conwy on 20 Aug and 28 Nov 2018, was still at RSPB Conwy on 15 Jun this year.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List, RBBP (potential)
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MGG

Recorded wintering in much reduced numbers since the end of the twentieth century.

All the records received this year involved the same individual, first seen at Cressage by the River Severn on the 4 Jan, followed by sightings next day at both VP and Cound Lane. This was followed by 42 reports all from the same two sites (VP and

Cound Lane) usually in the company of the large flock of Mute Swans, although it was reported a couple of times flying in to roost at VP on its own. The last record was at dusk VP on 4 Mar, flying into roost. It had gone the next day.

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MGG

Regularly wintering in the Severn Valley flood plain around Molverley and Edgerley and from Atcham to Cound. Reported in increasing numbers since the millennium, there have been flocks of 20 or more recorded in every year, except one, since the winter of 2004/05 with flocks of 22 in 2018, 29 in 2017, 38 in 2016 and 39 in 2015.

The first reports early in the year was of two immatures on New Year's Day, seen away from the usual wintering sites, near the Cound Brook at Stapleton, then one (with 75 Mute Swans) on 3 Jan at the regular wintering site at Cound Lane. The only other report in the first month of the year was from a WeBS count on 20 Jan where 13 were at the favoured site close to the River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence at Cross Lanes, Molverley.

On 1 Feb a flock of 17 was at The Mere, Ellesmere where they are by no means a regular visitor. The 18 at Hayes Farm on 17 Feb on a WeBS count in the River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence area may well have included the 17 from the Mere.

The flock in the River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence area had increased in March to 23 on 6th at Molverley. On 24th a WeBS count of 22 was made at Cross Lanes, Molverley with no further reports in the first winter period.

The first record at the end of the year was of one recorded at Noneley on 9 Oct, followed by a flock of 19 on 4 Nov on the Molverley floods that had increased to 25 by the 10 Nov. Lower numbers were reported in December at Molverley, with only eight on the 13th, 12 the next day and just two on 22nd. A flock of five was reported at Whixall canal floods on 1 Dec and probably the same five were at The Mere, Ellesmere next day.

There was just one (an adult) in the VP/Cross Houses area, with records received on seven dates in December, the first seen flying into VP at dusk on the 1st (with 73 Mute Swans) and the last at dusk on the 31st.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Shropshire status: Rare naturalised visitor, very rare breeding species
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Naturalised, not assessed
Author: GJW

Recorded every year since 2006, this species is now annual in the County. The first confirmed breeding since 2010 was noted at a pool in a private garden near Edgmond (*per MG Grant*) this year, only the third confirmed breeding record in the County, but perhaps these records form the vanguard of the colonisation of the County by a species which is now expanding its range from its East Anglian stronghold.

As always with a relatively mobile species that pops up here and there, it is difficult to determine how many birds were actually seen during the year. A pair was reported from Chetwynd Pool, a regular site for this species and the location of the only confirmed breeding, on several dates from 25 Jan until 21 Apr, although only one was seen on the latter date.

A single was on the Cound Lane swan field on 26 Jan with either the same or a different bird at nearby VP on 8 Apr. Two were then seen in the VP/Harnage area from 4 May until at least 1 Jul and could have been the birds from Chetwynd Pool. Subsequently, one was by the Severn at Leighton on 30 Sep and two returned to VP on both 7 and 12 Dec.

Elsewhere, singles were at Nib Heath on 24 Mar and at Clarepool Moss on 28 Apr. Two were on Cole Mere on 14 Oct with seven at the same site on 25 Oct, with presumably the same seven on the floods at Melverley on 6 and 9 Nov. Finally, five were on Whixall canal floods on 4 Dec and two at Wood Lane on 16 Dec, but were they the Cole Mere/Melverley seven having split into two groups?

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Shropshire status: Scarce summer and winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: MGG

Regularly recorded at more sites in the north of the County than previous years; this year at eight sites, up from five in 2018. Confirmed breeding was reported from five sites and pairs in the breeding season at a further thirteen sites, both representing increases from 2018.

Recorded at two sites in the south; a single at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 3 Jan and a pair on Walcot Pond Chirbury (SO2699) on 27 Feb.

Monthly maxima recorded at eight favoured sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chetwynd Pool	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
EGM (excluding Wood Lane)	3	2	7	5	6*	2	-	-	-	-
Polemere	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-
Shavington Park & Tittenley	2	2	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-
VP/Cound Fishery	12	8	9	4	4	2	-	-	2	6
Wall Farm	-	-	2	4	2*	-	-	-	-	-
Whixall Moss & canal floods	-	-	2	2	11	-	2	1	-	2
Wood Lane	3	6	3	-	3	1	-	-	-	3

*Not including juveniles

The seven at EGM in the table above were all from Crose Mere on 18 Mar. Other notable counts were 20 on a WeBS count on 24 Mar at the River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence (14 Ponthen and 6 Crosslanes, Molverley).

Pairs early in the year were at Crose Mere on 18 Feb and at Broad Oak on 21 Feb. A pair at Stone Bridge, Newport on 1 Apr was probably the same pair seen nearby at Chetwynd Pool on 6th.

Confirmed breeding this year was reported from five sites (probably six). Two broods in the EGM area on 19 May were at The Mere Ellesmere ('a pair with a large brood of small ducklings') and at Cole Mere ('with a small duckling probably less than a week old'). A pair at Wall Farm on 24 May had 11 recently hatched ducklings, whilst one at Little Wern on 14 Jun was seen with seven young. A pair at Baggy Moor was seen with four fledged young on 5 Jul. At VP, two pairs were seen regularly in April and May but were said to 'appear to be nesting off the reserve'.

Other records of pairs in the breeding season included a pair displaying at Brandwood, Myddle on 3 Apr; a pair at White Mere on 27 Apr and 17 Jun; Crimps Farm, near Ellesmere on 30 Apr; at Ightfield on 1 May; Noneley Meadows on several dates between 21 Apr and 7 May; Blake Mere on 19 May and Wiggington Pools on 15 Jun.

Single birds were also recorded at the Grove, Condover on 15 Jan and Pepperhill Pool, Calverhall on 7 Jun.

MANDARIN *Aix galericulata*

Shropshire status: Scarce naturalised resident
Shropshire conservation status: Naturalised, not assessed
Shropshire BBS: Present in 5% of plots; four birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: TW

‘Scarce’ remains the status description, but is it time for an upgrade? First recorded in the wild in Shropshire in 1966, Mandarin remained classified as ‘rare’ up until 2007, from when it was described in annual bird reports as ‘very scarce’; promotion to ‘scarce’ followed in 2015. *The Birds of Shropshire* suggested that on the basis of an estimated 60–90 breeding pairs the winter population might be in the order of 180–270 individuals, so it is hovering over the threshold of 200 which needs to be crossed for graduation to ‘fairly common’.

Based on the records for 2019, it would appear premature to suggest an upgrade, particularly because distribution remains uneven. There were reports from only 15 locations with SJ as the prefix to their grid references, as against 30 with SO, and all the records of confirmed breeding came from the south. The Clun and its tributary the Kemp would appear to be a stronghold of breeding Mandarins (or of Mandarin observers), with broods seen at Colebatch and Kempton on the Kemp, and Whitcott Keysett and Beambridge on the Clun. Other confirmations came from the Dowles Brook and the Rea at Cleobury Mortimer.

Records of 10 or more full grown birds were of 16 at Choulton (presumably on the Onny) on 16 Feb, 10 at Walcot Lakes, Lydbury North, on 17th, and 10 on the Severn, near Leighton on 1 Oct, followed by 12 plus and 30 plus (on a pool or brook, the records don’t specify) at Meaton Lane, in the Wyre, on 12 and 20 Oct. Of these locations all but the one on the Severn are in the southern ‘half’ of the County.

So, despite the submission of some 110 records, it is fair to say that on current evidence it remains premature to confidently accord the Mandarin a County status of ‘fairly common’, but, all indications are that it is steadily increasing and because it keeps a low profile it may already have slipped past us and crossed the threshold unseen.

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

Shropshire status: Very scarce passage migrant, very rare breeder
National conservation status: Amber List, Schedule 1, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MGG

Very few reports this year with probably no more than three birds involved, a pair and a single bird, all at Whixall canal floods with sightings on a total of only four days. First reports were of an eclipse drake and female on 25 Jul (*A Griffiths, R Harris, J Reeves*), followed by probably the same pair but not reported again until 3 Aug (*JA Almond, R Dowley, J Reeves*). The single bird was first reported on 13 Aug (*R Harris*) also at Whixall canal floods and was still present the next day (*J Reeves*).

SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*

Shropshire status: Uncommon winter visitor; very rare breeding species
National conservation status: Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
Author: MGG

Widespread at lakes, meres and mosses in the north but with very few records from southern sites.

The table below presents monthly maxima at favoured sites:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chetwynd Pool	98	63	94	36	-	-	-	-	20	30	10	41
Cottage Pool-Nib Heath	2	8	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
EGM	13	3	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	3
Pepperhill-Rhiewes Calverhall	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	32	6
Polemere	7	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Shavington/Tittenley Pool		5	5						14		37	9
VP/Cound Fishery	67	70	72	56	6	2	2	2	16	65	74	62
Wall Farm	4	15	13	10	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	14
Whixall canal floods	5	-	37	5	2	-	-	4	6	40	21	41+

The only count in double figures other than at the sites in the above table was of 20 at the River Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence on a WeBS count in February.

In the south, the species was regularly reported in winter at Walcot Pond, Chirbury (SO2699), with a maximum of eight early in February.

No confirmed breeding this year. However, pairs were recorded every month through the summer at VP and early in the breeding season at Chetwynd Pool, Wall Farm and Whixall Moss. A possible breeding record was from Whixall Moss where a juvenile was recorded 31 Aug but may not have bred there. The last confirmed breeding was at Whixall Moss in both 2014 and 2015.

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor, rare summer visitor
 National conservation status: Amber List
 Shropshire conservation status: Green List
 Author: MGG

Recorded at pools and meres mainly in the north as a winter visitor, but in increasing numbers in the summer months. There was a confirmed breeding at Sambrook Mill on 1 Jul where a female with five downy young was reported. This follows a confirmed breeding at Ellerton Mill in 2018 and Wood Lane 2017, with confirmed breeding in seven of the last ten years.

Monthly maxima recorded at the favoured sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dodecote	4	7	7	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EGM	6	-	4	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	3
Ellerton/Sambrook	4	-	9	5	5	24	28*	4	28	-	6	4
Priorslee Lake	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	5	-
Shrewsbury Sewage Works	6	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	21
VP/Cound Fishery	29	42	39	10	5	5	5	6	7	7	21	18
Wood Lane	1	4	-	2	3	3	-	-	-	1	-	-

*Not including juveniles seen that month; the 28 adults were 12 at Sambrook 16 nearby at Ellerton Mill.

The largest single flock this year was the 42 at VP on 28 Feb, considerably fewer than the record number of 60 at Ellerton Mill in September 2018, where the maximum number this year was only 28, again in September.

Other than the favoured sites in the table above, the only counts in double figures were 10 at Chetwynd Pool on 20 Jan and at Whixall canal floods on 5 Mar, with odd pairs at Dudmaston on 3 Feb, Wall Farm on 1 Apr, Sweeney Fen on 6 Apr, Shavington on 30 Sep and finally Dryton on 16 Dec.

WIGEON *Mareca penelope*

Shropshire status: Uncommon winter visitor
National conservation status: RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: JG

The table shows the monthly maxima from the main sites (summer months are not included). The total number counted during WeBS surveys and the number of sites contributing is also shown.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ellesmere	28	78	0	0	0	1	0	28	132
Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence	52	142	10	0	0	0	0	287	*
Polemere	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Shavington	55	24	0	10	0	0	0	18	0
Venus Pool	48	12	8	3	2	0	0	0	0
Whixall canal floods	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	66
WeBS total (no. of sites)	212 (9)	264 (6)	21 (3)	13 (2)	2 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)	384 (4)	255 (6)

*Could not survey due to weather conditions

January–April:

Present at 19 sites between January and March.

The winter of 2018/19 was one of the lowest overall counts of Wigeon in the last decade in Shropshire. This was probably due to less flooding at the key sites of Whixall and Severn–Vyrnwy that would otherwise hold high numbers. Sites with permanent water bodies fared better with VP and Ellesmere holding numbers consistent with historic data, though Polemere had an all-time low in numbers and Shavington continues to see lower numbers in more recent years.

Regular counts from a pool near Chirbury continued, with a high count of 40 in March (numbers seemed to regularly be between 30–40 birds between 21 Jan and 14 Mar) before dropping to a count of six at the beginning of April. These numbers are down about 33% from 2018’s figures.

At Wall Farm, another regularly watched site, birds were regularly counted from January through to the end of March (22nd was the last count). The peak in numbers came on the 13 Feb with 90 birds counted. Numbers ranged between 54 and 90 between 25 Jan and 14 Mar, before gradually declining through March. These numbers were significantly higher than those observed in 2018.

Numbers clearly fluctuate at sites and some counts at sites were higher than those recorded on the set dates of the WeBS counts (this is necessary to provide some consistency across the country and account for birds moving from site to site). High counts in these months included 90 at VP on the 6 Jan, 100 on the Whixall canal floods on 1 Feb, and 260 at Ellesmere on 27 Jan. Other notable counts included 23 at Quarry Farm Pool, near Howle on 16 Feb, and 30 at Pepperhill, Calverhall on 8 Feb.

The last significant counts made were both of 10 birds at VP and Shavington, both on 11 Apr.

May–August

Summering birds are usually scarce, but two males and a female stayed at VP throughout April. This appeared to drop to a pair which stayed through the summer, though no breeding evidence was recorded. These were (presumably) joined by more birds in July with counts of up to five birds, including a male with a damaged wing recorded numerous times up to the 7 Sep. A notable record of six birds was made from English Bridge in Shrewsbury on 17 Aug (*G Roberts*).

September – December

Recorded at 17 sites during this winter period.

It was the start of a wet winter period and this resulted in much more flooding at key WeBS sites in November and December, resulting in much higher counts of birds than 2018. Conversely, counts at sites with permanent pools were generally much lower, perhaps suggesting that birds spread out on the flooded areas across the County. The only other notable WeBS count not included in the main table were of 51 at Marton Pool, Baschurch in November.

High counts not taken from WeBS surveys included 52 at VP on 13 Nov, 38 at Polemere on 27 Dec, and 44 at Shavington on 13 Dec. Wall Farm was again regularly watched throughout November and December. Numbers fluctuated, although there seemed to be a steady increase up to a peak of 125+ birds on 30 Dec. A pool near Chirbury was also watched regularly with records from 11 Nov which climbed to a peak of 44 birds by 24 Dec. The only other record to get into double figures at this time, was of 10 birds at Pepperhill, Calverhall on 26 Dec.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Shropshire status: Fairly common resident; population supplemented by annual releases
 National conservation status: Amber list
 Shropshire conservation status: Green List
 Shropshire BBS: Present in 48% of plots; 197 birds recorded, an average of 4.32 per occupied plot and 2.09 per surveyed plot
 Shropshire BBS index 0.87, annual change of -0.3 (2018 Index = 0.90)
 Author: JG

The table shows the monthly maxima from the main sites (summer months are not included), the total number counted during WeBS surveys and the number of sites contributing is also shown.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chetwynd Park	63	8	7		16	8	45	51
Dudmaston	12	1			21	24		
EGM	272	272	157	318	383	200	130	256
Fenemere	9		44		181	42		18
Marton Pool	185	119	196		341	350	31	78
Baschurch								
Polemere	22	20	5	23	10	14	9	16
Severn/Vyrnwy confluence	23	87	34		28	11	16	10
Shavington Park	30	52	7	13	37	15	43	14
VP	12	9	7					
Walcot Lake	69	55	30	140	36	167	65	73
Whixall canal floods	106	70	20			16	8	22
2019 WeBS total (no. of sites)	1366 (35)	1385 (32)	687 (30)	690 (13)	1289 (20)	1303 (32)	1613 (28)	1275 (29)
2018 WeBS totals	1114 (39)	863 (35)	476 (32)	1046 (18)	1584 (31)	1638 (31)	1718 (34)	1554 (36)

Mallard were recorded at 36 WeBS sites and from over 100 sites across the County. Numbers were generally comparable with 2018, although total numbers were worse in the first winter period than the second, probably due to lower levels of flooding in early 2019 than in the later period. It seemed like fewer sites were counted (or they were not present at as many sites).

Other locations with over 50 birds in the first winter period between January and

March were: Ellerton Mill Ponds: 63 on 20 Jan; Linley Hall Pool: 50 on 18 Feb; River Teme at Ludlow: 67 on 16 Feb. Counts were generally higher during the second winter period, though releases for shooting were noted at two sites. Other locations with counts over 50 between September and December were: Oerley Reservoir: 65 on 15 Sep; River Severn in Shrewsbury: 92 on 20 Oct (this probably includes a significant number of feral/hybrid individuals); River Teme at Ludlow: 63 on 13 Sep (also probably includes feral/hybrids).

During the spring and summer months 432 records from 99 tetrads were submitted (a rise in distribution of records from 2018). The BBS index and numbers records were considerably down from 2018, but numbers fluctuate greatly on an annual basis for this species so this is unlikely to be of concern.

Confirmed breeding records were received from 20 locations. The earliest brood record was on 16 Apr on Dodecote Pool. Records were received throughout the season up to the latest record of downy young on the Whixall canal floods on the 10 Aug. One interesting record was of a female accidentally flushed from a nest with eggs in the crown of a tree stump on 21 Apr.

Rather smaller counts were noted than in 2018. The highest non-WeBS summer count was of 105 at VP on 25 Aug. WeBS counts also recorded highs of 143 at Ellesmere and 140 at Walcot Lake, both in August.



Bewick's Swan, Venus Pool,
10 January 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Greenland White-fronted Goose, Atcham,
24 February 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Whooper Swans, Molverley, 4 November 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Pintail, Venus Pool, 2 February 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Teal, Venus Pool, 3 February 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Scaup, Ellesmere, 22 October 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Black-necked Grebes, Ellesmere, 27 April 2019 (*John Hawkins*)



Red-necked Grebe, Venus Pool,
19 November 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Wood Sandpiper, Venus Pool,
10 August 2019 (*Dawn Micklewright*)



Quail, Noneley, 15 June 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Cattle Egret, Ellesmere 14 April 2019 *Dave Chapman*)



Grey Heron, Venus Pool, 27 August 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Golden Plover, Thresholds, 12 April 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Little Ringed Plover, Venus Pool, 24 August 2019 (*John Martin*)



Dotterel, Long Mynd, 3 May 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Dunlin, Venus Pool, 22 August 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Common Snipe, Venus Pool, 30 December 2019 (*Terry Arch*)



Greenshank, Venus Pool, 22 August 2019 (*Jim Almond*)

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: JG

Pintail were recorded from six sites between January and April.

The Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence holds numbers of Pintail that exceed the threshold for a Nationally Important site. WeBS counts here between January and March recorded a peak of 169 birds during the peak flooding of February. This is well below average for the last decade or so, and the only lower counts were from the hard, frozen winters of 2010/11 and 2011/12 and the very dry winter of 2016/17. Single birds were reported from three other WeBS count sites during this time.

Non-WeBS counts of birds were made from the Whixall canal floods with a peak of 40 birds on the 1 Feb. Three other sites including VP, Wall Farm and Edgebolton recorded one or two birds during this time.

Sightings in late spring and summer months are very rare, although a single bird was seen at Hardwick Pool on 19 May. Two males flew over Wall Farm on the 24 May. One was found on Whixall floods on the 26 Aug.

Numbers picked up in the later part of the year with a rough count of 286 on the Severn/Vyrnwy in November, though conditions made it difficult there and no count was obtained for December. A non-WeBS count observation of 20 birds was made from Melverley on 22 Dec, though this is probably an undercount of the whole area.

Other records during this time were scarce. A single bird was at Ellesmere on 27 Dec and VP held two pairs on 9 Dec.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Shropshire status: Fairly common winter visitor, very scarce breeder
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: MGG

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brown Moss	7	31	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
Chetwynd Pool	17	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hayes Farm & Hilley Farm, Pentre	35	38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	22+	-
Hardwick Pool [SO3690]	11	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	4
Lydham Heath [SO3490]	-	6+	8+	-	-	-	-	-	-	15+	-	1+
Polemere	108	5+	22	c12	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	60
Shavington	45+	150	10	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	15	-
Shrewsbury Sewage Works	6	9	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	16	16
VP/Cound Fishery	56	29	80	13	2	2	4	6+	22	90	83	92
Wall Farm	33	125	85	25	-	-	-	1	-	25+	150+	80+
Whixall canal floods [Moss*]	c125	350+	c100	c80	7	1*	-	30+	c100	c80	c40	146+

The only other reported counts from SO grid hectads were 10+ Bromfield on 6 Jan, 24 Lydbury North on 17 Jan, c12 at Clungunford on 7 Apr, c nine Chelmarsh Scrape on 13 Sep and two at Walcot Pond, Chirbury on 25 Sep.

Other double-figure counts from northern sites other than those in the table above, were 13 on the River Meese at Tibberton on 3 Jan, 14 on the Montgomery Canal on 12 Feb, 15 at Ponthen and 70 at Crosslanes, Meverley both on 17 Feb. In March, 35 were at Balmer Heath on 6 Mar and 19 at Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn on 24th. In the second half of the year, 27 were counted in the Severn floodplain between Atcham and Wroxeter on 14 Oct, with 35 at Newnes, near Ellesmere next day and 50 at Pepperhill-Rhiews, Calverhall on 27 Oct. Thereafter, c50 were at Brownheath Moss on 24 Nov, 80 at Dryton on 16 Dec, with 12+ at Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn on 19th and 35 at Boreaton on 29th.

Recorded every month at VP, with a pair on 29 Jun. There was no confirmed breeding anywhere in the County this year, although some of the 30+ at Whixall Moss on 31 Aug were identified as juveniles.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL *Anas carolinensis*

Shropshire status: Vagrant
National conservation status: RBBP (potential)
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MGG

A male at Wall Farm from 11 to 25 Nov (*MG Grant*) was the sixth individual recorded in the County. They have all been males; females are notoriously difficult to

separate from a Eurasian Teal.

Other County records were at VP 27 Feb to 10 Mar 1996, ASF 8 to 12 Dec 2001, Whixall canal floods 19 Jan to 3 Mar 2002 and Polemere from 2 to 31 Jan 2013. Records at VP on 24 Nov and 1 Dec 2016 and on 8 Jan 2017 almost certainly referred to the same bird.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor; has bred
National conservation status: Red List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: APD

Reports were received from only eight sites, seven in the first winter period and five in the latter, with four locations being used in both periods. There were just three double-figure counts; 16 at Shrewsbury Sewage Works on 19 Jan with 14 at the same site on 17 Feb, and 23 at VP on 10 Mar. Two at Wood Lane on 23 Mar were the last of this period.

Although a single was at VP on 3 Jul the next report was not until October, when one was at Cole Mere on 18th, followed by another at VP and three at Priorslee Lake on 30th. The highest numbers were eight at VP on 23 Nov, seven at Priorslee Lake on 7 Dec and six at Shrewsbury Sewage Works on 15 Dec.

Gender was infrequently recorded but from the limited information there were eight males and six females in the first winter period and 13 males and just three females from October to December.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 2% of plots, two birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: APD

Reports were received from 53 waters during the year. The table shows the monthly maxima from the main sites with regular counts (summer months are not included).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chetwynd Pool	12	23	28	30			23	4	22
EGM	55	48	115	60	9	36	73	114	111
Oerley Reservoir	20	33	2			30	11	26	16
Priorslee Lake	39	2	5	14			42	65	52
Shavington	3	15	15	21	9	6	21	38	31
Venus Pool	16	4	28	20	16	12	26	25	21

In the first months of the year 47 were at Lower Upton, Shifnal on 3 Jan with 88 there on 21 Feb, and 40 were at Priorslee Flash on 20 Jan, with 61 present on 18 Feb.

Forty-four at White Mere on 17 May were probably on passage as only four were counted two days later. Six pairs were at VP, but most reports at this time were in single figures with just one or two pairs at some sites. Breeding was confirmed by the observation of females with small broods at five locations in July; Quarry Farm Pool (Howle), Tittenley Pool, Bicton Pool, VP and Wood Lane. Regular reports from VP documented the gradual reduction in brood size from four on 20 July to two on 2 Aug.

The WeBS on 8 Jul found 28 at White Mere and 38 nearby at Wood Lane, but these numbers were not reached again until mid-September when 28 were at Shrewsbury Sewage Works. Fewer than 20 were noted at most sites other than those in the table, the exception being Priorslee Flash with 65 on 13 Oct.

Sex ratios tend to be more even than those found for the Pochard; 21 males and 18 females were at Priorslee Lake on 9 Jan, with 16 and 12 respectively at VP on 24 Mar.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor

National conservation status: Red list, RBBP

Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed

Author: APD

A first winter bird was at The Mere, Ellesmere from 19 to 23 Oct (*TC Lowe, JA Almond*). Almost an annual visitor, but the last was at Chetwynd Park in January 2017.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant and winter visitor
National conservation status: Red List, Schedule 1, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MGG

A total of five birds was reported this year, all on the same day, 28 Jul. Four were in the north of the County at The Mere, Ellesmere (*JA Almond, R Dowley, D Western*) with a single bird in the south at Chelmarsh Reservoir (*JP Martin, D Western*). A typical time of year in which to encounter this species crossing the UK from east to west.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: APD

The table shows the monthly maxima from the main sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cole Mere	14	7	6				8	21
The Mere, Ellesmere	19	29	33	34		1	20	20
White Mere	1	3					6	7
Ellesmere meres WeBS total	31	39	25	0		1	24	48

The WeBS at EGM during the 2018–2019 winter recorded a maximum total of just 39 birds, this was the second successive winter with low numbers at what is the main Shropshire site for this species. The December 2019 total shows a welcome increase and with numbers usually peaking in the early part of the year there should be more to come.

At The Mere, Ellesmere numbers stayed high well into April with 34 on 9th and 21 the following day, but none were found during the WeBS on 24th. There were no reports from any other locations during this period.

A single at The Mere, Ellesmere on 14 Oct was the only one that month but 20 at

the same site and six nearby at White Mere on 1 Nov suggest that many arrived during late October. Records from several other locations during November indicated movements into or through the County. A single was at Priorslee Lake on 7th with a male and two females there the next day. A drake was at VP from the 8th to the 13th and one was at Shrewsbury Sewage Works on 17th. Unusually, seven were on the River Severn between Coton Hill and the weir on 17th; the last ones noted on the river were on flood water at Coundlane during February 2014. There were no further reports away from EGM.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Shropshire status:	Scarce resident and uncommon winter visitor
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 3% of plots; 5 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	GB

At total of 238 records was received (up from 187 in 2018), mainly from larger rivers, lakes, pools and reservoirs. 51 WeBS records were held. Recorded in all months, 75% of the records were from sites in the north of the County (SJ grid references).

The first winter period saw male and female Goosander congregated in flocks, mainly on the River Severn but with large roosts at Chelmarsh Reservoir and smaller gatherings on the north Shropshire meres, smaller rivers and pools. Double figure counts were noted at The Mere, Ellesmere, on 5 Jan with 22 Goosander and 20 still here on 27 Jan. Eighteen were at Monkmoor and 11 at Leighton on 8 Jan, 31 at Shrewsbury on 15 Jan, with other January counts of 21 at Greyfriars Bridge, Shrewsbury, on 16th, 21 at Cressage on 17th, 12 at Ironbridge on 22nd and 31 on 31st, 43 at Shrewsbury on 23rd and 74 on 31st and 11 at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 26th. Relatively large flocks remained into February, with 31 at Ironbridge on 1st, a large roost of 164 at Chelmarsh also on 1st and 13 at Chetwynd Pool on 17th. On the Severn at Shrewsbury 72 were counted on 4 Feb with 39 on 22nd rising to 58 by 4 Mar. 45 were at Leighton on 19 Feb. Numbers declined in March as residents began moving away from the large static water bodies to their breeding sites and migrant birds began pairing up and moving north. The last large flock of the first winter period was 14 at Shrewsbury on 5 Mar. The Severn seems to be of considerable importance for Goosander in the winter months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chelmarsh Reservoir	11	164	-	-	-	44
Ellesmere meres	22	6	1	-	15	36
River Severn	102	72	58	4	5	33

Both males and female Goosander were recorded in the flocks throughout January to March with pairing noted as early as early as 2 Jan at Clungunford. Pairs were subsequently noted on the River Severn at Ironbridge 15 Jan, Coalbrookdale 17 Jan and Bridgnorth 21 Jan, on the River Tern at Market Drayton 2 Feb, at Stirchley Grange 21 Feb, Whitcott Keysett 23 Feb, Choulton 26 Feb, Aston on Clun 22 Mar, Jackfield and Whitcliffe 14 Apr and Ironbridge 15 Apr. Evidence from elsewhere suggests that male Goosander migrate to Tana Fjord in north Norway in spring to moult and remain there throughout July and August. The final male of the spring was recorded at Whitcliffe on 25 Apr.

All confirmed breeding was on rivers, with 97% of records during the breeding period, April to the end of June, relating to rivers, mainly the River Severn. Breeding was confirmed on the River Severn at Leighton on 22 Apr where 26 Goosander included a female with recently hatched young, on the River Teme on 11 May at Whitcliffe with a female with nine young, on the River Onny at Chorlton on 13 May with a female with seven young, the River Severn at Atcham on 20 May where a female was present with four young and the River Severn at Ironbridge on 11 Jun where a female had 11 well-developed young.

Records of post-breeding flocks were limited with one record in July. Seventeen Goosander at Atcham on 4 Aug comprised “mostly full-grown juveniles with at least one adult female” and seven were at Bridgnorth on 24 Aug. Other records in August and September related to one to four individuals with birds once more deserting some breeding waterways and showing up on large open waterbodies, such as VP where one to four birds were recorded between 13 Aug and 13 Sep.

The first record of a male in the second winter period returning from its summering grounds comprised a male at Newport Canal on 22 Oct. The first double-figure count in this period was 24 at Ponthen on 13 Oct. This was followed by 12 noted at Bow House Caravan Park, Bishops Castle, on 20 Oct and 11 at Cantlopgrove on 9 Nov. Fourteen were at Ironbridge on 6 Dec, 15 at Holmer Lake and 44 at Chelmarsh Reservoir 11 Dec, with 38 there 13 Dec, 21 at Crosemere 16 Dec, 31 at Shrewsbury 18 Dec, 14 at Shavington Park on 26 Dec and finally 10 at Ironbridge on 30 Dec. Records at the end of December suggest that pairing was already in progress. Three at Whitcliffe on 30 Dec were noted as “very much a pair and a second female”, three pairs were noted at Polemere on 31 Dec and a pair was flushed from the River Clun at Beambridge the same day.

The River Severn and a few other wild and large rivers probably constitute its main breeding ground in Shropshire, although their precise nest sites and breeding locations remain somewhat of an enigma: crevices amongst boulders and old stone walls aligning rivers and tree cavities near rivers are likely sites. It would prove both interesting and of potential conservation value if nest sites could be precisely identified and data made available from nestboxes installed along the River Severn and other sites.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Shropshire status: Rare summer visitor
National conservation status: Annex 1, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: RJH

A bird was recorded on Haughmond Hill (6 Jun) with two churring males on 1 Jul and three on the 12th (*TC Lowe*). Surveys from the Whixall /Fenn's Moss complex recorded the presence of five, possibly six pairs (*RJ Harris*). Breeding is suspected but unproven.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Shropshire status: Fairly common summer visitor
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 16% of plots; 78 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: TW

When in 1796 Thomas Telford designed the aqueduct carrying the Llangollen Canal over the Afon Ceiriog valley at Chirk, he could not have known that in due course it would be given a Grade II* rating as a 'particularly important building of more than special interest'. And he did not know that 220 years later, sufficient mortar would have come away from between its ashlar facing stones to provide nesting sites, 20 metres above the valley, for Swifts. The aqueduct crosses the boundary with Wales, but the area at the south end is the best for Swifts, and this lies in Shropshire. Here 20 or more birds were visiting nest sites on 15 Jul. The Canal and River Trust are custodians of the aqueduct and their ecologist and engineers have been alerted to this avian asset; let us hope that they give it proper consideration in any maintenance works.

Up and down the County similar cracks and crevices have opened up over the years in the walls of buildings, thereby fortuitously providing nest sites. Such is the case, for example, at the Bog Centre, near The Stiperstones. Here some nest sites were lost to pointing undertaken several years ago and when further pointing was planned, those responsible for arranging the work were asked to ensure that the gaps round the purlins where the remaining nests were located were left open – they weren't. Sadly, and most frustratingly for those doing their best to save our Swifts, this is a familiar story. Swift enthusiasts have since erected an apex nestbox in a gable end (it has six nest compartments), but did so in the full knowledge that it is no substitute, as the birds home-in on traditional sites and are slow to adopt new ones, so it is feared that this isolated colony may be lost. At Lydbury North church, three boxes were erected on the north side in the hope of compensating for nest holes lost to pointing works the previous year; time will tell.

Obviously the first step towards saving sites from zealous maintenance work is for them to be identified, and one hardworking recorder logged 75 occupied sites with from one to 13 nests at each, ranging from Bridgnorth to Stiperstones and Clun to Sellatyn.

May Day had brought the first bird of the year, with two seen at Preston Montford and two at Shrewsbury. This is a late date compared with the 30-year average of 23 Apr. The next sighting was not until 4 May, but after that, birds were recorded daily. On 8 May an estimated 60 were at The Mere, Ellesmere, and 40 at Whixall; thereafter, it was not until 4 Jun, when 30 were at the Tern Fisheries, Market Drayton, that more than 25 were counted, followed by 60 at VP on 7 Jun where there were 85 the next day. That latter figure was not to be emulated, but the former was, when 62 were counted over Ludlow on 12 Jul and 60 over Shrewsbury on 26th.

Swifts are amongst the many wildlife casualties taken to the Cuan Wildlife Rescue Centre, Much Wenlock; almost all come from Shropshire. It seems likely that the numbers taken there reflect weather-related difficulties faced over the season. Figures are available from 2013 onwards, over which period the numbers taken there have ranged from 15 in 2014 to 46 in 2018, with an average of 29. In 2019 a total of 43 were brought in, suggesting that it was a difficult year for Swifts, with low temperatures and high rainfall in June being perhaps responsible. By no means all of the birds are aged on arrival, but typically about half are recorded as being 'nestlings/fledglings/juveniles'. Normally, in the order of 30–40% of all the birds brought in are subsequently rehabilitated sufficiently for release, but in 2019 the figure was 70%, a tribute to Cuan's growing expertise.

At the end of the season records were virtually continuous in ones and twos up until 1 Sep, after which there was a gap before the final record of a single over Shrewsbury on 11 Sep, a week later than 4 Sep which is the 30-year average for the latest date.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Shropshire status:	Scarce summer visitor
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 17% of plots; 12 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	AJA

After four years of low numbers, there was an encouraging increase in records this year (to 125, 79% over 2018). All were for the period April–June, with May showing the largest total. The largest clusters of contiguous tetrads with records were from the area between Church Stretton and Stiperstones, north of Telford, west of Ludlow, Whixall Moss and the Wyre Forest. The first record was for 15 Apr (Whixall Moss), three days earlier than 2018, and the last records were for the last day of June, for both Plowden and Myndtown.

Evidence of breeding is hard to acquire for this species, although a bird visiting a probable host species nest was observed on 28 May on Caer Caradoc. No juveniles were reported; neither was there any data on host species. The Cuckoo's onomatopoeic song was reported from 17 Apr until 22 Jun, with two or more males competing on 28 Apr (Tibberton), 11 May (Dowles Brook, Wyre Forest) and 14 May (the Shropshire portion of the Mortimer Forest). A female was heard vocalising on 9 Jun (Tibberton) and a pair were observed duetting on 18 May at Haughmond Hill.

Regrettably, the Cuckoo's vulnerable status in Shropshire persists.

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common naturalised resident
Shropshire conservation status:	Naturalised, not assessed
Shropshire BBS:	Present on 9% of plots; 19 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	JJT

This year's complement of 132 records, half as many again as last year, was submitted by 34 recorders. More than half (54%) of the records were submitted by just five recorders with one of them contributing 26% of the total. Most records were from Shrewsbury (53) and Ludlow (13) while the remainder were largely from towns with a wide scattering of records and from rural locations, sometime farmsteads.

The late David Farncombe, writing the species account for BOS, describes some of the pressures on the population's distribution, being down 39% on that in the previous County Atlas of 1992. For such an under-recorded species it is almost impossible, annually, to judge the population trend other than in large-scale, systematic projects.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 52% of plots; 116 birds recorded, an average of 3.87 per occupied plot and 2.00 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 2.26, annual change -0.06 (2018 Index = 2.32)
Author: JJT

During the year, there were 640 records submitted, a 46% increase on the previous year, and two-thirds of them (67%) were from the north (SJ) of the County. This disparity is evident in the relative abundance map in BOS, seemingly demonstrating the bird's preference for arable landscapes.

The largest concentrations, three records in excess of 100, were all from the north; 160 on 19 Nov, 140+ on 16 Nov and 125 on 1 Feb, all from Wall Farm. Of the six records of 50–100, four were also from Wall Farm, the others being 76 at Bridge Farm, Edmond on 14 Apr and 80+ at Tibberton Moor on 19 Nov. Of the 39 records between 10 and 49, 36 of them were north. In the south of the County the highest counts were 20 at Choulton on 20 Jun, 15 near Onibury on 21 Apr and 16 at Gretton on 25 Aug.

The peak count of 160 at Wall Farm on 19 Nov was on telegraph wires, a considerable aid to counting them, and the 28 at Wall Farm on 18 Feb were in 'a mixed flock of c150 Fieldfare, c100 Redwing, c50 Starlings, feeding on a freshly manured arable field'.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Shropshire status:	Very common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 98% of plots; 1,099 birds recorded, an average of 19.28 per occupied plot and 18.25 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index	1.04, annual change -0.09 (2018 Index = 1.13)
Author:	JJT

Around 1,800 records were received, a 32% increase on 2018.

Comments were made in last year's report concerning the mysterious passage movements of Woodpigeons, although the precise nature of and reasons for them is unresolved. The request is repeated for records of autumn flocks of Woodpigeons, even small flocks of a dozen or more, if they show signs of strong purposeful flight in a particular direction; location, count, direction and date. Autumn records of movements, flocks with purposeful straight flight lines, were reported as follows. 1,295 passing Cantlopgrove flying south-west on 9 Nov, and 186, also heading south-west, both at around 8am. The only other records of movement were from Aston on Clun when on 12 Nov 129 (five groups of 9–60 birds) headed north and on 28 Nov first 45 and then six headed north over the same locality, on all occasions at around 8:30am.

Recorded fairly evenly throughout the year with 100–200 or so records per month, the highest being 221, 210 and 217 in Jan, Apr and May, and the lowest 102, 100 and 101 in Sep, Oct and Nov respectively.

Non-migratory flocks of 100–1,000 birds, presumed to be feeding flocks on arable ground, were reported 39 times, usually in the north or north-east. Such groups were recorded only five times in the south or south-east.

Breeding outside the normal season is predictable for this widespread and increasing species. One was on a nest at Chetwynd Pool on 28 Jan, late nest-building was noted near Fitz on 26 Aug and at Aston on Clun on 12 Sep, while a pair with dependent young was noted near Cockshutt on 31 Oct. In summer in a medium-sized garden in Aston on Clun there were three active nests within 30 metres of each other.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 50% of plots; 110 birds recorded, an average of 3.79 per occupied plot and 1.90 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 1.01, annual change -0.21 (2018 Index=1.22)
Author: JPM

Still a widespread and common resident, reported from across the County. Nationally, the famous colonisation, starting in 1955, and subsequent huge increase in range and numbers (with a dip in the 1980s) has recently been reversed, with a steady decline over the last 15 years. This seems to be linked to reduced nesting productivity. The 408 records this year represents an increase on 2018 and 2017 (279 and 251 records respectively) but perhaps just reflects an overall increase in the number of records received. The only double-figure counts received were: 17 at Longford, Market Drayton on 3 Jan, 14 at Ridgwardine, Market Drayton on 2 May, 12 at Whixall on 8 Sep (with 10 there on 6th), 11 at Maesbury Marsh, Oswestry on 8 Feb, and 10 at Ruyton XI Towns on 1 Jan. As noted in this report in 2017, large flocks at barns and grain stores no longer seem to occur.

Few reports contained breeding details but included two visiting a probable nest site at Annscroft on 5 Mar; a juvenile killed by flying into a window at Tibberton on 14 Jun, and a male displaying to a female in a Newport garden on 30 Nov. At Aston on Clun, two pairs were noted for the first time in almost a decade, at a very well-watched site.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Shropshire status: Scarce breeder and winter visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: MF

Water Rail was recorded 55 times in 2019 compared with only 18 in 2018. It continues to be found at very few sites: VP, where none was recorded in 2018, accounted for half the observations, the Whixall area about a quarter, and the rest came from a handful of other sites, including Chelmarsh, Shavington Park and

Shifnal Sewage Works. With the exception of Chelmarsh all are in the north of the County, as are two additional sites, Priorslee Lake and the Severn flood plain between Atcham and Wroxeter, where Water Rail was found during WeBS counts.

The distribution of observations through the year was similarly uneven, with the vast majority coming in the second half of the year, especially November and December, and only seven between January and March.

No records were received between mid-April and 27 Jul when an immature bird was found at Whixall canal floods. A further report of a single bird at the same site on 24 Aug was followed by a report of a juvenile on 26th and five days later by at least two birds calling, possibly ‘corroborating’ the record of the juvenile bird. Since young from early broods can begin dispersing in July, and migration is already under way in August, this hint of breeding must remain a tantalising possibility. Up to three were recorded at Whixall in September, with singles on two dates this month at both VP and Chelmarsh.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Shropshire status:	Common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 16% of plots; 14 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	AJA

As last year, records of this familiar bird were abundant during 2019, totalling 867, with monthly records varying from 39 (June) to 108 (January). The largest number of reports came from the north-east of the valley of the Severn and its tributaries, with a secondary cluster along the Rivers Teme and Onny. Locations with the largest number of reports include VP (187), Wall Farm (41), the mill pools at Sambrook and Whixall Moss (both 40), The Mere (Ellesmere) and Polemere (both 30). The largest counts were at Whixall canal floods (20 on four occasions in the period August–October) and Linley Hall (18).

Breeding data is likewise plentiful, due both to the overt nature of the species’ breeding activities and the efforts of WeBS observers. Nesting (with and without young) was reported between 2 Apr and 18 Aug, with recently fledged birds observed from 25 May until 31 Aug. Juveniles (often accompanying adults and second brood chicks) were seen from 30 Jun onwards. Some interesting observations on Moorhen breeding include a family of six chicks hatched on a garden pond near Condover

on 14 May, followed seven weeks later by a second brood of six. A nest near Lee Brockhurst was predated, with evidence of Otter activity.

The status of Moorhen would appear to be secure in the County.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Shropshire status: Common resident and winter visitor
 National conservation status: Green List
 Shropshire conservation status: Green List
 Shropshire BBS: Present in 12% of plots; 15 birds recorded
 Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
 Author: JJT

There were 500 or so records from around 72 sites, a third of them (170, 34%) from VP; the nearest competitor was The Mere, Ellesmere with 27. Records per month were generally in excess of 50 in January through to 78 in April and in December, otherwise in the 20s or low 30s. There were eight counts in excess of 100; 343 at White Mere on 11 Sep and 170 there on 29 Jul. The Mere, Ellesmere held 220 on 11 Oct but this was exceeded by the monthly WeBS count at EGM (below). There were 156 records in double figures.

Breeding was confirmed at Boreatton, Ellerton Mill Pond, Hanwood (Wood Hall), Lilleshall Hall, Polemere, Quarry Farm Pool (Howle), Shrewsbury Sewage Works, Stokesay, Sweeney Fen, VP, Walcot Lakes, Whixall canal floods and Bicton Pool, one of the two breeding sites in the extreme south-west. Breeding was also recorded as possible at around nine other sites, Wall Farm having two pairs on 28 Apr.

Table. Coot totals in WeBS counts with more than six months of counts and with peak totals in excess of ten in at least one of those months. Maxima in bold.

Site/Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EGM	155	136	99	66	75	141	189	357	766	374	399	420
Polemere	24	8	15	6			22	17	21	36	16	18
Marton Pool, Baschurch	9	2	4						14	86	40	
Oerley Reservoir	12	23	15						20	13	21	11
Priorslee Flash	25	38		25	25	34				8		
Priorslee Lake	110	32		14	21	53				112		
Shavington Park	6	6	7	12	16	12	12	38	14	8	16	21

Shrewsbury Sewage Works	8	5	6	4	3	8	7	26	8	10	10	4
VP/Cound Fishery	19	26	26	18	10		2		6			10
Monthly Maxima (single site)	110	59	45	38	43	79	108	214	484	272	221	194
Monthly Maxima (all sites combined)	283	199	118	117	121	192	151	295	567	545	324	258

CRANE *Grus grus*

Shropshire status: Rare summer visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status: Annex I, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: JO

One record, the first since 2016, was of five birds, seen on 20 Oct (*JE Lingard*). They were found in the far south-east of the County, in the Greater Wyre Forest area, not far from the River Severn. Could this indicate a flyway to and from the Somerset Levels?

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 2% of plots; one bird recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: JJT

A total of 291 records from around 40 sites was received, more than the 178 records from 36 sites last year, and 132 (46.3% of them) from VP. Breeding was confirmed at four sites: Polemere, VP (possibly two pairs), Wall Farm and Whixall canal floods with suggestions of breeding from Aston Locks, Quarry Farm Pool (Howle), Shakenhurst and Stapeley Hill.

The single bird on the Newport Canal on 14 Feb was unusual, the first seen there by the observer (*MGG*) in 50 years. It was seen again two days later (*K Hall*) and there

was an immature bird there on 26 Nov (*MGG*). The only records from the flowing water of a river were of two birds on the Teme, near Ludlow on 14 Jan, 4 Feb and a single bird on 28 Oct. Little Grebe pairs are normally intolerant of others on ‘their pond’ and the maximum recorded count of nine at Quarry Farm Pool, Howle on 11 Sep was perhaps a family still together. Likewise, the high count of six at Wall Farm on 18 Oct may have been a single family. There were ‘three very noisy pairs’ at VP on 4 Apr.

WeBS counts were made at eighteen sites (six fewer than last year).

Little Grebe WeBS counts 2019. Month maxima in bold.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bow House Farm Pool		1	1								2	5
EGM	4	2							4	2	5	10
Linley Hall Pool	2	2					2			3	3	3
Oerley Reservoir	4	1	1						3	1	1	1
Polemere			2	2			1	3	1	10		
Sambrook Mill Ponds	1	2							1			3
Shrewsbury Sewage Works	1	3	2	5	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	
VP/Cound Fishery	3	2	5		1							
Other Sites (9)	3			1	2	3			4	2	1	
WeBS Totals (all sites)	18	13	11	8	6	6	6	6	15	20	13	22

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Shropshire status: Very rare winter visitor

National conservation status: Red List, RBBP

Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed

Author: GT

The first record since 2012 and only the second of this millennium was found on Cound Fishery, adjacent to VP, on 12 Nov (*GE Holmes, JA Almond*). The bird was a popular visitor to the reserve throughout the month and was last seen on 27th.

Its extreme scarcity in recent years might well be due to our warming climate and the less frequent freezing of the Baltic in recent years, but it has also undergone a significant population decline in the last 20 years, hence its red listing.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
 National conservation status: Green List
 Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
 Author: GT

Two hundred and fifty-nine records were received from 22 sites, representing a significant 60% increase over 2018.

WeBS counts produced records from 16 sites; tabulated below. Four sites managed only single records, these were Chetwynd Pool 1 in April, Berthpool, a single in February, Shavington Big Pool, one in May, and a pair at Walcot Lakes in October. WeBS counts in 2019 were, in general, higher than those in 2018 especially early in the year; together with the increase in the number of records, strongly suggesting a higher County population this year.

WeBS counts for Great Crested Grebe 2019

Sites	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
White Mere		3	1	1	4	3	6	1	12	14	15	7
The Mere, Ellesmere	27	8	16	12	5	10	4	4	2	4	12	2
Croze Mere	1		7	5	4	1	2	1			1	9
Cole Mere	5	4			1		1	2	4	4	8	9
Blake Mere			1	2		3		1	1	1		1
Newtonmere		2	1	3	3	4	4	1	2	1	1	1
Marton Pool, Baschurch	2	1	19									
Fenemere		4	5									
Horsehay Pool	2			4	4	6						
Priorslee Flash	2	2		1	3	4						
Priorslee Lake	2	1		4	7	7				7	6	4
VP/Count Fishery	1	1	3	2	4							
Dudmaston	1				5				1	2		1
Other sites (4)		1		1	1					2		
Total of all Monthly Counts	43	27	53	35	41	38	17	10	21	35	43	34
Total of monthly Counts (2018)	21	21	24	20	6	11	15	29	36	38	39	51

Most significant non-WeBS counts were also at EGM, with 33 at The Mere on 27 Jan the highest count of the year. Also here, 19 were counted on 3 Jan and 4 Feb with counts at White Mere of 18 on 1 Nov and 13 on 11 Sep. The only other double-figure count was of 10 birds at Priorslee Lake on 30 Oct. It is quite evident that the County population is centred on EGM. The impacts of sailing on Cole Mere and White Mere and of triathlon swimming (at The Mere) on this species are unknown but probably not totally benign, at least in the breeding season. Perhaps the biggest surprise is the paucity of counts and birds at Chelmarsh Reservoir where singles were recorded on four dates in January with four birds on 1 Feb, then none thereafter.

Breeding was confirmed at Priorslee Lake (four juveniles on 23 Jul), at Holmer Lake (one juvenile, 19 Aug), Quarry Farm Pool, Howle (occupied nest on 17 Jun and one fledged juvenile on 9 Aug) and Dudmaston Pools (at least one juvenile on 28 Jul). Displaying pairs were seen also at Chetwynd Pool in April, and at White Mere, The Mere at Ellesmere and VP, all in May. A further pair was seen at Shavington Big Pool in June, but no further breeding evidence obtained.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant; has bred
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

Two early spring passage records, the usual type of occurrence in Shropshire. A pair were at Cole Mere on 24 Mar (*R Scott, J Reeves*). Perhaps the same or a different pair at The Mere, Ellesmere on 26–29 Apr (*JA Almond, JP Martin*) were by this time in full breeding dress. Remains a rather elusive and scarce passage bird in our County but a species which might be expected to attempt to breed again at some point.

STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Shropshire status: Vagrant
National conservation status: Red List, Schedule 1, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

Only the second occurrence of the millennium; a single bird was found alive at Albrighton on 19 Sep (*M Richardson*). The previous record in 2012 was of a bird found dead which had been ringed as a nestling in the same year in Wiltshire.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Shropshire status:	Scarce summer visitor
National conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 2% of plots; one bird recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	TCL

One hundred and eighty-three records represented a significant increase on recent years, but for the first time since 2013 there was none in January, the first being two males at VP on 13 Feb. One was then at Quarry Farm Pool, Howle on 16th, followed by singles at Shrewsbury Sewage Works (Monkmoor) on 17th, Colemere and Wood Lane on 18th and Leighton on 19th.

The first pair was recorded at VP on 20 Feb and throughout March, and incubation was observed in April, but this attempt presumably failed. Incubation of a clutch of three eggs was seen on 9 May and two small chicks were present on 24 May but five days later they had disappeared, presumed predated. A small chick was seen at Monkmoor on 19 May.

A pair was present at Tittenley Pool on 26 Feb, and in March pairs were observed at Wood Lane on 1st, Leighton on 18th, Noneley on 23rd, Quarry Farm Pool on 25th and Buildwas on 31st. Polemere, Dodecote and Wall Farm hosted pairs in April and a nest was observed at the latter site on 1 May. Chelmarsh, Whixall, Devil's Dingle, Bromfield gravel pits, White Mere and Baggy Moor were added to the site list during May, and although no breeding information was received, it is likely that attempts were made at some of these regular haunts.

The highest counts of the year were groups of five that visited Whixall canal floods on 11 May, Chelmarsh Reservoir on 20 May and VP on 1 Jun. One to three birds continued to be reported from various sites throughout June and July, and a family party of two adults and two well-grown fledged young were on Chelmarsh Scrape on 7 Jul but were not thought to have bred on site. The final records of the year came from Chelmarsh Scrape on 25 Aug and VP on 7 Sep.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Shropshire status:	Common winter visitor, uncommon breeding species
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 12% of plots, 60 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	LS

This year, 500 records were received from 140 sites, a 50% increase in records and a doubling of sites compared with 2018. However, reporting from sites in the south (SO grid references) was less, only 34 records from 19 sites, compared with 59 records from 16 sites last year. Records came from all months, with just over 40 in each of January and February, a build up to 65 in March and 87 in April, when flocks are passing through or returning to their breeding grounds, 57 in May when pairs that breed here are conspicuous, 25–38 in June–August, as post-breeding flocks build up, then 22–34 in the last four months of the year, as breeding birds depart, and winter visitors begin to arrive. Timed-tetrad visit (TTV) counts during the 2008–11 Bird Atlas found 10 times more Lapwings in winter than in summer, the former largely comprising birds which breed elsewhere in the UK or on the Continent.

The highest count of the year was 650 at Wall Farm Marsh (Kynnersley) on 11 and 18 Feb, with two counts of 400+ at the same place in the same month. There were large counts of 600 at Preston Brockhurst, also on 18 Feb, counts of 200 or more on 11 dates between 6 Jan and 25 Feb at VP (max 580 on 16 Feb), 447 at Maesbury on 23 Jan, 353 at Longford (Market Drayton) on 3 Jan, 295 at Cantlop on 31 Jan, 295 at Condover on the same date and 200 there on 28 Jan, 280 at Rednal/Pen-yr-estyn on 21 Feb, 250 at Montgomery Canal (Keeper's Bridge) on 12 Feb, and 200 at Hollywaste (Cleobury Mortimer) on 27 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed, with birds sitting on nests, or with unfledged chicks, at Berrywood, near Rednal (SJ32P), Berth (Baschurch), Hollywaste (Cleobury Mortimer), Ightfield (two well-grown young close to fledging on 20 Jun), Noneley Flash, VP, Wall Farm East (six pairs, including two pairs with one and two chicks on Buttery Farm fields of *Miscanthus*) and Wall Farm west (12 on the windmill field including three on nests). Probable breeding (pairs, display or likely nest sites) was reported from 11 additional sites. However, numbers reported from breeding sites were very small, with 34 individuals at Noneley the highest. Other counts of 10 birds or more came only from Berrywood (11), Gadlas (12), Montgomery Canal (Keeper's Bridge – 18), Norbroom Marsh east (10), Old Woods (Merrington – 20), Wall Farm Marsh, Kynnersley (26) and Whixall Moss NNR (Morris' Bridge – 16).

Lapwings were monitored by 11 Community Wildlife Groups (See Research Reports section), which found 105–122 pairs, virtually the same as last year. Large declines have been found by the three longest-established groups, and all the groups in the south have found only small numbers. None at all were found in the Upper Clun or Camlad areas. However, apart from the two CWGs in the Oswestry area, which found the vast majority, monitoring does not take place in the most-populated areas.

Post-breeding flocks started to gather in July with the first double-figure count at VP being 15 on the 17th, building up to 72 on the 27th. After that, monthly maxima were 87 in August (25th), 140 in September (23rd and 29th), 125 in October (11th), 130 in November (11th) and 105 in December (15th).

Elsewhere, maximum site counts of 200 or more, all in Dec, were in the Tibberton area (250 on 15th) and Cole Mere (200 on 20th), and on WeBS counts at Wood Lane (240 on 16th) and Polemere (205 on 14th).

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Shropshire status: Uncommon winter visitor; has bred
National conservation status: Annex 1, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

Records continue to be limited which is probably a combination of decreased site visits and falling numbers. January records came from seven sites, the most productive of which was Hollywaste, Cleobury Mortimer with a flock of between 55+ (6th) and 250+ (27th). Next was Lower Upton near Shifnal, with a flock of 470 on 3rd. Smaller flocks of c100 were at Cantlop and Condover with Walford, Upper Affcot, and Rodington returning counts of between six and 30.

Birds were still present at Hollywaste (140+) Condover (40) and Shifnal (22) into February with Wall Farm Marsh, Kynnersley providing the biggest flock with 1,100+ on the 18th (with smaller flocks each side of this date). Two were seen on the Montgomery Canal and two at Sleaf Airfield with 100 at Bicton Hill. First-winter counts finished in March with 100+ each at Hollywaste and Wall Farm and 250 at Masons Bank (21st), with 100 on the Long Mynd (21st–22nd). Forty at Titterstone Clee on 29th were the last of the first winter period.

As is typical, the first birds to return were on the Long Mynd, with up to five between the 14–17 Sep rising to 100 in Oct (27th). Three hundred were at Shadwell Hill (27th–28th) with 70 at High Park, 50+ at Motts Road, 23 at Shawbury and

single figures at Cantlopgrove and Meaton Lane. Four remained at Cantlopgrove in November (the only records for this month) before the year finished with 200 at Stokesay, 60–100 on the Long Mynd and two at Arlescott and Wyke in December.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2019:

DE69091	Adult	
Ringed	29-01-2016	near Two Crosses, Clun Forest, Clun: 52°28'N 3°7'W (Shropshire)
Found Alive (colour rings)	20-04-2019	Hofn, Hornafjordur, Austur-Skaftafells: 64°15'N 15°13'W (Austur-Skaftafellssýsla) Iceland 1,481km NNW 3y 2m 22d

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Shropshire status: Very rare vagrant
National conservation status: Amber list
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

Absent from the County list last year, this plover made a return with two birds present at Whixall canal floods from 15–18 May (*P Bag, GE Holmes, JP Martin, H Prince, J Reeves*).

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

Most records this year came from Whixall canal floods, followed by VP; with one record from floods at Noneley (two birds on the 10 May). Two birds were at VP on the slightly late date of 3 Apr, with one present on the 23rd. A single appeared at Whixall on 1 Apr and another on 7 May, with birds then present the whole month, reaching a maximum of five on the 17th before dropping to a final four on the 27th.

Birds returned in August with an individual at VP on 14th and an unspecified number on the 21st. At Whixall canal floods an individual was present 9–12 Aug, with one on 3 and 5 Sep; the last of the year were also here, with four present 8–9 Sep.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Shropshire status: Scarce summer visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Green List, BBP
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: GB

A total of 120 records was received, up significantly on previous years. As in 2017, there were no records from the southern half (SO grid references) of the County. Little Ringed Plover was recorded at eight sites compared with seven in 2018, with records from Noneley Floods for the first time. The sites included regular breeding sites but some passage stop-over wetlands, and fifty percent of the records were from VP, suggesting that other occupied sites may be under-recorded.

The first arrivals comprised a pair at Buildwas, one at Leighton and one at Whixall canal floods on 31 Mar. This was followed by one at VP on 3 Apr, with two 22 Apr and thereafter throughout May and June. One flew through Wall Farm on 5 Apr but was not observed to land; another was there on 18 Apr and a pair on 24 Apr. Three were present at Wood Lane on 7 Apr, one at Noneley floods on 23 Apr, four, possibly including passage birds, at Whixall canal floods on 5 May and a pair at Devil's Dingle on 13 May.

Breeding activity was poorly documented with no direct evidence of breeding. Breeding on the two natural sites at Buildwas and Leighton was curtailed, the observer noting 'the flooding of the River Severn over the banks at Leighton and Buildwas will have destroyed any breeding attempts by Little Ringed Plover on the shingle beds'. The shingle beds at Leighton on 3 Jul were still only partially exposed after the June flooding.

Unusually, and probably due to the heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding, there was a large volume of records in late summer from two sites – Whixall canal floods and VP. Four were recorded at Whixall on 7 Jul, with an unusual concentration, perhaps on passage, of 12 there on 11 Jul, eight next day, six on 22nd and one or two birds throughout August and September, with the occasional juvenile noted. The last record for this site was three on 12 Sep. VP similarly recorded Little Ringed Plover throughout August and September, all singles, with the last record of the year there on 16 Sep.

Little Ringed Plover will return year after year to sites that remain suitable and are also opportunists and will nest at new and transient sites where bare ground occurs adjacent to wetlands. Closer scrutiny for breeding at well-watched sites such as

VP and Wood Lane, more frequent observations at other sites, particularly in the southern half of Shropshire, such as Chelmarsh Reservoir and Scrape and Bromfield, and the monitoring, between May and July, of potential new breeding sites, such as redundant gravel and sand extraction sites and shingle bars on rivers might produce more breeding evidence.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: JJT

A rather typical brief 36-hour visitation on 2 and 3 May by two birds (*JA Almond, M Garbutt, G Hall, JP Martin, R Vaughan*) seen from The Burway, Long Mynd. The male and female were found at 12:30pm on 2 May and seen throughout the day until at least 5:50pm. Next morning, the birds were found at 7:30am, being last reported at 6pm.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

Six spring records this year. The first was of three birds at Wood Lane on 20 Apr. Another small party of three was seen at the Long Mynd on 1 May and two birds were at Kynnersley Moor on 6th. Singles were found at Whixall canal floods on 11th and Wood Lane on 27th, but the most intriguing record was of a pair of wader feet and legs found in a Peregrine eyrie on 28 May. Measurements confirmed they were from a Whimbrel.

Autumn passage was limited to a low-flying bird which appeared at VP on 11 Aug.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon summer visitor, scarce winter visitor
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 10% of plots; nine birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	LS

Two hundred and forty records were received, from 140 sites, a large increase in both from last year. Records were received for all months except December (and only two in November), a very unusual end to the year, and 68% came from the period March to May with almost half of these in April.

There was only one January record, eight on a field adjacent to the former gravel pit at Isombridge Pools, but also one on a WeBS count at Crosslanes on 20 Jan. Spring passage records from VP were extremely sparse: two on 17 Feb, one on 20th, and three on 25th, and, in March, one on 2nd and 5th and two on 6th. There were then none until August. Migration into and through the County was most marked in the Severn–Vyrnwy Confluence. Seven were at Ponthen on 17 Feb and 10 at the same place on 24 Mar, with 33 at Cae Howell on 6 Mar, 41 at Molverley on 15 Mar and 26 at Crosslanes on a WeBS count on 24 Mar. Other double-figure counts were at Isombridge, 18 on 11 Mar and 19 at the same site four days later.

First records from breeding sites were at Stiperstones NNR South on 19 Feb, Hollywaste (Cleobury Mortimer) on 24 Feb, Annscroft and Tittenley Pool (two) on 1 Mar, Whixall Moss on 2 Mar, Santley, near Hope and Woodhill on 6 Mar, then 16 other locations up until the end of March.

Most records received were from the 10 areas monitored by the Community Wildlife Groups (see Research Reports section), which located 94–115 territories in their core areas, and another three to four pairs nearby. Four nests were reported, but only one with chicks, at Woodhill (SJ22T) on 23 Jun.

Otherwise, reports were received of a nest at Ightfield which was predated. Other locations with evidence of breeding were Long Mynd (Pole Cottage), Whixall Moss, Annscroft and Clive (two pairs).

The SOS/SWT “Save our Curlews” Campaign appeal raised sufficient for a nest-finding and protection project to be carried out in each of the Upper Clun and Clee Hill areas, in co-operation with the respective Community Wildlife Group. Four nests were found and protected with an electric fence in Clee Hill. Two were successful,

five chicks were radio tagged and monitored, and all of a brood of three definitely fledged (an excellent result). In the Clun area, one nest was found, but permission could not be obtained to fence it. A full report of each of these projects can be found on the website, together with details of the Campaign www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews

‘Curlew Country’ continued to concentrate on ‘Headstarting’ (removing eggs from nests of wild birds, incubating them, rearing the chicks and then releasing them after fledging), and 33 chicks were released. One ‘headstarted’ Curlew released in 2017 was found breeding in the area (see www.curlewcountry.org).

The mid-Wales ringing group has been colour-ringing Curlews, and observers are asked to check all birds for rings. A female seen at VP on 17 Feb was ringed as an adult on the coast at Llanrhystud, just south of Aberystwyth, on 8 November 2017 (see SOS website).

Potential breeding areas were vacated by 1 Aug, and post-breeding flocks were seen at Whixall canal floods (27 on 19–20 Jul), and Wood Lane Nature Reserve (12 on 4th and 31 on 14th Aug).

The first returning bird did not arrive at VP until 13 Aug, and there were no further records until three on 1 Nov and the last one on 10 Nov. There were three at Whixall on 1 Sep, then one or two on 12 dates up until 16 Oct, the last for the year apart from the two November records from VP referred to above. The small size of passage flocks, in spring and autumn, is a further indication of the rapid decline of this species.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

FH15884	Adult Male	
Ringed	25-09-2017	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	26-11-2019	Welwick Marsh, Weeton Bank: 53°38'N 0°2'E (East Riding of Yorkshire) 208km NE 2y 2m 1d

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Shropshire status: Very rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

At least three were heard calling while migrating north at night over Condover on 23 Apr (*TC Lowe*).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant, very rare winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

A better year than last year with a few spring records, indeed, at least one individual was counted somewhere in the County between March and September.

The first bird was an individual at Wood Lane on 30–31 Mar, then one Whixall canal floods on 6 Apr, one at VP on 8 Apr, before two at Wall Farm on 12 Apr. A second spring bird appeared at Whixall canal floods 20 Apr, with a further bird here on 16 May. A small group of seven (mainly adults in summer plumage) appeared at VP on 30 Jun. Three birds were still here on 3 Jul, with a single on 21st.

All remaining records for the year, from 7 Jul until 10 Sep, came from Whixall canal floods. A flock of 20 was reported on the 7 Jul with two on the 20th and three on the 24 Jul and on 23 Aug. Singles were reported on a further nine days until the last on 10 Sep. Unlike last year, there were no November records.

The bird at Whixall on 16 May was the first documented County record of the European race *limosa* (See *Article by JP Martin elsewhere in this report*); all remaining records were deemed to be *islandica*, where a subspecies was recorded.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

A single on autumn passage at Wood Lane from 11–14 Aug (*J Morris, A Heath*). This is a typical date for what is an irregular visitor, and the first at Wood Lane since 2001.

RUFF *Calidris pugnax*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant, very rare winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

Following two lean years with just two in each of 2017 and 2018, there were 42 records of at least seven birds in 2019.

Typically, spring passage was a meagre affair with a single male present on Whixall canal floods on 13–18 May. Later in the year, the same floods hosted the bulk of the records, beginning with one on 21–23 Aug which was joined by two more on 24th, with two remaining until the end of the month and one still present on 1 Sep. Elsewhere, one was on Quarry Farm Pool, Howle on 11 Sep, one was at VP on 22 Sep, and the final record of the year was a juvenile male that lingered with the Lapwing flock at VP on 4–15 Oct.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Shropshire status: Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

Following the first record of the year, of two birds at Wall Farm on 18 Apr, the rest came from Whixall canal floods (14 records) and VP (seven records). Multiple spring and autumn records from each site represented a marked improvement on previous years (just five in 2017 and eight in 2018).

At Whixall canal floods, singles were present on 4 and 7 May (and also on Whixall

Moss on 7 May), increasing to two on 8 May and four on 10th, one on 11th and three on 27 May. The only other spring migrants were two at VP on 4 Jun.

Returning adults began with one at Whixall canal floods on 14 Jul, and the first juvenile was at VP on 29 Jul to 3 Aug. Whixall then saw a run of records starting with one on 5 Aug, two on 9th, six on 10th (the highest count of the year) and one on 11th, then one present 16–20th and one on 24 Aug. September records there consisted of one on 9th–15th and one on 22nd. Meanwhile, at VP first-year birds were seen on 20–24 Aug, 6–7 Sep and 21–23 Sep but it is not known how many different individuals this represented.

Finally, two were seen to circle VP on 11 Nov when a Sparrowhawk flushed the Lapwing flock, but they were not seen to land when the flock settled.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Shropshire status: Very rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

An adult was located on floods at Noneley on 9 May and reported again early the following morning. This was only the seventh spring passage bird since the first County record in 1957, and the first accepted record at any time since one at Mirelake, Allscott Sugar Factory, on 9–10 Oct 2010. This represents a remarkable change in status of a species recorded in all but three years between 1960 and 2010. The global population of this long-distance migrant is increasing, and the European population is estimated to be stable (BirdLife International 2020), so the reasons behind the sudden decline in local records presumably lies closer to home. The loss of the star wader hotspot at Mirelake and the deterioration of other sites in the County has hit many passage wader species hard, and with 97% of all Little Stint records coming from just four sites, a crash was perhaps to be expected.

BirdLife International (2020) Species factsheet: *Calidris minuta*. Downloaded from www.birdlife.org

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Shropshire status: Common winter visitor, scarce resident
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: TW

When the caretaker at St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, did his annual inspection, he picked up the remains of seven Woodcock on an area of roof favoured as a feeding station by Peregrines. Is it not ironic that now that Peregrines, long a subject of considerable concern, are faring better, they may be taking a worrying toll on Woodcock, a species which, as a breeding bird, has dropped precipitously and deeply into the red list?

We don't know when these birds were caught, although it seems most likely that it was during the winter when large numbers arrive in the UK from Fennoscandia and Russia. It is a time of year when our sportsmen are allowed to shoot them despite the risk that they may, albeit inadvertently, pluck UK breeding residents as well as visiting foreigners out of the sky, as may the Peregrines. And we don't know at what time of day they succumbed. Nocturnal hunting by Peregrines has been well documented at urban sites, and Woodcock have been found as prey remains at eyries in Bristol, Bath and Exeter. At these and other city sites they appear to be taking advantage of high night-time light levels, and perhaps also of the consequent disorientation of migrants. Are the lights of Ludlow, and those trained on St Laurence's, sufficient to facilitate nocturnal hunting? Lots of pertinent questions to which we are short of answers.

What we do know is the pattern of annual observations of live birds – a small number in winter and precious few in the breeding season. And we know that sightings tend to be of one or two birds, which is the case in this account, except where otherwise stated. There were five records in January followed by 14 in February and four in March, with the last of this period being on 10 Mar. Thereafter, there were no more records until four in June: three roding birds at Haughmond Hill on 6 Jun, two on the Black Hill on 26 Jun and one at Walcot Woods on 27th. July and September were blank, but in between there was an interesting and isolated record of three birds at Gretton, near Cardington, on 26 Aug. The first record of the winter period was on 31 Oct, followed by five more in November and two in December. The November records included seven birds at Brownheath Moss, near Cockshutt, on 29 Nov, the highest count of the year; they were seen after dark, so the observer must have been dazzling the birds for ringing as they fed out in the open.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2019 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

EY53408 First-year

Ringed	06-01-2019	Tong: 52°41'N 2°20'W (Shropshire)
Freshly dead (shot)	02-05-2019	Vinnitsy, Podporozhskiy District: 60°37'N 34°46'E (Sankt-Petersburg) Russian Federation 2,395km NE 0y 3m 26d

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Green List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: PC

This species is difficult to record and is known to be under-recorded due to its crepuscular habits. It is more widely reported from shooting enthusiasts, but these records rarely reach the County Recorder.

Twelve records in total involving 11 singles and one record of four birds; typically dispersed over the autumn and winter period. Seven records were in the early part of the year and five in the later. All records for the year are given in full.

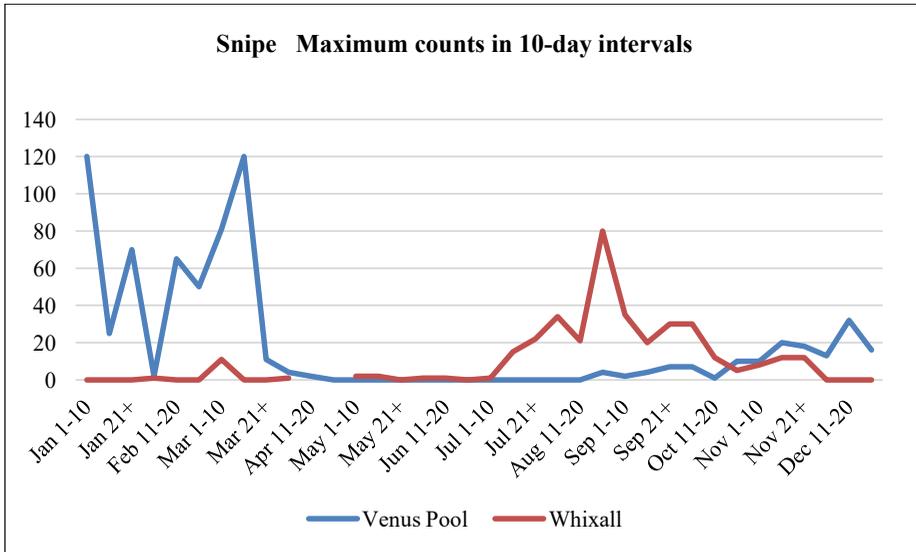
Single birds were found in January at Market Drayton on 6th, Hayes Farm on 20th and Colemere on 25th. Four were found together at Crosslanes on 17 Feb. In March, a clutch of single birds were found at Masons Bank, Leasowes and Hayes Farm on 21st with the same or another at Hayes on 24th. A late record of a single on 17 May at Whixall Moss is noteworthy and is the first May record since one at VP on 11 May 2000.

In the second part of year singles were found at Wolverley on 6 Nov; at Brownheath Moss on 24 Nov and at Whixall Moss on 29 Nov. One December record was from Edgebolton on 7th.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Shropshire status: Fairly common winter visitor; rare breeding species
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: LS

Over 300 records were received, a big increase from previous years, although the number of different sites, about 50, was the same as last year. Once again VP dominated, with about a third of the records coming from this well-watched reserve, but almost 100 came from Whixall (canal floods and Moss), and 37 came from Wall Farm. Most records came from the north, with only 28 from 17 locations in the south, similar numbers to last year. Almost all were in the winter and autumn period with only four breeding season records, all of one or two birds at Whixall Moss on 4 and 17 May, and 10 and 14 Jun. There were also 12 records from WeBS counts. No records were submitted with evidence of breeding.



The pattern of records at VP and Whixall sites was very different. The chart shows the maximum count at each site for each 10-day interval. At VP, there was a substantial winter population, with dispersal and spring passage during late March and early April, then no records until return passage starting in mid-July, and a steady increase throughout the autumn and winter. At Whixall, there was only one double-figure spring passage record (11 on 8 Mar), then autumn passage building up to a maximum of 80 on 29 Aug, then a steady decline until the end of Nov, with no wintering records in December. All the larger counts were at the canal floods, rather than the mosses NNR. The only other site with more than 10 records was Wall Farm, with a similar pattern to VP: double figure counts on 10 dates in February (max 21 on 11th), three in Mar (max 15 on 8th) and one in Nov (13 on 1st)

All the double-figure counts came from these three sites, except Black Hill, Clun (32 on 17 Nov), Brownheath Moss (about 120 on 24 Nov), Cockshutt (about 20 on 5 Dec), Market Drayton (17 on 6 Jan), Pennerley (10 on 5 Dec), Sandford (25 on 22 Mar), Tibberton West (10 on 17 Jan), Walford (10 on 14 Mar) and Wolverley (south) (30+ on 6 Nov). All except two of these were winter counts.

In addition, there were four early season doublefigure WeBS counts, all from the Severn/Vyrnwy Confluence: at Hayes Farm (22 on 20 Jan, 26 on 17 Feb and the same number on 24 Mar), and Crosslanes (30, also on 17 Feb.)

Snipe is a Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, and a survey has

been carried out every five years since 2004 to monitor the breeding population and distribution for the BAP. The first survey was extensive, covering a large number of sites in the south-west hills which appeared to have potential for breeding Snipe. After an initial assessment of 49 sites, three survey visits were made to the 24 most likely sites, plus three where Snipe were known to have bred previously (Long Mynd, Stiperstones NNR, and Rhos Fiddle SWT reserve). (Smith SBR 2004).

The vast majority of Snipe found during the first Survey were either drumming or chipping in deep twilight, at dusk, well after sunset. Some were flushed, but this required approaching within five metres. If densities are low, there is much less need for drumming to establish and defend territories. Initial monitoring on Wild Moor showed that, if the standard survey methodology had been used (three visits covering all parts of each site to within 100m, within three hours of dawn or dusk: O'Brien & Smith 1992), far fewer Snipe would have been recorded than the number actually found. All site surveys, in 2004 and subsequently, have therefore been carried out from listening posts for at least two hours, ending in darkness 1.5 hours after sunset.

In 2009, all the sites where Snipe were found breeding in the 2004 survey, plus every site in the County with breeding season records since the year 2000, were covered. In 2014 and again in 2019, all sites where breeding Snipe might be found were surveyed.

The results for all years for all sites where Snipe have been found are shown in the table. It will be seen that the observed population declined up until 2014. It has recovered slightly on The Long Mynd, where drumming Snipe were heard at seven places in 2019, usually accompanied by chipping. Habitat management work (rush cutting and scrapes) has been carried out there since 2008. No Snipe were found at Stapeley Common, suggesting a further contraction of range.

Snipe territories found on dusk surveys

Site	Estimated population			
	2004	2009	2014	2019
Long Mynd	7–9	2–3	2	7
Stiperstones	0	1	1	1
The Hollies Farm	1	1	1	1
Stapeley Common	1	2	1	0
Rhos Fiddle	3–4	4	0	0
Black Mountain	1	0	0	n/a
Pen-yr-estyn	n/a	1–2	0	0
Total	13–16	11–13	5	9

Whixall Moss should have been surveyed too, but arrangements fell through. However, subsequent research has obtained records from three observers of drumming and chipping Snipe, so it is considered that at least one pair bred, in improved habitat created by the BogLife project. Breeding evidence was heard in 2017 and 2018 as well, and these are the first records with breeding evidence from Whixall Moss since 1995. A full report of the survey, including an explanation of which sites were surveyed in which years, can be found on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com.

Including the Whixall Moss records, the estimated County population of Snipe in 2019 was 10 breeding pairs, a very welcome doubling of the population since 2014.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Shropshire status: Uncommon passage migrant, rare summer visitor,
very rare winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: LS

Over 100 records were received, but from only 11 sites, and four WeBS sites. Two thirds came from VP, and more than a quarter from Whixall canal floods. However, a third of the VP records were of spring passage, and two thirds were autumn passage, but only one of the Whixall records was of spring passage, reflecting the water levels at the time.

Twenty-five of the records and three WeBS records were of spring passage between 14 Apr and 18 May. There were no reports of possible breeding, singles reported from VP on 16 Jun and another at the same site on 7 Jul were probably failed breeders on very early return passage. More than 80 records were of return passage between 15 Jul and 16 Sep. Only two October records were of one on the Severn between Atcham Bridge and Wroxeter on 14 Oct (WeBS count), and one very late individual which passed through VP on 27 Oct.

As usual, no wintering birds were recorded this year. Two-thirds of records were of single birds, a quarter were of two, only nine were of three birds, and one was of four. There were no records of more than four.

The first passage reports of the year were four at Polemere and one at VP on 14 Apr, followed by another at Polemere and two at VP on 18 Apr, a single at Wall Farm on 20th, further singles at Wood Lane on 20 and 22 Apr, one on the Severn

in Shrewsbury on 21st and 24th, another at Walcot Hall Lakes on 21st, and two at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 25 Apr.

The only other site with a spring passage record was Bicton pools (near Clun – two on 12 May), while The Glebe (near Kynnersley) and the Teme at Whitcliffe (one on 1 Sep) were the only other sites with autumn passage sightings.

In comparison, the earliest arrivals in 2019 were a month later than the earliest arrivals last year (five at two sites in mid-March), while unlike last year, autumn passage was more pronounced than spring passage and started later.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Shropshire status: Uncommon passage migrant; scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

An increase in the number of records this year, with 130 reports in all months except for January. The increase was primarily due to a nice series of late summer and autumn birds at VP and Whixall canal floods in July and August.

After an unusually blank January, the species was recorded as ‘present’ at Chelmarsh on 3 and 24 Feb.

Spring passage was light, as is usual for this species. Four records in March included singles at Aston Locks on 4th, at Choulton on 9th and VP on 22nd with two birds reported from Chelmarsh on 16th. April birds were all singles at Ightfield on 10th, Wall Farm Kynnersley on 15th and Hilley Farm, Pentre on 30th with a single May report from Cantlogrove on 10th.

Autumn passage began early with one adult bird at VP on 25 Jun and two adults here on 30th.

Water levels at both VP and Whixall canal floods were perfect for this species and records were received for 15 dates at VP in July and nine dates in August with maxima of six birds on 7, 20 and 23 Jul. A peak of six birds too was recorded at Whixall on 29 Jul with reports on 13 dates that month and 15 in August. Most records were of one to four birds.

After the reports of adults in June, all five birds at VP on 27 Jul were also aged as adults. The first report of a juvenile was from here on 29 Jul. Other records in

July and August were of single birds on four dates at Wall Farm, on two dates at Chelmarsh and two birds at Hilley Farm Pentre on 5 Aug.

A decline in records and birds was apparent in September. At Whixall singles were recorded on 1st and 30th with three birds on 25th. One or two were at VP on six dates this month. Singles were at Chelmarsh on 13 Sep and a bird was heard overhead at Aston on Clun on 18 Sep. Singles were at Cantlopgrove on 4 Oct and at VP on 5th and 19th. VP also held a single on 11 Nov and unusually for the time of year, three on 17th. In December two were at VP on 8th and singles at Chelmarsh on 11th and by the River Perry near Milford on 29th.

A reasonably good year for the species and one of the few waders whose numbers are, in general, holding up in the County.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor, formerly bred
National conservation Status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

From seven records in 2017 and four in 2018 the 21 records from this year are a significant improvement. Birds appeared in March with singles at Wood Lane on 16th and 29th and at Wall Farm on 18th and 23rd. Individuals were at Whixall canal floods on 12 Apr and Polemere on 8 May. On the same day, a small group of seven appeared at Whixall with three still present on the 10th and one on the 11th.

In June, two were at Medlicott on 3rd with singles near The Lawley (6th), VP 9th and 20th, and Whixall canal floods on 26th.

A single was at VP on 11 Aug with three at Whixall canal floods on the 20th dropping to one on several days through the rest of the month and into September. The year finished with two at VP for one day on 24 Nov.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

None in spring this year, but an unprecedented group of six at VP on 9 Aug included one adult, four juveniles and one unaged bird (*GE Holmes, JP Martin, M George*). Present all day, just one remained on 10th. A further juvenile appeared at VP on 25th. Six birds together are the most ever seen in one location in our County.

Wood Sandpipers were unusually abundant in the UK in August 2019 especially in East Anglia, with good numbers in Norfolk. This abundance was attributed to an easterly airflow over the Baltic and the North Sea from 27 Jul into August (*BTO*).

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RJH

A typical year for this species. A single was at VP on 18th Apr, a day later than last year, with one, then two, then four at Whixall canal floods between 3–14 May. One was at Polemere on 17 May.

Returning birds appeared on 18 Aug with a juvenile at Whixall canal floods and an individual counted there on both 24th and 29th Aug, with a further sighting here on 5 Sep. A single at VP on 22 Aug was probably the same bird seen on 24th, with this or another there on 6 Sep.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

There was just one record, an adult at Priorslee Lake early on 28 Apr which departed

south-east (*E Wilson*). This predominantly coastal species has occurred annually since 2012, with one or two records per year, but five in 2013 and seven in 2014.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Shropshire status: Common winter visitor, uncommon breeding species
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 5% of plots; 11 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: TCL

Four hundred and eighty-one records were received, up 37% from 351 records in 2018. Present throughout the year, there is a peak in the winter months, and a notable slump in records in early summer.

A roost count of 4,200 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 3 Jan surpassed the five-year record of 4,000 recorded on 26 Nov 2018 and was followed by 4,000 there on 5 Jan and 3,500 on 27 Jan, the three highest totals of the year. The Mere and surrounding waters have always seen the highest numbers in the County but counts of 19,000 there in 1973 and 20,000 at White Mere in 1976 are unimaginable now; each would surpass the entire recent County population. The Chelmarsh Reservoir roost held 2,500 birds on 1 Feb, the only significant count at this site in the first winter period. Meanwhile 3,500 continued to roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 23 Feb, dropping to 2,800 on 6 Mar. 1,000 in sheep pasture by Orley Reservoir on 21 Feb may have roosted, and 750 were feeding on manured pasture at Shavington Park on 2 Mar.

Breeding records were typically patchy, but 400 birds were at the Wood Lane stronghold as early as 7 Apr. On 19 May 212 nests (and 442 birds including small chicks) were counted, a further colony increase from 160 nests in 2018 and 133 in 2017; the first confirmed breeding there was just ten years before in 2010 when 11 chicks were seen. Nearby 35 birds were present at a colony at Clarepool Moss on 28 Apr, including nest-building and sitting adults. On 7 May there were five occupied nests at Whixall Moss, and by 10 Jun there were 26 birds present including small chicks. Also, on 7 May, 20 birds were present at the colony at Whixall canal floods, rising to 35 there on 13 May. Small numbers were recorded at VP throughout the spring, but there was no breeding information this year.

Autumn build-ups began with 40 at Noneley floods on 16 Jul, and 1,500 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 30 Jul, including two ringed birds. 140 were present at VP on 5 Aug, and 95 there on 10 Aug were mostly juveniles. 900 roosted at The Mere,

Ellesmere on 10 Oct, with 2,000 the following evening, rising to 2,500 on 1 Nov, and 420 flew over Crose Mere en route to The Mere on 10 Nov. 2,000 roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 23 Oct and 13 Dec. The only other large gatherings were at Priorslee Lake where the occasional roost included 650 on 25 Nov, 1,000 on 2 Dec, and 1,200 on 13 Dec.

The following birds ringed abroad were found here and reported in 2019:

IA144893

Ringed Adult Male	15-05-2013	Riether Werder: 53°42'N 14°16'E (Mecklenburg - Vorpommern) Germany
Found Alive (colour rings)	04-11-2019	Bridgnorth: 52°31'N 2°24'W (Shropshire) 1,118km W 6y 5m 20d

FS27359

Ringed Full-grown	12-06-2019	Skoki Du e: 52°36'N 19°22'E (Kujawsko-Pomorskie) Poland
Found Alive (colour rings)	30-07-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 1,466km W 0y 1m 18d

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

There was just one record, but that consisted of a County record-equalling flock of seven, discovered at The Mere, Ellesmere in the evening of 8 Apr (*R Dowley*). They remained throughout the following day, and two were still present on 10th and reported again on 12th. Remarkably, a flock of seven were found at the same site exactly 23 years previously, on 8 Apr 1996.

Since the turn of the century the species has been almost annual in the County, with groups of up to four birds recorded mainly in late winter and on spring passage. The only blank years were 2001 and 2013.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Ichthyaeus melanocephalus*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant; very rare breeding species
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

Just 12 records represented a 59% decline from 2018, coming from just three sites. Just one record during the last four months of the year was particularly disappointing.

A first winter in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 27 Jan was followed by seven records of adults there between 31 Jan and 8 Mar, all involving just one or two birds. Three blank months followed before a fresh juvenile was observed on a jetty at White Mere on 29 Jul. This raised the possibility of another local breeding attempt (the sole record concerns a pair which raised three young at nearby Wood Lane in 2013), although European-ringed juveniles had already been recorded elsewhere in the country by this time. Another juvenile and a moulting adult were at VP on 5 Aug, and finally an adult roosted at The Mere, Ellesmere on 24 Nov.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon winter visitor; has bred
National conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire conservation status:	Not assessed
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 3% of plots; four birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	TCL

Unlike the previous species, the recording rate maintained a similar level to 2018, with 44 records received from all months except April and May. Again, half of the records and almost all of the double- or triple-figure counts came from the Ellesmere area, all but one of which were from the winter months, whilst summer records were all of single figures at VP or Chelmarsh Reservoir.

The roost at The Mere, Ellesmere held 350 on 3 Jan and 27 Jan, with 250 on 4 Feb and 300 on 23 Feb. At the same site during the second winter period, 20 on 10 Oct rose to 30 on 22 Oct and 300 on 24 Nov. These counts are typical for the last few years, but a far cry from the peak of 5,000 in the roost on 2 Mar 1993. Away from the meres, winter roost counts came from Chelmarsh Reservoir where there were 14 on 1 Feb, six on 23 Oct and one on 13 Dec. Priorslee Lake produced December records of two on 2nd and 7th, and one on 24th.

Unexpected summer records consisted mainly of juveniles, starting with four at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 29 Jul, one at VP on 5–10 Aug, and one at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13 Aug. The only September record came from The Mere, Ellesmere on 24th.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

A surge in records in the final six weeks of the year helped push the total to 22, a slight increase on the previous year, but the numbers of birds involved increased dramatically from the ones and twos seen in 2018.

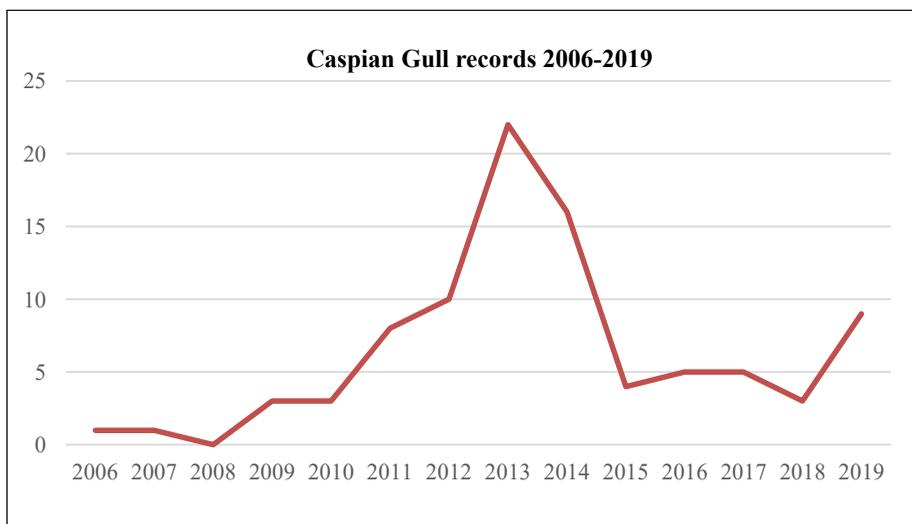
In January, one roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 3rd and 28th, and an adult was observed at The Mere, Ellesmere on 9th and 25th. One was at Oswestry on 17 Feb, and an unseasonal wanderer at Gretton on 25 Aug was the only record between then and late November, when a string of records began at Priorslee Lake. A first-winter on 25th and 26th was joined by an adult on 2 Dec, then two adults the following day, and by 6 Dec there were three adults and two first-winters. On 7 Dec there were 11 birds commuting between Priorslee Lake and fields at Red Hill, including eight adults and a second-winter. A peak of 17 was recorded on 8th, the highest County total since January 2016, also at Red Hill. Up to ten birds remained in the area until the year's end. This increase in records coincided with large numbers of other gulls in the area, presumably drawn by a new feeding opportunity that remained undiscovered to their human admirers.

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Shropshire status: Rare vagrant
National conservation Status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

An excellent autumn passage of Lesser Black-backed and Yellow-legged Gulls in October, followed by the development of a new feeding opportunity in the Telford area in November, drew a pulse of Caspian Gulls into the County in late 2019. Nine birds were recorded, with two at Chelmarsh Reservoir, three at The Mere, Ellesmere, and four at Priorslee Lake. This total more than doubled the yearly average for the last four years and was more reminiscent of the heady days of the first half of the decade when the County's landfills were in full swing.

An adult in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 28 Jan (*J Reeves*) followed three there during autumn and winter 2018. There were then no further records until



10 Oct when an adult was located amongst a huge gull roost at The Mere, Ellesmere (*T Lowe*). The following evening a third-winter was present (*JP Martin*), remaining until 19th, when a second-winter also roosted (*T Lowe*).

On 29 Oct a first-winter was found at Priorslee Lake (*J Reeves*), and remained for the rest of the year, an exceptionally long residence. It visited Trench Pool on 4 Dec and became less reliable in its appearances at Priorslee during December but was seen to roost overnight on 20 and 24 Dec (having been seen intermittently in the roost at nearby Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire in November). During this prolonged stay, the same committed observer found a remarkable sequence of three more birds at the same site: a second-winter on 18 Nov to 7 Dec, an adult on 21–22 Nov, and a third-winter seen on three occasions between 6 and 21 Dec. Also, in December, a smart first-winter was observed in the Chelmarsh Reservoir roost on 13th (*T Lowe*).

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Shropshire status: Scarce winter visitor
 National conservation status: Amber List, RBBP
 Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
 Author: TCL

Of the 66 records received, 11 were in January and February and the remainder were in the second half of the year; there were none in March to June. A healthy autumn passage peaked with a County record of 18 at The Mere, Ellesmere on 10 Oct. The

previous highest single site counts were of 13 individuals, both in the east of the County at Candles landfill site, Little Wenlock on 23 Aug 2013 and Priorslee Lake on 15 Oct 2014.

Up to three adults were present in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on six dates between 3 Jan and 23 Feb, and up to three roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on three dates between 28 Jan and 1 Feb. One was also reported from Wellington on 4 Jan.

An adult feeding in a silage field at Spoonley, near Market Drayton on 8 Jul was an early start to the summer season, and was followed by counts of four (26 Jul), 12 (29 Jul) and three (30 Jul) in the roost at Chelmarsh Reservoir, including the first juveniles of the year. In August a moulting adult was seen at VP on 5th, six roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 13th, and the first returning bird was recorded at The Mere, Ellesmere on 19th, rising to five on 27th. Two days later, five roosted at Chelmarsh Reservoir.

As expected, numbers increased during September with records received from locations other than the main gull roosts: a first-winter at Priorslee Lake on 5th, two by the A5 at Red Hill on 25th and one at Condover on 1 Oct. Eight were in the roost at The Mere, Ellesmere on 24 Sep before a record total of 18 roosted there on 10 Oct, consisting of 13 adults, a third-winter, three second-winters and a first-winter. Eleven remained on 19 Oct, seven on 1 Nov and two on 24 Nov. Elsewhere, the Chelmarsh Reservoir roost held four on 23 Oct and seven on 13 Dec, and two to five birds were counted at Priorslee Lake on 15 dates between 23 Oct and 24 Dec. An outlying record concerned a third-winter in a flooded field at Church Stretton on 17 Dec.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common winter visitor; rare breeding species
National conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 16% of plots; 19 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	TCL

The 214 records came from all months of the year and from across the County; this always has been the go-to large gull in Shropshire.

The most consistent roost counts came from The Mere, Ellesmere where there were 950 on 27 Jan and 230 on 4 Feb, and then, later in the year, 450 on 19 Aug, rising to 800 on 28 Aug, 2,800 on 11 Sep, 4,700 on 10 Oct, and a County record of 6,100 on

Nov. At the opposite end of the County, at Chelmarsh Reservoir, the roost held 1,700 on 1 Feb, 336 on 30 Jul, 550 on 13 Aug, 1,400 on 29 Aug, 1,500 on 23 Oct and 2,400 on 13 Dec. As in recent years, these figures reveal the species' true current status, at least in the north of the County, to be a passage migrant more than a wintering species.

During the first winter period, records of small numbers came from 24 widely scattered localities and included a colour-ringed bird at Trench Lock on 13 Feb that had been ringed at Puerto de Malaga (Spain) on 15 Feb 2012. As early as 18 Feb, 12 were back on roofs at Harlescott, and a month later on 19 Mar there were 'several pairs' around the Dunelm and Aldi stores. On 11 Jul the first fledged juvenile was seen over the Wickes builders' merchants, and by the end of the month a gathering of 70 birds on nearby roofs contained ten juveniles. Also, on 30 Jul there were 26 juveniles in the Chelmarsh Reservoir roost.

Away from the breeding area and evening roosts, summer gatherings began with 22 in a silage field at Rowton on 1 Jul, followed by 57 in a field at Bridges on 10 Jul, and 30 at Cockshutt on 23 Jul. In August, there were 180 at VP on 5th, 110 at Longford, near Market Drayton on 19th, 100 at Priorslee Lake on 21st, 162 at Tibberton on 22nd and 200 at Cantlop on 25th. 350 fed in a field at Moreton Say on 11 Sep, 200 were at Cockshutt on 19th and 320 were at Red Hill on 25th. Numbers remained high into October when 350 were at Condoover on 1st, 300 at Priorslee Lake on 23rd, 900 in a field by the A49 at Condoover early morning on 27th, and 280 in stubble at Brockton the next day. A final field flock of 640 was observed at Moreton Say on 27 Nov.

In late November, numbers started to build up at Priorslee Lake with birds present on and off all day, loafing and bathing, in between feeding at an unknown site nearby. Three hundred and fifty were counted on 26th, 600 on 2 Dec, and at dawn on 7 Dec 1,500 were seen to leave roost (there is not a permanent evening roost at this site, with most birds feeding in the area travelling the eight miles east to Belvide Reservoir in Staffordshire, to roost). By Christmas Eve there were still 500 present and occasionally roosting.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant, very rare breeding species
National conservation status: Annex 1, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

The first of nine records concerned an early spring migrant at Wood Lane on 22 Apr, followed by another at The Mere, Ellesmere in the evening of 8 May. As in 2017 and 2018, midsummer records were confined to Priorslee Lake where a pair was seen on four dates between 8 and 15 Jul. No breeding activity was observed, and the County's sole successful breeding record remains the pair at Chelmarsh Reservoir in 2014. Autumn passage began with two birds, an adult and a juvenile, at VP on 9 Aug, and an adult was at Chelmarsh Reservoir on 29 Aug. Finally, a moulting adult was present at VP on 9 Sep.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Annex 1, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

After a blank year in 2018, at least ten birds were recorded on spring passage in 2019.

An adult spent 9 Apr at one of the species' favoured haunts, White Mere, and was widely appreciated. Just over two weeks later, on 27 Apr, the same site hosted a flock of four birds whilst five were at The Mere, Ellesmere. All nine were together at White Mere by late afternoon, and for much of the next day. On the evening of 28th there was one (possibly part of the same group) at nearby Colemere, where it remained until 30th.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TCL

There were 14 records of at least 15 birds, all but one during the month of May.

An impressive spring passage began on 7 May with a flock of five of these firm spring favourites at Chelmarsh Reservoir, and remarkably, a flock of five was found at Colemere the same day. The next day saw a great spread of records, with three still at Colemere and seven (including the Chelmarsh flock?) at nearby White Mere, whilst two spent much of the day at VP and one was reported from The Bog, Cranmere. On 17 May, one was recorded at White Mere. No accepted autumn records this year.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Shropshire status: Very rare winter visitor
National conservation status: RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

The first-year bird found at Chelmarsh on 30 Nov 2018 stayed into 2019. It was last seen on 30 Jan and was seen by numerous observers.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

Shropshire status: Vagrant
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

Another early April record of this species. A bird flew north-east over Ryebank, Wem in mid-morning on 6 Apr (*A Wright*). Four of the nine records since 1997 have been in April; four more in May and one in June.

GANNET *Morus bassanus*

Shropshire status: Vagrant
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

An adult bird was found at Tibberton (on a manure heap) on 12 Aug (*A Bowen, R Dowley*). The first record since 2012 and only the eighth of the millennium.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Shropshire status: Uncommon winter visitor; scarce non-breeding resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Shropshire BBS: Present in 5% of plots; 11 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: MF

Through much of the County, Cormorant is exclusively a winter visitor: the six months January to March and October to December saw 248 encounters, with only 90 through the rest of the year, and just 12, almost all singles, in May and June. VP was the most-visited site with 127 of the 338 encounters; no other site came close. Even so, there was a gap in April when no Cormorant was seen.

The highest count was 99 seen fishing together before roosting at The Mere, Ellesmere in October, and four more gatherings of between 35 and 90 were reported there. Cantlopgrove, Chelmarsh, Clungunford and VP also saw flocks of over 30. WeBS counts produced a further 113 records, some at sites that were not represented in SOS data, but there were no higher counts.

Only a single record of the race *P.c. sinensis*, a bird at VP on 8 Aug.

NIGHT-HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Shropshire status: Vagrant

2017:

An adult in full breeding plumage of the American race *N. n. hoactli* was first seen at VP on 7 Apr 2017 (*MG Grant, HJ Griffiths, M Murphy et al*) and subsequently at Quarry Gardens in Shrewsbury.

This observation and the identification has been accepted by BBRC and is now with the BOU records committee who are assessing the bird's provenance.

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Shropshire status: Very rare visitor

National conservation status: RBBP

Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed

Author: GT

The bird found on The Mere at Ellesmere at the end of December 2018, continued to roost on the heron island throughout January. It was seen regularly until 4 Feb. The same bird or another then appeared at The Mere on 6 Mar and was seen intermittently until 19 Apr, although no observer reported any changes towards breeding plumage.

The daytime feeding location seems not to have been found but was probably close to cattle or horses somewhere near Ellesmere.

Following the first UK breeding in Somerset in 2007 and breeding, too, from Essex, Hampshire and Cheshire in recent years, the first breeding record in Northamptonshire was recorded in 2019, in a mixed colony of Grey Heron and Little Egret. Certainly a species to watch out for now, in Grey Heron colonies.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
 National conservation status: Schedule 1, Green list
 Shropshire conservation status: Green List
 Shropshire BBS: Present in 16% of plots; 11 birds recorded
 Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
 Author: JO

There were 414 records, nearly 75% from the north of the County (SJ grid references). 78% were of single birds. The largest number, eight, were seen at The Mere, Ellesmere on 4 Apr and on the Montgomery Canal near Rednal on 18–19 Jun.

Counts of apparently occupied nests were done at ten known sites, yielding a total of 84 nests. Traditional heronries at Ellesmere, Leighton and Peplow were not counted this year.

Ashford	0
Bicton Heath	17
Bromfield	9
Chelmarsh	8
Chetwynd Park	3
Chirbury	2
Ellesmere	Not counted
Halston Hall, Whittington	14
Leighton	Not counted
Llanymynech	10
Lydham	12
Peplow	Not counted
Skyborry	9

Given the previous year’s extreme weather during the nesting season, a decline in numbers was anticipated. However, an increase from 2018 was recorded at Chetwynd

Park (one in 2018) and Llanymynech (five in 2018) while Skyborry remained consistent at nine. The counts at some colonies were better than anticipated: Bicton (19 in 2018) and Chelmarsh (10 in 2018).

At Bromfield, though (20 in 2018), the decline was sharp. The favoured shrubby willow at this site is collapsing and probably more difficult to build in. There are tall conifers surrounding what would appear to be suitable nest trees but remain unused. At nearby Ashford (one in 2018), the absence of birds came after a steady decline since 2016. There was no apparent reduction in the amount or quality of nesting habitat, with all the nests used in recent years still largely intact, so the absence this year is puzzling. Chirbury (six in 2018) presented a similar continuing decline within an apparently 'stable' habitat.

At Lydham, the habitat is secure and very private for the colony but sadly becoming impossible to give any realistic counts. Access to the site is becoming more and more difficult due to flooding of the woodlands and viewpoints are now inundated.

At Bicton, the move to nesting high in conifers continued as occupation of Yew trees on site, for years the most favoured nest tree, declines. Of the 17 nests here, two were in Pine, one in Spruce and two in Larch, three to four remained in the Yew trees, two to three in a Weeping Willow and also in Common Laurel with single nests in standing and fallen Alders.

At Chelmarsh, the landowner reported late arrival of the birds this year in late January. They are often back late December or early January. The usual old established nests were used.

Observations through the nesting season at Chetwynd, illustrate the progress of activity:

28 Jan – three present, including one standing on a nest used in 2018

24 Mar – two adults on one nest, three nests (apparently occupied)

21 Apr – three adults at three nests, all with young

Weirs were noted as regular feeding locations with five records from weirs on the Teme in Ludlow. At Mill Street weir a bird struggled to subdue a foot-long Eel which kept wrapping itself around the bill, preventing it from being swallowed. The heron flew to a nearby field where it was seen to drop the Eel and eventually managed to swallow it (*B Daniels*). Herons were also seen feeding in slack areas of the River Clun at Hurst Mill in June.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Ardea alba*

Shropshire status: Rare visitor
National conservation status: RBBP, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Authors: JO, LS

Of the 45 records, 41 were of single birds and four of two birds. Thirty-seven were from the north – SJ area, and eight from the south – SO area.

At the start of the year there were 19 sightings, 18 in the north. Of the 13 records from Wall Farm, 11 between 22–28 Feb were probably of the same bird, and another was reported twice on 24 Apr. Single birds were also seen at Crose Mere (4 Jan), VP (11 Jan) and, on three dates (5th and 14th Feb and 2 Mar), at Wood Lane. The record from the south was of two birds seen near Bridgnorth on 19 Mar.

In the breeding season there were five sightings but no evidence of breeding behaviour. A bird was present at Chelmarsh Scape on 12 May. Three sightings at Whixall on 16 May were probably of the same, single bird, and a single was at Priorslee Lake on 24 May.

There were five post breeding dispersal records, all of singles. A bird flew over Whitchurch on 6 Jul. Two records from VP on 2 Aug were likely to have been of the same bird. Two records on 1 Sep came from Leighton.

There was then a gap until the first early winter records of a single at Cole Mere on 8 Nov, then one at Walcott (near Allscott, SJ5911) on 14 and 16 Dec; six records, all presumably of the same bird, on four dates at Walcot Park, Lydbury North between 14–22 Dec, and, the last of the year, six records of two together at Crose Mere on 21st, 22nd and 27th Dec.

The records probably relate to around 18 different individuals. This represents a very rapid increase – the first record was as recently as 1995, and there were only three further records, all of singles, up until the end of 2011.

2018

Following a reconsideration of 2018 sightings, a series of records in the EGM area from an initial sighting at Wood Lane on 17 Sep through to the end of the year were thought to refer to just one or two individuals circulating between Wood Lane and the meres. Between 17 Sep and 27 Dec, the species was at Wood Lane on 14 dates

including two birds on 3 and 5 Nov and again on 20 Dec. During the same period, it was seen on six dates at Cole Mere and on three dates each at Crose Mere and White Mere (*TC Lowe, JJ Tucker, GD Ashley*).

A further accepted bird was at Bow House Caravan Park, Lydham Heath on 10 Nov (*T Wall*).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
National conservation status: Annex 1, RBBP, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: JO

Of the 66 records submitted, 52 were of single birds, 10 of two birds, three of three, and just one of four. Fifty-three were in the north – SJ area, 29 coming from VP, all in the post breeding dispersal (28) and end of year winter period (one). There were 14 records in the south – SO area.

At the start of the year there were 19 winter sightings, including two sightings of two birds in adjacent tetrads near Maesbury in early April. Other locations were Trefonen, Woolston, Maesbury, Aston Locks, Dudleston Heath, The Mere at Ellesmere and Whixall Moss. In the south of the County, eight sightings were on or near the Rivers Clun, Onny and Redlake. There were two sightings of singles around Church Stretton in early February.

Just two sightings in the breeding season were both of singles at VP. Again, no evidence of breeding in the County.

There were 31 sightings of birds after the breeding season from 22 Jun with the majority from VP, including the highest count of four on 2 Aug. The first post-breeding record away from VP was at Bromfield on 4 Aug, with others from Attingham (21 Aug), Leighton (14 Aug) and Tittenley Pool (11 Sep).

The species was more widespread in the last quarter of the year; again, the majority of records (all singles) were from the north of the County. At Melverley, a bird was seen ‘in trees with Cormorants on east side of mere’. Sightings on or nearby canals suggest useful winter feeding along the waterways, records coming from Ellesmere Canal/Shropshire Union Canal and Montgomery Canal, as well as Newport. Other records were from Aston Locks, Chirbury, Cressage, Whixall canal floods, Longdon, Stokesay, Kinnerley and Meaton Lane.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: LS

Just four or five accepted records of 16 reports this year. Two were on spring migration, one in June may have been a prospecting immature returning to the UK for the first time, and one was heading south, presumably on autumn passage.

The two spring records were on the same date, 31 Mar, and the sightings at Monkmoor (*TC Lowe*) and VP (*D Chapman, J Reeves, JA Almond, HJ Griffiths et al*) may have referred to the same individual. A bird seen at VP on 4 and 5 Apr had a distinctive damaged primary feather.

The out-of-season sighting was at VP on 8 Jun (*T Arch*), with the two on autumn passage both seen at the same location in August, on 15th (*JP Martin*) and, presumably the same bird, on 19th (*R Dowley*).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Shropshire status: Fairly common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 16% of plots; nine birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: MF

The Sparrowhawk's hunting skills came to the fore again after a couple of years in which its failures were well documented. The list of species taken comprised two Blue Tits, two Blackbirds, a Chaffinch, two Goldfinches, a House Sparrow, a Collared Dove and a Red-legged Partridge. Attempts were made on, or interest shown in, Stock Dove, Swift, Sand Martin, Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Lapwing, Starling, Fieldfare, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Linnet, Teal and Wigeon – the latter surely rather ambitious, although the Sparrowhawk involved was described as a 'big female'. A female road casualty was reported in April. Considering how many Sparrowhawks are killed this way it is surprising how few find their way into the record.

There was evidence of probable breeding in woodland at Annscroft, where a Sparrowhawk was heard alarm-calling and seen mobbing a Buzzard. Other examples of aggression, against Buzzard at Ludlow and Red Kite at VP, suggest breeding there too. A successful nest in a small copse in the Clun area was reported by the landowners after the brood had fledged and moved away.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Shropshire status: Scarce resident
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Green List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: LS

About 70 casual records were received from about 20 sites, more than half from one observer, monitoring seven sites for the Raptor Group. Only four of the sites (Sweeney Mountain, Westcott, Whixall (Moss and canal floods) and Cantlopgrove) were in the north.

Records were received for every month, but around one-third were from February and the first three weeks in March, when Goshawks may be seen displaying over woods.

The majority were of single birds, and many came from known breeding areas in the south. Breeding was confirmed at five sites, and display or other probable breeding evidence was observed at three more.

Shropshire Raptor Group visited over 50 previously occupied sites. Twenty-nine were apparently unoccupied, the wood had been felled at three more, making the site unusable, but 26 territories were occupied, and nests were found in 22 of them. The nests failed in seven, the outcome at another was unknown, and 14 were successful. At least 28 young are known to have fledged from these nests, and 10 of them were colour-ringed. Two of the successful nests were in the north, including one of the sites that produced casual records summarised above. Two sites where casual records reported Goshawks displaying in the breeding season will be added to the Raptor Group searches in future years.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Shropshire status: Rare passage migrant, has bred
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: LS

Twelve records for the year was a big improvement on four in 2018, and five in the previous two years. All records were of single birds, and probably relate to eight or nine individuals.

Four records relate to the spring migration period, six were of autumn passage, and there were two winter records. Eight, two-thirds of the records, came from Whixall Moss or the canal floods.

Spring records came from Whixall Moss on 17 Apr (*RJ Harris*); two from the same site on 14th and 15th May (*RJ Harris* and *A Griffiths* on the former date) and Choulton, a female/immature on 17 May (*P Jennings*). A photograph taken on 15 May at Whixall (*S Barlow*) is of a second-summer male, just beginning to move out of immature into adult plumage.

A bird was found at VP on 26 Aug (*JP Martin, D Chapman*), then a juvenile or female at Whixall Moss on 16th and 26th Sep, and one at the same site on 5 Oct (all *RJ Harris*)

The winter records came from Whixall canal floods on 6th and 7th Dec (*RJ Harris*), presumably the same individual. This is only the second winter record. The first came to light in compiling this account, a photograph taken on 25 November 2018 (*S Barlow*).

Marsh Harrier is not quite annual but the only blank years since the turn of the century were 2006 and 2009. Sightings in the County have grown, but the previous maximum number of birds per year was five, in 2010 and 2012, so the nine or so different individuals that comprise these records is the largest by far.

Accepted records from previous years:

2018: One, Whixall Moss, 25 Nov (*S Barlow*)

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: PC

Currently the number of records submitted each year is decreasing. Whixall Moss is currently the site generating most records. Historically, the Long Mynd recorded similar numbers but records there have declined in recent years. Fifteen records in

total, all involving single birds from three areas/sites.

An unusual record of a bird with a white ring at Shrewsbury on 21 Mar (*P Hammersley*).

Whixall records were a single on 9 Jan, followed by an immature male on 1 Feb and again on 10 and 11 Mar, the latter three likely to be the same bird. Singles were present on 23 and 29 Nov, and 7 Dec, and a ringtail was recorded here on 11 May.

A single reported from the Long Mynd on 15 Sep was the only recorded sighting here all year.

It is difficult to state how many birds were involved in these records. Records on the same day from different observers are likely to refer to the same bird and a run of records on dates separated by a number of days may be the same or different individuals. At least seven and perhaps 11 birds are considered to be involved.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

Shropshire status: Very rare passage migrant
National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

A male was found on the Long Mynd on 16 May (*A Stamp, P Lewis*), very close to the location where a male was photographed in May 2017. This was the only record and the bird was not seen again.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Shropshire status: Scarce resident
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: 30 birds recorded (more than double the 13 recorded in 2018)
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: LS

Last year, the number of casual records almost doubled from previous years, to nearly 400 from 116 widespread locations. This spectacular increase continued in

2019, with 471 records from 226 locations. These included 128 from 79 locations in the north, almost double the 69 from 36 locations in 2018. Most came from the south-west, but others came from the very edges of the County, including Morda, Trefonen, Ellesmere and Whixall Moss in the north-west; Ridgwardine, Newport and Shifnal in the north-east; Bridgnorth and several locations around Titterstone Clee in the south-east, and Ludlow in the south. This species is now encountered throughout Shropshire, including over urban areas, a remarkable spread since the first successful breeding for 130 years near Knighton as recently as 2006.

Records came from all months but with a peak in February and March, decreasing from July onwards.

Most records were of one or two birds with just two double-figure counts, 24 at Norbury on 21 Jan, and 21 still present near the roost at Choulton near the south end of the Long Mynd on 1 Jan. Other notable counts of more than five included nine at Bury Ditches on 17 Jan; eight at Aston on Clun on 12 Jan and Pontesford on 12 Nov; seven at Cantlogrove on 14 May and Diddlebury on 20 Nov; and six at Oakeley Mynd on 24 Mar, Long Mynd on 31 Mar and Gretton on 25 Aug. A leucistic (white) Kite was seen near Oakeley Mynd on 17 Mar.

The Welsh Kite Trust and the Shropshire Raptor Study Group again tried to find the nests of all breeding pairs of Red Kite in 2019. Thirty-seven nests were found, 12 more than last year and nine more than the previous highest total (28 in 2017). One nest was not completed. Eleven were at new sites. Five further pairs were located or reported. Thirteen of the nests failed, largely due to very wet weather in the first half of June, and 23 are known to have been successful (the highest annual successful number to date). The outcome of one nest is unknown, where permission to monitor was refused. Assuming that all chicks large enough to tag survived, at least 35 young fledged from them (higher than all except one previous year, 2011, when 36 fledged).

The tagging programme has finished, but two young from one nest were ringed and tagged, bringing the total of tagged young from Shropshire nests since 2006 to 212. The oldest Shropshire Kite yet found, black/black L1, an 11-year-old female tagged in the nest in 2008, nested near Bridges. Four white-tagged Kites from 2011, two yellow-tagged in 2013 and one black-tagged in 2017, were also found.

Efforts are continuing to try and find all nests in the County, to locate tagged birds, and monitor the continued spread eastwards and northwards, so reports are wanted of evidence of breeding, and tagged birds, please. A full report, *Red Kites in Shropshire 2019*, can be found on the SOS website.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 78% of plots; 105 birds recorded, an average of 2.33 per occupied plot and 1.81 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	2.01, annual change -0.07 (2018 Index = 2.08)
Author:	LS

About 1,270 records were received, a 22% increase on 2018, which was itself a 30% increase on 2017. The records came from about 500 widespread sites. The number of records peaked during March and April, followed by a more or less steady decline from May onwards, and were lowest during November and December. Around 61% came from sites in the north, although the 2008–13 Atlas showed the species to be far more numerous in the south-west.

There were 14 double-figure counts, considerably fewer than last year. The highest was 43 at Gretton on 25 Aug, with 20+ nearby the day before. Nine of these counts came from Oakeley Mynd in the first three months of the year, ranging from 10 on 5 Jan to a maximum of 22 on 13 Feb. The only other sites with double figure counts were Cantlopgrove (14 on 14 May), Pentre near Chapel Lawn (12 on 3 Feb), and Hayes Farm (Alberbury – 13 on a WeBS count on 22 Apr).

Although Buzzard is a widespread breeding species, evidence was poorly reported with confirmed breeding only at 16 sites: Bromfield, Buttonoak (north), Claverley, Crudgington Moor, Hints (near Cleehill), Kinlet (north), Lower Chorley, Meadowley, Meaton Lane (near Cleobury Mortimer), Moelydd, Newcastle, Rhyn, Sidbury, Titterstone Clee Hill, Tuckhill (near Six Ashes) and Wall Farm Marsh (Kynnersley). Probable breeding was reported at another eight sites where pairs were seen in suitable nesting habitat, or display or territorial behaviour was noted.

Only one was reported with prey, seen catching a weasel by the roadside at Longford (Market Drayton) on 17 Nov. Five were circling over carrion with Red Kites at Diddlebury on 20 Nov, and one was ‘worming’ on two dates in December, also at Longford.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*



Providing nestboxes for Barn Owls and promoting their conservation in Shropshire

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
 National conservation status: Schedule 1, Green List
 Shropshire conservation status: Green List
 Author: GB

The Shropshire Barn Owl Group nestbox scheme

2019 proved to be another productive year for Barn Owls in Shropshire, following two highly productive years in 2017 and 2018. Sixty-eight breeding pairs were recorded; seven new pairs were established, and 219 chicks produced (Table 1). The breeding data is confined to those pairs successfully producing chicks and includes data from five successful breeding sites monitored by the Upper Onny Community Wildlife Group (UOCWG). Broods ranged from one to six chicks with an average of 3.0. Nestboxes produced 206 chicks and natural nest sites produced 13 chicks. Natural nest sites comprised five oak trees. Two nestboxes were occupied for the first time since they were installed in 2007 and another for the first time since installed in 2008. A tree nestbox was occupied again after being vacant since 2012.

Table 1. Number of chicks produced according to type of nest site in 2019
Shropshire Barn Owl Group
Figures in brackets refer to number of broods

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		
153 (47)	3.2	48 (16)	3.0	5 (2)	2.5	12 (5)	2.4	1 (1)	1.00	0	0	219	3.0

Forty-eight chicks were lost in the nest, possibly due to predation but most likely due to starvation as a result of heavy and persistent rainfall in June which impeded feeding by the adults with first broods. One nestbox adjacent to the River Severn held five young in May but when checked in June all the young were dead, probably due to flooding and inundation of rough grassland feed habitat. Three pairs proceeded to have second broods in July and August: one of the three first broods of these pairs was successful and all three second broods were in the same nestbox as the first breeding attempts and all succeeded. By the end of August 13 nestboxes contained young chicks, which was unprecedented, with young in the nest noted into late October.

Despite the problems inflicted by excessive rainfall, the 219 young successfully produced was the third highest for SBOG in eighteen years of monitoring. 2019 was a peak breeding season which followed two previous successful breeding seasons, with no notable dip associated with Field Vole cycles as in some previous years. See figure.

2,057 Barn Owl chicks have been produced in nest sites monitored by SBOG since 2002; 1,764 in nestboxes and 293 in natural sites. The mean number of chicks produced per successful brood is 2.9. Studies elsewhere suggest that a long-term average productivity of about 3.2 young per pair is required to maintain viable populations, so the long-term productivity rate for Shropshire's Barn Owls appears to be acceptable. The wide availability of nestboxes and the firm establishment of pairs at nestbox sites means that more Barn Owls in Shropshire now probably breed in nestboxes than natural sites and that they produce a significantly greater proportion of chicks compared with natural sites.

Road Casualties

Thirteen casualties were recorded on roads in Shropshire in 2019. Barn Owls were located either directly on the road or on the central reservation or grass verge. 92% of the 201 road casualties recorded by SBOG between 2002 and 2019 have occurred on 'A' roads with relatively few casualties on 'B' roads. The A5 is the most serious threat to Barn Owls accounting for 69 (34%) of casualties. Sixty-five percent of road victims occur in the winter period October–March, and probably arise from juvenile dispersal. Adult Barn Owls are site faithful and highly sedentary, but juveniles make short-distance dispersal movements from their natal areas, usually by December, although some make longer movements. An emerging trend is a peak in casualties in March.

Casual records

In addition to the data provided above by SBOG, 74 records were submitted to the SOS in all months. Several were typically observed hunting, including in the first winter period, one over grassland beside the River Meese at Tibberton on 4 Jan and one over a field at Aston on Clun 30 Jan. One was subsequently recorded hunting along the field margins at VP on 19 May and two hunted across a hay meadow at Tibberton 31 May. At the end of the year on 30 Dec one hunted over a tussocky field at Aston on Clun.

There were no records of confirmed breeding, but one frequently observed carrying food to a hole in an oak at Whitcott Keysett during the breeding season on 14 May probably bred there.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: GT

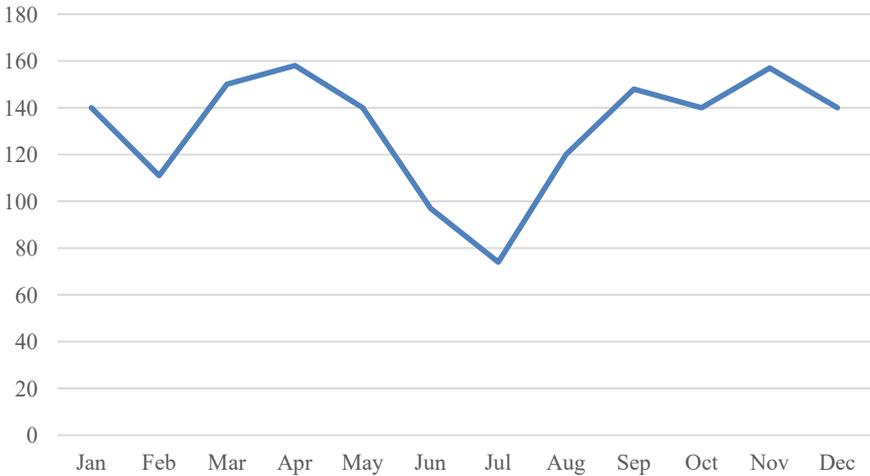
The 140 records reported this year was almost double that in 2018 and twice the annual average of the years 2000–19. It is possible that this increase was solely due to the extra recording effort which occurred due to the BTO's 'Project Owl', although this project commenced in September 2018, a year of average numbers.

Birds were reported from all months of the year, from 61 sites, with a wide distribution in wooded habitats across the County. Survey techniques often involve sound lure playback, which is generally efficient in picking up local birds, although obviously this species is generally recorded only incidentally.

Most records are of single birds or perhaps a male and female duetting or young birds calling, but there were a few higher counts. Seven birds were picked out at Wolverley on 6 Nov, using a thermal imager. Counts of five were recorded at Conover on 31 Jan; at Shifnal Sewage Works on 13 Oct and at Brownheath Moss on 24 Nov. Four-plus birds at Haughmond Hill on 12 Jul no doubt included some young birds.

A male and female were duetting at Cross Houses on 18 Feb and a male with the usual territorial call was heard at Ironbridge on 4 Feb. Occasional calling can be heard at any time of the year; pairs are territorial all year round. Breeding was recorded in a few locations with young owlets (two) first found at Oakeley Mynd

Total Tawny Owl records by month 2000-2019



on 11 May. An adult with two young was recorded at Ercall Wood on 22 May and a single owlet was roosting at Mary Knoll/Evens on 28 May with mobbing passerines around. Two family groups were noted at Hilley Farm, Pentre in August.

Once fledged, the chicks continue to be fed by the adult birds for another couple of months, although by August are usually feeding themselves. They remain in their parents' territory until September or October when dispersal gets underway and vocal activity increases substantially. In 2019 males were re-establishing their territories in October at The Wrekin, Shifnal Sewage Works, Annscroft and Ironbridge, whilst a bird roosting in pines near the Fen Hide at VP may have been a bird of the year finding its own way in the world.

The pattern of vocalisation in this species is illustrated by a simple chart of the number of records reported in each month of the year between 2000–2019. The number of reports each year varied from a low of 37 in 2017 to a high of 140 this year.



Little Gull, Ellesmere, 10 April 2019 (*John Hawkins*)



Arctic Tern, Colemere, 28 April 2019
(*Jim Almond*)



Black Tern, Colemere, 8 May 2019
(*Jim Almond*)



Barn Owl, Dudleston Heath, 17 January 2019 (*John Hawkins*)



Little Owl, North Shropshire, 7 July 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Kestrel, Venus Pool, 7 February 2019 (*Rob Stokes*)



Sparrowhawk, Dudleston, 23 June 2019 (*John Hawkins*)



Hobby, Wood Lane 11 August 2019 (*John Hawkins*)



Blackcap, Venus Pool, 19 April 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Whitethroat, Noneley, 6 May 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Dartford Warbler, Long Mynd, 29 March 2019 (*Jim Almond*)



Treecreeper, Bridges, 20 April 2019 (*Paul King*)



Pied Flycatcher, Bridges, 12 May 2019
(Paul King)



Wheatear, Clee Hill, 26 March 2019
(Dave Chapman)



Stonechat, Carding Mill Valley, 23 March 2019 *(Dave Chapman)*



Lesser Redpoll, Venus Pool, 17 January 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Coues's Arctic Redpoll, Church Aston, 7 March 2019 (*Jamie Maclauchlan*)



Channel Wagtail, Noneley, 30 May 2019 (*Dave Chapman*)



Siskin, Broseley, 23 March 2019 (*Terry Arch*)

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Shropshire status: Uncommon naturalised resident
National conservation status: Not listed
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed (naturalised)
Author: GT

A surprising increase in the number of records and the number of sites where this species was recorded this year. It is a charismatic species so likely to be reported when seen. The 26 reports were from 18 widespread sites and the latter figure perhaps gives some cause for optimism; it is feasible that the species may be able to maintain a low-density population.

The species has declined by 60% across the UK since 1990 (BBS), and trends suggest it is the survival and recruitment of fledged young into the breeding population which may be the key factor in driving the decline, but research is needed.

There were two confirmed breeding records, with two juveniles reported from Clive on 18 Jun. although one was subsequently found dead on the road. Fledged young were also found at Wistanstow in August.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Shropshire status: Rare resident
National conservation status: RBBP, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: GT

Two accepted records in 2019 of an elusive species which is not always recorded every year. It is difficult from the few records received to really make a proper assessment of its status, and even the status of 'rare', although justifiable on the number of records received, must nevertheless be considered as provisional.

The species has occurred at Prees Higher Heath in previous years. This year breeding was confirmed here, the first confirmed breeding since 2012, with an adult and three juveniles recorded on 4 Jun (*J Reeves*).

During an attempt to catch owls for ringing at Shifnal Sewage Works on 1 Dec, a bird was attracted towards the net by a sound lure and seen via thermal imaging (*ME George*).

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status: Annex 1, RBBP, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed (non-breeding visitor)
Author: GT

In the early part of the year there were sightings of single birds (perhaps the same individual) on the Long Mynd on 23 Mar and 12 Apr (*B Lyon*).

The first of the second winter period was sighted on Whixall Moss on 23 Nov, with the same or another here on 21 Dec (*RJ Harris*), whilst the Long Mynd also held at least one bird in December with sightings on 17th (*TC Lowe*) and on 30th (*D Stafford*).

Continuing to be disappointingly scarce in recent winter and passage periods.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

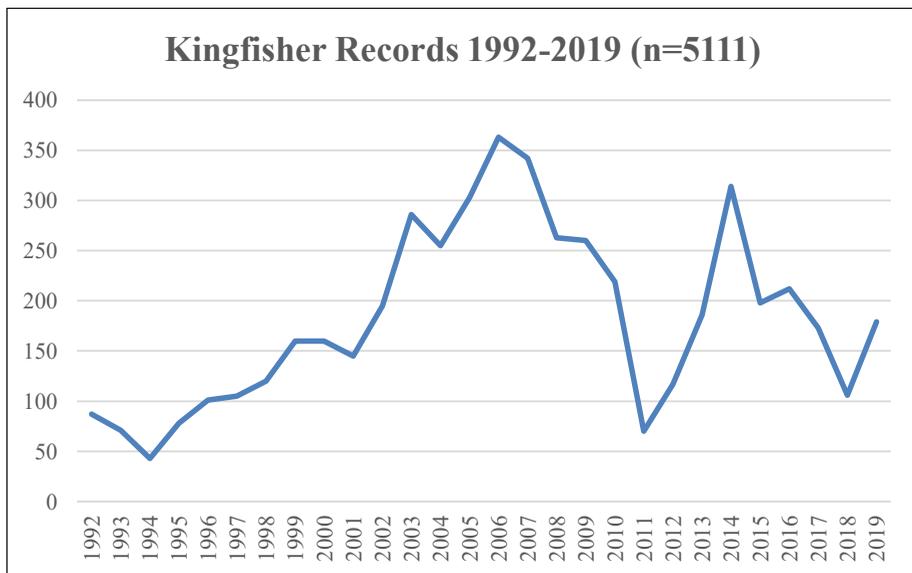
Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Authors: PC, GT

A highly noticeable species with 179 records received from widespread sites. Records submitted fluctuate from year to year, suggesting significant annual population changes. This species is particularly vulnerable to cold winters and will be impacted by floods which make it more difficult to access fish.

The chart shows the variation in the number of records of this species annually from 1992–2019; showing a steady increase to a peak in 2006, followed by a decrease to a low of just 70 records in 2011, then a recovery.

This year over 70% of records were from May to October, coinciding with the breeding season or just afterwards. Kingfishers tend to be more obvious in April–May–June when they are active and vocal in breeding locations, and just after the breeding season in July and August especially when young birds are dispersing.

No definite breeding records were obtained this year, but birds were widespread across the County with records from the rivers Severn, Clun, Rea, Teme and Tern, together with Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest and Rea Brook at Shrewsbury. Birds were seen along the Montgomery Canal and at Whixall canal floods, close to the



Llangollen Canal. Especially after the breeding season there were many sightings on lakes and pools such as Chelmarsh Reservoir (two birds were trapped and ringed here on 10 Nov), Trench Pool, VP, Tittenley Pool, Marton Pool (Baschurch) and at Wood Lane. Rather surprisingly, the only record from the Ellesmere Group of Meres was of a single at Cole Mere on 8 Nov.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Shropshire status: Very rare passage migrant
 National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Green List
 Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
 Author: GT

A bird at Trefonen on 13 Apr (*S Sauer, JP Martin*) was both an unusual spring record but also the earliest modern record in the County (since the 1950s). The arrival date is in line with the species being recognised as the ‘Cuckoo’s mate’ when it used to breed in Shropshire in the nineteenth century (*BOS*).

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dryobates minor*

Shropshire status: Scarce resident
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: AJA

Data for 2019 record a further decline in numbers for this species, with only 10 records and 15 individuals, 11 of which were encountered in the Wyre Forest, a distribution far more concentrated than in 2018. The only sightings outside this area were two birds at Earls Hill (20 Aug), a single male at Attingham Park (19 Feb) and an adult visiting an occupied nest at Marton on 8 Jun (the only evidence of confirmed breeding). There was only one record of drumming (the Attingham observation in mid-February) and the only notable count was of four birds at Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest on 17 Feb.

Last year's conclusion stated 'There is very little encouraging in this report. While the species is undoubtedly under-reported, there appears to be little doubt that it is becoming scarcer'. There is no reason to disagree with this analysis this year.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 69% of plots; 72 birds recorded, an average of 1.80 per occupied plot and 1.24 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 2.61, annual change -0.19 (2018 Index = 2.80)
Author: AJA

'Great Spot' remains the most easily observed woodpecker species in the County with 838 records (10% up on last year and 54% on 2017). Records were submitted in every month but with roughly two-thirds of these in the first half of the year and over 100 each in April and May, when under-developed vegetation and raucous mating displays draw attention to their presence. Records were quite uniformly distributed geographically but with an area of lower density in south-central Shropshire.

Evidence of breeding was plentiful. 'Drumming' behaviour was observed from early January until mid-May, with one record from late December, a precursor to the 2020

breeding season. Occupied nests (with or without evidence of young) were reported from mid-May until mid-June, including a case of two pairs feeding young at Pentre on the last day of May. Fledglings and juveniles were noted from late May until early August. There were 29 records of probable breeding and an equal number of confirmed breeding cases.

The overwhelming majority of records were of single birds (57%) or pairs (20%). The largest counts were six (Cole Mere), seven (Dowles Brook, Wyre Forest) and eight (Attingham Park), all in January and February.

A Great Spotted Woodpecker foraging in a dead Silver Birch was observed to be mobbed by a pair of Pied Flycatchers and Blue and Long-tailed Tits on 16 May at Hall of the Forest, presumably a response to the threat of nest predation behaviour by this species. Perhaps turning the tables, a pair of woodpeckers exhibited agitated behaviour when their nest tree in the Aston on Clun/Beambridge area was visited by a Carrion Crow.

Feeder-use was reported from gardens in Church Stretton, Newport (where an adult male visited peanuts nine times in three hours when feeding young) and Shifnal, as well as at VP and Wall Farm.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 7% of plots; four birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	AJA

After a welcome increase in reports last year, accounts of Green Woodpecker have dropped to previous levels (173). Records were submitted for all months of the year, with the largest numbers (>20 per month) in April–May and July–August and the fewest in June and November (7). Over one-third of the reports are from spring when ‘yaffling’ draws attention to its presence. Indeed, many reports were based on auditory, rather than visual, detection. The geographical distribution is sparse over the County with areas of greater clustering in the valleys of the Clun and Severn, the North-west Uplands, the area around and north of Telford and the Long Mynd – Stiperstones – Stretton Hills area. However, the site with the largest number of records was VP (30).

Two-thirds of all reports were of singletons and only six were of three or more birds. The only evidence of confirmed breeding consisted of recently fledged birds at VP on 3 Jul and at Kempton on 14 Jul.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Shropshire status: Fairly common resident and passage migrant
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 7% of plots; four birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: MF

Observations were spread pretty evenly through the year, but with a geographical bias in favour of the northern half of the County, which accounted for roughly two-thirds. This seems to confirm a trend, already apparent in Atlas fieldwork, of localised thinning of Kestrel populations, especially in the south-west. In the Clun Forest, for example, not only was there no recorded breeding, despite provision of nest-boxes in suitable habitat, but several sites at which Kestrel used to be regular appeared vacant.

Breeding was confirmed at Haughmond Hill where a female was sitting in early May. Later that month a Kestrel was seen carrying a small rodent over Crosemere into woodland. At Moretonwood, Shavington Park and Pepperhill, nests with young were found at the beginning of June and the chicks subsequently ringed. A male was carrying prey at Titterstone Clee in mid-June; towards the end of the month three fledged young were found at Ightfield in an oak tree with a natural nest cavity. Fledglings were also noted at Cleeton St Mary and Meadowley.

Numbers were low, with only two counts of three and one of four, between July and September when family groups might be expected.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Shropshire status: Rare resident, scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, Red List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Author: LS

A total of 19 records was received, the best for at least four years. Part of the increase is due to five records received from one observer (*K Steggles*) from a large area

of apparently suitable habitat. All records were of single birds, probably all winter visitors from the north. No records at all were received for much of the breeding season, the months of May, July and August.

In the first quarter (the early-winter period), there were five records, two from Bicton Hill on 7 Jan and 19 Mar, one from Whixall Moss, a female on 2 Feb, a record from near Cross Houses on 22 Mar, and from VP, another female on 28 Mar. There were two records from Long Mynd, just before the start of the breeding season, near Boiling Well on 24 Mar and Pole Cottage on 21 Apr. However, The Long Mynd was searched thoroughly by the Raptor Group, and for the second year running, no nests were found, and no Merlins were seen during this searching. No young fledged in 2017, so perhaps this absence is not surprising. One was seen on Bicton Hill in suitable breeding habitat on 14 Jun, but there was no evidence of breeding, and no other breeding season records.

After the breeding season, singles were seen at Bicton Hill on 17 Sep and nearby Shadwell Hill the following day, at Whixall Moss on 5 Oct and a female at Noneley the same day, Long Mynd on 16th and 23rd Oct, VP on 13 Nov, Whixall canal floods on 29 Nov and Pen-yr-estyn (Rednal) on 19 Dec.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Shropshire status:	Scarce summer visitor
National conservation status:	Schedule 1, Green List, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 2% of plots; one bird recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	LS

Nearly 90 records from over 50 locations were received, a considerable increase on the last two years. Twenty-eight records from 17 sites were in the south. No large gatherings were reported and the only counts of more than two birds were three at Maesbury Marsh on 28 Apr, and a family party including three young at Meadowley, seen on four dates between 18 Aug and 8 Sep.

The first arrivals were singles at Silvington (27 Apr), the three at Maesbury Marsh referred to above, and Brockhurst Farm East (4 May), then further sightings in May up until 29th, several of which will have been passage birds, at Choulton, Cockshutt (south), Newcastle-on-Clun, Oswestry, Pentre (Chapel Lawn), Shifnal, Silvington (again), Long Mynd (Pole Cottage), St. Martin, Uppington, Wall Farm (Kynnersley) and Whixall Moss.

Hobby was seen in the breeding season (June – late August) at 35 sites: Aston Locks, Batch Valley (Long Mynd), Bicton, near Clun, Bridgnorth, Cantlopgrove, Choulton, Claverley, Cockshutt (south), Deuxhill, Dodecote, Eudon George, Hem Farm, Long Mynd (southern end), Market Drayton, Meadowley, Newcastle-on-Clun, Oswestry, Pentre, Preston Gubbals, Sambrook, Shavington Park, Calverhall, Shifnal, Silvington, St. Martin, Stiperstones NNR, Telford, west of Tibberton, Trefonen, Tuckhill, Uppington, VP, Wall Farm (Kynnersley), Wattlesborough, and Whixall Moss. These sightings confirm a wide distribution across the County.

Pairs were seen at Deuxhill (21 Jul) and Bagginswood (1 Jul). Apart from Meadowley, referred to above, the only confirmed breeding record was of two fledged young at The Hooks (Nagington Grange) on 8 Sep.

The dearth of records from the Whixall sites was again noticeable, and it was present on only eight dates, and all records were of singles, except two or three on 7th, 12th and 14th May; there was only one further record, on 13 July, until 29 August, and the final sighting was on 14 September. At VP, singles were seen on just five dates, the first not until 11 August and the last on 21 September.

There were 18 September records, all from the north except three from the Bridgnorth area, with the last on 4 October, at Cantlopgrove

Shropshire Raptor Group checked 40 sites where breeding Hobby has been found in the previous nine years, and 14 breeding pairs were found, including six nests. Four nests were in the south, one was near Ellesmere, and the sixth at Meadowley is referred to above. Two nests failed, but the other four fledged eight young, three of which were ringed. In addition, one recently fledged young was found, but not the nest, making 11 fledged young in total.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Shropshire status: Scarce resident and winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Annex 1, RBBP, Green list
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: JG

This year was a good year for Shropshire's Peregrines. Twenty-three sites were monitored, with 22 of these producing breeding attempts. Of these attempts, 16 (73%) were successful in producing at least one fledged young. A total of 40 chicks was recorded as fledging out of 46 chicks reported hatching. This is an excellent total, significantly higher than most years and the best since 2016. Although there is some



Whimbrel legs, 28 May 2019 (*Jim Almond*).

fluctuation over the years of site coverage, it does seem as though Peregrines have certain years where the numbers of fledglings spike, presumably due to favourable conditions in terms of climate or prey availability.

Thankfully, 2019 was a year without any untoward incidents which is heartening. A site where Peregrines were the victims of persecution seven years previously, was used once again and the pair successfully raised two young. Some of the Shropshire Peregrine Group are able to visit their sites regularly to keep diaries of activity which can make for interesting reading. During chick ringing at one site, examination of prey remains at the eyrie included the unusual discovery of a pair of Whimbrel feet. Studies elsewhere have also shown Peregrines to hunt quite a diversity of prey in addition to their usual pigeons and doves, including bats!

One hundred and twenty-three records were submitted via Birdtrack from 45 tetrads. Records were made throughout the year. Some of these will refer to breeding birds which can cover significant ground whilst out hunting. Other records will be of passage and wintering birds, which may or may not be part of the breeding population in the County. No reports were made of ringed birds which would help us to narrow this down. Notable sightings outside the breeding season included a bird (presumably the same one) regularly hunting a Starling roost throughout January to

March. One observer spotted a bird in October '*perched and puffed up with white upper breast looking like football and lower barred feathers spread out like tutu*'. A wonderful description!

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

GR01564

Ringed Nestling Female	23-05-2018	Site Confidential: Shropshire: c. 52°49'N 2°57'W (Shropshire)
Found Long dead	11-09-2019	Talbot Green: 51°33'N 3°22'W (Rhondda Cynon Taff) 143km SSW 1y 3m 19d

There were fewer than five recoveries of this species:

GV90460

Ringed Nestling Female	16-05-2019	Confidential Site in Greater Manchester: c. 53°32'N 2°40'W (Greater Manchester)
Found alive (colour rings)	27-11-2019	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury: 52°38'N 2°39'W (Shropshire) 96km S 0y 6m 11d

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Shropshire status: Rare naturalised visitor or escapee
Shropshire conservation status: Naturalised, not assessed
Author: GT

One bird was at Priorslee Flash on 7 and 10 Jan (*GE Holmes, TC Lowe*). An individual at Belle Vue, Shrewsbury on 28 Feb (*D Wrench*) and again 8 Aug (*JD Groom*) may have been the same bird seen on several occasions in 2018, although for such a usually noisy species perhaps more observations would be expected if the bird had remained in the area.

A juvenile seen in Newport on 2 Aug (*K Williams*) is the first of this age reported in the County. The nearest known breeding sites are in the West Midlands.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor
National conservation status: RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

All records this year may well refer to the same individual. The bird reported

from Hurst Barn, near Clunton and Purslow in December 2018 was again seen in the Purslow Wood and Clunton Coppice area between 1 – 17 Jan (*GE Holmes, I Johnson*). It seems probable that an individual at nearby Radnor Wood, Clun on 3 Mar (*R Taylor*) was the same bird.

One or more Great Grey Shrikes have been regularly seen in the Clunton Coppice – Purslow Wood – Black Hill area south of Clun each winter since 2012 and it is possible the same individual(s) have been involved.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Shropshire status: Fairly common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 28% of plots; 34 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: AJA

This colourful crow remains well-observed (439 records), with a County-wide range and records from every month of the year; April and October remain the months with the largest number (46 and 47, respectively). Of the records with a count of birds, 81% were of singletons or pairs but larger groups were reported at Whixall Moss (nine on 10 Nov), Granville Country Park – Donnington area of Telford (eight on 7 Apr) and in the Wyre Forest (six on 28 Apr). The list of locations with the largest number of records was topped by the Wyre Forest (51) and VP (35).

As in previous years, evidence of breeding is scarce. A bird was reported visiting a probable nest site on 22 Mar (quite an early date for this species to nest) and a juvenile was observed in the Clun Forest on 13 Jul. Likewise, behavioural notes were few, but a pair and two individuals were noted collecting acorns at Bicton on 23 Oct. A Jay (a species notable for a large range of vocalisations) was heard ‘making [a] lower pitched, almost rhythmical, creaky mewling calls for several minutes’ at Wykey on the last day of the year.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 84% of plots; 165 birds recorded, an

average of 3.37 per occupied plot and 2.84 per surveyed plot

Shropshire BBS Index: 0.75, annual change -0.08 (2018 Index = 0.83)
Author: MF

One of the few breeding records came from an observer who recognised that recently fledged Magpies on 17 May were unusually early; the likely laying date would have been the beginning of April or earlier. Another observer recorded an incubating bird on 23 Mar. Based on data from the Nest Record Scheme, BTO suggests that between 1967 and 2017 the Magpie's laying date advanced from around 26 Apr to 6 Apr, although the mean annual sample comprised only 31 nests. BirdTrack and local recording may not supply such precise data but could make a valuable supplementary contribution if more interest were shown in the breeding cycle of common species.

The Magpie population always includes a significant number of non-breeders. These can be gregarious, roosting, feeding communally or holding social gatherings thought to have hierarchical or territorial purposes. One observer described 'a flock, rattling and "scolding" in a scrub thicket'; another saw 37 leaving 'what appeared to be a flocking area concealed in a stand of mixed willows and thorns', and a third came across an 18-bird 'parliament' in an overgrown hedge.

There were 20 further double-figure counts, most made outside the breeding season. The highest was a roost of 102 on the island in Priorslee Flash in January.

A leucistic bird whose normally black plumage areas were pale buff was spotted several times in the Rea Brook Valley, Shrewsbury, between May and September, always in a group of up to 10.

JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 93% of plots; 786 birds recorded, an average of 14.56 occupied plot and 13.55 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 2.28, annual change +0.23 (2018 Index = 2.05)
Author: MF

The national Jackdaw population has increased rapidly over the last few decades, and continues to grow, although at a slower rate. This is reflected in local data, where

three-figure counts have become almost commonplace and only those of several hundred or more stand out. Two flocks of well over a thousand were recorded, 1,500 at Chelmarsh in January, and three four-figure roost counts at VP on different dates in December; the one felt to be most accurate, possibly even on the low side as light was failing, was of 1,900 counted at dusk as they flew in group by group. Other noteworthy flocks were 500 near Tuckhill, 400 roosting at Much Wenlock and another 400 at Choulton.

Breeding evidence is usually in the ‘probable’ category, with Jackdaws seen entering or leaving likely nest sites or carrying nest materials. Their predilection for holes, crevices and chimneys means that most nesting and chick-rearing takes place out of sight. However, an occupied nest was recorded at Westbury, and Jackdaws were seen carrying food at Preston Montford and Rea Brook Valley.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Shropshire status:	Very common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 48% of plots; 739 birds recorded, an average of 26.39 per occupied plot and 12.34 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	0.73, annual change 0.00 (2018 Index = 0.73)
Author:	JJT

A total of 339 records, an increase of 26% on the previous year and, just as last year, 64% of records were from the north of the County.

2019 was the first of a two-year resurvey of all previously recorded rookeries, that is, those of the SOS/BTO survey of 1975/76 and that by this author in 2008. Full analyses will appear in a subsequent issue of this journal.

On 17 Jan there was a count of 231 near Prees, encountered on an English Winter Bird Survey. Post-breeding, on 4 Jun at Dodecote, there were 150+ ‘adults with fledged young feeding in adjacent young Maize field, sheep paddock and Rye-grass field recently cut for silage’. A mixed flock of Rooks and Jackdaws at Bishops Castle had close to 600 birds in mid-July, counted by this author using a still from a video. On 22 Jul there was a gathering of 400 at The Lawley.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 95% of plots; 705 birds recorded, an average of 12.82 per occupied plot and 12.16 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 0.93, annual change -0.03 (2018 Index = 0.96)
Author: MF

Although the 1,700 observations made in 2019 represent an increase of almost a quarter on last year, only about one in a hundred is accompanied by data on breeding status or habitat use.

Carriion Crows produce a single brood each year, so they need to be attentive and resourceful parents. The pair seen ‘vigorously and successfully driving off a Raven’, the adult in flight alarming urgently over a barely-fledged juvenile on the ground, another ‘vocally encouraging equally noisy young’ to leave their nest in a sycamore, give us a glimpse into the anxious business of rearing young. Despite these efforts, only about half of young crows make it into a second year, and the adult survival rate is little better.

A canny crow at Shirlett worked out that it could safely pick up food scraps around empty tables in a pub garden while humans were busy enjoying themselves. In February, far from such comforts, a party of 16 in the Clun Forest made do with feeding on forage crops alongside the sheep.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 41% of plots; 39 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: LS

Records of the charismatic corvid continue to increase, the almost 600 being 50% greater than 2018, itself a significant increase on 2017. They came from 239 widespread locations, twice as many as last year, with a welcome increase in the

proportion from the south (58%), which holds the vast majority of the population.

There were 60+ records each month in January–March, a maximum of 72 in April, then a fairly steady decline for the rest of the year, but there were fewer than 40 in only June and December. Around two-thirds of the records were of one or two birds.

There were 20 double-figure counts, twice as many as last year. Half came from The Lawley, a maximum of 120 on 23 May, 56 on 6 Jun, 50 on two dates in April (12th and 20th with the remainder from five other different months. The other 10 came from Bridges (30 on 30 Apr), and perhaps the same flock at Long Mynd (17 on 17 Sep); Stowe Hill/Jutland Plantation (24 on 12 Feb); Whitcott Keysett (16 on 21 Jan) and perhaps the same flock at Bicton, near Clun (10 on 27 Jun); Cardington (15 on 24 Aug) and almost certainly the same flock at Gretton (13 a day later); Cefn Coch at opposite ends of the year (10 on 14 Jan, and 12 on 23 Dec) and Hope Bowdler (10 on 31 Jul).

These flocks mainly comprise young non-breeding birds, the size of which have increased as the population has grown rapidly in the last 30 years, but 11 on the Stiperstones in 1988 was the largest recorded by 1990, followed by 21 in October 1994 at the same place, and 53 in July 2000 on the Long Mynd. Subsequent counts of over 50 were 55 at Cefn Coch on 10 Apr and 84 at Stow Hill on 4 Oct (both in 2004), and the largest flock recorded up to the end of 2014, 93 around the summit of the Lawley on 4 May 2008. In the four years since, counts of more than 30 have come only from Cefn Coch, max 48 on 28 Nov 2016. The flock at The Lawley on 23 May is thus the biggest ever recorded in the County.

Although no doubt widespread, breeding was poorly recorded. However, nests were reported at Clunton and Shavington Park, and fledged young at Cantlopgrove, Cleeton St. Mary, Cleobury Mortimer, Haughmond Hill, Meadowley, Silvington and Titterstone Clee Hill. Probable breeding was observed at 15 sites, and pairs at almost 20 more.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 28% of plots; 31 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: GT

Six hundred and sixty-eight records in the year with reports in every month. As usual, reports peaked in March (90 records) and reached a trough in July (24 records).

Consistent high counts were reported from the Wyre Forest area with ca. 30 birds here on Apr 28, a time of year when the species is very vocal, and 30 in the Meaton Lane area on 29 Sep. Several counts of over 15 birds were made at Postensplain in February, March and December with others in double figures from Llanyblodwel (February) and Shavington Park (March, November and December). 24 birds at Cefn Coch on 2 Dec included several collecting and hoarding beech-mast.

The first singing birds this year were noted at Shifnal Sewage Works on 20 Jan and at Mytton Dingle a few days later. Territorial behaviour became more frequent after 20 Feb with unusually early nest building at Edgebolton on 29 Mar. The first occupied nest site was not reported until 20 May at Medlicott and hatched young were first found on 25 May at Meaton Lane in the Wyre Forest. Nevertheless, newly emerged fledglings were out of the nest in Whitcliffe Wood by 28 May, and soon after at Meaton Lane and Cross Lane Head on 2 and 7 Jun, respectively. Confirmed breeding was subsequently also reported from Shavington Park and Kynnersley Moor.

Garden feeding is regularly reported for Coal Tit including in summer months, with birds visiting a garden in Church Stretton between June and August.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2019:

L183205

Ringed First-year	18-01-2011	Tee Lake, Wellington, Telford: c. 52°42'N 2°31'W (Telford and Wrekin)
Found Dead	06-01-2019	Ditton Priors: 52°29'N 2°35'W (Shropshire) 24km S 7y 11m 19d

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common resident
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 5% of plots, three birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	JG

Forty-nine observers submitted 211 records in 62 tetrads. This is slightly down from the number of records submitted in 2018 which was 283. Records were widespread throughout the County from Whixall to Ludlow, although most locations (about 65%) were in the south of the County (the 'SO' grid references). Records were submitted in every month of the year. The number of records from the BBS were below average but for species like this, which are not numerous and can be elusive, a pattern of annual fluctuation is quite normal.

There were six confirmed breeding records, including a pair carrying food into a nest in a stone well in Whitcott Keysett on 13 May. This is an unusual nest site for this species which normally prefers natural cavities in mature trees and shrubs. Another interesting breeding record was made of a Marsh Tit nesting in an artificial woodcrete House Martin nest in the Bishops Castle area. The birds successfully raised young and were observed bringing food in for the youngsters during May.

For the second year in a row, a Marsh Tit nested in the same Dormouse box on Wenlock Edge (*per A. Bicheno of the Shropshire Dormouse Group*). This species does not commonly take to nest boxes as frequently as its more common cousins, Blue and Great Tits.

A systematic survey was conducted at Haughmond Hill (*J Groom*) using a playback survey method identical to that used to survey for Willow Tit. This method proved very effective and located 10 territories throughout the wood, mainly concentrated in the west side of the site in the mixed and remnant ancient woodland, rather than the conifer plantation. An additional territory was located in the Haughmond Abbey woods adjacent to the main woodland site. This method could be used more widely to estimate population sizes for other sites which could be of benefit to monitor numbers at key woodland sites such as Wenlock Edge or Benthall Edge and surrounds.

The highest single count was of nine vocal birds at Shavington Park on 26 Sep. This probably included adults of both sexes and juveniles that may have fledged earlier in the year.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

Shropshire status:	Scarce resident
National conservation status:	RBBP, Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 2% of plots; one bird recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	JG

Specific survey work for this elusive species continued in 2019 with the start of the national Willow Tit survey, led by the RSPB. Unfortunately, take-up in Shropshire was disappointingly low and only nine tetrads were covered, though this did produce five positive results in some new areas to those found in previous years. Thankfully, it was possible to compile all the local surveys made since 2016 to add to the data. This brings the total number of tetrads surveyed since 2016 in Shropshire to 81 with 44 positive results. Tetrads are widespread across the County from Whixall to Ludlow, but birds are never abundant, with an average of around two per tetrad (there are a few spots where up to five territories were recorded). This survey will continue into 2020 (and hopefully beyond) with the aim of continuing to add to our knowledge of this species.

A total of 37 records was submitted via Birdtrack from 22 tetrads. Several of these tetrads have not been covered by the Willow Tit survey so help to expand our recent knowledge of their distribution.

The best time to record this species is during late February and March, when territorial males will be at their most vocal. They may be seen excavating a nest in decaying wood during April if the observer is particularly lucky. Birds can be quiet during incubation, normally from mid-April to early May, before activity can be seen of adults collecting food for young. If birds fledge, then they can often be heard in June or even as late as July and August, foraging as a family group constantly uttering their nasal “tchay-tchay” call to one another. Records from Birdtrack were fairly well spread through the year but the higher numbers did come from February and May.

The only breeding record came in the form of a fledgling ringed at Pam’s Pools in July. Repeat records, presumably of birds on territory, came from VP and Mary Knoll Valley in the Mortimer Forest (a known hotspot thanks to Willow Tit survey work). Notable records came from Earl’s Hill where a singing bird may be the first recorded at this site and also a bird caught and ringed at Bicton, Shrewsbury was a first for this location. For the second year running, birds could not be located at Haughmond

Hill, despite a focused survey. Marsh Tits remained abundant (see Marsh Tit species account for more details).

This is a difficult species to differentiate from the Marsh Tit, especially where birds do not vocalise (such as at bird feeders), or as juveniles. It would be of value for observers to provide some notes on the features which enabled confirmation as Willow Tits, or indeed to be explicit that identification could not be confirmed. For such a scarce and declining species, it is important that key sites are identified and followed-up over future years to completely understand how the Willow Tit is doing in the County.

If you are interested in taking part in Willow Tit survey work in the future, please contact Jonathan Groom at bto.shropshire@gmail.com.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Shropshire status:	Very common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 97% of plots; 541 birds recorded, an average of 9.66 birds per occupied plot; 9.33 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index:	0.95, annual change -0.10 (<i>2018 Index = 1.05</i>)
Author:	GT

Unsurprisingly, Blue Tits invariably top the list of the numbers of birds ringed each year in the UK and of the number of nest records submitted to the BTO. This wealth of data does have advantages though, and the BTO now has a huge data set for this species. Recent investigations of this data (*Burgess et al 2018*) has shown that the Blue Tit has advanced its first egg-laying dates in response to warming weather, but not sufficiently to keep up with the advancement of the peak abundance of its caterpillar prey. For every ten days the caterpillar peak has advanced, the Blue Tit breeding season, as measured by first egg dates, has advanced by five days. So, the suggestion is that Blue Tits are struggling to keep up with the fast pace of change. The investigations suggest that this mismatch should result in poorer breeding success if the advancement of spring continues, and perhaps those pairs who lay earlier will tend to rear more young than pairs who lay late.

Nest box schemes contribute directly to the understanding of how our wildlife adapts to climate change; details were provided from three schemes this year and these are summarised in the table below, with previous years for comparison.

Scheme	Craig Sychtyn	Eardington NR	Newcastle-on-Clun (R. Clun and Folly Brook)
Blue Tit completed clutches	6 (2017=3, 2018=5)	13 (2017=7, 2018=11)	55 (2017=70, 2018=71)
No. Eggs	49 (2017 = 22, 2018=35)	102 (2017=56, 2018=86)	418 (2017=466, 2018=442)
Av. Clutch Size	8.2 (2017=7.3, 2018=7.0)	7.8 (2017=8.0, 2018=7.8)	7.6 (2017=6.7, 2018=6.2)
No. chicks hatching	47	85 (2017=56, 2018=85)	380 (2017=368, 2018=342)
%age of eggs which hatched	96%	83% (2017=100%, 2018=99%)	91% (2017=79%), 2018=77%
No. Chicks fledging	43 (2017=22, 2018=21)	68 (2017=53, 2018=74)	282 (2017=302, 2018=304)
% hatched chicks which fledged	91%	80% (2017=95%, 2018=87%)	74% (2017=82%, 2018=89%)
Overall nesting success (% chicks fledging from all eggs laid)	88% (2017=100%, 2018=60%)	67% (2017=95%, 2018=86%)	67% (2017=65%, 2018=69%)

Variation in the success of different schemes is noticeable. The longer-term trends will be interesting as these schemes continue over the years. The number of clutches at the Newcastle scheme was lower than in 2017 and 2018, but this site and Craig Sychtyn recorded their highest clutch sizes in the last three years. Hatching success was higher at Newcastle but down at Eardington on previous years and fledging success was lower at both these sites.

The 2019 breeding season started with birds inspecting nest boxes at Norbroom Marsh in early February, but the first nest-building behaviour was not observed until 29 Mar at Wall Farm. A pair at Market Drayton was visiting a nest box in a garden on 3 Apr, a female with an incubation patch was caught during ringing operations at Shavington Park on 18 Apr and the first recorded eggs were at Moelydd on 4 May. Adults visited nest sites with food from 10 May at Cantlopgrove, with others presumably feeding chicks in May at Tibberton, Annscroft, Haughmond Hill, Preston Montford, Lee Brockhurst, Pentre and Whitcliffe Wood. Hatched chicks were found from 16 May at Newcastle-on-Clun, but pairs were still on eggs at Hall-of-the-Forest on the same date. Fledging was reported first from Frankwell on 1 Jun, perhaps not surprisingly a lowland site, but also from Bridges on the same date and thereafter at many sites in the first week of June.

Fledged Blue Tits formed significant proportions of mixed species flocks throughout the County in late June and July, and 30 were in one such flock at Bishops Castle on 20 Jul with 25 at Swancote in late June.

Reference

Burgess M.D., Smith, K.W., Evans K.L., Leech D., Pearce-Higgins J.W., Branston C.J., Briggs K., Clark J.R., du Feu C.R., Lewthwaite K., Nager R.G., Sheldon B.C., Smith J.A., Whytock R.C., Willis S.G., Phillimore A.B. 2018. *Tritrophic phenological match–mismatch in space and time*, Nature Ecology & Evolution, 2, 970–975.

The following birds were among the oldest reported in 2019:

D470567

Ringed Adult	25-01-2014	Walcot, near Wellington: 52°42'N 2°36'W (Telford and Wrekin)
Caught by ringer	21-10-2019	Walcot: 52°42'N 2°36'W (Telford and Wrekin) 0km 5y 8m 26d

D618890

Ringed First-year Female	23-08-2014	Shavington Park, Calverhall: 52°56'N 2°33'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer on three further dates:		Shavington Park, Calverhall: 52°56'N 2°33'W (Shropshire) 0km 0y 4m 6d

Until:-

Caught by ringer	30-11-2019	Shavington Park, Calverhall: 52°56'N 2°32'W (Shropshire) 1km 5y 3m 7d
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The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

ATH9753

Ringed Juvenile	13-08-2019	Attingham Park: 52°41'N 2°40'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	02-10-2019	Moorsholm Mill: 54°31'N 0°56'W (Redcar and Cleveland) 234km NNE 0y 1m 19d

AXB8821

Ringed Nestling	19-05-2018	Queen Mary Reservoir: 51°25'N 0°28'W (Surrey)
Caught by ringer	03-08-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 177km NW 1y 2m 15d

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Shropshire status:	Very common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 97% of plots; 314 birds recorded, an average of 5.61 birds per occupied plot and 5.41 birds per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	1.13, annual change +0.02 (<i>2018 Index = 1.11</i>)
Author:	GT

Another increase in the number of records with over 1,500 reports for the whole year. The continuing mild winters are probably having an impact, with high winter-survival rates. The long-term trend in numbers for the species has been one of steady increase since the 1960s, although nationally a slight dip in recent years has been apparent.

Evidence of earlier breeding behaviour was again found in 2019 with much territorial behaviour and male song in January and February. A nest box was inspected by a bird at Apley Pool as early as 2 Jan and song was reported from Ironbridge and Shifnal Sewage Works in the same month and from Annscroft, The Cliffe, Whitcliffe Wood, Earls Hill and Shrewsbury in February. The first nest-building behaviour was noted at Mary Knoll Valley on 13 Apr when an adult was bringing in moss to a nest site. Sitting birds were found at Llanymynech on 22 Apr and at Brown Moss on 26th.

The BTO's Nest Recording Scheme has found that the Great Tit has advanced its average laying dates across the country by nine days since the 1970s, so the species is certainly responding to the earlier springs. First young in nests were reported from 3 May at Trefonen, with birds nesting in a hollow elder, and next day at Moelydd. By 11 May chicks were found at Pontesbury and by 16th at Newcastle-on-Clun, with much evidence in subsequent days of active nests with adults feeding young at nest sites. An exceptionally early record of fledged young was reported from Rea Brook, Shrewsbury on 6 May with others at Bridgnorth on 18th. The bulk of fledging seemed to occur from 24th with birds at a wide variety of locations up and down the County.

The table below shows the nest record results from three nest box schemes. An increase in the number of breeding pairs was recorded in 2019, with the Newcastle scheme recording an increase in average clutch size per pair. Breeding success, though, was variable; high again at the Eardington scheme but lower at both Craig Sychtyn and Newcastle.

Scheme	Craig Sychtyn	Eardington NR	Newcastle-on-Clun (R. Clun and Folly Brook)
Great Tit clutches	5 (2017=4, 2018=5)	7 (2017=3, 2018=6)	56 (2017=39, 2018=47)
No. Eggs	35 (2017=24, 2018=31)	49 (2017=23, 2018=42)	409 (2017=228, 2018=272)
Av. Clutch Size	7.0 (2017=6.00, 2018=6.2)	7.0 (2017=7.7, 2018=7.0)	7.3 (2017=5.9, 2018=5.8)
No. chicks hatching	31	46 (2017=22, 2018=39)	359 (2017=166, 2018=201)
%age of eggs which hatched	89%	94% (2017=96%, 2018=93%)	88% (2017=73%, 2018=74%)
No. Chicks fledging	18 (2017=21, 2018=26)	41 (2017=19, 2018=32)	273 (2017=152, 2018=173)
% hatched chicks which fledged	58%	89% (2017=86%, 2018=82%)	76% (2017=92%, 2018=86%)
Overall nesting success (% chicks fledging from all eggs laid)	51% (2017=88%, 2018=84%)	84% (2017=83%, 2018=76%)	68% (2017=67%, 2018=64%)

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 69% of plots; 167 birds recorded, an average of 4.18 per occupied plot and 2.88 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index: 0.98, annual change -0.07 (2018 Index = 1.05)
Author: GB

A total of 516 records was received, up substantially from 320 in 2018, with Skylark recorded in every month of the year.

There were no exceptionally large flocks in the first winter period but 25 were in a stubble field at Buildwas on 8 Jan ‘feeding on abundant meadow grass’, four were in ‘weedy stubble’ at Priors Hatton on 10 Jan, 54 near Prees on 17 Jan, over 50 at Meaton Lane on 23 Jan, 12 at Hayes Farm on 17 Feb, seven on stubble at The

Rodway on 20 Feb and 50 at Sleaford Airfield on 26 Feb.

Territorial song was first noted as early as 7 Feb at Buildwas where one male gave snatches of song. This was subsequently followed by seven males in song in autumn sown crops and stubble at Arlescott on 12 Feb, two at Oakeley Mynd on 15 Feb, 10 males with some giving sustained song-flights on the Long Mynd on 18 Feb, one at Shawbury on 19 Feb, 3 displaying at Masons Bank on 21 Feb and a particularly high population of over 40 around Edgmond on 24 Feb, 'mainly singing, no flocks'. Territorial males were increasingly noted throughout March with seven in song in autumn sown cereal at Sutton Maddock on 5th, 20 at Sleaf Airfield on 15th and 22 at Buildwas on 18th. Here, the River Severn was in flood over the surrounding fields 'causing Skylark to congregate at the water's edge' with some males continuing to display over flooded ground where their territories had been located. Eleven were noted at Stiperstones NNR on 27 Mar, 15 at Stapeley Hill on 28 Mar, 35 at Westcott Hill on 7 Apr, 14 at Uppington on 21 Apr, 10 at Baggy Moor on 2 May, 10 Isombridge on 16 May, 15 between Ashes Hollow and Callow Hollow on the Long Mynd on 20 May, and 16 at Childs Ercall Airfield on 21 May.

Evidence of confirmed breeding was limited to 18 Skylark, including adults carrying food, at Childs Ercall Airfield on 9 Jun and 15, again with adults carrying food, at Childs Ercall on 1 Jul. Song was recorded at four sites in July with the last noted at Bridges on 7 Jul. Records of Skylark typically declined in late summer with only eight and 11 records for August and September respectively, but more than usual for this period.

Movements south from Scotland and northern and western Europe augments resident Skylark numbers in autumn. The build-up of wintering flocks began with 23 feeding in stubble at Buildwas and four with a 'hint of song' at Overton on 30 Sep. Twelve were at Cantlopgrove on 4 Oct. Twenty nine at Arlescott on 8 Oct were in stubble and recently tilled fields whilst 66 at Eyton-on-Severn were in cereal stubble, and 20 here in separate groups flew over in a north-westerly direction on 14 Oct. Six were recorded at night with a thermal imaging camera at Cockshutt on 15 Oct, with 11 at Wall Farm and 12 Wall Farm Marsh also on 15th. 12 were at Ticklerton on 16 Oct; three heard passing over Aston on Clun and at least seven flying in from the north at Evens on 17 Oct. At Uppington on 22 Oct, 61 birds were in cereal stubble with 14 flying over in four groups in a southerly direction. Cereal stubble was used by 15 at Buildwas on 27 Oct and by 12 at Kemberton on 28th with a further four here overflying. Approximately 100 had built up at Ticklerton by 30 Oct, whilst 27 at Cantlopgrove on 25 Nov increased to 50 there on 2 Dec rising to 130 on 15th. Other flocks were of 25 at Rednal on 8 Nov; 30 at Wall Farm on 9 Nov, 18 in maize stubble at Dodecote on 22 Nov and 28 at Meaton Lane on 21 Dec. The largest flock was

saved for the penultimate day of the year when 132 were noted in cereal stubble at Arlescott 30 Dec.

Red-listed, Skylark's decline in the UK is largely attributable to agricultural intensification and changing farm practices. Management options to help them are now incorporated in agri-environment schemes but any increase in the breeding population is probably dependent on a high level of take-up across a wide geographical spread. Options to promote their conservation at a local level are limited but recorders could aim to identify and regularly monitor sites that support dense breeding and wintering populations and work to ensure that they are protected and enhanced. More records of autumn passage would be of interest.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Shropshire status: Fairly common summer visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 5% of plots; 14 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: TW

'River Severn finally free of flood warnings' was the headline in the *Shropshire Star* on 18 Jun, following persistently heavy rainfall in east Wales and Shropshire during the period 10–12 Jun. Over the month as a whole, more than twice as much rain fell as the average for the years 1981–2010. On 14 Jun, having walked the Severn between Leighton and Buildwas, one observer noted that 'flooding will have decimated the large breeding colonies', and on 18th another watched birds 'looking for new holes in the bank of the Severn between Atcham and Wroxeter following the recent floods'. The flooding came at a critical time when most eggs will have hatched but before young will have fledged. Many pairs are likely to have tried again, particularly as in a normal season second broods are generally attempted, but the riverine colonies will have taken a significant hit. It is possible, however, that being well up the catchment (in this case of the River Teme) the birds seen entering nest holes on the River West Onny at More on 9 Apr, may have fared better. Those nesting in sand quarries should have done so too, although the colony of 25 or so nests at Beckjay Lane, near Clungunford was not reoccupied this year, seemingly because of sand-falls; subsequently a building was erected there, blocking off the site.

Back-tracking to the start of the season, the first sightings were of a single bird at Wood Lane on 16 Mar (plumb on the average first date over the last 30 years), 22 at

The Mere, Ellesmere, on 21st and 80 there on 27 Mar, when 20 were at VP. Counts thereafter in excess of 100 were of 150 at White Mere on 31 Mar, 450 at The Mere on 2 Apr, 250 at Priorslee Lake on 3 Apr and, the following day, in heavy sleet, when snow was lying on high ground, 1,200 at The Mere and 500 at White Mere. The next pulse of counts in excess of 100 started on 26 Apr with 250 at Priorslee Lake; the following day there were 600 at The Mere and 250 at White Mere where there were 600 and 450 respectively on 8 May. At the end of the season the only notable counts were of 60 at Bromfield on 4 Aug and 100 at VP on 31st. Records trickled on until 11 Sep when 50 were seen over Aston on Clun, followed by a long gap until a record from Fitz on 1 Oct and the last sighting, of five at Polemere, near Yockleton, on 4th, a late date compared with the 30-year average of 17 Sep.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Shropshire status:	Common summer visitor
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 83% of plots; 334 birds recorded, an average of 6.96 per occupied plot and 5.76 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	0.80, annual change -0.06 (2018 Index = 0.86)
Author:	TW

‘One Swallow does not a summer make’ is especially true if the sighting is on 22 Feb, when one was spotted at Atcham. It is a remarkable date, much in advance of the previous earliest dates of 12 March 1993 and 13 March 1913. Even the singles at The Mere, Ellesmere, and White Mere on 21 Mar were precocious, bearing in mind the average date of 27 Mar for first sightings over the last 30 years. Other early records came from The Mere (22nd), Polemere near Yockleton (23rd), Lower Frankton (24th) and White Mere (25th), but these were followed by a gap until 31 Mar from when records became daily.

Thirty were seen at Whitemere on 27 Apr, and the only higher early spring counts were of 50 at the same location on 8 May, when 150 were at The Mere. The highest tally in June was of 24 at Rowton on 16th; in July it was 70 near Hampton Loade on 17th; in August it was 90 at Tibberton on 26th; and in September it was 200 flying south in small groups over Telford on 4th, and 200 at Claverley on 8th.

These last counts may seem substantial until they are set beside the thousands, indeed sometimes tens of thousands, that visited roosts in the County up to the 1980s.

Young were still being fed at Leasowes and Hayes, near Walford, on 30 Sep, and this was followed by 17 records on 15 dates in October, including 30 at Polemere on 4th and 34 at Cantlopgrove near Condoover on 6th. The last two sightings were of single birds, the penultimate on 16 Oct, and the last on 29th, later than the 30-year average latest date of 19 Oct.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Shropshire status:	Common summer visitor
National conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 45% of plots; 163 birds recorded, an average of 6.27 per occupied plot and 2.81 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	0.84, annual change -0.38 (<i>2018 Index = 1.22</i>)
Author:	TW

There can be few easier birds to monitor than House Martins – our common, conspicuous and confiding cohabiters. The nest is obvious, and whilst the eggs remain hidden, the young leave ample evidence of their presence. Yet there is considerable uncertainty as to how well House Martins are faring, leading to as yet unpublished investigations by the BTO. Such uncertainty leads to concern, occasioned in part by the demise of some of the largest colonies, including in our own County, as detailed in BOS. Is another one now in decline? The report for 2017 recorded 59 nests on the Buckatree Hall Hotel, close by The Ercall, on 31 Jul, and in 2018 ‘at least 50’ was the tally on 9 Aug, but this year the figure was just 25 on 3 Aug. Bird-watcher patrons are urged to provide counts in future years.

One at Whixall on 2 Apr was the first sighting, close to the 1 Apr average over the last 30 years, and from then on sightings were reported virtually daily. Reports of 50 or more in April and May came from Priorslee Lake, where there were 250 on 26 Apr, The Mere, Ellesmere, 50 on 8 May, and VP, 100 on 9 May.

Sixty at VP on 4 Jun was the highest count for that month and in July the maximum was 100 at Kinlet, near the Wyre Forest, on 28th. Thereafter, counts of 100 were made at Claverley on 7 Aug, Whixall on 31st and Meadowley, near Bridgnorth, on 8 Sep, exceeded only by 120 at The Mere on 4th and 200 at Claverley on 8th.

Sightings continued almost daily up until 6 Oct, when 10 were at Meaton Lane in the Wyre Forest; these were followed by the last of the year, two at Noneley, near Wem, on 10th, a few days earlier than 14 Oct which is the 30-year average for the date of last sightings.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Shropshire status: Rare, non-breeding resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MPS

This species now seems to have a firmer if slender foothold in the County. The majority of records were from VP, where at least one bird was present throughout (*J Morris, JP Martin, C Williamson, JA Almond, GE Holmes, S Twigger*). Records were again received from Norbroom Marsh, on the outskirts of Newport, in April and May (*MG Grant, S Cox*). Elsewhere, one was present for several weeks at Chelmarsh Scrape, being caught and ringed on 10 Nov (*L Munday*). Other singles were found at Shavington Park on 16 Feb (*G Thomas*) and at Ironbridge on 22 Apr (*R Baggott*). Still no confirmation of breeding, though, at any of these sites, despite its presence just a kilometre across the County boundary at Aqualate Mere.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Recorded in 53% of plots; 87 birds recorded, an average of 2.81 per occupied plot and 1.50 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index: 0.78, annual change +0.19 (2018 Index = 0.59)
Author: JG

Seven hundred and fifty-one records from 115 observers from 177 tetrads across the County. Records are slightly up from last year.

This is one of the earliest breeding passerine species in the UK and birds are often easy to see carrying nesting material from late February through March. Their distinctive domed nests can take nearly a month to complete and are lined with hundreds of feathers. They can nest in a wide variety of places (*J Groom, pers. obs.*) but the most popular are usually thick, thorny bushes, often gorse or bramble. They are often quite vocal at this time, and this can be reflected in the distribution of records, with 60% of them coming between January and May, and 26% coming from March and April alone.

Confirmed breeding records were reported from 38 locations.

Early nest building was reported between 21 and 27 Feb from Rednal, Haughmond Hill, Annscroft and The Cliffe. The first nest with eggs was reported at Aston Locks on the 19 Mar, on the same date as another was reported to be just starting to build at the same site! Presumably, this was the same nest reported with young by the same observer on the 12 Apr. It was then reported to have fledged on 25 Apr. A high site count of seven nests was reported from Haughmond Hill on the 30 Mar; four in Gorse, two in Honeysuckle and one in Bramble, ranging from 0.5 metres off the ground to well over 2.5 metres.

Numerous records of family parties containing fledged young were made throughout May and June with a high count of 24 at Cross Lane Head on 16 Jun. This was probably made up of several, possibly related, family groups. Flocking continues throughout the year and into winter where they may join mixed flocks with other tit species. The highest count of the year was of 29 birds on 16 Oct at Whixall.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Shropshire status:	Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 3% of plots, three birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	MPS

The first record of the year involved two singing males at Mortimer Forest on 21 Apr. The final sighting was also from the Mortimer Forest area on 23 Jul. The highest numbers were seen in the Wyre Forest, with a maximum of eight singing males along the Dowles Brook on 12 May. Birds were also noted from several sites in the Clun area, notably this included Bury Ditches, where no birds were reported last year, and Clunton Coppice. An interesting set of records was submitted from a recorder in the Mortimer Forest, with an adult noted carrying food on several occasions in June. Signs from other locations were not that promising, on Whitcliffe Common there was only one report, noting that most of the usual territories were unoccupied, no records at all were received from the Ercall and there was only a maximum of two birds recorded on The Wrekin. There was only one report from the Oswestry area, at Pentre.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Shropshire status: Very rare vagrant
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MPS

For the second consecutive year, a spring record was received for this species. This time it was an excellent find of a bird in song in the Wyre Forest on 21 Apr (*C Reed*). There were also two records in the later part of the year, one at VP on 6 Oct (*D Chapman, JP Martin*) was a typical date. The latest County record so far was found at Shifnal Sewage Works on 29 Dec (*P Hopwood*).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Shropshire status: Common summer visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 60% of plots; 101 birds recorded, an average of 2.89 per occupied plot and 1.74 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 0.50, annual change +0.19 (2018 Index = 0.31)
Author: MPS

This species arrived in the County at the beginning of April, with the first record at Telford on 1st. The 378 records received this year indicate that the species was much more widely encountered. As usual, the vast majority of records were away from the north-east corner, where this seems to be a genuinely scarce species. The highest numbers were reported in the Wyre Forest, where an estimated 40 individuals on 28 Apr included 26 singing males. Other notable counts were of 25 at Bridges on 30 Apr and 20 at the Lawley on 21 Apr. Interestingly, there was only one record from the Stiperstones, concerning nine singing males, whilst most of the records from Whixall Moss were of singletons. These two sites are usually strongholds for this species. Breeding records were received from 12 sites in the Shropshire Hills and Oswestry Uplands. The last record of the year was at Caer Caradoc on 25 Sep.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

KPD617

Ringed Juvenile	08-07-2018	Nightingale Wood: 51°35'N 1°41'W (Swindon)
Caught by ringer	21-07-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 110km NNW 1y 0m 13d

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Shropshire status: Very common summer visitor, scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 97% of plots; 289 birds recorded, an average of 5.16 per occupied plot and 4.98 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 2.22, annual change +0.32 (2018 Index = 1.90)
Author: MPS

Records in the first winter period were received from Telford, Ellesmere, and Brompton. There was a notable upturn in records from 27 Feb, with three singing males noted at Haughmond Hill on this date. Birds were subsequently noted from a large number of sites across the County. The award for the highest count goes to a remarkable 35 logged at Maesbury Marsh on 2 Apr, although double-figure counts were also received from many other sites. Breeding was confirmed from multiple locations, including Aston Locks, Mortimer Forest, VP, Lyth Hill and the Rea Brook in Shrewsbury. A report of nine recently fledged young at Haughmond Hill on 18 May was particularly interesting. At the end of the year there were reports from VP, Edgebolton and Shifnal Sewage Works in December.

IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Shropshire status: Vagrant

Records now accepted by BBRC:-

2017:

A male of this species, which was photographed, and sound recorded at Granville Country Park from

3 to 7 Apr 2017 (*A Godson*) has now been accepted and published by the BBRC (BB 112, October 2019). It is presumed to be the same individual as recorded at that location in April 2016.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Shropshire status: Uncommon summer visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 7% of plots; 7 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: MPS

This species was noted from 22 sites this year. Records were received from most of the popular wetland sites, with VP (which held the first on 16 Apr) and Whixall Moss claiming the majority of the records. Yet again, there were no records from Wood Lane. The only sighting where breeding was confirmed was Queens Head. Somewhat surprisingly, there was no confirmed breeding at VP, despite the large number of observations. The last record of the year was at Attingham Park on 16 Sep.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

ARH9731

Ringed Adult Male	07-07-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	03-08-2019	Squire's Down: 50°58'N 2°21'W (Dorset) 168km S 0y 0m 27d

The following birds were found abroad and reported in 2019 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

ABC0557

Ringed First-year	31-08-2018	Attingham Park: 52°41'N 2°40'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	08-08-2019	Noyant, Soulaire-Et-Bourg: 47°33'N 0°31'W (Maine-et-Loire) France 591km SSE 0y 11m 8d

ARH9890

Ringed First-year	18-08-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	02-09-2019	Tour Aux Moutons, Donges: 47°19'N 2°4'W (Loire-Atlantique) France 574km S 0y 0m 15d

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Shropshire status: Uncommon summer visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: MPS

The first arrival was at VP on 18 Apr. Records were received from 24 locations, with VP providing the bulk of sightings. Other sightings were from traditional sites such as Chelmarsh Scrape, Aston Locks and Sambrook Mill, as well as suitable habitat on wetlands or along the Severn. Numbers peaked at seven singing birds at Aston Locks on 11 May. Other sites recording counts of at least five included Norbroom Marsh, Little Wenlock, Shifnal Sewage Works and Ruyton XI Towns Sewage Works.

Though there was evidence of breeding at many of these sites and at Crosemere, it was proven only at Ruyton XI Towns where juveniles were caught on 6 Aug. Females with incubation patches were caught for ringing on several dates at Chelmarsh.

The last record of the year was on 13 Sep at Chelmarsh Scrape.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2019:

L123225

Ringed Juvenile	11-07-2010	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	10-07-2011	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 0km 0y 11m 29d
Caught by ringer on four further dates		Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire)

Until:-

Caught by ringer	12-05-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 0km 8y 10m 1d
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GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Shropshire status: Scarce summer visitor
 National conservation status: Red List
 Shropshire conservation status: Red List
 Author: MPS

A slightly better year for this species, with records of reeling males received from five sites. The first was at Lydbury North on 13 May, singles were noted at The Stiperstones on 22 and 25 May, one was at Whixall canal floods on 24 May, one was in Ashes Hollow on the Long Mynd on 9 Jun and, finally, a singing male was at Maesbury Marsh on 24 Jul. That only one of the records was from more than one day makes it difficult to draw conclusions on whether the species is settling at any locations.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Shropshire status:	Very common summer visitor; uncommon in winter
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 90% of plots, 249 birds recorded, an average of 4.79 per occupied plot and 4.29 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	2.94, annual change +0.44 (2018 Index = 2.50)
Author:	MPS

There was a typical smattering of records from gardens in January and February. The first singing bird was logged on the slightly early date of 27 Feb in Shrewsbury, although it was only from the end of March that an upturn in records was seen. As usual for this species, it was widely reported from suitable locations throughout. Notable records included 34 ringed at Pam's Pools, near Underton, on 12 Jul, whilst there was an estimate of 40 birds present in the Wyre Forest on 28 Apr. Haughmond Hill was another location where they were noted in number, with 23 present on 18 May, including adults feeding young. Breeding was also recorded at Whitcliffe, Crudgington Moor, VP, The Wrekin, Rhos-y-Llan Wood, the Rea Brook in Shrewsbury, Shavington Park and Meaton Lane. There were several reports at the back of the year, with windfall apples and the berries of Rowan and *Pyracantha* proving attractive.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Shropshire status:	Common summer visitor
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 41% of plots; 42 birds recorded, an average of 1.75 per occupied plot and 0.72 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	MPS

The first record was of a bird at the Lawley on 12 Apr. There were more reports than in previous years, with birds noted from more than 50 locations. Most records were received from the Wyre Forest, where a maximum of 12 was noted on 1 May. Most records from other sites involved one or two birds, although counts of four or five were noted from some sites, including Haughmond Hill, Sowdley Wood and Earls Hill. Breeding was noted at Brompton, Lyth Hill and Queen's Head. The last record of the year was from Chelmarsh Scrape on 8 September.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 28% of plots; 23 birds recorded, an average of 1.44 per occupied plot and 0.40 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data.
Author:	MPS

Records received from more than 40 sites. The first record was on a typical date of 17 Apr, at Trefonen, near Oswestry. Most records involved singing male birds, with four at Wall Farm on 22 Apr representing the peak count. There was one breeding record, with an adult feeding young in a nest within a dense hedge at Bicton, near Clun, on 23 May. Another notable record was of a passage bird in a garden at Cantlopgrove. The last record of the year was at Cross Lane Head, near Bridgnorth, on 23 Sep.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 62% of plots; 87 birds recorded, an average of 2.42 per occupied plot and 1.50 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	1.14, annual change +0.08 (2018 Index = 1.06)
Author:	MPS

The first report was from Granville on 18 Apr, followed by a typical sequence of records of this popular species. There were 316 records from across the County, with the species seeming to remain common in scrubby habitats wherever they occur. Breeding records were received from the Lawley, Wall Farm, Mortimer Forest, Chelmarsh Scape, Old Oswestry, and Overton. The last record of the year was at VP on 13 Sep.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia communis*

Shropshire status: Very rare vagrant
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: MPS

An individual of this species was discovered at the Shooting Box on the Long Mynd on 24 Mar, remaining until 29th (*M Stokes, JA Almond*).

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Shropshire status: Scarce visitor, has bred
National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: TW

Last year's report asked whether the southern half of hectad SO 38 was particularly sought out by Firecrests. This followed the first County breeding record there in 2012 and singing birds heard elsewhere in this area in 2016 and 2018, a period during which there was only one other record at the same season, in the Wyre Forest, in 2017. The net has now to be spread a little more widely, as the singing male heard on 30 May was in the northern half of this 10km square, in Plowden Woods (*P Jennings*).

The only other record was of a first calendar-year male mist-netted at Shavington Park, near Market Drayton, on 30 Nov (*RJ Harris, G Thomas*). November is second only to March in terms of numbers of records. These two birds bring to 73 the number now recorded in the County, of which 61 since 1971.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Shropshire status: Common resident and winter visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 21% of plots; 27 birds recorded, an average of 2.25 birds per occupied plot and 0.47 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: AJA

After a decline in records in the previous SBR, perhaps a result of mortality due to the February–March cold spell, 2019 saw a recovery to 371 records, up 60% over the previous year. Such fluctuations are characteristic of this species, the population of which can plummet during harsh winters but recovers quickly because of large clutch sizes and serial nesting habits. Goldcrest range covers the whole County with no evidence of clustering or scarcity in any areas. Spring showed the greatest frequency of records (40%) and autumn the lowest (13%).

Observations were overwhelmingly of single birds, with only 6% of records having counts of five or more. The largest counts (over 10) were in the Wyre Forest (about 35 on 28 Apr), Quatt (over 20 on 3 Jan) and Shifnal Sewage Works (about 15 on 13 Oct).

Evidence of confirmed breeding was scarce and was limited to a nest with eggs at Colemere on 29 Jun and four records of recently fledged birds at various locations between 5 Jun and 18 Sep.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Shropshire status:	Common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 50% of plots; 50 birds recorded, an average of 1.72 birds per occupied plot and 0.86 birds per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	JPM

Nuthatches rapidly increased in abundance and expanded their range north in the UK from the mid-1970s, although numbers have been stable over the last five years. The increase was driven by greater nesting productivity, although the ecological causes of this are not fully understood.

This is a well-reported species with 762 records received, 176 of them just noting presence (23%). This compares with 740 records in 2018 and 496 in 2017, probably reflecting overall levels of reporting rather than Nuthatch abundance.

Song was noted from 6 Apr at Shavington Park. Confirmed breeding comprised recently fledged juveniles at VP on 31 May and then at five other sites between 2 and 22 Jun as follows: Pentiken and near The Gogin, both Newcastle-on-Clun; Corra Common and Shavington Park, both Calverhall; and Rea Brook Valley, Shrewsbury.

Records of probable or possible breeding came from 12 other widely scattered sites between April and August.

Eleven in the Wyre Forest on 28 Apr was the highest count of the year and other records of five or more were as follows: Postensplain, Wyre (six) in February and December; Clunton (five) in February; Shavington Park (nine caught for ringing on 2 Mar, seven there in April, five in June and November); five at Aston on Clun in March, August and September; Llangollen Canal south of Saint Martins in March (six); near The Gogin, Newcastle-on-Clun (eight) and Rea Brook Valley LNR (at least five) in June; Heath, Clee St Margaret in August (five) and Trefonen in December (five).

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 33% of plots; 25 birds recorded, an average of 1.32 birds per occupied plot and 0.43 birds per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	JPM

Nationally, the Treecreeper population has been roughly stable since about 1980 after a peak in the mid-1970s. Treecreeper numbers and survival rates are reduced by wet winter weather so the 2020 picture will be very interesting. Two hundred and thirty records represents a significant increase from 195 in 2018 and 192 in 2017 but might at least partly reflect overall levels of reporting rather than Treecreeper numbers. Fifty-one of the records (22%) only reported presence.

There were widespread reports of breeding activity. Song was first noted on 27 Feb near Chirk and at Bomere Heath, and last reported on 22 May at Er call Wood. Nest building was observed at Haughmond Hill on 16 Mar (in a crevice in a large root plate) and 30 Mar (under bark on large dead bough on a mature oak). At Meaton Lane a nest with eggs was found on 12 May; it contained young only a week later and finally six, including fledged young, were seen here on 2 Jun. A pair was watched feeding feathered young in a nest in a fissure in an Alder at Whitcott Keysett on 25 May.. Breeding was also proved at: Aston Locks; Hill Crest, Lee Brockhurst; near Ludlow; New Works, Telford; Shavington Park, Calverhall; and Wall Farm.

The largest count came from the Shropshire part of the Wyre Forest where eight were counted on 28 Apr. There were also five at Postensplain, Wyre Forest on 17 Feb and

five along Dowles Brook on 7 May. Other reports of five and six involved family groups with recently fledged young at three of the sites listed above where breeding was proven. Most reports apparently come from sites with woodland or good cover of mature trees with few from towns and gardens, for example one at Market Drayton on 6 Jan and one in Shrewsbury on 8 Jan. Rea Brook Valley LNR in Shrewsbury produced six records between April and October. At well-watched VP, which lacks mature woodland, the species is rather scarce with single individuals recorded on 13 Jan; 21 and 22 Sept; 2 and 3 Nov and 2 Dec.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Shropshire status:	Very common winter visitor, common resident
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 45% of plots; 117 birds recorded, an average of 4.50 per occupied plot and 2.02 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	0.22, annual change -0.12 (2018 Index = 0.34)
Author:	MF

Most of the 588 observations were made in the north of the County, with fewer than 90 coming from the south. Several observers took note of habitat and feeding behaviour, the results vividly illustrating the Starling's eclectic tastes. Upland sheep pasture was well represented, but also stubble, sheep feeding troughs, silage shared with cattle, freshly manured arable fields, horse paddocks, wet pasture and flooded fields, of which there was no shortage in the autumn. One observer made an explicit connection between the November rainfall and 'unprecedented' numbers of Starlings in the lower Clun valley, counting flocks of up to 500 gathering to feed at the edges of the floods.

The gregarious Starling mixes freely with other species as well as its own. It was found feeding in association with Lapwing, Golden Plover, Fieldfare, Redwing and Stock Dove as well as with corvids.

Only one flock in the first winter period reached four figures, a restless 3,000 in late February giving the impression they were preparing to migrate. In the latter part of the year, all high counts were made at roosts. The largest was 40,000 at Whixall Moss in December, after 25,000 at the same site a month earlier. An estimated 15,000 roosted at Chelmarsh on 1 Dec.

There was welcome evidence of successful breeding, mostly from urban areas. Starlings raised broods, including second ones, under several roofs in Shrewsbury

and Newport, but also in tree holes in more rural areas. A number of flocks reported in late summer, including one of 150+ at Polemere, were described as containing a majority of juveniles, in one case ‘the vast majority’.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2019:

LA52207

Ringed Adult	27-03-2011	Mossley, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	06-07-2011	Mossley, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire) 0km 0y 3m 9d
Caught by ringer	07-02-2016	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire) 0km 4y 10m 11d
Caught by ringer	01-07-2019	Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire) 0km 8y 3m 4d

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Shropshire status: Scarce passage migrant, has bred
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: LS

All except eight of the 42 records came from Titterstone Clee, and all except two were in the spring passage period.

However, the earliest two records, both of singles in March, came from Ratlinghope on 21st and Stiperstones on 23rd. The first from Clee Hill was of two birds a day later, followed by four males and three females below the buildings below the car park on 25th, four on 26th, and three on 27th and 28th, the latter including a female, all in March. In April there were two males on 6th, four individuals on 7th, five on 11th, three on 12th, two on 13th and 14th, three on 17th, four on 18th, two on 21st, and, the last spring passage record, one on 25th. There were several other records of smaller numbers on some of these dates.

Elsewhere, spring passage records came from Long Mynd on 31 Mar, and 1st and 12th Apr (two on the last date), Stiperstones on 18 Apr (one, possibly two, pairs), Moelydd on 21 Apr. and a female at Wall Farm (Kynnersley) on the same date.

There was no evidence of breeding, and there hasn't been any since 2003. Around a dozen pairs bred regularly on the Long Mynd until 1999.

The two autumn passage records were both from below the old quarry on Titterstone Clee in October, eight on 16th and, the final record for the year, a male and first year female on 19th.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
National conservation status: Green list
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 100% of plots; 781 birds recorded, an average of 13.47 birds per occupied plot and surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index: 1.36, annual change -0.14 (2018 Index = 1.50)
Author: RR

A total of 1,838 records of Blackbird sightings were submitted for 2019, nearly 300 more than the previous year. It remained the most reported bird in the County, though Woodpigeon reports were only three fewer. The highest monthly report was in May (237) dropping off to a low of 69 in September. The greatest number of birds seen at any one time was at Trefonen (SJ22N) on 2 Jan (53).

Breeding: although nest building was observed as early as 4 Mar, the first report of confirmed breeding was on 16 Mar at Haughmond Hill. This is almost a month earlier than the first such report in 2018. The latest report of confirmed breeding was the observation of fledglings at Clee St Margaret on 24 Aug (c/f 12 Aug in 2018).

After the low number of reports in September, numbers increased again in the last quarter with the arrival of European migrants. The wet weather at the end of the year does not seem to have affected this usual trend. In December 117 reports were submitted, with a single report of 48 birds seen at Trefonen on 22nd.

The following birds were among the oldest reported in 2019:

LC16512

Ringed First-year Male	11-03-2010	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	27-12-2018	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 0km 8y 9m 16d
Caught by ringer	07-07-2019	Chelmarsh Reservoir, near Bridgnorth: 52°28'N 2°23'W (Shropshire) 0km 9y 3m 26d

LC88793

Ringed Adult Male	02-12-2012	Wicken Green Village: 52°50'N 0°43'E (Norfolk)
Caught by ringer	08-04-2013	Wicken Green Village: 52°50'N 0°43'E (Norfolk) 0km 0y 4m 6d
Caught by ringer	11-02-2019	Shavington Park, Calverhall: 52°56'N 2°32'W (Shropshire) 220km W 6y 2m 9d

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Shropshire status: Common passage migrant and winter visitor
National conservation status: Red List, Schedule 1, RBBP
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Shropshire BBS: Present in 3% of plots; 87 birds recorded, an average of 43.5 birds per occupied plot and 1.5 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: RR

In total, 366 reports of Fieldfare were made during the year, from 155 locations. Reporting falls into two clusters: the period from Jan–Apr being the second half of the 2019–20 season and Oct–Dec being the first half of the 2020–21 season. The latest sighting was on 20 Apr, a flock of around 100 near Hall of the Forest. The first arrival in the autumn was a group of nine birds seen at Whixall on 3 Oct. The table below shows that there has been remarkable consistency in the arrival dates of Fieldfare over the past 7 years.

First arrival dates for Fieldfare	
2019	03/10
2018	03/10
2017	04/10
2016	08/10
2015	11/10
2014	07/10
2013	11/10
2012	09/10

Numerous reports of flocks in excess of 100 were reported, the largest count being 500 seen at Condover in late January and again in early February. Fieldfare are frequently reported as part of a mixed flock with Redwing and Starling, hence many of the counts submitted were approximations. The largest count for the year was a flock in excess of 1,200 birds, reported from Ellerdine.

As expected, Fieldfare were frequently seen where there were wild berries such as Hawthorn and Yew or fallen apples in domestic locations. These food supplies were generally exhausted by the end of November and the birds reverted to feeding on stubble and open pasture.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Shropshire status: Common winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, RBBP, Red list
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: RR

In total, 393 reports of Redwing were submitted in 2019, slightly fewer than for the previous year. They were observed in 167 locations across the County. No birds were seen between 12 Apr, when an individual was seen at Rea Brook Valley, Shrewsbury and 11 Sep when a solitary bird was observed at Whitchurch. This sighting was almost a full month earlier than the first sighting in 2018 but as the table below shows, until 2019 there has been remarkable consistency in arrival dates. The next sighting was not until 30 Sep, more in line with the usual arrival date.

First arrival dates for Redwing	
2019	11/09
2018	07/10
2017	04/10
2016	05/10
2015	07/10
2014	13/10
2013	10/10
2012	02/10

Many of the reports submitted through the year were approximations as Redwing had been observed as parts of mixed flocks with Fieldfare and Starling. The largest count in the early part of the year was of 218 birds seen at Longford, Market Drayton, on 3 Jan with other reports in excess of three figures made in February and early March. Towards the end of their wintering season here, in late March and April, more reports of individuals were submitted, indicating the bulk of the birds were on their way to summer breeding grounds.

In the autumn period, the largest flocks were reported in October and early November, when hedges and orchards still had ample supplies of food. The largest flock of the year was a group of around 700 seen at Clungunford on 30 Oct; apparently new arrivals in passage as they dispersed from there soon after. By December, when most berries had been consumed, more birds were seen feeding on stubble and pasture. Freshly manured fields were of particular attraction to them, manure often being a good source of larvae and worms.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Shropshire status:	Very common resident
National conservation status:	Red list
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 88% of plots; 152 birds recorded, an average of 2.98 per occupied plot and 2.60 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index:	1.51, annual change of +0.06 (2018 Index=1.45)
Author:	RR

In total, 678 reports of Song Thrush were submitted for 2019, a small increase on reporting for 2018 (629), from 280 sites. Song Thrush were observed in every month of the year, with the highest number of reports (125) being submitted in May and the lowest number in September (seven), after breeding has finished and the birds are laying low during moulting. Reports increased to 19, 20 and 20 for the last three months of the year, respectively. The BBS index remained constant.

Singing males were heard from 1 Jan through to mid-July, resuming again in mid-November.

Although pairs had been seen in suitable breeding habitat earlier, the first evidence of confirmed breeding was submitted on 13 Apr when adults were seen carrying food to a nest at Rea Brook Valley, Shrewsbury. The latest breeding record was on 1 Aug when an occupied nest was observed at Hopesay.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common resident
National conservation status:	Red list
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 29% of plots; 35 birds recorded, an average of 2.06 per occupied plot and 0.60 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index:	0.97, annual change -0.37 (2018 Index=1.34)
Author:	RR

A total of 423 reports of Mistle Thrush sightings were submitted in 2019, 46 fewer than in 2018. Most sightings were made in April (64) and as for Song Thrush, reports reduced in the period September–October to the low teens, returning to a count of 31

for each of the months of November and December. The number of BBS plots where Mistle Thrush were recorded were significantly down on 2018 (from 43%) as was the County index, although where Mistle Thrushes did occur the number of birds per occupied plot remained almost constant at around two.

Although singing males had been heard since January, and pairs of birds had been seen in suitable breeding territory in the first quarter, no confirmed evidence of breeding was submitted until 12 Apr when a pair were observed carrying food at a nest close to VP. The last record of breeding was an observation of fledglings on 6 Aug at Bitterley. In May, at least three pairs were observed feeding young at Cefn Coch.

During the early months of the year and through the breeding season, observations were almost entirely of single birds and pairs. By late July, after the breeding season was over, groups of birds began to be reported. There seems to have been a particular concentration of birds at Wall Farm, Kynnersley where a group of 35+ were recorded on 27 Jul and 37 on 7 Aug. They seemed to have been attracted to meadows where a hay crop had recently been taken off – the short grass obviously enabled them to access worms and grubs from the soil more easily. A group of 20, possibly juveniles, were seen at Walcot Arboretum on 5 Sep.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 5% of plots; three birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	RJH

The vanguard arrived between 11–14 May, a good 24 days later than last year. One or two were present at Earl's Hill, Dowles Brook, Wrekin, Whitcott Keysett, Aston on Clun, Kempton and Whixall Moss before six were counted at Bridges on 13th. Over the next two weeks singles were reported from an additional five sites with a count of five from the Wyre Forest (19th).

In June, it was found at 15 more sites with reports from Newcastle-on-Clun, Whitcliffe, Aston on Clun, Twitchen and Whitcott Keysett all reporting successful breeding either by a nest with eggs or of feeding of young. Fledged juveniles were present at Mardu, Edgmond, Wall Farm and Woolston. A single was reported from Whixall canal floods on 8 July.

August produced some of the largest yearly counts as family parties became more mobile. Cardington Valley and Kerry Ridgeway recorded four, Walcot Arboretum seven and Wall Farm twelve (6th & 7th); an additional seven sites reported singles. The final birds of the year, all singles, were at Whixall (1 Sept) VP (7th), Wall Farm (10th) and Cole Mere (13th); the final bird six days earlier than 2018.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 100% of plots; 477 birds recorded, an average of 8.22 per occupied and per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 1.71, annual change +0.21 (2018 Index = 1.50)
Author: JJT

This year close to 1,730 records received, a 28.3% increase on the previous one and together with the change in the County BBS index does indicate a real population rise this year.

The distribution of records through the year will always reflect the extent to which the birds are detected and for many people that probably means by song, or on call for those who know the ‘ticking’ and can differentiate it from for example that of the Wren.

Robin song declines markedly after breeding and resumes in autumn as they set up and defend winter territories (with a subtly different, more languid song) and several records reflect this. For example, on 17 Jul ‘they have gone very quiet of late’ around Aston on Clun where not until 5 Aug ‘of the five, one was singing’ and by 13th ‘3rd day of some sub-song’. Similarly, on 15 Aug at Ironbridge ‘gave several bursts of winter territory song, first song since lapse after summer’ and by 25th at Whitcliffe, “‘large numbers singing – perhaps half a dozen from any given spot so overall 20–30 or more but unfortunately didn’t do proper count’.

Early nesting, reflecting earlier springs prompted by climate change, was mentioned by several observers. Nest building was noted at Ironbridge on 8 Feb and a nearly complete nest was found at Annscroft on 1 Mar. At Abbey Wood on 30 Mar nest-building was noted and an adult was found feeding a one- to two-day old chick, the egg laid around 16–18 Mar.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Shropshire status: Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 3% of plots; 13 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: RJH

First reported sighting for the year was from Craig Sychtyn – for the third year running. The individual, a male, was recorded on the 7 Apr, a week earlier than 2018. Birds appeared at another 13 sites during the month, mostly in the south of the County, with counts of six at Clunton Coppice and Bridges, six plus at Evens/Mary Knoll and seven on The Wrekin.

Presence was reported from an additional 26 sites in May, slightly down on last year; a third of all sites are nest box schemes. Sites with most reported birds were The Wrekin, Clunton Coppice, locations around Newcastle-on-Clun, Dowles Brook, Pentre and Bridges. Records from Wyre Forest only reported a maximum of three singing males (I hope this was just a bad recording year rather than a sign of decline).

Successful breeding was reported from Bridges, Clunton Coppice, Craig Sychtyn, six locations around Newcastle, Evens/Mary Knoll, Medlicott, Pentre, The Wrekin and Wyre Forest. Using all of the nest box locations around Newcastle breeding was worse than last year with a 26.6% fledging rate, compared with 49.2% last year. But this site is known to be well short of typical fledging rates; however, it may reflect a potential bad year for all sites.

As is typical – birds seem to disappear once fledged – there were only three records from July, Evens/Mary Knoll, Cefn Coch and Walcot Arboretum, and the last bird of the year was seen on a typical date of 26 Aug at Long Plantation.

The following birds were among the oldest reported in 2019:

D270714

Ringed Nestling Male	30-05-2014	Strid, Bolton Abbey: 53°59'N 1°53'W (North Yorkshire)
Caught by ringer	05-06-2019	Bridges: 52°33'N 2°53'W (Shropshire) 174km SSW 5y 0m 6d

D000685

Ringed Nestling Male	31-05-2014	Purlogue, near Clun: 52°23'N 3°3'W (Shropshire)
Caught in nestbox	09-06-2015	Moccas Upper: 52°4'N 2°56'W (Herefordshire) 36km SSE 1y 0m 9d
Caught by ringer on two further dates		Moccas Upper: 52°4'N 2°56'W (Herefordshire) 36km SSE

Numbers counted and presence at sites fell away quickly in August and September with birds present at 17 sites – all records of only up to two birds per site. The last bird of the year was a juvenile male caught during a ringing session at Bicton, near Shrewsbury on 8 Sep.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Shropshire status: Scarce summer visitor
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 2% of plots; five birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: LS

The first records of the year, both on 21 Apr, were of singles seen at Whixall Moss and Pole Cottage (Long Mynd), and on the following day at Whixall Moss (again), and another at Bog Marsh (Stiperstones). Further records in the spring passage period were of singles in May, at Llwyntidmon, Maesbrook (SJ22V) on the 5th, Noneley Flash on the 7th, Noneley on the 9th and VP on the 11th. Further early arrivals on Long Mynd were noted on 2 and 11 May.

The Long Mynd is the only regular breeding site for this species, and all 10 records between 16 May and 4 July were from various parts of this National Trust property, all of singles except six singing males, some with females, noted in Ashes and Callow Hollows on 20 May. There were two further records in July, including the only confirmed breeding, at least two, possibly three, adult males with at least one, possibly three, juveniles, in Townbrook Hollow on 24th, and the last for the year on the Long Mynd, one at Pole Cottage on 8 Aug.

Intensive monitoring by The Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project found an estimated 52 breeding pairs, a few more than previously thought.

The territories map resulting from this monitoring provided the foundation for a pilot project to test and evaluate proposals for a Whinchat conservation project on the Long Mynd, funded by the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund, “Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons” (supported by National Lottery) and the National Trust. The project found 11 nests, and four adults and 19 nestlings were colour-ringed. A full report can be found on the SOS website.

Return passage was unusually well documented, starting with singles at Whixall canal floods on 6th, 7th and 20th Jul, and 1 Aug. Then at Wall Farm Marsh

Kynnersley (a male, female and juvenile, the first sighting of the year at this site) on 2 Aug, an adult female on 8th and a female and immature on 12 Aug, with two on 10 Sep. Other birds were found at Westbury on 29 Aug, Rhos Fiddle (two on 8 Sep) and, the last for the year, a female at Charlton Hill which flew into an oil seed rape stubble field on 29 Sep.

STONECHAT *Saxicola rubicola*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 2% of plots; five birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: RJH

Now apparently a resident throughout the County with records from all months. For the first three months of the year recorded pairs were present at 17 sites, predominantly in the south of the County but with birds at Cefn Coch, Crose Mere, Wall Farm and Whixall Moss from SJ grid squares. Higher counts were at Titterstone Clew (three), Stapeley Hill and Clew Hill (four at each site) and Stiperstones (six).

Between April and June birds were present at 24 sites with probable or confirmed breeding at five sites (Llanfair Waterdine, Rhos Fiddle, Masons Bank, Whixall Moss, Cefn Coch). The largest counts were from Black Mountain with six, six also at Whixall Moss, Meaton Lane (greater Wyre Forest) with eight, and nine at Catherton Common. In the following quarter Rockhill Clun, Titterstone Clew, and Stiperstones were added as confirmed breeding sites. The largest count was from Cardington Valley when 16 were counted on 24 Aug. Chelmarsh Ringing Group RAS study on Titterstone Clew Hill reported 61 pairs – much improved on the 45 pairs from last year.

In the final winter period, birds, predominantly pairs, were present at 17 sites split almost equally between north and south. Highest counts, four to five, were all from Whixall Moss in October. The final records for the year were both of pairs, on 22 Dec at Catherton and 30 Dec at Wall Farm.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Shropshire status: Uncommon passage migrant, scarce summer visitor
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 2% of plots; two birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: RJH

Presence was reported on the Long Mynd on 9 Mar but with no number given. Singles were then found at Clee Hill (18th), Isombridge (21st) and Stiperstones (24th). Two were at Llanfair Waterdine (25th) and the first significant count of the year was seven+ at Titterstone Clee (26th).

Singles continued to pop up throughout the County into April and May, occasionally counts of two and rarely more. Higher counts were of three at Gatten Plantation, four at Lower Hordley and Dhustone Lane and eight on a ploughed field at Rhyn Park, Rhyn on 19 Apr.

The summer months were unexciting with a smattering of individuals reported and only one possible breeding record – a conceivable immature at Tibberton in August.

Passage birds started to appear at new sites in September with singles at VP, Whixall Moss, Whixall canal floods and Tibberton. Rhos Fiddle had four on 8 Sep and five on the 17th. The last record of the year finished in the way it started – an unknown number present on the Long Mynd on 16 Oct.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
Author: LS

The number of records (207) was slightly fewer than last year but were again dominated by a few regularly watched locations. Records came from all months of the year, with most in the first five months, while pairs were establishing territory, building nests and feeding young, with 32 and 30 records in April and May respectively, but the records were in only single figures in June, July, October and November

Only 23 records came from the north, from seven sites: Cound Stank and Cound Brook, near VP, Jackfield, Llanyblodwel, Longnor, Rea Brook Valley (Shrewsbury), River Ceiriog near Chirk and Trefonen. Pairs were seen at Longnor and Rea Valley, and five on the River Ceirog on 29 Jun was probably a family party, but there was no other evidence of breeding, and Dippers are still absent from the upper River Tern. They have largely disappeared from the Severn catchment.

The 187 records from the south came from 39 sites, a few more than last year, mainly on the streams and small rivers in the south, in particular, the River Clun and the River Teme. Most records were of one or two birds and the nine counts of three or four, from only three sites, appear to be either family parties or two pairs along a stretch of river.

Breeding was not well documented but was confirmed at Bridges, Cleobury Mortimer, Clunton, Dowles Brook (Wyre Forest), Earls Ditton, Farlow, Hopton Wafers, Pentre, Silvington and south-west of Clungunford. Probable breeding was reported from Whitcliffe.

Nest-box schemes have been operated by the Upper Onny Wildlife Group (upstream from Horderley) since 2005, and the Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group (the headwaters of the River Clun, including the River Unk and the Folly Brook) since 2007. In the Upper Onny, 23 sites were checked, 16 were occupied, and five pairs made second attempts (four successful). Two-thirds of the 21 nests were in boxes. There were 14 broods (totalling 52 young, all of which were ringed); 13 males and two females of the 32 adults were colour ringed. Totals were much higher than in 2018, when there was lower site occupancy and lower breeding success, due to high water levels. In the Upper Clun catchment, 29 potential nest sites were monitored, 12 were occupied, and there were 15 active nests, including three second broods. All nests were in boxes, 47 chicks and three adults were ringed at 11 sites and 20 colour rings on breeding adults were read. In contrast, the number of nests was down from 16 last year, and the lowest since 2011.

The nest box schemes have increased the population – there are more potential nest sites, and the pairs that nest in boxes produce more fledged young. This work is part of a wider project, Dippers in the Teme Catchment, but the results for the whole area are not available at the time of writing. The average length of the territories is approximately 1km and is closely related to water quality. The health of the Dipper population, assessed by nest monitoring, ringing, and trapping or re-sighting ringed adults, is therefore an important indicator of changes in the river environment. The yellow colour rings are inscribed with a letter and two numbers, and observers are requested to report them.

The following birds were among the oldest reported in 2019:

RF78915

Ringed First-year Male	18-09-2011	Knighton: 52°20'N 3°3'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	29-09-2012	Knighton: 52°20'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 0km 1y 0m 11d
Caught by ringer	01-10-2013	Knighton: 52°20'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 0km 2y 0m 13d
Caught by ringer	21-10-2014	Knighton: 52°20'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 0km 3y 1m 3d
Found Alive (colour rings)	16-03-2015	Panponton, Knighton: 52°20'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 1km 3y 5m 26d
Found Alive (colour rings)	14-12-2015	Knighton: 52°20'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 0km 4y 2m 26d
Found Alive (colour rings)	03-04-2016	Panponton,Knighton: 52°21'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 1km 4y 6m 16d
Found Alive (colour rings)	08-04-2017	Panponton,Knighton: 52°21'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 1km 5y 6m 21d
Caught by ringer	17-11-2017	Wylcwm Brook,Knighton: 52°20'N 3°2'W (Shropshire) 1km 6y 1m 30d
Found Alive (colour rings)	27-04-2018	Panponton,Knighton: 52°21'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 1km 6y 7m 9d
Caught by ringer	03-10-2018	Wylcwm Brook,Knighton: 52°20'N 3°2'W (Shropshire) 1km 7y 0m 15d
Found Alive (colour rings)	29-05-2019	Panponton,Knighton: 52°21'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 1km 7y 8m 11d
Caught by ringer	06-11-2019	Wylcwm Brook,Knighton: 52°20'N 3°2'W (Shropshire) 1km 8y 1m 19d

RL15093

Ringed Nestling Female	16-04-2012	Llananno: 52°21'N 3°20'W (Powys)
Caught by ringer	14-05-2017	Cefn Einion, Clun: 52°28'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 23km ENE 5y 0m 28d
Caught by ringer	14-10-2017	Cefn Einion, Clun: 52°28'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 23km ENE 5y 5m 28d
Caught by ringer	17-10-2018	Birches Mill, Cefn Einion: 52°27'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 22km ENE 6y 6m 1d
Caught by ringer	06-11-2019	Cefn Einion, Clun: 52°28'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 23km ENE 7y 6m 21d
Caught by ringer	10-11-2019	Cefn Einion, Clun: 52°28'N 3°3'W (Shropshire) 23km ENE 7y 6m 25d

RL51002

Ringed First-year Female	05-10-2013	Longnor, Shrewsbury: 52°35'N 2°46'W (Shropshire)
Found Alive (colour rings)	26-03-2015	Longnor, Shrewsbury: 52°35'N 2°46'W (Shropshire) 0km 1y 5m 21d
Caught by ringer	24-10-2016	Longnor, Shrewsbury: 52°36'N 2°45'W (Shropshire) 1km 3y 0m 19d

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 76% of plots; 516 birds recorded, an average of 11.73 per occupied plot and 8.90 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 1.21, annual change -0.08 (2018 Index = 1.29)
Author: JJT

A total of 965 records this year, about a 25% increase on the previous year.

More than 100 recorders submitted records, at least one of them resident out of the County. Many are single records perhaps a component of a field trip listing all species, as requested by BirdTrack, or the result of following some systematic or regular walk or transect.

The comment 'present', indicating the species recorded but not counted, was used for 236 records, so a quarter of them. The highest counts were c85 from Cherrington on 19 Aug, recorded 'roadside' where perhaps gleaning spilt grain from the harvest and from Cantlopgrove where 80 were noted on both 27 Jul and 9 Aug. Records of 10 or more were frequent but groups of 40 or more were scarce.

One diligent recorder in the north-west recorded 'nine nesting attempts in five boxes, 39 eggs, 31 hatched, 19 fledged from seven successful nests' at Trefonen. These records were submitted to the BTO Nest Record Scheme; commendable and something recommended for anyone with even just one nest box. At Whitcott Keysett on 14 Jul a female was seen feeding peanut to fledglings, not whole but allowing the young to peck at them.

The following birds were among the oldest reported in 2019:

TT53978

Ringed Juvenile Female	21-06-2014	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	
Caught by ringer	21-09-2014	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	0km 0y 3m 0d
Found Alive (colour rings) on five further dates		Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	0km 0y 11m 9d
until:-			
Found Alive (colour rings)	05-07-2019	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	0km 5y 0m 14d

TX66415

Ringed Juvenile Male 05-07-2014 Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire)
 Found Alive (colour rings) 12-10-2014 Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire)
 0km 0y 3m 7d

Found Alive (colour rings) on four further dates Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W
 (Shropshire) 0km 1y 5m 8d

until:-

Found Alive (colour rings) 15-09-2019 Mossley Well, near Whixall: 52°54'N 2°44'W (Shropshire)
 0km 5y 2m 10d

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Shropshire status: Fairly common resident
 National conservation status: Red List
 Shropshire conservation status: Red List
 Shropshire BBS: Present in 9% of plots; 14 birds recorded
 Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
 Author: MF

The number of observations was down again to 74 after last year's 118, but the number of sites at which Tree Sparrow was found was almost unchanged at 21. Although not always made explicit, it would appear that well over half the entries, and virtually all those reaching double figures, related to birds using garden feeding stations. The highest counts, five in all ranging from 14 to 34, came from such a site in the Clun Forest.

More ominous was the absence of any post-breeding flocks on harvest fields: a loose colony that in recent years had regularly formed flocks of 40 or 50 had all but disappeared, represented this year by only a couple of probable breeding pairs, and although suitable crops and then stubbles were available, there was little evidence of late-summer feeding.

Breeding was likely or confirmed at several sites: a pair nest-building in a derelict barn, a couple of pairs carrying food to nests in a conifer shelter-belt on a bleak hilltop, adults feeding nests and later accompanied by fledglings in the Chapel Lawn area, eight adults and three broods at Choulton in the Upper Onny valley.

The geographic spread of records is striking: Tree Sparrow was recorded ten times across six sites in the 'SJ' or northern half of the County, but 64 times at 15 sites in the 'SO' south. Only part of the imbalance is explained by the high proportion of 'SO' records collected at garden feeding stations.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Shropshire status:	Very common resident
National conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 91% of plots; 257 birds recorded, an average of 4.85 per occupied plot and 4.43 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index:	1.40, annual change +0.10 (<i>2018 Index = 1.30</i>)
Author:	GB

A common and widespread species with another increase in the total of records from 1,034 in 2018 to 1,213 and from all months. Usually recorded as singles and twos in the first winter period with many records of three to four individuals. Nine were at Trefonen 2 Jan, 10 at Longford 3 Jan, seven at Market Drayton 6 Jan, seven at Aston on Clun 23 Jan, seven at Cross Lane Head 3 Feb, 11 at Llanyblodwel 11 Feb, seven at Lyth Hill 12 Feb, six at VP 13 Feb, eight at Crosemere 18 Feb, seven at Annscroft 21 Feb, eight at Cefn Coch and Earls Hill 27 Feb, eight at Upper Hayes Farm 28 Feb and eight at Ruyton XI Towns on 2 Mar.

Onset of breeding activity was noted as early as 2 Jan with several bursts of territorial song from a male at Ironbridge. This was followed by two males engaged in territorial song there on 6 Jan, rising to three singing males 20 Jan and at least five on 22 Jan. Three Dunnock were chasing and wing-flicking at Ironbridge on 12 Feb and one male gave song at Arlescott on 12 Feb. Twenty-one at Trefonen on 8 Mar must have included territorial males in song and 10 were at Bentlawnt on 8 Mar. A pair was noted mating at Ironbridge on 9 Mar and six at Annscroft on 12 Mar and nine at Rowton Grange Farm on 20 Mar included singing males. Fourteen were at Oswestry on 8 Apr.

Confirmed breeding was well documented at Aston Locks on 19 Apr, Cross Lane Head on 2 May, VP on 24 May, Tibberton on 28 May, Kynnersley Moor on 29 May, Cantlogrove on 2 Jun, Ironbridge on 21 Jun, Lawley on 26 Jun, Shrewsbury on 1 Jul, Lyth Hill on 7 Jul and Whitcott Keysett on 27 Jul. Territorial song was last noted on 20 Jul at VP, marking the cessation of breeding activity. Late summer records included four at a garden feeding station at Ironbridge 16 Aug with some aggressive wing-flicking display noted, 10 at Market Drayton on 25 Aug and seven VP on 27 Aug.

One to four Dunnock were routinely recorded in the second winter period but 10 were in the hedgerows at Eaton Constantine on 14 Oct, six at Wall Farm on 15 Oct,

15 in hedgerows at Uppington on 22 Oct, six at Bentlawnt on 9 Nov, seven at Market Drayton on 24 Nov, six at Granville on 7 Dec and eight at Trefonen on 22 Dec. One was characteristically chased by a Robin at a garden feeding station in Ironbridge at 17 Nov and eight at Arlescott on 30 Dec included a male which gave three bursts of song on a bright, sunny day.

The Dunnock has a complex social system with alpha and beta males and records of singing males will not necessarily reflect the true breeding population. Mature, overgrown hedgerows with outgrowths of Bramble, Nettle and Dog Rose are favoured habitat, so the retention and planting of hedgerows and scrub corners as part of agri-environment schemes is essential to assist the recovery of the Dunnock population to earlier levels on farmland.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2019:

Y861288

Ringed Full-grown Male	26-01-2013	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	
Caught by ringer	16-02-2013	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	0km 0y 0m 21d

Caught by ringer on five further dates Grove Farm, Bicton

until:-

Caught by ringer	23-02-2019	Grove Farm, Bicton: 52°43'N 2°48'W (Shropshire)	0km 6y 0m 28d
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FLAVA WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon summer visitor
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 12% of plots; 16 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	GB

In total, 125 records were received, up significantly on 56 in 2018 and previous years. The Yellow Wagtail's breeding distribution in Shropshire has a marked affinity to the North Shropshire Plain and the Eastern Sandstone Plain and just 17% were from sites in the south of the County (SO grid references).

The first record of this attractive African summer migrant was of one bird on 7 Apr at Polemere. This was followed by birds typically occupying arable breeding sites

or passing through wetlands and included two, with a male in song, at Conover on 19 Apr. Six, probably including some passage birds, were at Noneley Floods on 20 Apr and one to four birds were here throughout April with eight, including singing males on 7 May. Other April arrivals were one at VP on 21st with two by 28th; one at Annscroft on 23rd; two pairs at Lydbury North also on 23rd; singles at Wall Farm, Choulton and Tibberton on 28th and one Ercall Heath on 30th. Farmland sites continued to be occupied in early May with two at Baggy Moor and three at Eyton upon the Weald Moors 2 May and three territorial males at Bicton on 4 May.

Breeding was confirmed at Noneley on 31 May where eight birds included two visiting nest sites. Also, at Chetton on 21 Jun, Childs Ercall Airfield on 1 Jul and Tibberton on 6 Jul. Breeding activity declined after this date. although one on 11 Jul 'appeared to be collecting food' and nine at Cantlopgrove on 21 Aug included recently fledged young. Breeding habitat comprised cereal and other arable crops.

Passage in late summer was notably more prominent than some previous years and typically evident at wetland sites. Six were noted at Wall Farm Marsh 'feeding around the feet of cattle' on 12 Aug, one at Whixall canal floods (the first for this site) 23 Aug, rising to six the next day with the last record on 3 Sep. Nine were at Wall Farm on 2 Sep, with two at Cantlopgrove and one VP on 7 Sep. The last Yellow Wagtails were recorded on 8 Sep with four at Nagington Grange and one at Meadowley.

The Yellow Wagtail is one of several long-distance African summer migrants in severe decline, but, because of the large landscape issues involved targeted conservation measures are probably limited. The majority of Yellow Wagtail now probably breed on arable farmland and the continued promotion of agri-environment schemes to create water features, fallow plots, spring crops, invertebrate-rich headlands, reduced pesticide inputs and beetle banks is paramount. More records of breeding and habitat are required. The low number of records from the southern half of Shropshire is probably attributable to the fact that its favoured habitat is lowland arable farmland but suitable habitat, particularly potato and bean fields in south Shropshire, are worth checking for new breeding sites.

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava*

One found at Whixall canal floods on 31 Aug.

Channel Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava* × *flavissima*

One was recorded at Noneley Floods 20 Apr and noted as a male on 21 Apr. Probably the same bird was subsequently recorded there on 22 Apr and 30 Apr, then 6, 7, 9 and 27 May and finally on 30 May.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon resident
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 2% of plots; one bird recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	GB

In total, 211 records were received (up on 185 in 2018) in all months from a range of wetland habitats during the breeding season comprising rivers, brooks, streams, lakes, pools, reservoirs and canals. Outside the breeding season habitats included urban areas, farmland and sewage treatment works. Grey Wagtail has a strong affinity with the upland watercourses of south Shropshire and major rivers of north Shropshire, with more records usually arising from sites in the southern half (SO grid reference) of the County: this year, it was evenly split with precisely 50% of records from the south.

Records were mainly of single birds and some twos in the first winter period but three were at Meaton Lane on 17 Feb. Four were at Cleobury Mortimer and five at Dowles Brook on 24 Mar, three at Bitterley on 30 Mar and three at Newcastle-on-Clun on 3 Apr, all potential breeding sites.

Breeding activity was first noted on 6 Apr at Rea Brook Valley where a pair was engaged in courtship and display with a male in song there on 12 Apr. This was followed by a pair noted at Cardingmill Valley on 13 Apr, two at Catherton the same day, a pair on the River Severn at Jackfield and three, including a pair, on the River Teme at Whitcliffe on 14 Apr. Pairs and males in song were increasingly recorded as April progressed. Breeding was confirmed early at Newcastle on 29 Apr, then Cole Mere on 7 May, Hopton Wafers and Cleobury Mortimer on 12 May, Pentre on 19 May, Chelmarsh Reservoir on 20 May, Catherton on 25 May, Aston Locks on 29 May, Newcastle on 1 Jun, Pentiken on 2 Jun and Lower Chorley on 29 Jun.

Passage away from upland streams and lowland river breeding sites was evident from 30 Jun when one flew through VP, but otherwise there were only seven records in both the months of July and August. Five were at VP on 7 Sep and six along the River Teme at Whitcliffe on 13 Sep. Grey Wagtail was recorded mainly as singles and some twos in the autumn and second winter period, with one on a rooftop chasing insects and momentarily itself chased by a Pied Wagtail at Priorslee on 15 Nov and one feeding on a dung heap with Pied Wagtail at Priors Hatton on 5 Dec.

Severe winters can cause declines in Grey Wagtail populations and more evidence of winter movements, breeding activity and habitats would be of conservation interest given its national Red-List status.

ALBA WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 47% of plots; 41 birds recorded and average of 1.52 per occupied plot and 0.71 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS index: 1.08, annual change -0.05 (2018 Index = 1.13)
Author: GB

A total of 479 records were received, up significantly on 302 in 2018 and earlier years. Recorded in all months and in a variety of habitats including lakes, pools, meres, rivers, reservoirs, canals, reedbeds, sewage treatment works, farmland, hills, moorland, heathland, mosses, grassland and built-up areas. Larger counts in the first winter period comprised over 20 at Chelmarsh on 3 Jan, 29 feeding on manure spread at Ridgwardine on 10 Jan, 18 at Shifnal Sewage Works and 20 in a sheep field at Church Stretton on 20 Jan. 19 were in a muddy beet field at Aston Locks on 4 Mar and nine at Polemere on 23rd.

Breeding activity was first noted on 26 Mar at Westcott where five Pied Wagtails included a pair. A pair was noted at Pentre on 30 Mar and two pairs were at Leighton on 31 Mar. As spring progressed, pairs were noted at Priorslee Lake on 26 Apr and Clee St. Margaret on 5 May with nine at Whixall canal floods on 16 May. Breeding was confirmed from May onwards at Hincks on 12th, Isombridge on 16th, Aston Locks on 24th and in June at Newcastle-on-Clun on 1st, Cantlopgrove on 2nd, Clun on 3rd, Aston on Clun on 24th and Cross Lane Head on 26th. An extended breeding season was suggested by further breeding confirmation in July at Annscroft (1st), Attingham (4th), Westhope (14th) and finally at Beckbury on 1 Aug.

Flocks and passage movement, probably augmented by birds from the highlands of northern Scotland and England, was noted early with a significant 40 at Whixall canal floods on 26 Jul. This site proved attractive to Pied Wagtail in August and September with 30 there on 30 Aug, 60 the next day, 35 on 8 Sep, 25 on 10 Sep, 15 Sep and 17 Sep and finally 15 on 28 Sep. Sixteen fed on the lawns at Cosford

Air Museum on 27 Aug, 60 were at Chelmarsh Scrape on 13 Sep, 16 fed in horse paddocks at Buildwas on 30 Sep with 11 at Attingham the same day. As autumn progressed, a high count of around 200 was recorded at Polemere 6 Oct with 17 at Cantlopgrove the same day. Further high counts in October were 20 at Annscroft on 7th, 12 at Shifnal Sewage Works on 13th, 80 at Harlescott on 14th, 30 at Noneley on 16th and 20 at Prees Higher Heath Sewage Works on 20th. 80 were feeding in a newly tilled field at Annscroft, also on 16th. Three fed on a manure heap at Charlton on 16 Dec and 32 were feeding on flooded grassland with spent silage at Moreton Say on 26 Dec. The only large roost noted was one of at least 100 birds roosting in a Holly tree in Ludlow Castle square on 16 Dec.

Given the number of records submitted Pied Wagtail is a popular and ubiquitous bird in Shropshire but more evidence of breeding, passage movements, winter flocks and large roost gatherings would be of interest.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Shropshire status: Fairly common resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 5% of plots; 23 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: LS

Almost 330 records were received, more than 40% more than 2018, itself a 20% increase on 2017. Records were from all months of the year but with obvious increases during the months of March to April and September to October, when these pipits are moving to and from their breeding grounds. In total, there were slightly more from sites in the north than sites in the south, but with a distinct seasonal shift, with most April–August records from breeding sites in the south.

Double figure counts in the early part of the year came, in January from Shavington Park, (25 on 7th), Hayes Farm (14 on a WeBS count on 20th), Bringewood (12 on 23rd) and Ruyton XI Towns (10 on 1st); in February from Wall Farm west (25 on 15th and 22nd, and Shavington Park, (23 on 16th), and in March from New Works/Huntington Lane (Telford – 25+ on 19th), Long Mynd (20 on 31st), Stapeley Hill (16 on 28th), Annscroft (14 on 1st), Tibberton West (11 on 1st), Bury Ditches (10 on 8th) and Leasowes and Hayes (10 on 21st). The largest count in the early part of the year was of 35 south of Tibberton on 3 Apr.

However, of the 101 breeding season records (6 Apr– 31 Jul), only a quarter were

from the north, and these came from the usual isolated breeding sites – Oswestry Uplands (two records), the northern edge of the south Shropshire hills (four), Whixall Moss (11) and on or near the Wrekin (five). Only two records of singles came from other sites in the north. Four or more birds were reported from only two sites: Westcott (eight on 13 Apr) and Bentlawnt (six on 11 Apr). In the south, 75 breeding season records came from 35 locations, all regular breeding sites: The Long Mynd (including Ashes Hollow Batch Valley, Cardingmill Valley and Pole Cottage); the Stretton Hills (Caer Caradoc, Hope Bowdler and the Lawley); Stiperstones NNR, and sites nearby (Bridges, Picklescott and Stapeley Hill); Hopesay, Pentre and Sowdley Wood; Clun Forest (including Bicton Hill, Llanfair Waterdine Turbury, Mason's Bank, The Gogin, near Newcastle-on-Clun, and Rhos Fiddle); Brown Clee; and Titterstone Clee (including Catherton Common and Cleeton St. Mary). Double-figure counts came from Stapeley Hill (14 on 2 Jul), Caer Caradoc (12 on 8 Jun), Carding Mill Valley (11 on 21 May), and counts of 10 at Caer Caradoc (15 Apr), Titterstone Clee (7 Jul), Hope Bowdler (21 May) and The Stiperstones (5 May). Breeding habitat is becoming much less common, and evidence of breeding was very poorly reported. It was confirmed only at Llanfair Waterdine and Mason's Bank (both feeding young) and Titterstone Clee (a nest with eggs).

Sixteen August records (compared with only one last year) largely reflected the build-up of post breeding flocks, all except one (Whixall Moss) from sites in the south, mostly listed above but also including Gretton, Knighton (Selley/Cwm-sanaham Hill), Long Plantation (Kerry Ridgeway) and Mitchell's Fold. Double figure counts were 18 on The Stiperstones on 23 Aug and 15 at Pole Cottage (Long Mynd) on 8 Aug.

In the last four months, there were 131 records, only 38 from the south. Of these, 37 were of 10 or more, but only eight were from the south, and there were 15 in Sep and 20 in Oct, but only one in each of November and December. Double-figure records in these four months came from Annscroft (30 on 13 Sep), Arlescott & Wyke (11 on 8 Oct, feeding in stubble and recently tilled fields), Brownheath Moss (30 on 28 Sep), Buildwas (14 on 30 Sep and 20 on 27 Oct, feeding on cereal stubble) Cantlopgrove (40 on 7 Sep, 85 on 4 Oct, 142 on 6 Oct and 204 on 12 Oct, the highest count of the year), Hollywaste (Cleobury Mortimer – 20 on 6 Oct), Hope Bowdler (22 on 12 Oct), Inwood (Long Mynd – 10 on 2 Oct), Kemberton (12 on 28 Oct, in cereal stubble), Long Mynd (30 on 14 Sep), Lyth Hill (11 on 22 Oct), Masons Bank West (30 on 7 Sep), New Works (Telford – 90 on 4 Sep, 30 on 18 Sep and 20 on 25 Sep), Noneley (15 on 3 Oct and 20 on 9 Oct), Robin Hood's Butts (Long Mynd – 60 on 14 Sep and 25 on 21 Sep), Titterstone Clee (10 on 22 Oct), VP (10 on 19 Sep), Wall Farm Marsh (Kynnersley – 35 on 15 Oct, on a stubble field, and 20 on 9 Nov), and Whixall Moss (12 on 8 Sep, 20 on 28 Sep, 35 on 30 Sep, 20 on 3 Oct, 15 on 8 Oct, 30 on 10 Oct, 16

on 19 Oct and 10 on 27 Oct). The last double-figure count was from River Severn in Shrewsbury (12 on 23 Dec). The last record of the year was of four birds at Granville (Telford) on 29 Dec.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Shropshire status: Uncommon summer visitor
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 3% of plots; two birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: LS

Seventy-three records were received, virtually the same as last year, but they came from 36 different locations, a big increase compared with the previous two years. Most were from upland sites in the south of the County with only Cefn Coch, Westcott, Earl's Hill and The Wrekin in the north. There were no records from Whixall Moss.

A singing male on the unusually early date of 26 Mar at one of the northern sites, Westcott, was the first arrival, followed by two at Meaton Lane (Cleobury Mortimer) on 31 Mar, plus three+ a week later, and five+ on 21 Apr, at the same site. After a single at Buttonoak on 12 Apr, they were reported from several sites on 17–24 Apr: Clunton Coppice (on three dates up to 20th), Hopesay (three on 17th), Dowles Brook (Wyre Forest – five on 17th), Earl's Hill (19th), other parts of the Wyre Forest (two on 19th and four on 21st), Kinlet Bank (two+ on 20th), Brown Clee (two singing males on 21st), Wrekin on 23rd and Caer Caradoc and Carding Mill Valley, both on 24th. Habitat was rarely noted, but forestry clearfell was occupied at Clunton Coppice and Evens (Mortimer Forest).

The only double-figure count was 24 (13 singing males) in the Wyre Forest on 28 Apr. In addition to those listed above, other counts of more than two were eight+ in the Evens area (Mortimer Forest) on 30 Apr, five and, all in May, at Sowdley Wood on the 4th, four on The Wrekin on the 11th and three at Bury Ditches on the 25th.

Breeding was poorly documented and was only confirmed at Cefn Coch and Mortimer Forest. However, many records were of singing/displaying males or pairs in suitable habitat, indicating possible or probable breeding, and agitated behaviour was noted on The Wrekin on 10 Jun. Indeed, it seems likely that most records relate to breeding birds which arrive direct to the breeding grounds and, in Shropshire, are rarely recorded on passage.

The last records of the year, both in August, were three at Cefn Coch, including a juvenile begging for food, on the 4th, and one at Mortimer Forest on the 8th.

For the first year since BBS monitoring of a transect in Callow Hollow started in 1994, no Tree Pipit were recorded. Up until two years ago, counts were usually of three or four territories, sometimes more, but there were only two in 2018. Long Mynd BBS found less than 30 territories in 2019, compared with an estimated 70 in 2006–08, and 90–100 in 1998. SBRs in the late 1980s regularly listed counts of over 20 territories at several sites. Not surprisingly, Tree Pipit appears on the Shropshire Red List (see article entitled ‘*Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*’).

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 100% of plots; 401 birds recorded, an average of 6.91 birds per occupied/surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 0.52, no annual change (*2018 Index = 0.52*)
Author: APD

Flocks feeding on bird seed crops at VP and Wall Farm peaked at 80 on 9 Jan and 18 Feb respectively with 51 feeding on seed provided in a garden at Tibberton on 21 Jan almost matching the larger sites. The highest counts of this period were 100+ at Brownheath on 9 Feb and 110 at Choulton on 25 Feb but what attracted these numbers was not recorded. In March numbers fell quickly, after 50 at VP on 3rd only 30 were present two days later and few totals reached double figures after this date.

Song was first noted at Caldly Bank, Newcastle-on-Clun on 26 Feb and mating was observed at The Wrekin on 23 Apr. Breeding was only confirmed at Kynnersley Moor when recently fledged young were seen on 29 May.

Following the breeding season, numbers were generally below 20 until November, the one exception being 80 feeding in ‘oil seed rape bird mix’ at Eaton Constantine on 14 Oct. In November, 60 were at VP on 6th, 100 at Shakenhurst on 15th and 200 at Wall Farm on 18th. At the latter site, 150 on 30 Dec were feeding in a ‘set aside barley field’. One hundred were at Walcot Park on 14 Dec, with 92 at Arlescott and Wyke, and 65 feeding in small groups under alder at Aston Locks both on 30 Dec.

Two caught for ringing at Market Drayton on 2 Feb and another caught there on

28 Sep had severe lesions on both feet caused by the Papillomavirus and a lethargic individual at Trefonen on 12 Mar was showing signs of Trichomonosis.

The following bird ringed abroad was found here and reported in 2019 (countries with 20 or fewer such records):

14499611

Ringed First-year Male	11-02-2017	Nijlen: 51°9'N 4°40'E (Antwerpen) Belgium
Found Dead	29-03-2019	Chorley, Bridgnorth: 52°26'N 2°26'W (Shropshire) 509km WNW 2y 1m 18d

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Shropshire status: Fairly common, occasionally irruptive winter visitor
National conservation status: Schedule 1, Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: APD

There was a stark contrast between the two winter periods. There were 70 reports in the first, although 36 of them came from three locations: Oakeley Mynd (18), Market Drayton (eight) and VP (10) and a single large flock of 100+ at Sowdley Wood on 3 Feb. Twenty-one were nearby at Clunton on 25 Feb and 12 at Choulton on 25 Mar, the remaining reports were of eight or fewer and they continued until 21 Apr when the last single was at VP.

The first to return for the second winter period was noted as 'present' at The Long Mynd on 16 Oct and this was followed by a female at Tibberton on 31 Oct and a male at Shakenhurst on 15 Nov. Just four further reports followed; 10+ at Lower Shortditch on 8 Nov and three of flocks of 50 in December: Walcot Park on 14th and both Long Mynd and Pole Cottage on 17th. It is quite likely that the latter reports referred to the same birds.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Shropshire status: Rare, occasionally irruptive winter visitor; has bred
National conservation status: RBBP, Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: APD

Four accepted records this year.

A group of three birds was found at Glenburrell, Craven Arms on 23 Apr (*D Pearce*).

Seventeen at Woolston/Horderley Wood on Christmas Day (*D Pearce*) stayed into 2020 and singles were located at Meaton Lane on 21 Dec (*J Lingard*) and at Kinlet Bank next day (*M Wheeler*).

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Amber List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 26% of plots; 20 birds recorded, an average of 1.33 birds per occupied plot and 0.33 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
Author: APD

Small numbers were reported throughout the year. Twelve feeding together on Ash seeds at Coalbrookdale on 17 Jan was the largest group, followed by seven, mostly juveniles, on feeders in a Shrewsbury garden on 5 Sep. Garden feeding on seed mixes is becoming more frequent but it does not appear to be widespread, in addition to further reports from the Shrewsbury garden in October it was also noted at VP in March (on niger seed) and Telford in April. Feeding was also observed in a wild bird seed mix crop at Arlescott and Wyke in December. Other than the Ash seed above, Dandelion seed at Market Drayton in May and Birch at Whitcliffe in December were the only other natural foods noted.

A recently fledged youngster was at Ironbridge on 25 Jul and a pair repeatedly entering a *Leylandii* hedge at Hopesay on 1 Aug suggested a nest site. In addition, juveniles were seen at Church Stretton, Tibberton and Tuckhill.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Shropshire status: Common resident
National conservation status: Green List
Shropshire conservation status: Red List
Shropshire BBS: Present in 52% of plots; 89 birds recorded, an average of 2.97 per occupied plot and 1.53 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index: 0.67, annual change +0.08 (*2018 Index = 0.59*)
Author: APD

Large flocks of Greenfinch seem to be a distant memory. In the early part of the year 24 in a Shifnal garden on 2 Feb was the highest of just six double-figure counts from 240 reports at this time. These included 17 caught for ringing at Market Drayton on 23 Feb and even VP could only muster 11 on 3 Mar.

The first song was heard at Pave Lane, Newport on 21 Feb after which it was noted at a further 28 locations. Two nests, lined and ready to use, were found in a *Pyracantha* hedge at Otley Road, Shrewsbury on 28 Mar and fledged young were seen at Cross Lane Head and VP in May and again at VP and Attingham in July.

Late summer saw over 40 feeding on Oil Seed Rape seeds in a crop at Annscroft on 21 Jun and 1 Jul, but this was considered an underestimate as only birds flushed from a footpath were seen. Larger numbers were all connected with roosts; 35 left a roost at VP between the car park and the main hide on the morning of 15 Aug. A pre-roost gathering of 70+ in the tops of trees (including Corsican Pines) in the centre of Tibberton on 25 Nov had increased to 90+ by the following weekend, they were thought to be roosting in large Yews in the churchyard. Twenty-two at Newport cemetery on 16 Dec was the only other count to exceed 20.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

NZ85273

Ringed First-year Male	04-01-2019	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W (Shropshire)	
Caught by ringer	06-11-2019	Old Weston: 52°22'N 0°23'W (Cambridgeshire)	152km ESE 0y 10m 2d

LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

Shropshire status:	Common resident
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 38% of plots; 114 birds recorded, an average of 5.18 birds per occupied plot and 1.97 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	APD

The New Year started well with 120 at Meaton Lane, Wyre Forest. Regular counts from the site showed an increase to 400+ on 3 Feb and 500+ on 8 Feb, what attracted them to this area was not reported but the food source must have been steadily depleting, as although 200+ were still present on 17 Feb, numbers had fallen to

50+ one week later. Sympathetic management at VP and Wall Farm provided ideal conditions for this species. Monthly maxima at VP were 100 on 26 Jan, 150 on 25 Feb, 100 on 3 Mar and 190 on 6 Apr, and at Wall Farm 200 on 8 and 15 Jan and 70 on 15 Feb. Maize stubble at Lyneal on 15 Apr attracted 140, no other counts exceeded 100.

One singing at Haughmond Hill on 27 Feb was early for this species and singing was not noted again until 17 Apr at Tibberton. Nest building commenced soon afterwards with a pair at The Lawley on 21 Apr and at least four pairs building on a section of Old Oswestry on 23 Apr with eggs at the latter site on 2 May. A pair at The Lawley had hatched young by 4 May and breeding was also confirmed at Trefonen, Llanymynech and Mary Knoll.

Oil Seed Rape provides a valuable food source for Linnets and the unripe seeds are frequently fed to their young. Thirty-seven at Childs Ercall on 9 Jun included 25 in a rape field. Forty were feeding in this crop at Annscroft on 2 Aug and after harvest c100 were feeding in the stubble on 21 Aug and after cultivation 120 on 13 Sep. At Tibberton a minimum of 80 were flying around prior to roosting in willows by the River Meese on 30 Aug and 130 were roosting there on 3 Sep. Large flocks were present at five further locations during October; 150 at Noneley on 1st, 124 feeding on stubble and recently tilled fields at Arlescott and Wyke on 8th, 400+ at Meaton Lane on 12th, 240 in cereal stubble at Eyton on Severn on 14th and 200 at Wall Farm on 15th. At the latter site over 400 were present on 18 Nov but no other sizeable flocks were found.

COMMON REDPOLL *Acanthis flammea*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: APD

Singles in the Wyre at Dowles Brook on 27 Jan (*M Wheeler*) and at Postenplain on 17 Feb (*M Wheeler, C Reed*). The first records since 2013.

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

Shropshire status: Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident
National conservation status: Red List
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: APD

The larger flocks in the first months of the year were mostly reported from The Wyre Forest area, 50+ were at Button Oak and 80 at Dowles Brook on 27 Jan, c60 at Postenplain on 17 Feb and 50+ at Meaton Lane on 14 Apr. Forty were trapped for ringing at Market Drayton on 23 Feb and 25 were present there on 8 Apr. At Donnington Wood 24 on 3 Mar was the only total to exceed 10 although 10+ at Mary Knoll on 13 Apr was considered to be an underestimate as 'a noisy flock high in larches could have been many more'.

Reports became less frequent after 21 Apr. There were two more in late April, three each in May and June, one in July and two in August. They came from six locations: The Stiperstones (3 sites), Cefn Coch, Masons Bank and Wyre Forest, all potential breeding areas.

After a single at Shavington on 26 Sep sightings became more regular from 6 Oct. The ringing project targeting passage at Whixall Moss recorded highs of 50 on 19 Oct and 30 on 3 Nov. Elsewhere, single figures dominated reports, with 18 at VP on 13 Nov, 20 at Shavington on 15 Nov and 12 at Aston on Clun on 1 Dec being the exceptions.

There was only one report of a bird using garden feeders and this was from Woolston on 16 Apr. More typical feeding was noted in birch four times and alder twice.

One ringed at Shavington on 10 Feb 2017 was re-trapped at the same place on 9 Jan.

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

S792215

Ringed First-year	13-03-2017	Cressage, near Shrewsbury: c. 52°37'N 2°36'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	10-04-2019	Rowlands Gill: 54°54'N 1°45'W (Tyne and Wear) 260km NNE 2y 0m 28d

ADA3086

Ringed First-year Male	20-10-2018	Whixall & Fenn's Mosses: c. 52°54'N 2°45'W (Wrexham)
Caught by ringer	19-04-2019	Heysham Harbour, Heysham: 54°1'N 2°54'W (Lancashire) 124km N 0y 5m 30d

ARCTIC REDPOLL *Acanthis hornemanni*

Shropshire status: Rare winter visitor
Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
Author: GT

The second County record was a bird found at Church Aston on 7–9 Mar (*J MacLauchlan*). As with the previous record in 2013, the bird was assigned to the Coue's race, *A.h. exilipes*.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Shropshire status: Uncommon resident, irruptive scarce winter visitor
National conservation status: Green List, Schedule 1
Shropshire conservation status: Green List
Author: APD

There was a large increase in both the number of reports, up from 45 in 2018 to 104 this year (83 of which were during the first six months), and the number of locations, up from 19 to 40 with just seven in the north. Over 70 at Brown Clee on 6 Jan was the largest concentration by far. A series of reports from Meaton Lane from 23 Jan to 21 Apr peaked at 30 on 7 Apr and 20 were at Clunton on 25 Feb, the remaining reports were all below 16 and most in single figures.

Recently fledged young in The Wyre Forest on 28 Apr was the only confirmed breeding report.

Regular reports continued until late May including nine flying over a BBS plot at Wart Hill on 5 May, described as 'bonus birds'. There were just two June records from Earl's Hill and Meaton Lane and one in July from Cefn Coch and six at the latter site on 4 Aug included a singing male. After three at Bury Ditches on 17 Aug reports became more frequent. Fifteen were at Bury Ditches on 20 Nov and 12+ in flight south of High Vinnals on 25 Dec, with no more than 10 seen at seven other locations.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Shropshire status: Very common resident
Conservation Status: Green List

Shropshire BBS: Present in 78% of plots; 233 birds recorded, an average of 5.18 per occupied plot and 4.02 per surveyed plot

Shropshire BBS Index: 2.29, annual change -0.25 (2018 Index=2.54)

Author: APD

In total, 1,110 reports were received. Numbers were low in the first quarter, with only 13 reports exceeding 20. A garden at Newport registered 38 during the RSPB Garden Bird Watch on 27 Jan, 40 were at Market Drayton on 1 Feb and 47 at Crose Mere on 18 Feb.

Song was heard from 20 Feb and on 28th a lined nest was found in Bramble and Elder at Trefonen and two nests, one with five eggs, at Otley Road, Shrewsbury. Breeding was confirmed at 10 further locations, mainly when recently fledged young were observed. Unfortunately, this code is sometimes used in error for juveniles which can be identified as such long after they have left the nest and perhaps a great distance from the breeding location.

A late summer flock of 50+ was present at Wall Farm on 12 Aug, and at VP 45 on 15 Aug had increased to 170 by 28 Aug. One hundred and ten here on 19 Sep was the monthly maximum and in October numbers fell quickly from 80 on 4th and 25 on 15th. In October, 49 were at Bentlawnt on 6th, there was another count of 50 from Wall Farm on 15th and 70+ at Cockshutt on 26th. Thirty at VP on 23 Nov and 50 at Priors Halton on 16 Dec were the highest counts for those months.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2019:

L104277

Ringed First-year Male	19-02-2010	The Rea, Upton Magna, Shrewsbury: 52°42'N 2°39'W (Shropshire)
Found Freshly dead (cat)	03-04-2019	Royston: 52°2'N 0°1'W (Hertfordshire) 192km ESE 9y 1m 15d

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

Z884424

Ringed First-year Male	30-01-2016	Cross Lane Head, Bridgnorth: 52°33'N 2°26'W (Shropshire)
Caught by ringer	11-03-2019	Ardeamush, Lisdoonvarna: 53°1'N 9°19'W (Clare) 466km W 3y 1m 9d

AKC2240

Ringed First-year	18-01-2019	Cressage, near Shrewsbury: c. 52°37'N 2°35'W (Shropshire)
Found Freshly dead (car)	20-04-2019	A92, near Haughs of Benholm: 56°48'N 2°19'W (Aberdeenshire) 464km N 0y 3m 2d

AAE4291

Ringed First-year Female	22-11-2018	Pett Level: 50°54'N 0°39'E (East Sussex)
Found Freshly dead	01-07-2019	Clun: 52°24'N 3°2'W (Shropshire) 305km NW 0y 7m 9d

S632507

Ringed First-year	19-10-2017	Harper Adams University: c. 52°46'N 2°25'W (Telford and Wrekin)
Caught by ringer	22-10-2019	Lundy Island: 51°9'N 4°39'W (Devon) 236km SW 2y 0m 3d

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2019 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

S731126

Ringed Juvenile	25-07-2017	Attingham Park: 52°41'N 2°40'W (Shropshire)
Found Freshly dead	26-03-2019	le Sablon, Grézillé, Gennes-Val-De-Loire: 47°19'N 0°19'W (Maine-et-Loire) France 620km SSE 1y 8m 1d

SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

Shropshire status:	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident
National conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire conservation status:	Green List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 3% of plots, 3 birds recorded
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	APD

Away from Aston on Clun only 11 double-figure counts were reported in the first winter period and the highest of these were at the end of February and the beginning of March; 44 caught for ringing at Market Drayton on 23 Feb, 30 at Clunton on 25 Feb and 40 (probably many more, dispersed through plantation) at Badger Moor on 1 Mar.

Regular observations from a route walked at Aston on Clun and Beambridge was responsible for 59 of the 340 reports and provide fine detail of Siskin in that location. From 5 Jan to 18 Feb the mean count was 24, with peaks of 60 on 19 Jan and 100 in several groups on 6 Feb, with the final reports up to 18th all in single figures. Unfortunately, their exact departure date from this area is unknown, the observer took a holiday at this time and no more were seen after his return a month later.

Because Siskin breed in small numbers throughout the County there is no clear departure or arrival date for migrants, but the number of reports begin to drop in April and do not increase again until October. The peak in late winter is probably due to an increase in garden visits at this time as natural food supplies dwindle, but garden feeding was only noted at Newport, Ironbridge, Tibberton, Market Drayton



and Church Stretton.

The only confirmed breeding record was from Chirk Bank when parents were seen carrying food on 22 May.

The largest flocks and timed counts came from Aston on Clun. The first of the autumn at this site was on 18 Sep but the next was not until 15 Oct after which they became more numerous; 60 were in Alders on 8 and 10 Nov, 60 in two flocks on 18 Dec and between 100 and 150 in a swirling flock on 30 Dec. Twenty were at Meaton Lane in October and November, 23 south-west of Clungunford on 3 Dec and 50+ at Farlow on 22 Dec.

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

ACF7032

Ringed Adult Female	23-03-2019	Prees Higher Heath: c. 52°55'N 2°39'W (Shropshire)
Found Freshly dead (cat)	08-04-2019	Dinnet, near Aboyne: 57°4'N 2°53'W (Aberdeenshire) 461km N 0y 0m 16d

ACF7036

Ringed First-year Male	23-03-2019	Prees Higher Heath: c. 52°55'N 2°39'W (Shropshire)
Found Freshly dead	10-06-2019	Glenample, Locheanhead: 56°20'N 4°16'W (Stirling) 395km NNW 0y 2m 18d

AKC2441

Ringed Adult Male	19-03-2019	Cressage, near Shrewsbury: c. 52°37'N 2°35'W (Shropshire)
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Caught by ringer	26-04-2019	Peebles: 55°38'N 3°11'W (Scottish Borders) 337km N 0y 1m 7d
Caught by ringer	02-05-2019	Peebles: 55°38'N 3°11'W (Scottish Borders) 337km N 0y 1m 13d

S449754

Ringed Full-grown Female	17-03-2018	Dunmurry: 54°32'N 6°0'W (Antrim)
Caught by ringer	23-02-2019	Market Drayton: 52°53'N 2°29'W (Shropshire) 295km SE 0y 11m 6d

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Shropshire status: Very rare passage migrant
 Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
 Author: JPM

One was well watched and photographed along a track at Robin Hood's Butts, Long Mynd on 14 Sep (*J Reeves et al*). It was still present the following morning but not subsequently. The fresh-looking pointed tail feathers indicate a first-winter bird. Only the second modern record, after one at Brown Clee on 22 Sep 1979, and coinciding with an influx in the north and west of Britain.

(*See Finder's Account by J Reeves elsewhere in this report*).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Shropshire status: Very rare winter visitor and passage migrant
 Shropshire conservation status: Not assessed
 Author: JPM

Two at Titterstone Clee from 7 to 9 Nov were seen by several observers and photographed (*C Biddulph, G Corfield et al*). A typical date and location for this rare species, last recorded in November 2017. It seems likely to be somewhat overlooked on bleak hill tops in late autumn and winter.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Shropshire status:	Uncommon resident
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 7% of plots; 11 birds recorded, an average of 2.75 birds per occupied plot and 0.19 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	Insufficient data
Author:	JPM

This species declined rapidly between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s in Britain, with local extinctions in many areas. The decline has continued, albeit at a reduced rate, to the present. It hangs on in several localised patches of lowland arable farmland from the north-west to the east of the County.

Early in the year there were significant flocks in three areas: 20 at Kingslow on 10 Jan (the only record from this area in the east); 20 with other buntings in hedge by a recently manured field at Tibberton West on 3 Mar and 23 at Cockshutt on 24 Mar. In the north-west there were five at Woolston on 17 Feb and 24 Mar; and five at Maesbury Marsh on the same date.

A male was already singing at Tibberton Moor on 13 Feb followed by 38 more reports between 25 Feb and 17 Jul relating mainly to singing birds, established territories or other evidence of breeding, as follows (single singing males unless stated): traditional territories in a small area near Oswestry on 24 Mar (four); Benthall on 25 Feb; Noneley area (a number of reports of up to five between April and mid-July plus two sing males and a flock of eight on 7 May); Moreton Say on 22 Jun; Isombridge (up to three March and May); near Hodnet on 23 Apr; Moretonwood on two dates in May (two); Tibberton and Tibberton Moor areas (at least six territories April to July with 10 in the area on 7 July); Ercall Heath on 11 Jul; Waters Upton on 16 Apr; Childs Ercall Airfield and area (up to ten territories between May and July); Wall Farm area (at least two); Flashbrook area (up to six in April and June); Ovens Bottom, Sambrook; Camp Farm and Kingslow crossroads.

After the breeding season, November and December saw the build-up of some encouragingly large flocks, suggesting a good breeding season, with 11 at Wall Farm on 16 Nov building up to an impressive 68 on 13 Dec. Elsewhere, there were 44 at Tibberton Marsh on 22 Nov; 17 at Walcot on 1 Dec; and 24 at Bank House Farm, Shrawardine on 24 Dec. Elsewhere, the only reports were from Earnstrey (one on 9 Sep – the first seen here by the observer); one at Ellerdine on 1 Nov and two at VP on 1 Dec, the only record from this once-regular site.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Shropshire status:	Common resident
National conservation status:	Red List
Shropshire conservation status:	Amber List
Shropshire BBS:	Present in 43% of plots; 102 birds recorded, an average of 4.08 birds per occupied plot and 1.76 per surveyed plot
Shropshire BBS Index:	0.55, annual change -0.03 (2018 Index = 0.58)
Author:	JPM

This species has suffered marked declines nationally, especially in the lowlands of the south and east, since the mid-1980s. It has been red listed since 2002 due to declines in the breeding population, mainly driven by poor winter survival – how long it will remain classed as a common resident with us remains to be seen.

In January and February, there were 52 reports from 36 localities, 70% of them relating to between one and five individuals. The only double-figure counts at this time were: 19 at Greenacres Chain Lane, Maesbury on 17 Feb; 11 at Babbinswood and 11 at Brown Heath both on 9 Feb; 11 at Green Acres Farm, Kemberton on 19 Feb; 10 near Clun on 8 Jan; and 10 in a cover crop with 150 Chaffinches at Shakenhurst on 19 Jan.

Song was first noted at Oakeley Mynd on 15 Feb and Aston on Clun next day. Records of confirmed breeding included a nest with eggs at the Lawley on 5 May and birds attending young in the nest at Bicton, near Clun in May and August, and Prees Heath on 4 Jul. Evidence of probable breeding came from a further 11 sites as follows: Hem Farm, Westley; Lyth Hill; Brompton; Wall Farm Marsh, Kynnersley; Eaton; near Clungunford; Long Mynd; near Ludlow; Starvecrow, Overton; Silvington and Claverley. Other reports in the breeding season of birds singing or in suitable habitat came from about 45 additional sites with more in the hilly south and west where they seem to be faring slightly better than in the (even more) intensively farmed lowlands.

After the breeding season, the scattered reports in August and September referred to no more than four together. One foraging along the Upper Aston Brook at Aston on Clun on 11 Aug was unusual for the location and suggests some post-breeding movements were taking place. Reports came from a total of 35 sites between August and the end of the year. Six at VP on 5 Oct were the first at the site since a record of two on a single date in April. They were in the bird food crop of Oats with Reed Buntings, which they favoured here until the end of the year. Numbers picked up in

December with 20 on 2nd and a peak of at least 40 on 14th, a welcome resurgence at this formerly reliable site for a winter flock (see table below). Elsewhere, there were 26 in stubble and recently tilled fields at Arlescott and Wyke on 8 Oct; 10 at Wall Farm on 29 Oct with 18 here in an unharvested Barley field on 30 Dec; with 70, the largest flock of the year, at Dryton on 16 Dec in Maize.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max count	1	0	0	2		0	6	5	40

Monthly maxima at VP

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

- Shropshire status: Common resident
- National conservation status: Amber List
- Shropshire conservation status: Green List
- Shropshire BBS: Present in 10% of plots; 8 birds recorded, an average of 1.33 birds per occupied plot and 0.14 per surveyed plot
- Shropshire BBS Index: Insufficient data
- Author: JPM

A species whose British population declined rapidly during the late 1970s, after an earlier increase, but has fluctuated since the 1980s. Since 1994 the population has somewhat increased in most areas of the country. There has been widespread moderate decline across Europe since 1980.

In January and February there were reports from 22 localities, at 20 of them relating to between one and eight individuals. The exceptions were at Wall Farm where the combination of wetland habitat and bird food crops held good numbers, with a peak count of 90+ on 15 Feb. The largest number were at a reed bed roost at Shifnal Sewage Works where an impressive 250+ were estimated on the evening of 20 Jan, of which 77 were trapped and ringed. Numbers at VP were disappointing, with a maximum of just three, despite large areas of bird food crops (compared with, for example, 40 in February 2018). Three males were noted under feeders in a Newport garden on 17 Feb. Numbers were lower in March with a maximum of eight at Crose Mere on 18th as winter flocks dispersed and birds returned to breeding sites.

Song was first noted at VP on 17 Feb and last noted, again at VP, on 30 Jul. Reports came from 41 sites between April and July. Breeding was only proved at Kynnersley Moor (female feeding young on 29 May) and Cleeton St. Mary (newly fledged young

on 9 Jun), with probable breeding at nine other sites. The sites mainly have wetland habitat or are in the upland fringes and hills.

After the breeding season, reports from nine sites in August and early September referred to no more than three together. An upsurge in mid-September saw 18 at Long Mynd and 17 at Wall Farm on 17th with a more modest 11 at VP on 19th. In October, the VP flock in bird food crops peaked at 45 on 15th. The roost at Shifnal Sewage Works held 30 on 13 Oct, fewer than expected – it might have been too early in autumn for the peak (but see VP) but growth of Common Reed was unusually short, which could have reduced its attractiveness as a roost site. The VP flock remained in the bird food crops with up to 20 in November, an obvious increase to 40 on 2 Dec then a similar number to the end of the year. Ringing at Chelmarsh Scrape on 10 Nov produced c.50, of which 23 were trapped and ringed. The Shifnal Sewage Works roost had increased to c.200 on 1 Dec, with 26 ringed. Other double-figure flocks at this time were 15 at Catherton on 30 Nov and 20 at Wall Farm in unharvested Barley on 30 Dec. Otherwise, reports of single figures came from just seven other sites.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max count	3	3	3	3	6	6	5	2	11	45	20	40

Monthly maxima at VP

Feral Species/Escapes

These are species conforming to Category E in the BOU classification system., i.e. species recorded as introductions, transportees or escapees from captivity, or whose populations are not thought to be self-sustaining. Individuals reported here are thought to be escapes or birds not obviously cared for.

These are included as a record, in the event that self-sustaining populations to get established in the future. Waterfowl and gamebirds are overwhelmingly the main species groups in this section, the former still being popular with bird keepers.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Two birds were at Crimps Farm near Ellesmere on 19 Mar.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

Two birds were seen at a regular location for the species near Lady Halton in March and again in December.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Cock and hen birds were in the village at Longford on 3 Jan. Three birds were recorded in the Stanmore Caravan Park in March and singles were noted in Ellesmere in March and June.

Reeve's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*

A male was found at Priors Halton on 1 Oct in the company of four or five other birds which may have been females of this species or of the Common Pheasant. The birds were wandering free in a stubble field. One was at Bannister's Coppice, near Homer on 13 Oct.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

A bird was recorded in the grounds of the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital on 16 Nov.

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Two birds were noted at Stanwardine-in-the-Fields on 18 Mar and again on 4 Apr.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

A bird at the Quarry at Shrewsbury in September and October was mixing with Mute Swans. One was noted at Bridgnorth on 12 Oct.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*

A dominant gander patrolled the promenade at Ellesmere throughout the year.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

A bird was seen at Benthall Edge Wood on two dates in May. Two were at Holmer Lake on 11 Dec.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

No fewer than 38 records this year and signs of breeding ferally with the sighting of a juvenile with an eclipse drake at VP in summer.

The regular drake was seen along the Severn around the English Bridge and Quarry on several occasions between 2 Jan and 4 May. No records were then received from Shrewsbury until 2 Nov when again a male bird was seen regularly until the end of the year.

Intriguingly, a drake in eclipse plumage (the same bird?) was at VP from 16 Jul and was seen by numerous observers through to 15 Aug when it was thought to have just about completed its wing moult. A juvenile bird here on 3 and 8 Aug strongly suggested local breeding. Birds were not seen at VP at any other time of the year, and the lack of records in Shrewsbury in the summer period does perhaps suggest the same male bird may have been involved.

Other reports were of a drake at Polemere on 8 Mar and another on the Severn at Ironbridge on 4 Dec.

Blue-winged Goose *Cyanochen cyanoptera*

A single was reported from VP on 6 Oct and again on 3 Nov.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

A single bird was again reported from Molverley this year following on from observations in 2018 with records in July and November.

Shropshire County Checklist

The baseline for this checklist is the county avifauna, ‘Birds of Shropshire’, published in November 2019. Species status and historic occurrences are taken from this publication, and this should be referenced for sources of data.

This baseline has been updated with accepted occurrences of all species recorded in 2019 and with all changes to the accepted British List defined by the BOU (see Introduction to the Systematic List). Additionally, any changes to species requiring rarity descriptions either nationally (BBRC) or within the county are included.

In a County context, the following species no longer require rarity descriptions or supporting evidence accompanying submitted records as from 1st January 2020:-

Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Cetti’s Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i> – sightings at Whixall Moss only now require no description

The column labelled ‘Rarity Reporting’ in the table below shows BBRC (British Birds Rarities Committee) or County Rarity for national and county rarities, respectively. Observers recording such species should always inform the County Bird Recorder initially; the description and evidence will be forwarded to BBRC if this is required. Any species not currently on the County list will require submission of a County Rarity description for acceptance and may also require a BBRC submission (the latest BBRC assessment list can be found at www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/species-taxa).

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	Rare visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2017
Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Scarce resident		2019
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2019
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Uncommon resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2019
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Rare summer visitor		2019

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Very common naturalised resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2019
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2018
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident		2019
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Rare naturalised resident, has bred, possible vagrant		2018
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident		2019
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2017
White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	Rare naturalised visitor, very rare breeding species		2019
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Scarce summer and winter visitor		2019
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Scarce naturalised resident		2019
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>	Rare passage migrant, very rare summer visitor	County Rarity (except for males in breeding plumage)	2019
Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, very rare breeding species		2019
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	Scarce winter visitor, rare summer visitor		2019
Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	Uncommon winter visitor		2019
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Fairly common resident: population supplemented by annual releases		2019
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species		2019
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2019
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	Very rare naturalised visitor	County Rarity	2012

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Scarce winter visitor, has bred		2019
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2002
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	Very rare passage migrant and winter visitor	County Rarity	2015
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2005
Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1993
Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2016
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor	County Rarity	2018
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2017
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2016
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Scarce resident, uncommon winter visitor		2019
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2013
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	Naturalised resident now eradicated		2017
Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Rare summer visitor	County Rarity	2019
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Fairly common summer visitor		2019
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Common resident		2019
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Very common resident		2019
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Rare summer visitor		2018
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common resident		2019
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Rare resident, scarce winter visitor		2019
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	2016
Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2014
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common resident		2019
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident		2019
Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	Rare visitor	County Rarity	2019

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	1998
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	2019
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2019
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1965
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2018
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Common winter visitor, uncommon breeding species		2019
White-tailed Plover	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	1984
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, has bred		2019
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2014
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Scarce passage migrant		2019
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Scarce passage migrant		2019
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Uncommon summer visitor, scarce winter visitor		2019
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Scarce passage migrant, very rare winter visitor		2019
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2013
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	Scarce passage migrant, very rare winter visitor		2019
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2011
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2011
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2016
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor		2019
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2002

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2012
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1986
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2017
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Common winter visitor, scarce resident		2019
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species		2019
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	1996
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2011
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Uncommon passage migrant, rare summer visitor; very rare winter visitor		2019
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.		2019
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1995
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor; has bred		2019
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2013
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Scarce passage migrant		2019
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2011
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Common winter visitor, uncommon breeding species		2019
Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>	Rare passage migrant, very rare breeding species		2019
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, has bred		2019
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2018

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucooides</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2018
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Uncommon winter visitor		2019
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Scarce winter visitor		2019
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, rare breeding species		2019
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2003
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2017
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2016
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Scarce passage migrant, very rare breeding species.		2019
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Rare passage migrant		2017
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2010
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2015
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity (Birds in non-breeding plumage only)	2019
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1990
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1963
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2011
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1999
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1993
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2012
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2005
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1973
Leach's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2006
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2001
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2016
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2014
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2012
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2005
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2019

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1993
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Uncommon winter visitor, scarce non-breeding resident		2018
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Very rare visitor	County Rarity	2016
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2016
Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2011
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2018
Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1988
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Very rare visitor	County Rarity	2019
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2015
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Rare visitor		2019
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor		2019
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Rare passage migrant		2019
Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	2010
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Scarce resident		2019
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity (except for observations at Whixall Moss)	2019
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.	County Rarity (May to September records only)	2019
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Scarce resident		2019
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2005
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2016
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Uncommon naturalised resident		2019
Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	Rare resident	County Rarity	2019
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Rare winter visitor, rare passage migrant.	County Rarity (except for observations at Whixall Moss and the Long Mynd)	2019
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2015
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Uncommon resident		2019

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2013
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	Scarce resident		2019
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Common resident		2019
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1983
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Rare resident, scarce winter visitor		2019
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Scarce resident and winter visitor		2019
Ring-necked Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Rare naturalised visitor or escapee	County Rarity	2019
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	1995
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Steppe Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor pallidirostris</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2011
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2007
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Very rare passage migrant, has bred	County Rarity	2000
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Common resident		2019
Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga carvocatates</i>	Very rare irruptive winter visitor	BBRC	1968
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	Very common resident		2019
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Very common resident		2019
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Very common resident		2019
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2010
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Rare irruptive winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	Common resident		2019
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	Scarce resident		2019
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Very common resident		2019
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Very common resident		2019
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Very rare irruptive visitor	County Rarity	2017
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Very rare winter visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2008
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Common resident		2019
Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2017

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Fairly common summer visitor		2019
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common summer visitor		2019
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Common summer visitor		2019
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Rare, non-breeding, resident		2019
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Common resident		2019
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Pallas's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1987
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Very common summer visitor, scarce winter visitor		2019
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2017
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2015
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Very common summer visitor, uncommon winter visitor		2019
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Common summer visitor		2019
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Common summer visitor		2019
Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2019
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor; very rare breeding species	County Rarity	2019
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Common resident		2019
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Very common resident		2019

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Common resident		2019
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Rose-coloured Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	2018
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Very common winter visitor, common resident		2019
White's Thrush	<i>Zoothera aurea</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Scarce passage migrant, has bred		2019
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Very common resident		2019
Black-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus atrogularis</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2007
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Common winter visitor		2019
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Common winter visitor		2019
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Very common resident		2019
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Very common resident		2019
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Vagrant	County Rarity	1996
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Very rare summer visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2000
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2019
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Fairly common summer visitor		2019
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Scarce summer visitor		2019
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Uncommon passage migrant, scarce summer visitor		2019
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2011
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Very common resident		2019
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	No modern records	BBRC	
Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Very common resident		2019
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Common resident		2019
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Fairly common resident		2019
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Uncommon summer visitor		2019
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Very rare passage migrant and winter visitor	County Rarity	2016

Species	Scientific Name	Shropshire Status	Rarity Reporting	Last Occurrence
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2011
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Very common resident		2019
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Fairly common, occasionally irruptive, winter visitor		2019
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Rare, occasionally irruptive, winter visitor, has bred	County Rarity	2019
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Common resident		2019
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	Very common resident		2019
Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>	Very rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2004
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Common resident		2019
Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	Rare winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident		2019
Arctic Redpoll	<i>Acanthis hornemanni</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2019
Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>	Very rare irruptive winter visitor	County Rarity	2014
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Uncommon resident, irruptive scarce winter visitor		2019
Two-barred Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	Very rare irruptive winter visitor	BBRC	2014
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Very common resident		2019
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	Fairly common winter visitor, uncommon resident		2019
Lapland Bunting	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Very rare passage migrant	County Rarity	2019
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Very rare passage migrant and winter visitor	County Rarity	2019
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Uncommon resident		2019
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Common resident		2019
Pine Bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	Vagrant	BBRC	2017
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	No modern records	County Rarity	
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Uncommon resident		2019

List of Contributors

The following contributed records to the Society in 2019. Grateful thanks to all below who have taken the time to send in their records and therefore make the bird report what it is. Every effort has been made to make this list as comprehensive as possible, but the complexity of gathering and logging records from the various systems and communications means that omissions and mistakes are inevitable. If your contribution has not been acknowledged, please accept my sincere apologies, but also contact me via email and an addendum will be included in next year's report.

D Ackland, JA Almond, A Ambrose, A Andrews, T Arch, AJ Arnfield, W Arrowsmith.

CS Backshall, P Bag, I Baggley, R Baggott, V & C Baldry, S Ball, D Balmer, S Banks, LJ Barber, R Barber, D Barnes, D Barrett, I Barrie, M Bastow, S Batchelor, P Beddows, D Beevers, M Bell, E Benbow, P Bennett, Y Benting, E Betteridge, E Bevan, W Bevan, C Biddulph, C Bill, Birdguides, G Bishton, S Boswell, A Bowen, C & A Bowles-Jones, A Brenchley, E Broad, C Brooks, S Brown, A Bunting, P Burge, J Burn

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County Bird Report Editor

Scientific names of species mentioned in the text

Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Barley	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Birch	<i>Betula sp</i>
Black Poplar	<i>Populus nigra</i>
Bluebell	<i>Endymion non-scriptus</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus species</i>
Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Common Laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>
Common Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>
Corsican Pine	<i>Pinus nigra var. maritima</i>
Crassula weed	Refers to invasive New Zealand Pigmyweed, <i>Crassula helmsii</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum species</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Dormouse (Hazel)	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>
Dutch Elm Disease	Caused by fungus of the ascomycete genus <i>Ophiostoma</i>
Eel	<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
English Elm	<i>Ulmus procera</i>
English Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
False Oat Grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex species</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex europaeus</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Larch	<i>Larix species</i>

Leylandii	<i>Cupressus x leylandii</i>
Maize	<i>Zea mays</i>
Meadow Foxtail	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>
Miscanthus	<i>Miscanthus species, the sterile hybrid Miscanthus x giganteus being extensively grown as a biofuel crop</i>
Nettle (Stinging)	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus species</i>
Oats (cultivated)	<i>Avena sativa</i>
Oil Seed Rape	<i>Brassica napus</i>
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
Papillomavirus	<i>DNA virus in the family Papillomaviridae</i>
Pine	<i>Pinus species</i>
Pyracantha	<i>Pyracantha species</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Short-tailed Field Vole	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Spruce	<i>Picea species</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Timothy Grass	<i>Phleum pratense</i>
Trichomonosis	<i>Disease caused by the protozoan Trichomonas gallinae</i>
Weeping Willow	<i>Salix babylonica</i>
Wild Garlic	<i>Allium ursinum</i>
Willow	<i>Salix species</i>
Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

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Indoor Meetings and Field Trips 2019

Indoor Meetings

2 January	Birdwatching in Norfolk	Dave Hollis
6 February	Great Britain's Wonderful Wildlife	Gary Jones
6 March	Bird Migration	Jeff Clarke
3 April	AGM followed by: Shropshire Birds	Jim Almond
2 October	Peregrines and Goshawks	Steve Watson
6 November	Birding in The Gambia	Ashley Grove
4 December	Tanzania	Helen Mugridge

Field Trips

20 January	Llanfairfechan & North Wales Coast	Sue Brealey
24 February	RSPB Marshside & Hesketh Out Marsh	Estelle Hughes
24 March	RSPB Dearne Valley (Old Moor) (by coach)	Sue Brealey
7 April	Leasowes, Parkgate and RSPB Burton Mere	Sue Brealey
17 May	Elan Valley	Ian Baggley & Helen J Griffiths
30 May–2 June	Weekend in Suffolk	Sue Brealey
20 June	Upton Warren	Sue Brealey
8 September	Cors Caron NNR (Tregaron Bog)	Sue Brealey
13 October	Kingsbury Water Park & RSPB Middleton Lakes	Sue Brealey
24 November	Mere Sands Wood & Lunt Meadows	Estelle Hughes
15 December	WWT Martin Mere (by coach)	Sue Brealey

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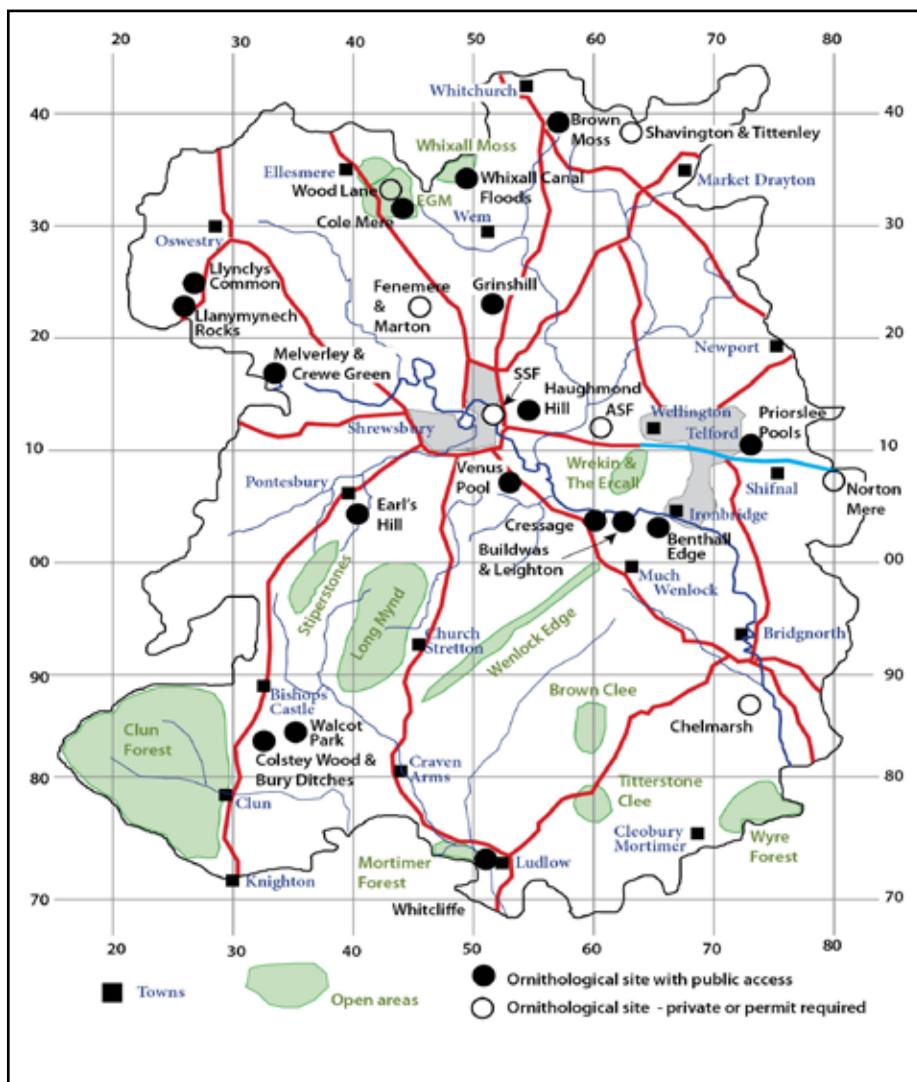
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